

*The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960* is the Ibadan School of History's attempt at celebrating one of its icons – Obaro Ikime – on his attainment of 70 years and recognition that he introduced 'Inter-group Relations' to the History curriculum in Nigeria. Nigeria gained independence in circumstances of intense inter-regional, inter-group, inter-ethnic suspicions and hostility. This is against the background of increased, and very multifaceted, interconnections amongst its peoples. This book focuses on ethnic pluralism, relations and competition, interrogating ways in which socio-economic, political and cultural cleavages were transformed into sites of struggle over identity, power and resources since Nigeria's independence in 1960. These issues, interrogated by an array of twenty-five scholars across the Nigerian Universities explore the tapestry of various aspects of the network of relationships amongst Nigerians. They bestude questions of citizenship, constitutional developments, ethnicity, state creation, religion, gender, economy and how they have shaped and continue to dictate the matrix of inter-group relations in Nigeria in contemporary times.

C.B.N. Ogbogbo, is an Associate Professor in the Department of History, University of Ibadan.

R.O. Olaniyi, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History, University of Ibadan.

O.G. Muojama, is a Lecturer in the Department of History, University of Ibadan.

ISBN 978-49579-8-4



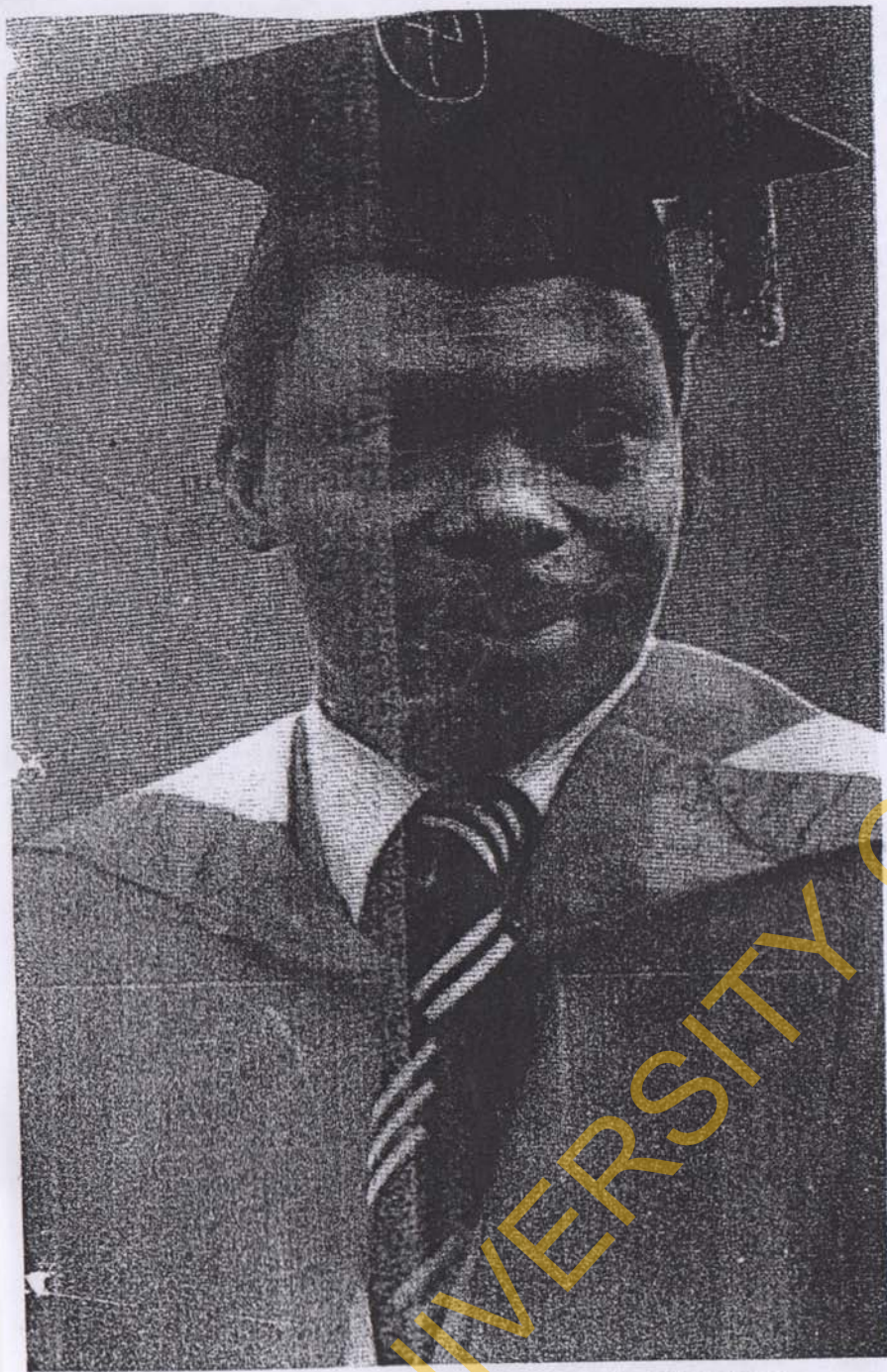
A Publication of The Department of History, University of Ibadan

# The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960

*Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*

Edited by  
**C.B.N. Ogbogbo**  
**R. O. Olaniyi**  
**O.G. Muojama**





**PROFESSOR OBARO IKIME**

The Dynamics of Inter-group  
Relations in Nigeria Since 1960

*Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*

*Edited by*

C.B.N. Ogbogbo, R.O. Olaniyi  
and O.G Muojama

A Publication of the Department of History,  
University of Ibadan



## Dedication

Dedicated to those who laboured in the Department of History, University of Ibadan in the years 1956-1961 – those who laid the foundation of Professor Ikime's career as a historian.

Published by

Department of History, University of Ibadan

© Department of History, University of Ibadan, 2012

SBN 978-978-49579-8-4

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Head Department of History, University of Ibadan, who is the copyright holder.

Printed by

W B Wright Integrated Publishers Limited

1, Adenuga Street,  
Ibadan, Bodija, Ibadan

0805 236 8340, 0803 4994 267

mail: oshafidaniel@yahoo.co.uk



## Contributors

Dr Akamese, L. is of the Department Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt.

Akinmidu, P. is with the University of Ilorin.

Animashaun, M. lectures in the Political Science Department, Nassarawa State University, Keffi.

Prof. Anyanwu, U.D. is of the Department of History, Evans Enwerem University.

Janigo, Y. is of the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Niger Delta University.

Benjamin, S. is a Research Fellow at National Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), Ibadan.

Dr. Chukwu, D. lectures in the Department of History and International Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Dr. Danjibo, N. is a lecturer in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

gharevba, M. is of the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Otta.

Prof. Fwatshak, S. is with the Department of History, University of Jos.

Aladima, D. is of Theatre and Communications Arts Department, University of Jos.

Quah, A. lectures in the Department of Philosophy, Lagos State University

Ujida, M. is with the Department of History, Nassarawa State University, Keffi.

Dr. Mgbada, C.O. is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and International Relations, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Muojama, O. lectures in the Department of History, University of Ibadan.

Nyito, S. is of the Department of History and International Studies, Benue State University.

Dr. Ogbogbo, C.B.N. is a Reader in the Department of History, University of Ibadan.

Okoro, S. is of the Department of History and International Relations, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Oladejo, M. is of the Department of History, University of Ibadan.

Olayode, K. is of the Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Dr. Omoiya, S. teaches in the Department of History, University of Ilorin.

Dr. Onyekpe, N. is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Lagos.

Dr. Tijani, A. is of the Department General Studies, Ladoko Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho.

Dr. Ugboaja, P. lectures in the Department of History, University of Ibadan.



## Contents

Dedication	v
Introduction	1
<b>SECTION A: PROFILE</b>	
Chapter 1: Obaro Ikime: a Titan at 70 <i>C.B.N. Ogbogbo</i>	13
Chapter 2: Ikime and the Study of Intergroup Relations in Nigeria <i>U.D. Anyawu</i>	25
Chapter 3: "Historical Stencil" As Dominant Axis of Niger Delta Crises: Allegorizing Obaro Ikime's Historicity <i>Lucky O. Akaruese</i>	37
<b>SECTION B: THE STATE, CITIZENSHIP AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Chapter 4: Constitutional Development and Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: The Unending Dilemma <i>Eghareba M. Etiosa</i>	55
Chapter 5: Identity Crisis and Indigene-Settler Question in Nigeria: The Constitutional Review Option <i>Mojeed A. Animashaun</i>	71
Chapter 6: State Creation and Intergroup Relations: The Nigerian Experience <i>Solomon Akhere Benjamin</i>	90
Chapter 7: State Creation and Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: The Izzi-Ukelle Experience Since 1996 <i>C.O. Mgbada</i>	113



Chapter 8: Babangida Regime and the Crisis of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria 1985-1993  
*Paul K.N. Ugboajah* 127

**SECTION C: ECONOMY AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

Chapter 9: Globalisation and Intergroup Relations in Nigeria  
*Olisa G. Muojama* 143

Chapter 10: The Dog-Palm Oil Trade Between the Jos Plateau and the Niger Delta  
*S.U. Fwatshak* 167

Chapter 11: Land Disputes and Intergroup Relations in West Niger Igboland  
*J.G. Nkem Onyekpe* 182

**SECTION D: ETHNICITY, RELIGION, GENDER AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN NIGERIA**

Chapter 12: Ethnic Politics, the Press, and Struggles for Political Control of Nigeria  
*Galadima D. John* 213

Chapter 13: The Impact of *Shari'a* on Intergroup Relations in Post-Colonial Nigeria  
*N. D. Danjibo* 231

Chapter 14: Intergroup Influence and Conflicts in Yoruba Muslim Family  
*Abdulwahab Tijani* 250

Chapter 15: Market Women and Inter-group Relations in Ibadan Since 1940  
*Mutiat Oladejo* 261

**SECTION E: THE RESURGENCE OF SELF-DETERMINATION**

Chapter 16: Variables and Constants: Self-Determination and Intergroup Relations in Nigeria Since 1960 271

Chapter 17: Self-Determination, Ethno-Regional Organisations and Conflicts in Nigeria since 1960  
*K. Olayode* 285

Chapter 18: Reflections on Ijo Struggle for Self-Determination in Nigeria  
*Youpele Banigo* 315

Chapter 19: Internal Domination, Group Mobilization, and Agitation: The Tiv Experience in Northern Nigeria, 1960-1966  
*Saawua Nyityo* 333

**SECTION F: CONFLICTS AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN NIGERIA**

Chapter 20: Pluralism and Dialogue in the Middle Belt: A Phenomenologico-Existential Analysis of the Benue-Taraba-Nassarawa Pogrom  
*Alloy S. Ihuah* 353

Chapter 21: The Aftermath of Ilorin Talaka Parapo Revolts, 1960-1967  
*S.Y. Omoiya* 379

Chapter 22: Bassa and Egbura Relations in the 21st Century  
*M.M. Mejida* 396

Chapter 23: Colonialism and Intra-Community Conflict in Enugu: Itumbauzo and Ugbawka Examples  
*D.O. Chuckwu* 413

Chapter 24: Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Intergroup Relations: A Re-assessment  
*Paul Ilesanmi Akanmidu* 430



## Introduction

C.B.N. Ogbogbo, R.O. Olaniyi and O.G. Muojama

Intergroup relations feed into almost every vein of our national history, politics and public memory. When the Faculty members of the 'Ibadan School History' converged in early 2006 to deliberate on the planning of an international conference in honour of Professor Obaro Ikime at 70, a bevy of creative themes came up. First, the choice of the theme of intergroup relations was to celebrate the intellectual icon, Professor Obaro Ikime whose "academic turn" launched a new perspective in the study of postcolonial historiography and discourses. Second, intergroup relations constitute a compelling factor transforming the postcolonial society in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Its currency to nation-building processes and constant variable cannot be underestimated. The theme of intergroup relations focused on ethnic pluralism and competition, interrogating ways in which social and cultural cleavages were transformed into sites of struggle over identity, power and resources. Intergroup relations are characterised by social consciousness, feelings of solidarity, boundaries or indifference towards 'others' and interest articulation which shape contest for power and resources as well as protection of socio-cultural values in a competitive plural society. Nearly all ethnic groups in Nigeria, at various stages of post-colonial experience have been mobilised politically for recognition and significance. In most cases, ethnic or group mobilisation often snowballed into violent crises and reprisals.

Yet, a composite history of any community in Nigeria can hardly be written without reference to another group either within or outside the community's cultural area. Some families or communities trace their origins to distant regions that are culturally or politically diverse from their contemporary identity. Intergroup relations underpins interconnections and networks that override relations between states,



empires, political units and formations to relations that are communal, familial, social, economic and cultural. Oral traditions of origin among the Hausa and Yoruba, two competing powerful ethnic groups in Nigeria, refer to each other independently. Oduduwa legend among the Yoruba refers to Gobir, one of the Hausa-states, and Kukawa in Kanem-Borno, as part of the Oduduwa migration while the Bayajida legend among the Hausa incorporates Yoruba. According to Ikime<sup>1</sup> and Obayemi<sup>2</sup>, intergroup relations among pre-colonial groups included economic, social and political contacts. Pre-colonial groups were fully aware of their neighbours with whom they fought wars, brokered peace, inter-married, traded and exchanged ideas. For example, the diffusion of Nok culture is yet to be adequately unearthed due to similarities with the terra-cotta arts of Ile-Ife and Zamfara region. Sultan Muhammad Bello's *Infaq al-Maysur* (1812/1813) is one of the written sources of Yoruba history. The British colonial rule created dichotomies and imbalances which had profound repercussions on inter-group relations. For Ikime, Nigeria regained independence in 1960 in circumstances of intense inter-regional, inter-group, inter-ethnic suspicions and hostility.<sup>3</sup>

As a complex phenomenon, intergroup relations oscillates between harmony and hostility; accommodation and conflict. In a multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria, it is germane to inquire into the challenges of ethnic co-existence and intergroup relations. Since the Civil War years, and possibly, much earlier during the Tiv Riots of the early 1960s, intergroup relations has remained salient in the emerging competitive identity structures and rampaging forces of history in postcolonial Nigeria. The ethnic notions, perceptions and stereotypes Nigerians developed over time influenced the contingencies of the ways in which they react, respond and give social meaning national issues and political development. These perceptions have dramatically influenced the

<sup>1</sup> O. Ikime, *History, the Historian and the Nation (The Voice of A Nigerian Historian)* (Ibadan: HEBN Publishers Plc, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> A. Obayemi, "States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area" in O. Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books for the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> O. Ikime, *History, the Historian and the Nation*, p. 104.

competitive and hierarchical nature of the Nigerian citizenship between indigenes and settlers or host/migrant relations. Throughout Nigeria's post-colonial history, the (re)construction of ethnic, cultural religious identities has affected the political integration and national development of the country. Ethnic belonging and ancestral linkages plays vital roles in framing citizenship. Thus, the post-colonial nation is constructed on ethnicity and expectedly, the diverse ethnic groups prioritise their national aspirations above the general interest of the entire federation. This partly accounts for the reasons why political competition became more violent and patron-client cleavages developed in socio-economic and political relations.

Since independence, intergroup relations have remained within the matrix of suspicions and hostility. To Ayandele, national instincts do not exist, only ethnic instincts "... you only had to scratch the educated Nigerian and you had your tribalist."<sup>4</sup> Ikime concludes that Nigeria remains without Nigerians and the search for Nigerians continues.<sup>5</sup> What characterises intergroup relations in contemporary Nigeria is not so much skewed in cultural differences as governance issues. The cultural diversity of the country itself is not an aberration in ethnic relations. Notions of belonging, inclusion and exclusion are shaped by access to power, party politics, land issues, politicisation of religion, political corruption and perceptions of marginalisation. Tamuno argues that a common national identity in Nigeria was a plant of slow growth. It was much possible to establish the Nigerian state than to nourish the Nigerian nation.<sup>6</sup> The severity of ethno-religious conflicts, secessionist agitations, fraudulent elections and rising wave of crime made international media and observers predict collapse of Nigeria. The increasing pervasiveness of ethnic nationalism and solidarity movements underscores the futility of nation-building processes in plural society.

<sup>4</sup> E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974) p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> O. Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Intergroup Relations in an Evolving Nation State* (Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria, 1985) pp. 25 and 30.

<sup>6</sup> T. N. Tamuno, "Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1970, pp. 564.



Indeed, ethnicity is a fact of everyday life and its dynamics put the Nigerian state at a risk. Nation-building is resisted by the ethnic groups that constitute the state not only because the state was externally imposed by colonialism but due to the unequal distribution of influence and resources among diverse ethnic groups. As Bala Usman and Alkasum Abba suggest these positions fit into some established mental stereotypes about Nigeria and Nigerians which generate fears and insecurity as to the viability of Nigeria as a nation-state and frequent violent communal conflicts in the urban and rural areas since the mid-1980s.<sup>7</sup>

The sub-text to the above image of hostility and conflictual inter-group relations in Nigeria is against the background of an ever increasing interactive space amongst Nigerians. Indeed, the dynamics of migrations which have acquired immense proportions since 1960 has been monumental. Social and economic pursuits have found Nigerians from diverse backgrounds settle and become accommodated in other parts of the country different from their primordial base. For instance, there has been an explosion in Igbo migrations and investments in Lagos, South west Nigeria. The point being made is that underlying the picture of tense and anxious moments everywhere is a peaceful relationship amongst the various peoples and groups. This is evinced from the number of socio-economic and cultural engagements across ethnic boundaries, pursuit of livelihood beyond primordial enclaves and vigorous interactions amongst various groups. Unfortunately, thus far, the tense moments and violent conflicts tend to becloud these other dimensions of inter-group relations since 1960. Indeed, we do not have to look too far in answering Obaro Ikime that the Nigerians been sought for are beginning to emerge<sup>8</sup>.

The substance of the conference theme attracted participants from over twenty Universities and institutions of higher learning. It provoked debate, and celebrated the intellectual achievement of a historian, teacher, administrator and mentor. This conference, held in

<sup>7</sup> B. Usman and A. Abba, 2005, *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria: The Facts and the Figures* (Zaria: Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> O. Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians*.

2007, was successfully marked by academic conversations and exchange of ideas among scholars of different generations, identities and academic bearings. Their critical power and transdisciplinary approach reflected on the issues of intergroup relations that further explored the link between history and citizenship in a multi-ethnic postcolonial society. From the avalanche of papers presented at this conference twenty four of them were selected, arranged and presented in six sections representing the major themes covered by the international conference in honour of Obaro Ikime.

Section A covers the profile of Professor Obaro Ikime in whose honour the conference was organized. Chris B.N. Ogbogbo, in Chapter one, notes that although some literature on the person, carrier and works of Obaro Ikime exists, the dynamism that has attended his carrier has made an update necessary. In this connection, he examines the academic career, leadership, administrative engagements, sports and religious life of Obaro Ikime. In chapter two, Professor U.D. Anyanwu posits that as Nigeria entered the colonial and post-colonial periods, other tiers of group consciousness evolved in terms of the emergence of divisions, provinces, regions, states and geopolitical zones. These units in varying degrees became platforms for the quest for self-determination, meaning the pursuit of the survival of human and people's rights and overall preservation of the identities in respect of each group. In effect, as the Nigerian state evolved, the link between self-determination and human development (on the bases of groups) intensified with serious implications for the nature and outcome of inter-group relations in Nigeria. Lucky Akaruese, in chapter three, analyses the historicity of Ikime's works, especially *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta* (1968) and *Niger Delta Rivalry* (1969) as a way of understanding the factuality and social forces inherent in the Niger Delta crisis.

Section B deals with such constitutional issues as state creation and citizenship, and how they affect inter-group relations in Nigeria. Decentralisation of governance through creation of states and local governments further deepen conflicts rather than ameliorate them. The proliferation of states created new ambiguities of cohabitation while reinforcing old ones, especially the emphasis on indigeneity or state of origin in employment, education and political participation. Since 1967,



state creation has led to a process of centralisation of power, the indivisibility of the Nigerian state through the weakening of the federating units, and the national question remains unresolved. State creation has produced more minorities. Forty-six years after the Sir Henry Willink Commission report of 1958 was submitted to the British colonial government, the fears of minorities continue to escalate. There are fears over political domination and religious freedom. Egharevba Etiosa, in chapter four, investigates the underlying dynamics and contexts within which the structuring of constitutional development has been able to provide the framework for the advancement and maintenance of profitable and viable relationships among the various multiethnic groups that constitute the Nigeria nation. In chapter five, Mojeed Animashaun argues that the competition for values and resources engendered the categorization of some Nigerians as "indigenes or natives" and others as "settlers or strangers" which has serious implications for citizenship rights and privileges. In chapter six, Solomon Benjamin suggest that from all indications evidence abound to prove that states creation in Nigeria over the years has had no ethnic-cultural basis, rather it had been motivated by fear of being dominated as people were made to believe. Mgbada, in chapter seven, analyses the influence of state creation on intergroup relations. The creation of Ebonyi state in 1996 launched a new source of conflict between the Izzi people of Ebonyi and their Ukelle neighbours in Cross River State. State creation truncated their hitherto cordial relations due to the inability of the government to effectively demarcate their boundaries. In chapter eight, Paul Ugboajah suggests that the long period of abrogation of the constitution by military rule and its seeming non-performance has not only led to a crisis of legitimacy but also a crisis of civil-military relations.

Section C dwells on the economy, which plays a pivotal role in determining the structure and nature of relationship among groups in every society. In chapter nine, Olisa Muojama throws light on the contradictions of globalization in promoting intergroup relations and exacerbating socio-cultural differences. Historically, Nigerian communities have engaged in tremendous commercial intercourse and networks. Such transactions and exchange of communities still persists.

Fwatshak, in chapter ten, illustrates the development of flourishing trade in dogs and palm oil between Ngas people of the Jos Plateau and their counterparts from Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom States. Nkem Onyekpe argues in chapter eleven that the phenomena of land disputes are not only a reflection of the crisis in the agrarian economy of the area, but also the major factor that has turned most West Niger Igbo communities against one another.

Section D concentrates on ethnicity, religion and gender which constitute important elements and strands in inter-group relations. Galadima John, in chapter twelve, reviews the ethnic undertone of news coverage which Nigerian newspapers accorded the political struggle by different groups during democratic governments since 1960. Danjibo, in chapter thirteen, argues that in the face of the adoption of Shari'a law by some states in northern Nigeria, there emerged a negative impact on group cohesion in northern Nigeria. More than ever before, people in northern Nigeria have come to be sharply divided based on religious identity after Sharia's law was adopted in 1999/2000. In chapter fourteen, Abduwahab Tijani examines how the cultural flows of globalization has equally has generated discordant and conflictual relations within the Yoruba Muslim households. Through inter-marriages and trading networks, women play pivotal roles in intergroup relations, but the constitution pay less attention to their changing citizenship status. In chapter fifteen, Mutiat Oladejo explains the roles of market women in intergroup relations in Ibadan metropolis.

Section E examines the resurgence of self-determination. In chapter sixteen, Sylvanus Okoro suggest that self-determination as a strand in inter-group relations in independent Nigeria has tended to depict two major paradigms: a mechanism for drawing attention to perceived injustice and alienation from the national commonwealth, and a conscious predilection to the pursuit of group interest outside the national sovereignty. Kehinde Olayode's paper in chapter seventeen equally explains the proliferation of ethno-regional based organizations that have resulted into the escalation of ethno-regional conflicts in many Nigerian cities. This scenario has weakened the achievement of national integration. In chapter eighteen, Youpele Banigo critically examines the long struggle of the Ijo people in the Niger Delta, historically locate its



origins and attempting to account for its causes. Furthermore, the paper posits that self-determination and democracy are complementary, and concludes that the durability of our 'nascent' democracy depends on the readiness of the State to ensure that every group, irrespective of its size, should have a comfortable space in the polity. Saawua Nyityo in chapter nineteen discusses the way and manner by which NPC hegemonic politics was played out particularly in the Benue valley area, the response of the Tiv and its impact on inter-group relations. In chapter nineteen, Alloy Ihuah analyses persistent conflicts in the Benue-Taraba-Nassarawa axis.

Section F looks at the conflicts generated by the warped fashion of nation-building which has impinged on inter-group relations in Nigeria. In chapter twenty, Alloy Ihuah notes that the most potent cause of conflict in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is fear of domination and marginalization, arguing that the Plural character of the region with its attendant distrust and conflicts could be welded together and made to co-exist for sustainable development through dialogue. Omoiya states, in chapter twenty-one, that the attainment of Nigeria's independence in 1960 meant for the Ilorin people a restructuring of polity, which was dictated by, among other things, the power struggle between the indigenous ruling class, that represented the interest of the colonial administration, and the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* ITP. Maiyaki Mejida, in chapter twenty-two, discusses the impact of arbitrary imposition of rulership, political structures and institutions on distinct ethnic groups by the colonial state created untractable conflicts in post-colonial Nigeria. The colonial state distorted Bassa history describing them as subjects of their neighbour, Egbura. Dan Chuckwu in chapter twenty-three uses the case studies of Ugbawka (a local community widely known for rice production, and located south of Enugu, the capital of Enugu State) and Itumbauzo (a supposed one community that now finds itself split between Abia and Akwa Ibom States) of Nigeria. Over the years, these communities have found themselves in unending conflicts that have sometimes resulted in the loss of lives and property.

In chapter twenty-four, Paul Akanmidu focuses attention on the Owe, Bunu and Ijumu relations within the Okun constituency of Kogi State. He reconstructs the historical misconceptions that had promoted

their strained relations. In the literature, Owe was stereotypically described as "collaborator, betrayer and traitor" during the external invasion of the Nupe. This longstanding stereotype continues to determine the relations between Owe and her neighbours in the postcolonial period.



UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

SECTION A  
PROFILE



## Obaro Ikime: A Titan At 70

C.B.N. Ogbogbo

### Introduction

Although some literature on the person, carrier and works of Obaro Ikime already exists, the dynamism that has attended his carrier and several other engagements of his have made an update a necessity, since the last major work on him twenty years ago.<sup>1</sup> At age 70, Obaro (as he is fondly called by his admirers) can be said to have attained the peak of his chosen profession, vocation and calling. It is indeed a life worthy of celebration.

This piece is, therefore, a cursory attempt to interrogate other aspects of Obaro Ikime, which have not been adequately covered by the earlier works. Prominent in this regard are issues pertaining to his education, scholarship, leadership and foray into administration. It also covers his sporting and religious engagements.

Obaro was born on 30 December 1936 to parents of Anibeze origin, a community which was then in the Delta Province of colonial Nigeria. Presently, Anibeze bestrides both Delta and Bayelsa States in the Niger Delta area. Thus, Obaro's state identity in contemporary Nigeria depends on which of the states his family compound is located. However, all his official documents indicate Delta State.

---

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Ekoko and S. O. Agbi. eds., *Perspectives in History: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1992).



origins and attempting to account for its causes. Furthermore, the paper posits that self-determination and democracy are complementary, and concludes that the durability of our 'nascent' democracy depends on the readiness of the State to ensure that every group, irrespective of its size, should have a comfortable space in the polity. Saawua Nyityo in chapter nineteen discusses the way and manner by which NPC hegemonic politics was played out particularly in the Benue valley area, the response of the Tiv and its impact on inter-group relations. In chapter nineteen, Alloy Ihuah analyses persistent conflicts in the Benue-Taraba-Nassarawa axis.

Section F looks at the conflicts generated by the warped fashion of nation-building which has impinged on inter-group relations in Nigeria. In chapter twenty, Alloy Ihuah notes that the most potent cause of conflict in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is fear of domination and marginalization, arguing that the Plural character of the region with its attendant distrust and conflicts could be welded together and made to co-exist for sustainable development through dialogue. Omoiya states, in chapter twenty-one, that the attainment of Nigeria's independence in 1960 meant for the Ilorin people a restructuring of polity, which was dictated by, among other things, the power struggle between the indigenous ruling class, that represented the interest of the colonial administration, and the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* ITP. Maiyaki Mejida, in chapter twenty-two, discusses the impact of arbitrary imposition of rulership, political structures and institutions on distinct ethnic groups by the colonial state created untractable conflicts in post-colonial Nigeria. The colonial state distorted Bassa history describing them as subjects of their neighbour, Egbura. Dan Chuckwu in chapter twenty-three uses the case studies of Ugbawka (a local community widely known for rice production, and located south of Enugu, the capital of Enugu State) and Itumbauzo (a supposed one community that now finds itself split between Abia and Akwa Ibom States) of Nigeria. Over the years, these communities have found themselves in unending conflicts that have sometimes resulted in the loss of lives and property.

In chapter twenty-four, Paul Akanmidu focuses attention on the Owe, Bunu and Ijumu relations within the Okun constituency of Kogi State. He reconstructs the historical misconceptions that had promoted

their strained relations. In the literature, Owe was stereotypically described as "collaborator, betrayer and traitor" during the external invasion of the Nupe. This longstanding stereotype continues to determine the relations between Owe and her neighbours in the postcolonial period.



## Education and Scholarship

Obaro spent his early years in the Delta Province where he attended the Church Missionary Society (CMS) primary schools at Oleh, Burutu and Warri between 1944 and 1950.

That Obaro rose to become a reputable scholar and an outstanding Professor of History is not surprising. While some people are born great, others achieve greatness. Apart from his brainpower, Obaro clearly falls within the latter category of the greats. Preponderance of evidence indicates that he was a high-flier at his early years. Mazino avers that his dad was virtually on scholarship throughout his secondary school and university education. While he enjoyed a Government scholarship for his secondary school education from 1950 to 1956, his University education was also with a Federal Government scholarship from 1956 to 1960. Obaro's doctoral degree was funded with a University of Ibadan Post graduate scholarship. Clearly, Obaro's brain power ensured his spectacular academic performance that won him attention, admiration and the various scholarships.

He finished his school certificate examinations from the prestigious Government College Ughelli (GCU) with a division one grade and repeated this top-flight performance when he graduated with a second-class upper division in History at Ibadan. Thus far, this has remained the best attainable grade in the 59 years existence of the department.

After his first degree, he proceeded to do the doctoral programme. His doctoral thesis on the *Niger-Delta rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo relations and the European Presence 1884-1936*<sup>2</sup>, is one of the classics published under the *Ibadan History series*. It is a masterly and groundbreaking effort in helping to understand the discourse on inter-group relations between two prominent Nigerian groups in the Niger Delta. This and his subsequent foray into other aspects of Nigerian history positioned him as a leading light in the field of Nigerian and African History. He pioneered efforts in introducing courses on inter group relations,

<sup>2</sup> Obaro's PhD Thesis was published as *Niger-Delta Rivalry, Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence 1884-1936* (Longman: Ibadan History Series, 1969).

teaching and calling attention to this crucial aspect of study for the purpose of nation building. This commitment and devotion earned him the appellation 'father of inter-group relations'. What is not often remembered and acknowledged is that his thesis and subsequent works such as *The Fall of Nigeria*<sup>3</sup> provide the historical foundations of what is today christened conflict studies.

At age thirty-seven, after eleven years in academia, he became a professor of History at Ibadan, a Department that had made its mark in the circles of the enlightened. Indeed the pioneering effort of the Obaro Ikime's generation of historians in revolutionizing African History attracted scholars from all over the world who paid regular professional pilgrimage to the History department at Ibadan. Important is the fact that Obaro was one of those that built up the fame of the Ibadan School of History, a feat that ultimately placed the University of Ibadan on the intellectual map of the world<sup>4</sup>.

No doubt Obaro's carrier was positively influenced by the quality of accomplished scholars that he interacted with at Ibadan. Prominent amongst these giants are Kenneth Onwuka Dike, the pathfinder and godfather of African History, J.F. Ade Ajayi, the oracle of history at Ibadan, and other gurus of the school, such as J.C. Anene, C.C. Ifemesia, H.F.C. Smith, A. Ryder, J.D. Omer-Cooper, E.A. Ayandele, A.E. Afigbo, R.A. Adeleye, J.A. Atanda, B.O. Oloruntimehin, etc. These Masters had uncommon mastery of their areas of specialization which made their works indispensable to scholars working in their field of specialization. It is with these first class intellectuals that Obaro interacted and nourished his intellect. A celebration of Ikime is in a way an acknowledgement of these high priests of the Ibadan School of History.

<sup>3</sup> O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria (The British Conquest)* (Heinemann Educational Books, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> See J.D. Omer-Cooper, "The Contribution of the University of Ibadan to the Spread of the Study of and Teaching of African History within Africa" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. X No. 3, 1980, pp. 23-32.



Bisi Oyegoke, in his published piece in *Perspectives in history* edited by Ekoko and Agbi<sup>5</sup>, did a seminal analysis of Obaro's academic accomplishments as a researcher, writer and a teacher. Even though at the time of the publication of the book on Obaro in 1992, he had successfully stamped his presence as an accomplished scholar and a foremost professor of Nigerian history, his journey into the spiritual domain was yet to come to public glare. Even after the publication, his academic enterprise continued with vigour, and much later on *pro bono* basis in the Department of History University of Ibadan. His pen as a writer continued to flow and his curriculum vitae became further elongated.

We are therefore not going to dwell so much on his academic carrier because by the date of the said publication, he had by his academic output established himself as one of the apostles of the Ibadan School of History and the father of inter-group relations in Nigerian history<sup>6</sup>. His intellectual output was such that he was sought after in leading centres of learning all over the world. By the end of 1981, he had held Visiting Professorial appointments in the University of California, Los Angeles, University of California, Berkeley and Harvard University all in the U.S.A. All that happened to his intimidating academic credentials and stature after 1990 were merely to further entrench this perception of him in the minds of his students, former students and colleagues in the global intellectual community.

Obaro succeeded through his intellectual engagements, in playing a part in shaping the writing and making of Nigerian history. The ultimate demonstration of this is his editing, on behalf of the Historical Society of Nigeria, the *Groundwork of Nigerian History* which has until this day remained the *magnum opus* for students of

<sup>5</sup> Bisi Oyegoke, "Professor Obaro Ikime: The Making of a Historian: A Critical Survey of his Works and Contributions" in Ekoko A.E. and Agbi S.O. eds., *Perspectives in History*...

<sup>6</sup> O. Akinwumi, O. O. Okpeh and D. J. Gwamna, eds., *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2006) p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> See O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980).

Nigerian history.<sup>8</sup> Although he retired prematurely, it is safe to surmise his academic career in the words of Prof. Dapo Adelugba that "Prof. Obaro Ikime has during his many years of service, been an exemplary teacher, researcher, administrator and an all-round academic whose moral conduct is widely regarded as impeccable"<sup>9</sup>. This no doubt echoes the views of historical icons such as Kenneth Dike who had much earlier opined that Obaro "possesses unusual power of logical argument .... a person of complete integrity"<sup>10</sup>. In his twenty six years of scholarship at Ibadan, he displayed thoroughness in his research, competence as a teacher and remarkable experience in administration; qualities that have engraved his name in gold in the circles of the learned.

### Leadership and Administration

This doyen of the Ibadan School of History held various leadership positions at different times. This virtue of leadership can again be traced back to his secondary school days. At the then prestigious Government College Ughelli, he was the Head Prefect of the school in 1955/56, a position for outstanding students with leadership ability. He remains the only student to have been so appointed while at the same time retaining his position as a house prefect. Even in his sporting activities, his leadership qualities earned him the position of the captain of the cricket team in his secondary school. At Ibadan, his sporting prowess came with leadership responsibilities of being the captain and eventually, coach to the volleyball, badminton and soccer teams. His dedication to his pursuits and the fact that he excelled in them stood

<sup>8</sup> The Historical Society of Nigeria which Obaro Ikime headed as President between 1985 and 1987 was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission in 1955 as the first academic association in Nigeria.

<sup>9</sup> See Protest letter by Prof. Dapo Adelugba, on behalf of the Faculty of Arts, to the Vice Chancellor on the compulsory retirement of Prof. Obaro Ikime dated 4<sup>th</sup> November 1990. See Obaro Ikime's file in the Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1957-Till Date.

<sup>10</sup> K.O. Dike, as Principal of University College Ibadan, while expressing an opinion on Ikime in "O. Ikime" dated 15th February 1964. See Obaro Ikime's file in the Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1957-Till Date.



him out for leadership in virtually all his endeavours. As a member of the Historical Society of Nigeria, he rose to the position of National President in 1985. His record as President of the society indicates that he stood in stout defence of his discipline and its propagation. This was at a time when the fortunes of History as a discipline had dwindled in a Nigeria that exhibited historical amnesia in the conduct of its affairs.

As a university lecturer, Obaro also made his mark as a foremost sports administrator in the country. For eleven years, beginning from 1968, he led the university sports contingent to National and International competitions; remained the honorary sports coach for volleyball, badminton and football (1964-1978) and rose to become the Chairman of the University of Ibadan sports Council in 1978- a position he held for three years. At the national level, in recognition of his numerous sporting activities and sustained interest even while a lecturer in the university, he was made the Chairman of Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA). He became a continental stakeholder in sports when he was elected and served as the Vice- President of Federation of African University Sports from 1974 to 1978. His stature as an icon in intellectual circles can therefore be attributed not just to his uncommon brilliance, but the doggedness and passion with which he pursued all the endeavours he engaged. Whether in the pursuit of service to humanity or in the service of God, his dedication was, zealously the same.

Part of his administrative experience includes membership of the University of Ibadan senate from 1969-1990 and a member of the University of Ibadan Governing Council between 1977 and 1981. Also, Obaro served in the same capacity at the Universities of Sokoto (1984-1986) and Delta State University from 2003 to 1990. At the Auchi Polytechnic he was the Chairman of the Governing Council from 1987 to 1990. Furthermore, he was a member of the body that drafted the 1979 constitution for Nigeria. The National University Commission also benefited from his membership of its Academic Planning Group between 1976- 1977. He was one of the eggheads that put together what is today Ambrose Alli University in Ekpoma.

In addition to the ones mentioned earlier, Obaro also served the University of Ibadan in several administrative capacities. He was twice

chairman of the University Sports Council, National Secretary and later 3rd National Vice-President of University of Ibadan Alumni Association. Even before he joined the clergy, our erudite professor had held several positions in the Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan. He, in 1988 became the Chairman of the Chapel Committee- a body that approximates to the Governing Council of the church. The point in emphasis is that his leadership qualities attracted to him numerous administrative positions in several institutions across the country. Through these positions, he positively impacted on the development of tertiary education in the country.

### Sports and Religious Engagement

Obaro's life has been a packed full one. He is not just a renowned historian of world acclaim, the same passion and vigour he exhibited in his career as an academic also attended his calling as a reverend of the Anglican Church. His contemporaries remember his dedication and outstanding performance as a multi-talented sportsman at Government College Ughelli (GCU) and later at the University College Ibadan<sup>11</sup>. Obaro was an outstanding footballer and cricketer who, in addition, played volleyball and badminton to a competitive level. Indeed, by 1954, he was already a member of his school's football, cricket and athletics teams at GCU. He later captained the earlier two teams from May 1955 to August 1956. Obaro made the football team of the University in his first year and remained a member until 1964 when he bagged his doctoral degree and ceased to wear the toga of a student. He was indeed an exemplary student that was well rounded. His interest in these extra curricula engagements continued while he was a student at the University College Ibadan.

<sup>11</sup> There are several correspondences indicating his prowess as a sportsman. See Dr. A.B. Aderibigbe's description of Obaro as an excellent sportsman in his recommendation of him to The Registrar, University of Ife, dated 3rd April 1964 and Tayo Akpata's (Assistant Registrar) letter of commendation dated 6th April 1967, both in Obaro Ikime's file in the Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1957-Till Date.



As in Government College Ughelli, he also captained the university football team from 1958 to 1960. His interest in his other sporting engagements never diminished. He played cricket and badminton for the university, was a member of its athletic team and was for two years (1959-1961) the University Badminton singles champion. Clearly, Obaro towered head and shoulder above his peers, for in spite of what seems like a pre-occupation with sports and games, he, in the words of his teacher, "consistently produced the best sessional examination results in History"<sup>12</sup>. It was this rare combination that stood him out even amongst the gathering of the Greats. His athletic look and movement have remained with him as he ages gracefully. In recognition of his active support and participation in sports, the football team of the Department of History (who, for some time now remained the university champions) is named 'Obaro babes'- after our eminent historian.

The point need be made that Obaro was in every ramification a very visible part of the University College Ibadan community. This was because he stood out in all his activities. His disposition towards Christianity and leadership role amongst brethren were already very visible while an undergraduate. He joined the Students Christian Movement on arrival to the campus in 1956. Two years after, he became an executive member of the organisation and Editor of its magazine (*The Christian Student*). That Obaro was to later end up as a reverend gentleman would therefore not come as a surprise to those who knew him in his formative years. The seed of his Christian calling was deeply sown in him.

His glittering career as a university lecturer at Ibadan was abruptly truncated in 1990 as a fall out of the Major Gideon Okar military coup. This coup coincided with statements made by Obaro (from the pulpit of the Chapel of the Resurrection) purportedly criticizing the military government. It was presumed that he was in

<sup>12</sup> Internal memo from the Department of History to the Academic Secretary dated 29-11-1960 captioned "Intra-University Council Fellowships and Studentships". This was during the Headship of Dr. H.F.C. Smith. See Obaro Ikime's file in the Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1957-Till Date.

sympathy with the coup plotters and consequently was arrested when the coup failed. After a 95 days detention, he was released and subsequently compulsorily retired from service by the military regime of General Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida on 15th October 1990<sup>13</sup>. Since then, Obaro has devoted his physical and intellectual energies to the service of God. While speculations were rife that he was offered a professorial chair in one of the prestigious universities abroad, Obaro, instead choose to enrol as a student in Emmanuel College of Theology in Ibadan. The master historian chose to go back to study and climb the orthodox religious ladder.

Although his earlier history indicates that he was not a neophyte in Christian religious matters, its formalization into priesthood was a development that came later in his life. Apart from his prominent roles while a student, amongst his Christian brethren, he was much later deeply involved in Christian activities in the campus. Clearly, during this period there was a Pentecostal fervour that blazed from him. At age 59, Obaro trained in the Anglican seminary at Ibadan for two years.<sup>14</sup> In the course of his training, he did his internship at the Chapel of the Resurrection of the University of Ibadan where he had been an active member as a student and staff.

While in training, he served as a trainee priest in the Chapel of the Resurrection of the University of Ibadan and the Anglican Church of the Messiah, New Bodija, Ibadan, from 1991 to 1995. On completing his training at the seminary, he was posted as a Deacon to the Anglican Church of the Messiah between 1995-1996; then subsequently as an Assisting Priest to Anglican Church of the Messiah in August 1997. His subsequent postings led to his pioneering two churches.

First, was as Vicar, Anglican Church of Hope and Salvation, Jericho from 1997 to 1999 and between 1999 to 2006, as Vicar of the Anglican Church of the Redeemer, Ibadan. Even while on retirement,

<sup>13</sup> See Ekamen Ita's (then Registrar University of Ibadan) letter to Professor Obaro Ikime captioned 'Effective Retirement Date' dated 14th December 1990, in Obaro Ikime's file in the Department of History 1957-Till Date.

<sup>14</sup> He attended Emmanuel College of Theology, Ibadan between 1991 and 1993.



he continued to serve the Anglican Communion for another year, as the Assisting Priest at the Anglican Church of the Messiah also in Ibadan.

It is on record that he nurtured these churches to maturity and used his vast contacts and connections to support the erection of church buildings for the parish. It is thus not surprising that Obaro, given the zealotry and commitment with which he pursued all that interested him, soon rose to become a canon of the Anglican Church. At age seventy, the compulsory age of retirement for Anglican priests in Nigeria, he was elevated to the position of archdeacon and an extension of service granted him by his Bishop<sup>15</sup>, a testimony to his dedication, usefulness and contribution to his parish. Just like in his teaching career, in the church, he succeeded in touching the lives of the parishioners who came in contact with him. Thus far it has been demonstrated that, although Obaro joined the full time service in the Lord's vineyard not too long ago, he has also made a success of his calling as a servant of God. In about a decade, he rose from the position of a deacon to that of an archdeacon. During this period, he served in three churches within the Ibadan diocese and was the vicar in two of them. Judging by the testimony of his Bishop, the church is also pleased with his service and is reluctant to let him off the hook of active service.

Obaro never shied away from controversies. He was known both in the academia and the church to confront them whenever they arose. His blunt and brutally frank positions did always elicit antagonism from his foes. The confidence with which he marshals his arguments, their unassailable and logical nature gave his rivals an inferiority complex that made them regard him as arrogant. His radiation of confidence is not a latter day development. He had manifested this virtue very early in his life to the recognition of his teachers. At the high school, it partly accounted for his emergence as the school captain. In his university days as a student, his lecturer and doctoral thesis supervisors described Obaro as "very industrious and seemed to have an unlimited capacity for work. His essays were

<sup>15</sup> Bishop Akinfenwa of Ibadan Diocese announced the extension of Obaro's service and elevation to an archdeacon during the church service held to mark his 70th birthday in December 2006.

distinguished by maturity, sound judgment and mental penetration". These attributes identified by Professor Anene imbued Obaro with an uncommon confidence that became noticeable even in his strides.

### Concluding Remarks

Thus far we have in this piece tried to compliment the earlier works on him by focusing more extensively on Obaro's sporting and religious activities where he was equally accomplished but areas of his life that seemed dwarfed by his intellectual acumen and academic vitality. In celebrating his scholarship, as has been done severally, it is important to always remember that there are several dimensions to the man Obaro Ikime. The point in emphasis is the fact that while making his mark as an academic he never jettisoned his love for God and sports. In these two areas he also commanded considerable attention. The point need be echoed that Obaro remains an extremely patriotic Nigerian. This patriotic quality, largely define the trajectory of his entire scholarship. It is true that in this piece, we have not dwelt on the family life of Obaro. This turf, we reserve for Mazino Ikime the first son of Obaro who like his father, took his first degree in History at Ibadan. Given his Ibadan training, there is no doubt that he is immensely capable of rising to this task.

At 70, Obaro has joined the class of the J.F. Ade-Ajayis who have attained the status of intellectual divinities. They are venerated and consulted by scholars from across the continents and revered by students who hold them in awe. Obaro Ikime's gift to the nation on the occasion of his 70th birthday celebration is his latest book titled *History, The Historian and The Nation*. This gift is a pointer to his love for the history discipline and for the Nigerian nation. However, he still owes us his memoirs and it is our prayer that this will be redeemed before or when he turns eighty years. There is no doubt that given his high degree of patriotism and enormous intellectual and physical energy

<sup>16</sup> See Prof. J.C. Anene's letter to Miss C. Minter, Secretary (SSA) University of Ibadan dated 11th April 1964, in Obaro Ikime's file in the Department of History 1957-Till Date.



left in him, Obaro still has so much to offer in service to God and humanity.

As he joins the club of septuagenarians, an analysis of the profound accomplishments of Obaro in sports, administration, the academia, the Church and in service of God will inevitably lead us to the same conclusion reached by Bisi Oyegoke twenty years earlier; that like Caesar, indeed, Obaro can, at this juncture of his life, justifiably thumb his chest and say *veni, vidi vici* (I came, I saw I conquered).

## **Ikime and the Study of Intergroup Relations in Nigeria**

U.D. Anyawu

### **Introduction**

Professor Obaro Ikime was the first in the *DYNASTY* to lecture my set of first year undergraduates of History in 1973. The course was *HIS 103 EUROPEAN CONQUEST AND AFRICAN RESISTANCE* and the venue was Room 32 (the Faculty of Arts Lecture Hall). He taught us other courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels and was the supervisor of my Ph.D. Thesis, which was successfully defended in December 1984.

Thus, I am a typical student of Ikime and others in the Ibadan History Dynasty. We, the students, are not unaffected by *Professor Ikime's* or indeed the Dynasty's concern that Nigerian or African history should consciously seek to be relevant to nation-building. One aspect of Nigerian history in which *Ikime* pursued this concern with remarkable doggedness, consistency and result is "Inter-Group Relations". He designed and taught course on the theme, supervised projects on it, and wrote extensively on it and directed research schemes on same. Generally when I was leaving the *Ibadan History Family* in 1988/89 session for the old Imo State University Okigwe which is now relocated to Owerri, I had clear consciousness of the impact and challenge of *Ikimeism* in particular and the Family in general on my vision of Igbo, Nigerian and African History studies. It has been



difficult to live up to the expectations of *Ikime* and the Family (as they must have noticed).

Perhaps, the major reason for this paper is to provide me a formal opportunity for revival, renewal and reunion as a valued child of the *FAMILY* whose members are really large and of various generations, age grades, knowledge and talents. It is for this same reason that I embrace the opportunity with happiness, delight, and gratitude to present resident or home based members of the Ibadan History Family. I thank them both corporately and individually for keeping the lineage active and relevant, thereby making the generation of the *FAMILY DYNASTY* happily recall that their investment in us is bearing positive and enduring fruits.

Indeed, I thank the University of Ibadan as the custodian of that tradition of excellence in historical studies, which has withstood the vagaries of space and time not only in Nigeria but also in the world at large. As the Igbo would say, "if there is reincarnation" I shall return as part of the Ibadan University History family. These compliments are well deserved and I make them as a token of happy memories of my Ibadan Days with Professor Obaro Ikime as the anchor personality.

## Perspectives

### *Self-Determination*

To appreciate this view point, it is necessary to present our perception of self-determination. This is done without recourse to any level of review of what could be described as the standard or universal conceptualizations of the term. This somewhat revisionist and contentious approach is adopted because it offers us adequate platform for a conceptualization that derive from the Nigerian reality and experience. It is an approach that may help to save the conceptualization from being burdened by concerns, principles and values that may be alien to the Nigerian experience of self-determination. In short, we shall be enabled to perceive self-determination as a Nigerian element; indeed an element explicable largely in the indigenous setting.

Some purists among theoreticians may find this too restricted or conservative, emphasizing that its product shall not satisfy the cardinals

of accepted or standard conceptualization of self-determination such as those derived from American history, the United Nations Organization and the decolonization theories.

One hopes that in this connection it is not trite to recall the well known view that *political ideas are hardly neutral since they are usually derived from historical wombs of particular times and spaces*. In brief, they are dynamic and contextualized even though they may be presented as canons of truth and wisdom valid for all times and places. Certainly, it does not require the mathematician's brain to discern falsehood in such a presentation. And in any case, universal properties are not the monopoly of any time or place. That is every particular time or place is endowed with elements of the universal, either explicit or implicit.

In the lights of these observations, it may be safe and easy to indicate directly our perception of self-determination by inferences from indigenous (indeed Igbo) insights. Self-determination among the Igbo as among other Nigerian peoples is the ultimate in a people's or group's resolve to remain alive and involved at all times and situation. It includes their desire to retain their territories and their material and other endowments and to defend same in the face of threats from within or outside sources. The Igbo reveal this element of self-determination in world-views expressed by terms like *amaechila* or let every kindred or community survive; *egbe bere*, *ugo bere* or let each person or group be given the opportunity to survive or share the goods of society; *cheta obodo gi* or be patriotic and work for the good of your motherland, which also means regular call to consciousness of the destiny of your community; *cheta imezi obodo gi* or you are duty bound to promote progression of your community; *etu amuru dike n'otu obodo ka esi muokwa dike n'obodo ozo* or no community or people has a monopoly of power or strength. It is evident from living among other Nigerians that these perceptions are not peculiar to the Igbo. That is these elements of self-determination are common to all Nigerian peoples and also indigenous. They existed prior to British colonial rule and have existed since then. Therefore, those who claim that ethnicity and related self-determination emerged from colonialism may need to reconsider that claim in order to be more positively relevant in the dialogue on the Nigerians nationalities question.



In conclusion, we observe that self-determination among Nigerian peoples is the concern for sustaining individual and corporate existence and identity of respective Nigerian groups without prejudice to the general objective of the Nigerian State. It means the desire of each group to survive and enjoy the benefits derivable and due to them as equivalent and equal members of the Nigerian state.

### *Nigerian Groups*

The groups are basically ethnic. A common feature of each group is language, which usually has significant dialectical variations, which delineate the sub-groups in each ethnic group. Group consciousness on the basis of language (including the dialects) as well as related cultural, religious, cosmological and historical affinities was at varying degrees reflected in the kinds of polities which existed, notably, empires, kingdoms, clans, village-groups and villages. These polities represented autonomous or sovereign units, which served as the platform for legitimate exercise of human activities (social, economic, political, rituals, legal, etc) both internally and externally.

This implies that group consciousness was dynamic even in the pre-colonial period. Yet at every stage, group interests covered both individual and corporate issues that concerned the welfare of the group. The emphasis here is that in the pre-colonial order there was much link between what western oriented scholars designate as group rights and individual rights. In the social cosmos of Nigerian groups it would be misleading to over stress the distinction between group rights on the one hand and individual rights on the other. This element has persisted in the social cosmos and ought to be appreciated even in contemporary times when injury to so-called individuals easily become construed as injury to the ethnic groups to which the individuals belong. It is in this context that one understands the claim by a historian of the *Ibadan History Dynasty* that "the decapitation of an Okoro at the airport during the 1966 pogroms brought tears to the eyes of the Igbo nation and people just as did the deprivation of all Igbo landlords of their landed property in Rivers State after the Biafra war". It remains to add that the

farther away from the basic group the individual is or was, the more tenacious the reliance on the larger group affiliation.

Also, as Nigeria entered the colonial and post - colonial era other tiers of group consciousness evolved in terms of the emergence of divisions, provinces, regions, states and geopolitical zones. There is also group consciousness on the bases of religion, notably, Christians and Muslims (with their sub-groups as well). These units in varying degrees became platforms for the quest for self-determination, meaning the pursuit of the survival of human and people's rights and overall preservation and protection of the identities in respect of each group.

Consequently, as the Nigerian state evolved the link between self-determination and human development (on the bases of groups) intensified and expanded with serious implications for the nature and outcome of inter-group relations in Nigeria. This is why it seems useful and insightful to situate the dynamics of inter-group relations in Nigeria since independence in the context of the quest for self-determination by Nigerian groups, relying on the manifestations in the political, economic and religious or social spheres since 1960. Of course, only a few reflections is focused on in order to elucidate this position from various spheres of Nigeria's life.

### *Political Sphere*

The colonial situation which led to the loss of political autonomy of respective Nigerian ethnic or sub-ethnic groups and the failure of the colonial administration to seriously tackle the issue of the "assimilation" of the groups is adequately stressed and appreciated. Also, the claims of Nigeria being an *artificial creation* on this ground seem accepted and logical. In the context of inter-group relations in Nigeria since independence, it seems arguable that enough emphasis has not been placed on the very stout and virile survival of ethnic or sub-ethnic power (authority) in the Nigeria, which emerged. That is, the menace of ethnic or sub-ethnic power or authority was a critical factor in inter-group relations.

The idea of the ethnic political group was real but the Nigeria idea was not. This survival became an instrument or manifestation of self-determination in the political processes, thereby promoting serious



political acrimonies, rivalry and competition among the groups and constraining the capacity of institutions, personnel and organs to pursue Nigerian - wide perspectives in the political activities and programmes of the first Republic as well as of the Military and successor civilian administrations. Thus, the self-determination which has impacted most on Nigerian political processes is that of the ethnic groups, thereby imperiling significantly self-determination for the entire Nigerian state.

Political parties in Nigeria since independence have thus evolved as the platform for ethnic struggle for power and leadership at all levels of the polity: federal, region or state; province; division; geo-political zone and local government. Groups and sub-groups have engaged in fierce and hostile political activities at all these levels on the quest to satisfy their primordial self-determination or identity pressures or interest, real and/or perceived.

This phenomenon has been evident in inter and intra-party activities, producing numberless victims in the inter and intra-ethnic conflicts that have erupted. The high point was the civil war (1967-1970) but none can forget several others in different parts of the country: the TIV Rising of the 1960s, the WAWA struggle in Igboland; Tarok - Hausa/Fulani conflicts, the anti-Nga conflicts in Pankshin, the minorities agitations in the East, West and North of Nigeria (as efforts to resist hegemonies by majority ethnic groups). All these manifestations of self-determination reveal the truth of the endurance of the element in the country's politics during and since after the colonial era.

The anticipated political dividends to each ethnic or sub-ethnic group in terms of offices, appointments, election victory, roles and participation in power sharing and the general administration of the polity have stiffened inter and intra-ethnic rivalry or conflict, at times leading to mergers and demergers among the groups operating as political parties or their supporters even for limited periods. What has strengthened this is the idea of winner-takes-all which has accompanied election victories in most of Nigeria's leadership since 1960. The opposition sees itself as not only losers of elections but also as "people to be humiliated, alienated, exploited, marginalized and despised by the winners", a view usually certified by the actions and non-actions of the winning parties (ethnic group coalitions). For both parties, it remains

the quest for self-determination to overcome political serfdom from neighbouring or competing groups.

To date, reliance on self-determination or identity quest of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups remains a major factor in inter and intra-group relations in attempts to define the political destiny of respective tiers of political action in Nigeria. Perhaps, the obvious revelation of this is the current posture of the minorities generally and the Niger Delta people in particular over the leadership question in Nigeria as from May 2007.

The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria presented similar posture though they also reveal a readiness to concede leadership to people from the South-South geo-political zone, thereby reducing the age-old disharmony and conflictual aspects in Ibo interests on the one hand and the Niger Delta interests on the other. The basic here is that both groups believe that they are common victims of marginalization in Nigeria, with the claim that they are also treated as second-class or incomplete citizens by the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups. That is, a recent outgrowth of Nigeria's political evolution which is reducing the antagonism among ethnic groups in the southeast on the one hand and those in the South-South is the consciousness by both that their oppressor(s) whose hegemonies are subjugating and exploiting them are located in the North and the West of Nigeria. It remains to be seen how long this perception can be sustained and with what results. Yet the emphasis is that self-determination is a dynamic element in inter-group relations in Nigeria, showing that the survival demands of the groups powerfully affect the targets and objectives of the relations.

Similar statements can be made of inter-group relations between the Muslim-north (Far North) and the non-Muslim (including middle Belt) groups. The latter's political affiliation have been largely affected by the fear of Hausa/Fulani hegemony which subjugates them. Consequently, the middle Belt groups have largely tended to support political parties, election candidates, constitutional provision, administrative, local government and judicial positions which would constrain the capacity of Hausa/Fulani hegemony in the northern part of the country.

Generally, therefore, self-determination of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups has been given political expression and affected the content of inter-group relations. Agitation for state creation, for example, were



basically inspired by the objective of redressing imbalances in political power and authority allocation among various groups. This also applied to local government creation as well as provisions on the creation of constituency areas.

### *Social, Religious and Economic Spheres*

Socially, inter-group relations reflect that aspect of self-determination which we can designate world-views or cosmology. Deriving from their respective world-views, the social view of Nigerian groups on family system, gender, education and formation, leadership values, principles and structures have over time affected the level of inter-groups relations. At times, these aspects have presented a situation of clash of cultures and civilization and its attendant areas of co-operation and areas of conflict in the relations. This is true of the situation in Nigeria since 1960; that is, in spite of the impact of the elements of change represented in westernization and globalization.

Often, the full meaning or significance of this element of differing world views or clash of civilization or, the inter-group relations is not reckoned within in the analysis of the subject.

Thus, the significance of religious formation is not fully appreciated. How much collaboration and antagonism do religious affiliations and perspectives encourage or discourage among Nigerian groups. Closely related to this is the issue of traditions of education: Western, traditional and Islamic. Their impact on inter-group relations is best manifested in the differing perceptions their recipients and adherents have shown on issues that determine social, religious, economic and political relations in the country. This is particularly the case in Christian and Muslim dominated communities.

The phenomenon of religious conflicts and misunderstanding among groups and sub-groups has fuelled self-determination to ensure the flourishing of Islam and Christianity, almost at all costs, including death and destruction of property. In Nigeria there is a religious dimension in self-determination which has often had adverse impact on inter-group relations. The issue here is that there are different responses to the constitutional provision that proclaims Nigeria a secular state:

The Muslim response to it has remained one of lack of acceptance and non-compliance, arguing that it runs counter to the convictions (injunctions) of their religion. Instead, leaders in Muslim states are more devoted to the implementation of the Sharia than to the constitutional provisions for a secular state. For them, this is an aspect of their obligation to the religious dimension of their self-determination. Non-Muslim groups have not found it easy to accept their perception. This remains a thorny theme in inter-group relations in Nigeria. Closely related to it is the question of western education in the Muslim and non-Muslim (Christian) parts of Northern Nigeria in particular and the entire Nigeria in general. The Challenge for inter-groups relations is how to ensure that groups that have western education and the attendant manpower are not subjected to discrimination in the civil and public services as they have been.

The poser here is how shall Nigeria overcome this challenge without obliterating the identity or self-determination of both Christians and Muslims. This calls for tolerance and accommodation, particularly on the part of leaders who often provoke religious crisis in the pretext of other desires, thereby making the citizens victims of their quest for power and other vested interests which have little or nothing to do with religion.

The economic base of self-determination, which impacted on inter-group relations in Nigeria, deserves full consideration. It is a core issue in Nigeria's political evolution as a federation. Issues of resource control, revenue allocation, environmental control and fiscal federalism among others are economic subjects related to the survival of Nigerian ethnic groups.

The Niger Delta question in Nigeria is a classic example of the challenge of economic issues on inter-group relations, within the Niger Delta itself and in the rest of the country. A study of some of the relevant documents issued by nationalists or activists from the Niger Delta area makes it very clear that self-determination is at the core of the struggle and is a great determinant of the trends in inter and intra-group relations in the area. Leaders and groups in the Niger Delta area demand to have control of the resources (oil) from their soil. This vexed position has engendered various responses from Governments and stakeholders



including the multi-national corporations and Nigerian groups in and outside the Niger Delta area. Internally, the Niger Delta has experienced inter and intra-group relations that were in some cases hostile. Governments have also given both palliatory and repressive responses which have made fundamental impact on inter-group relations, as each group lay claim to self-determination for its actions and non-actions in the situation. Perhaps, the best illustration of the mind of the agitators (nationalists) is the KAIAMA DECLARATION issued by the Ijaw Youth Council in March 1999.

At national and other levels of the administrative-cum-political structure, inter-group relations have been affected by the resource control controversy associated primarily with the OIL WEALTH in the Niger Delta area. In many ways, the issues raised are similar to those stressed by the Igbo through the OHANEZE NDI IGBO or as presented by MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra).

As is well known, MASSOB is a militant movement and like the OPC (Odua Peoples Congress) of the Yoruba; Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) in the north; the Egbesu Boys of Africa of the Ijo of the Niger Delta; the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) or the earlier (1966) Niger Delta Volunteer Service led by Isaac Adaka Boro; the Chikoko of the Niger Delta and others among the Urhobo and Isoko, the membership is dominated by Youths. Their agitations generally desire economic and political survival of their respective ethnic groups or sub-groups. A related issue derived from self-determination is the struggle for land and administrative headquarters as well as the contest between so-called *indigenes* (landowners) and *non-indigenes* (strangers or later settlers) in most of Nigeria's urban centres, all of which have affected adversely the inter-group relations in the affected areas and in some cases the entire country.

The roles and non-roles of Governments, traditional leaders, non-governmental organizations, the political, educated and business elite and the international community in all these have either exacerbated or mitigated the adversities in inter-group relations by their respective strategies or policies towards the basic self-determination of the groups concerned. In all, self-determination among Nigeria's ethnic and sub-

ethnic groups has been a constraint on the ability of the country to emerge as a united, and stable nation. Consequently, the *nationalities question* in Nigeria is yet to produce a country made up of Nigerians. Thus, when Professor Obaro Ikime, raised the issue of the *search for Nigerians in Nigeria in 1985*, his historical insight harped on a theme that was to challenge the country for a long time ahead.

### Concluding Remarks

Clearly, the search for Nigerians in Nigeria is a worthy project that deserves frank, courageous and sustained support. In an era when peoples elsewhere are inspired by globalizing values and principles, it may be dysfunctional and anti-progress to propose the emergence of countries on the basis of ethnic groups.

Yet there is need for formal and frank dialogues to address the thorny issues in the practice of federalism in Nigeria in order to arrive at programmes for increasing equity, fairness, justice and overall patriotism among Nigerian peoples.

If we are unable to do this, we should not continue to accuse the colonial authorities for what is called the mistake of 1914 or the artificial creation of Nigeria. After forty-six years as an independent country, the leaders and peoples of Nigeria should have located the roots of the mistake or artificialism and reasonably tackled them.

We must concede that structural reforms such as the creation of states and local governments are steps in the right direction. Something can also be said in favour of the federal character policy in education, appointments etc. Yet, we may ask how long a Nigerian people or area can be described as educationally disadvantaged? Clearly, it is not a status that genuine and patriotic leaders shall like to have their people in for ever? Otherwise, it may be perceived by those people or groups who suffer undeserved injuries because of the policy as an instrument of subjugation and repression.

It seems apposite to insist that for inter-group relations in Nigeria to evolve into a major positive force for national cohesion, peace and development, all groups must be given full sense of belonging so that all (particularly the opinion leaders in academia, politics, pressure groups,



government) shall think NIGERIA and live/act NIGERIA as an ideology and regular mind-set.

The Centre or federal government may have to shed off some of its social, economic and political hold on the states and local governments so that the respective groups can have adequate freedom and initiative to address the peculiar problems and interests of their people. This will perhaps increase the hope of the groups that their self-determination or desire to survive in all aspects of life shall not be killed just because they belong to the Nigerian state. Furthermore, this will easily expose local persons who fraudulently explain their groups' underdevelopment in terms of federal pressures or policies, an explanation that may be false in many cases.

The last view acquires more importance when we realize that a major feature of groups in contemporary Nigeria is the emergence of armed youths or militias who are increasingly impacting on the character of political and other relations in the country. They portend something uncomfortable for the present and future. Will it be too wild to speculate that they might evolve into powerful units for terrorism by aggrieved groups in the future? Their impact on inter-group relations in such a situation shall be most regrettable.

We must however overcome the fear of being NIGERIANS by addressing the enthronement of the cardinals or virtues of good governance, equity, prudence, tolerance, love, hope, justice, fortitude, charity, temperance and faith in all Nigerian people and their affairs. The idea or concept of the PROMISE of great Nigeria shall be a source of hope and encouragement to all Nigerians. In the end, the self-determination of the groups shall evolve into the self-determination of the Nigerian state and nation. To attain this we need conscious, frank and sustained commitment on the part of leaders at all tiers of the political structure. The ultimate desire or goal is to supplant the terrorist potentials of inter-group relations and replace them with humanizing and elevating values and goals. Hence, the call for a review of the current concept of citizenship by shifting from emphasis on ethnic origin to emphasis on place of birth or residence.

## **“Historical Stencil” as Dominant Axis of Niger Delta Crises: Allegorizing Obaro Ikime’s Historicity**

Lucky O. Akaruese

In the history of western philosophy, the first recorded use of *allegory* as one of the methods of philosophizing and knowledge-disbursement was in Plato’s *The Republic*. This was his classic philosophical work on *justice* entitled *The Myth of the Cave*.<sup>1</sup> Here allegory is presented as a fictional literary narrative to make known and strengthen the epistemological basis of ‘what philosophy is’ (particularly that philosophy is a difficult activity) and most importantly, the aim of philosophy (which is *freedom*). Manuel Velasquez vividly captured a very significant aspect of the epistemological content of Plato’s allegory when he noted of philosophy that:

... as Plato made it clear in the parable, philosophy is a difficult activity. The journey upward is hard because it involves questioning the most basic beliefs that each of us accept.... This means ...that your philosophical journey sometimes may lead you in directions that society does not support.... Like the prisoners in the cave, we uncritically accept the beliefs and opinions of those around us, and this leads us to see the world in narrow rigid way. Philosophy aims at breaking us free of the prejudices and unthinking habit we have

<sup>1</sup> Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy* (Wadsworth, 2002) pp. 5-6.



long absorbed from those around us so we can move towards more reflective views....<sup>2</sup>

The import of the above is to inform our epistemological thrust within the context of our espoused 'language-game' of philosophy. Our thrust here, is neither to doubt nor contest any historical fact in Obaro Ikime's *historicity* as encapsulated in his works, particularly the two from which we shall extract few lines, but to assess the unexpected dimensions of these facts through 'a journey from the apparent to the real'.

By *historicity*, we have in mind the state or fact of being historically authentic. Simply put for the purpose of this work, we conceptualize Obaro Ikime's *historicity* as the unquestionable status of the actuality and factuality inherent in his works which deals with some parts of the present Niger Delta region of Nigeria, particularly some parts of the present Delta State. It will be quickly added here that such undisputed factuality and authenticity inherent in Obaro Ikime's *historicity* seem to now constitute fundamental aspects of the causes, or do we say foremost contributory factors to a fundamental specific (i.e. the Warri Crises) of the *universal*; the Niger Delta crises.

The above could be paradoxical; but therein lies our allegorizing thrust! Here, we are espousing the concept of allegory as put forward by the *Encarta* Dictionary Tool which describes allegory as *a work in which the characters and events are to be understood as representing other things...* What we intend to do is to briefly look into some stated historical facts in Obaro Ikime's *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta* (1968) and *Niger Delta Rivalry*, (1969) and how same might have over the years become a sort of reoccurring (causal) decimal in some specifics of the Niger Delta crises. It is such historical facts which have remained ever potent and resonating as axis of the causal factors of the Niger Delta crises that we refer to as *historical stencil*.

Thus, by 'historical stencil', we have in mind such identified historical events within a particular past of a particular area, and specifically that such historical facts of the said particular past still resonates and brazenly influence the events of 'the today' of that same

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

area, particularly the interplay of social forces, factors of crises sustenance and inter ethnic relations within that same area under focus.

One brute fact of today is the inherent difficulty in arriving at a cartographic consensus about the areas that constitutes the Niger Delta region. I recall an interaction with a colleague of the Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, who informed me that in strict discourse within the arena of the discipline of Geography, areas that are supposed to be referred to as the Niger Delta should be such that benefit from the waters of the tributaries within the triangular areas of the River Niger. The implication of such a definition is that some of such places and towns that are assumed as the hubs of the Niger Delta region should not have been, given the simple fact that such areas cannot be said to have in any way been benefiting from the waters of the River Niger. By the above definition, it thus amount that only some parts of the present Bayelsa State that benefit from the waters of the tributaries of the River Niger falls within the cartographic classification of the Niger Delta region. However, this is not so within Nigeria's geo-political discourse possibly because of the complexities of interests that are considered central to state policies. What has become apparent is that Niger Delta region has attracted different cartographic or do we say 'space' definitions as informed by different considerations such as political, economic and linguistic, among others.

The dominant tendency is to loosely assume the six states that constitute the South-South zone of Nigeria as constituting the Niger Delta region. These states include Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. Another widely held viewpoint within the context of Niger Delta space identification is the assumption of crude oil presence as the basic definition of such areas that can be assumed to constitute the Niger Delta region. Along this trajectory, crude oil bearing states of Abia and Imo are subtly excluded, and even Ondo. However, the indigenes of the Ilaje and Ese-Odo Local Government Areas of Ondo State who are Ijaw and Ilajes (a sub-group of the Yoruba, i.e. Ilaje) that occupy the crude oil bearing areas of the state are sometimes loosely included in the assumed Niger Delta configuration.



The above appears to be mere hair-splitting given the fact that a new definition (i.e. *crises ridden region*) for the Niger Delta seem to have emerged since the late nineties when the area assumed central focus in most discourses on the Nigeria Nation State, especially such that borders on its survival as a single entity. In recent times, the mere mentioning of Niger Delta automatically evoke among discussants the part of Nigeria that is perpetually *crises-ridden* manifested in devastation by crude oil exploration and exploitation, bloody inter and intra ethnic crises, under development, bloody conflicts between local militia groups and the Nigerian military, pipe-line vandalisation, hostage taking, etc.

The much trumpeted 'notoriety' (which now basically define the region within the Nigeria's configuration) began in early 1997 and it evolved from 'Warri Crises' when inter ethnic bloody battle ensued between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri. Also, within the same period, the Urhobo and the Itsekiri were equally engaged in fratricidal wars of no mean proportion. As these crises were on, commentators desirous of a single categorization for both inter-ethnic wars, and possibly the need for a *universal* within which both intractable crises, and others within the region can be identified as *particulars*, began emphasizing the category *Niger Delta Crises*. Since then, the Niger Delta region has become identified as the most tumultuous region of Nigeria where instability reigns supreme to the extent that hardly any discussion on Nigeria's economic and political stability and future is assumed completed in isolation of discussants ensuring that issues bordering on the region do not take central stage.

Niger Delta' instability as it is presently conceptualized, described and raised to present pedestal of national and international discourse, assumed such status in 1997 as a result of the crises that enveloped Warri metropolis and later its environs (i.e. the three Warri Local Government Areas of Warri North, Warri South and Warri South-West). The much trumpeted causal factor of the crises was over the said relocation of the headquarters of the then newly created Warri South-West Local Government Council (LGC) from Ogbe-Ijo, (an Ijaw community) to Ogidigben (an Itsekiri community). It will be noted that while the 'grammar' of relocation was largely limited to those of Ijaw extraction and possibly their 'sympathizers'; conversely, from the

Itsekiri perspective, the issue of possible relocation could not have arisen because (as they argued), the two decrees (viz Decrees No. 36 of 1996 issued in December 30, 1996, and No. 7 of 1997 issued on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1997) had nowhere in which Ogbe-Ijo was ever mentioned for whatever reason.

The Ijaws based their claim on the said pronouncements credited to the then Military Administrator of Delta State, Colonel John Dungs (now retired) while announcing the creation of new Local Government Council Areas as it affects the old Warri Division when he was quoted as saying that:

I want to correct the injustice in Warri and so I have decided to move the headquarters of Warri South Local Government Area to Ogbe-Ijoh, Warri South Local Government consists of Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba and Gbaramatu and so what is left of the former Warri South is now Warri Central.<sup>3</sup>

But when the enabling decrees were published, in none was Ogbe-Ijo referred to, even remotely, nor was a Warri Central Local Government Council created. The new decrees created a new Warri South-West Local Government Council from the already existing Warri North Local Government Area with its headquarters at Ogidigben. To many observers of the 'Warri crises', it will forever remain a misery as to the source(s) of Colonel John Dungs' authority to have made the above said pronouncements which completely veered from the enabling decrees.

To those of Ijaw extraction, the earlier pronouncements of Colonel Dungs as above was the original position of the defunct Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC); but the Itsekiris were accused to have used their alleged or real (historical) political influence(s) and power(s) to cause the AFRC to reverse itself to the advantage of the Itsekiris such that Ogbe-Ijo which was originally adopted as the headquarters of the newly created Warri South-West LGC was dropped in favor of Itsekiri's Ogidigben.

<sup>3</sup> T.A. Imobighe, et al. eds., *Conflict and Instability in the Niger Delta: The Warri Crises* (Academic Associates Peace Works), p. 202.



The Itsekiris on their part held that Dungs' pronouncements on local government creation was in all ramifications an absolute nullity, basically because AFRC was the only body empowered by the then military laws to create Local Government Council Areas; a body Colonel Dungs was not a member of, nor could he have spoken for it, and thus was on his own acting illegally.

The outcome of the above was the sacking of almost all Itsekiri towns and villages by Ijaw militants between 1997 and 99. For umpteen times, Warri metropolis was invaded and hundreds of houses (particularly those near Warri River through which militants came in) identified as belonging to Itsekiris were burnt down in the full glare of the Nigerian security agencies. This climaxed to a point that large numbers of Itsekiris house owners were constrained to fake different ethnic origin and same boldly inscribed on the walls of such houses to divert invading Ijaw militants.

Within this period, those that could loosely be described as Urhobo militias and were sympathetic to the 'Ijaw cause' were alleged to have joined the Ijaw militants in the assaults against the Itsekiris, the presumed historical enemy. It was indeed a harrowing period for the Itsekiris.

In early June, 1999, Warri was again invaded, and the invaders went as far as to Okere community in Warri. Okere community according to Itsekiri version of history (usually disputed by the Urhobos) is made up of six quarters; five for Itsekiris and one for the Urhobos. According to the Itsekiri version, the Urhobos aided by the Ijaws on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June lunched attacks on the Itsekiri quarters and burnt down some houses before they were repelled. However, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, in a most surprising manner, the Itsekiri who had hitherto been the acclaimed weaklings suddenly woke up from what many described as self-induced lethargy and invaded the Urhobos (of or in) Okere in an unimaginable scale of mindless ferocity.

By the time the sound of guns had died down, the said Urhobo quarter was no more as it was completely reduced to dung heap of rubbles by the Itsekiri militias; and consequently a peoples' history wasted for no such cause traceable to the ones identified as responsible for the crises in the Niger Delta.

By May 29, 1999, a new civilian regime headed by Chief James Ibori came into being, and one of its first self assigned tasks was to restore 'peace' in Warri and environs. From the angle of Ijaw leadership, the cause of the crises was the issue of Local Government headquarters location; and the solution was *ipso facto* the relocation of the headquarters of the newly created Warri South-West from Ogidigben to Ogbe-Ijo.

This was done through a bill sent to the Delta State House of Assembly by Chief Ibori, and the headquarters of the Warri South-West LGC was relocated to Ogbe Ijo. This action by the Delta State government even though imbued with constitutional snag was however welcomed by many as it was thought that this will assuage the feelings of the Ijaws and result into the sheathing of their swords and consequent cessation of hostilities.

This action of government was protested against by the Itsekiris, and in the view of Dr. Tonwe (an Itsekiri scholar)

The Delta State House of Assembly...passed a bill moving the headquarters of Warri South-West from Ogidigben to Ogbe-Ijoh. This is not constitutional and is not acceptable to the Itsekiri. This was a gang-up by the Urhobo and Ijaw ethnic groups in the House. This is a reward for violent means as a way of settling the conflict. It will never be accepted by the Itsekiris.<sup>4</sup>

Protests and condemnations were swift from the Itsekiri leadership accusing Governor Ibori of bias and a vaunted mission to decimate the Itsekiri 'Nation' to the advantage of the Ijaws and Urhobos. Caustic as these accusations were, Governor Ibori was resolute, and the relocation was effected and for a very long time, staffs of the Local Government Council who were of Itsekiri extraction distanced themselves from the Ogbe Ijo office of the Council for fear of what they described as possible attack from the Ijaw.

To many observers of the Warri crises, particularly those in the circles of governments, i.e. both at the State and Federal levels, a long period of respite was envisaged given the fact that the demand of the

<sup>4</sup> T.A. Imobighe, et al. eds., *Conflict And Instability*, p. 215.



Ijaws have been met and their feelings presumably assuaged. Even, among some Itsekiri elites, it was their view that if the relocation of the local Government headquarters from Ogidigben to Ogbe-Ijoh was all that was required to bring peace to the area, it was not too much of a 'sacrifice'.

Relative peace was achieved from late 1999 until Friday 31 January 2003 when another phase of conflict vortex took the central stage and robustly replicating the old pattern of destructions and killings, and this lasted until mid-2004 when relative peace was again restored. Let us briefly touch on some specifics of this phase of violence which will later bring to the fore that historical stencil remain central as causal factor while issues of underdevelopment and others are at best peripheral and ethereal in the hierarchy of causes. .

On Friday 31 January 2003, the ruling party in Delta State, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was having its primary election for aspirants to the Delta South Senatorial Seat at the Warri Township Stadium. It was a time when the attention of many residents of Warri and environs were shifted to the scene of the electoral event given the fact that the state was a near mono-party state. Without any visible warning signal, Warri, particularly the Okere axis was again thrown into turmoil as suspected Urhobo militias (probably to avenge the 1999 destruction of the Urhobo "quarters" in Okere) invaded and set Itsekiri houses on fire in the full glare of the military units stationed there. At the end of the invasion, scores of houses belonging to Itsekiris were burnt down with few human casualties.

Two days after the Urhobo inversion, which was Sunday 2, February 2003, probably the Itsekiri felt that it was now their 'turn' to take the central stage of the Warri' theatre of violence; and this they did with ferocious and incredible inhumanity. By the end of this inexplicable macabre 'drama', it was a tale of woe and indices of unspeakable barbarism. Specifically targeted by the Itsekiri militias were the properties of Chief Benjamin Okumagba who heads the Urhobo Progressive Union, a pan-Urhobo organization. Inexplicably, the security units again maintained dubious neutrality.

By March 2003, the general election was due and Warri and its environs were again enveloped by such tensions that emit 'air of blood'.

By mid-March, the Ijaw militias again re-emerged and through well coordinated assaults, almost all Itsekiri communities along the Benin, Escravos and Forcados rivers were raised down and the survivals in their tens of thousands were forced to flee into different towns and villages particularly in non Ijaw speaking areas of Delta, Edo and Ondo States. From this period till mid June 2004, it was a ding-dong battle between the Ijaw and Itsekiri with the Urhobo angle occasionally bubbling up against the Itsekiri in Warri metropolis.

All these self inflicted macabre actions by the three ethnic groups have in all relevant literature been categorized as fundamental indices of the Niger Delta crises; and further discussions towards identifying causes have never gone beyond what in our view amount to superficial and mundane ones, all within the ambit of the reality of the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta Region.

#### Causes of conflict/crisis between the Itsekiri and Urhobo

One of the significant aspects of the above report is that the issue of 'Underdevelopment and unemployment' was ranked least among other perceived causal factors of 'Warri Crises' by those who were involved in various ways. This no doubt perfectly demonstrate our earlier espoused view that most of the generally accepted causes of 'Warri Crises' are at best structurally verisimilar because many of the protagonists of such causal factors do not take into cognizance the structural complexities and alchemies of the political history of the crises.

All the issues raised above, particularly the issue of the title of the Olu of Warri, were equally responded to by Dr. D.A. Tonwe (Itsekiri scholar) in a corresponding survey among Itsekiri respondents by relying on volumes of historical records including a reported documented 'event' in Portugal when he said for example that: *in 1607 the King of Portugal made a decree in which reference was made to the "King of Warri" and to "Prince Domingo" son of the Olu of Warri*'. Here

<sup>5</sup> For details, see Dr. Tonwe in T.A. Imobighe, et al. eds., *Conflict and Instability*, pp. 186-192.



we can see the truism inherent in some of the observations on the Itsekiri made by Sir Henry Willink in his report.

A similar survey from the Ijaw perspective was carried out by Professor V. F. Peretomode in which:

Those interviewed revealed the following acts or attempts by the Itsekiri to continually subjugate, oppress, degrade and marginalise the Ijaw of their rights.<sup>6</sup>

Let us specifically note the above views, particularly to continually subjugate, which means that the Itsekiri are perceived by the Ijaw as historical 'hegemony' and oppressors. Some of the identified acts or attempts attributed to the Itsekiri include:

- Attempts by the Itsekiri to claim their territories in Warri and treat them as second class citizens and customary tenants.
- Increased awareness of the oppressive and marginalizing tendencies of the Olu and his Itsekiri people of the Izon people.
- The claim of the Itsekiri to the ownership of all lands in Warri including those owned by the Ijaw, and the frequent public statements by the Itsekiri that the Ijaw are their "customary tenants" in Warri.
- The arrogance and domineering attitude of Itsekiris.<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis ours).

Looking at the last alleged 'sin' of the Itsekiri from the Ijaw perspective may ordinarily sound ridiculous given the problem of subjecting this to rational discourse with a view to proffering solution(s) to this said constituent 'cause' of crises in Warri. But this said issue of vexation cannot be undermined simply because it might not find place in the arena of rational discourse, and also simply because to accuse a whole ethnic group of arrogance may be a precipitate of a jaundiced assessment and self induced inferiority complex whereby it can be argued that such 'cause' may not be real, but mere figment of imagination; and

<sup>6</sup> Prof. Peretomode in T.A. Imobighe, et al. eds., *Conflict And Instability*, p. 135.

<sup>7</sup> Prof. Peretomode in T.A. Imobighe, et al. eds., *Conflict And Instability*, p.138.

solution(s) therefore may solely depend on such self-professed victims to purge themselves of such self-induced inferiority complex.

But the above is mere 'big' grammar or what the Itsekiris refer to as *Oyibo kporo*. This aspect of causal factors in 'Warri crises' is very real and this is encapsulated in what we have described as psycho-cultural dispositions of the respective trio. In all sincerity, how can such stereotypes be erased?; and if the accusation is real, how can we exorcise this 'small group' that thrive in *arrogance and domineering attitude* of such 'evil spirit' of catastrophic nature that so infuriate their neighbors, which has been so limitlessly calamitous to the respective trio in particular and geographical Warri and all her denizens.

Such expressed bitterness as encapsulated in the survey among the Ijaw cannot be in isolation of history which has created such aprior conception of the Itsekiri in relation to their neighbors. For example, Obaro Ikime noted that the early contact the Itsekiri had with the European:

... has naturally influenced the attitude of the Itsekiri and their relations with their neighbours, especially the Urhobo. It also enabled the Europeans to have direct dealings with the Itsekiri, and so to appreciate their laws and customs and the workings of their society. This explains the kind of remarks made about them by the European writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While these writers scarcely mentioned the Urhobo in any detail, the Itsekiri were accorded prominence. Thus Major Leonard, ... describes the Itsekiri as 'the most intelligent and tractable' and 'the best mannered of all the tribes' in the Niger Delta.<sup>8</sup>

Possibly, but for Obaro Ikime's works, such derogatory views on the Urhobo<sup>9</sup> and the above on the Itsekiri by the said Major Leonard might have sublimed into history and no longer retaining such space in documented histories of Warri which possibly still influences inter-ethnic relations in Warri. No doubt, with such documented historical exaltation (moreso from a foreigner and one of the colonial masters who

<sup>8</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry* (Longman, 1969) p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 5.



were presumably 'neutral'), it is little wonder that the Itsekiri in their cosmogony, claim that the 'white man' is next to 'Oritsenebuwa' (Supreme Deity) and the Itsekiri come next in the hierarchy of beings.

### Obaro Ikime's Historicity as Dominant Axis of Niger Delta Crises

As we have already said, the most contentious issue in the 'Warri Crises' which in our view is the 'highest' in the hierarchy of causes, is the contestation over the ethnic proprietorship of Warri. Other issues in contention and causal in character, at best constitute subplots to the issue of 'ethnic ownership' of Warri. Here Obaro Ikime again comes in through his contribution to historicity. Of the Itsekiri and their geographical space, he said:

The Itsekiri inhabit the North-Western extremity of the Niger delta in an area bounded approximately by latitudes 5°2' East. Their neighbours are the Bini to the North, the Ijo to the South; the Urhobo to the East and the Yoruba of Ondo province to the Northwest ... Itsekiriland is watered by three large rivers, the Benue, the Escravos and the Forcados.<sup>10</sup>

Today, the above brief quotation remain central to the Warri crises in the sense that it remains what can be considered as the *centre of gravity* of the corpus of Itsekiri claims of (historically backed) absolute ethnic ownership of the defunct Warri Division as their *ancient tribal property*. Added to the above is Obaro Ikime's report on the tour of Sir Claude Macdonald, the Commissioner and Consul-General of Niger Coast Protectorate. In it, Ikime said that:

The Council-General visited Warri on 19 August 1891. He reported that the chiefs of Warri were Itsekiri who were 'under Nana - the great middleman chief of Benin.'<sup>11</sup>

The above cannot but be assumed as equally central to the Warri question in terms of ethnic ownership. It no doubt documentarily

underlines some of the claims of the Itsekiri and thus possibly informs their rigidity and inflexibility towards considering a possible reappraisal, ground-shifting and accommodation. This is against the back ground of our earlier expressed view that both the Ijaw and Urhobo respectively and collectively do not in their views exclude the Itsekiri; for they espoused that ethnic ownership of Warri is tripodal; while the Itsekiri are irrevocably glued to their claim of sole ethnic ownership, and relentlessly and copiously citing Prof. Obaro Ikime, who remain (in my view of non-academic history background) as one of the most authoritative sources of the pre and post-colonial histories of inter and intra-ethnic relations within the region. Do we here in our allegorizing mission apportion any blame for Obaro Ikime's historicity, in terms of the crises vortex in Warri?

It is from these historical facts as contained in Obaro Ikime's works (which constitute our hypothesized *historical stencil*) that such historical relationships of the remote-past between the three ethnic groups remain documentarily preserved and particularly easily assessable; and same are combined with oral sources which then guide and inform on the respective actions and claims on any issue perceived as basic to the Warri contestations, particularly in terms of ethnic proprietorship; the fundamental cause of the perennial crises in Warri.

The historical relationship between the trio hereby referred to, include the types engendered by the duo of 'protectorate' and colonial administrations which for whatever reason(s) placed the Itsekiris at such advantageous positions, such that precipitated corollary bitterness on the part of the disadvantaged duo which in our view are yet to be dumped into the proverbial 'garbage heap of history'. Some of such incidents, which are well represented in Ikime's historicity remain basic to the causal factors of the 'Warri crises', and thus perpetually informing and reminding those who felt cheated by 'history' that at a particular historical juncture, their ancestors were oppressed and 'enslaved' by their ethnic neighbors. This we think, in varied way(s) play some negatively determinant roles in the Warri crises particularly the abiding desire to avenge the perceived injustice ancestrally suffered and

<sup>10</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta* (Ibadan, Dalag Print, 1995) p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 69.



sometimes presumably inherited. Let's take some few of such from Ikime'.

The Benin River Council was exclusively an Itsekiri tribunal with jurisdiction only over Itsekiri settlements. The Warri Native Council however, had jurisdiction over Itsekiri as well as over a number of Urhobo settlements .... Although the court was expected to serve a number of Urhobo settlements, there was not a single Urhobo on the 'bench' of the court: of the sixteen members in 1896, fifteen were Itsekiri and one Ijo.<sup>12</sup>

Another fact of Ikime's *historicity* which today constitutes critical aspect of our hypothesized *historical stencil* is as below:

... the upshot of their situation was that Urhobo people enslaved their fellow countrymen and sold these to outsiders, prominent among whom were the Itsekiri. At a later period, the number of Urhobo slaves in Itsekiri hands was to be used by the Itsekiri as evidence of overlordship over the Urhobo.<sup>13</sup>

On the issue of the Warri Oluship which today re-echo any time Warri issue is addressed, from Obaro Ikime's facts of history, the revelation below was made on the events of 1936:

... the installation of had its effect of worsening Itsekiri-Urhobo relations. First, the reinstatement of the 'Oluship' after nearly one century of interregnum would seem to have filled the Itsekiri with an exaggerated conception of the importance of their ruler....The Olu himself was reported to have claimed he recognized no boundaries except that with the Oba of Benin, disregarding thereby the existence of Urhobo, his immediate neighbours. The Urhobo naturally resented the Itsekiri claim.<sup>14</sup>

We shall end some of these few selected specifics from Obaro Ikime's *historicity* with an aspect of the Urhobo petition in 1936 to the colonial government as reported by Obaro Ikime:

<sup>12</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 253.

... On the question of the treasury, the petition stated that the Urhobo could not, while they shared common treasury, be certain that their money was not being used for paying the Olu and financing Itsekiri projects. They did not want a common ledger with one side used for the Itsekiri and the other for the Urhobo: we want a separate ledger-a separate Native Treasury in which all the clerks and office boys will be purely Urhobo.<sup>15</sup>

The above expression perfectly demonstrates the depth of bitterness and mutual distrust which might have characterized the Itsekiri-Urhobo relations of that era. As we have said, such bitterness still persists in varied forms, and definitely manifest in the intractable Warri crises of today.

Let us now take few historical facts from Obaro Ikime within the context of Ijaw-Itsekiri angle. He reported that:

... in 1865 R. Burton referred to the Ijo as a large and influential tribe who were 'almost at war with the Jakri men because like these they traded for oil to Sobo country.'<sup>16</sup>

Obaro Ikime reported another specific aspect when he said that:

... Furthermore, all through the nineteenth century, the Itsekiri were in constant dread of the Ijo who were reported to be seizing and selling Itsekiri men into slavery.<sup>17</sup>

Also reported by Obaro Ikime was the subjugation of the Ijo when Olomu (the Father of Nanna of Itsekiri) defeated the Ijo in wars.<sup>18</sup> Also documented, was how the Ijo became subjects of Nanna.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Some of the quotations from Obaro Ikime's works might have been taken out of the contexts within which he stated them; but this we

<sup>15</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 257.

<sup>16</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 55.



think we have done in such manner that approximate how the generality of the trio ethnic combatants largely interpret some of these facts. It is along such trajectory that one can properly cognize our allusion to the fact that Obaro Ikime's historicity has contributed to our hypothesized *historical stencil*; and same in our view constitute the dominant axis of all identifiable causal factors of the Warri crises.

What this study has attempted to put forward is to inform that some of the specifics of the Niger Delta crises vortex have strong historical roots, and until such 'historical roots' are properly identified, and same analyzed for solution-proffering, such mundane solutions, no matter how well focus in terms of developing the region they may be, even at the level of praxis, will not provide the required panacea for peace building and inter-ethnic harmony. For the 'Warri Crises', Obaro Ikime's works remain most informative.

## SECTION B

### THE STATE, CITIZENSHIP AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## Constitutional Development and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria: The Unending Dilemma

Egharevba Matthew Etinosa

### Introduction

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's conceptualisation of Nigeria as a mere geographical contraction established to serve the interest of the British colonialists and the post-colonial state collaborators clearly underscores her existentiality and the ensuing social and inter-group relations that has permeated the diverse groupings since 1914. Since independence in 1960, the leadership of the Nigerian nation-state has engaged, and dissipated energy and scarce resources as well as employed diversionary tactics/antics of constitutional development, reforms and amendment for enforcing the nation' continuity, while covertly or overtly oblivious of the necessity for the various nationalities to define the *raison d etre* for their participation in the foist relationship for which they were never consulted. The latent manifestation of this forced togetherness is exacerbated by various crises of marginalisation, deprivation, self-secession agitation, Ethno-regional competition for state power and resource control, etc. The study critically examines the underlying dynamics and contradiction that characterised Nigeria's constitutional development process. It concludes that until there is an all inclusiveness of the various diverse nationalities (whether majority or minority) that make up the Nigerian nation-state in altruistically having defined stakes in the nation-state, the present razz mantas that constitute the crux and



modus operandi of our inter-group relations and interactions is nothing but a futile exercise that will not advance our national aspirations.

It is recognisable today that the life of any society, nation and its utmost survival as a cohesive, functional entity, hinges upon the existence within it of commonly acceptable standards of what is, morally speaking, a right or wrong behaviour, as judged by its collective conscience. What makes a society, therefore, is not just a community of ideas, beliefs, aspirations, political ideas embedded in the form of a constitution alone, but also ideas about the way its members should behave and govern their lives. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to agree with what Lord Devlin said that "a society's shared morality is as necessary to its existence as a recognized government."

The history of Nigeria predates the period of constitutional developments which began when the British colonialists commenced the process of taking over the territory following the annexation of Lagos as a colony in 1861. Thus, before 1800, the nation could be seen as much more than a collection of individual peoples, political and ethnic units engaged in economic, cultural and other interactions/relationships between themselves having their own system of government and administration. Following from this foist occupation by the British colonialist which began with the merging of the Lagos colony and the Southern Nigeria Protectorate in 1906 and the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, was the imposition of the crown colony system of administration, which did not reflect the system of government and administration in these territories, but simply to serve the interests of the British government.

Imbued with an unjustified sense of superiority they considered it a sacred duty to impose on the people their own system on the people which from the outset, excluded a vast majority of Africans from participation in the central administration of the territory. Thus the leadership in the African society at the national level passed from the hands of the indigenous rulers to a small elitist group of Western educated Africans which was easily bought off before independence by the prospect for power and wealth, which evolved through varying constitutional development process that has always revealed divisions

between the North and South, a division that has always permeated our social and political milieu, thus hindering our national unity.

This paper seeks to investigate the underlying dynamics and contexts within which the structuring of constitutional development has been able to provide the framework for the advancement and maintenance of profitable and viable relationships among the various multiethnic groups that constitute the Nigerian nation. To be able to achieve this objective, the paper is thereby broken into five sections: Section I deals with the concept of understanding the framework of a constitution along with its basic features; Section II looks at Nigeria's Constitutional development process vis-à-vis her multicultural setting and inter-group relations among the multiethnic groups that comprises the collectivity; Section III provides the theoretical framework for analyzing inter-group relations in multicultural society such as Nigeria. Section IV addresses the salient factors that constitute obstacles to the processes of constitutional development for a multiethnic society like Nigeria and Section V sums up the conclusions.

### The conceptual framework of a Constitution

The Longman dictionary of Contemporary English defines a constitution as the system of basic laws and principles that a democratic country is governed by, which cannot be easily changed by the political party in power. A constitution refers to "the substantive principles to be deduced from a nation's actual institutions. It structures the formation of a government, its organs, the distribution of powers within it, the relations of the organs and the procedure for exercising powers. A constitution embraces not only a frame of government but also the relations of the government to the individuals that compose the nation or other association and the fundamental objectives of the association. It should symbolize the ideas and values that the people holds dear . . .

With the constitution being an act by which the frame of government is constituted for a people, it means therefore, that the constitution must be an original act of the people. Hence the notion of the people as a constituent power is only an integral part of the wider



concept of the people as repository of the totality of a country's sovereignty, constituent power being the crowning point of sovereignty.

From these definitions, it is clear that a constitution is a charter of government deriving its whole authority from the governed . . . agreed upon by the people of the union as an absolute rule of action and decision for all departments and officers of government in respect of all points covered by it ... and in opposition to which any act or ordinance of any such department or officer is null and void.<sup>1</sup> A constitution in essence deals with how the collectivity of the people that makes the nation is formed and how their relationships are organised. Thus, a constitution can be termed an autochthonous one if it derives its legitimacy from the will of the people. It is such a constitution that obviously declares the fact of its origin in the preamble: "We the people..."

Be that as it may, the mere use of the preamble "We the people ..." does not distinguish a constitution as autochthonous as is the case with the constitutions that we have had since independence in 1960 to date. For a constitution to be autochthonous, it must incorporate as its benchmarks the principles of popular participation, inclusiveness, diversity, transparency, accountability and legitimacy.

### Functions of a constitution

It has two chief functions, viz, as a source of governmental power and as a means of limiting power. According to Nwabueze (1993:26) Constitutional limitations upon government may take five main forms:

- (i) limitation on the extent of power by means of constitutional protection of the life, liberty and property of the individual;
- (ii) constitutional provisions designed to secure observance by government of the ends or purpose for which power is granted to government;

<sup>1</sup> O. Agbakoba and W. Mamah. 2002. *Towards a Peoples Educational manual for the legal community* (Lagos: Human Right Law Service, 2002).

- (iii) limitation directed, not to the extent or purposes of power, but to how and by whom it may be exercised-what is termed separation of powers;
- (iv) limitation of power by dividing it between two or more tiers of government; i.e. federalism
- (v) constitutional protection of local self government.<sup>2</sup>

The process of recognising the people as the repository of sovereignty, including constituent power, and as the only entity entitled to exercise power, is a recent development, dating to the American Revolution of 1776-1787. With this development, the people are now generally recognized as sovereign and as entitled to exercise all the powers incident to sovereignty, including the constituent power. A "democratic" constitution may therefore be defined as one approved or adopted by the people either directly at a referendum or through a constituent assembly specially elected and specifically mandated in that half. It would be expected that a democratic constitution would establish a constitutional government, indeed a constitutional democracy.

Constitutional democracy combines the notion of a constitutional government and a democratic one, that is to say, it is a democratic government regulated and limited by a constitution. A constitution may be the foundation of law and order in a community, but mere law and order is not enough, it must be good law and good order. Besides, enactment by the people enhances the democratic character of the constitution; it institutionalizes the people and their role in government, thereby imparting greater legitimacy to the constitution. This fact is believed to contribute in no small measure to evoking a feeling of attachment and obedience among the people, and therefore in sustaining its longevity.

This notion of the people as the law maker, and a supreme one at that, with power not only to approve a frame of government but to give

<sup>2</sup> B. O. Nwabueze. *Ideas and Facts in Constitution Making*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 1993).



force of law to a constitution, is thus the most radical principle implied in a democratic republic as implemented in the United States, followed by Switzerland from where it has spread to become a common feature of modern democracy widely used throughout the world.

### History of constitutional development in Nigeria

The idea of a constitution is not new. It is as old as government itself. Government as a structure of powers, relationships and procedures necessarily imports the idea of a constitution. The process of constitutional development began in Nigeria in the 1920s with the Clifford constitution of 1922. However, the make-up of the constitution was the creation of the legislative council that replaced the Nigerian council formed by Lord Lugard in 1914. It was the 1922 Clifford constitution which marked the bane for the unending constitutional development crisis that has befallen this nation from the colonial times to the present post independence dispensation. To begin with, the jurisdiction of the new legislative council only covers the southern Nigeria protectorate while the Northern protectorate was governed by proclamations.

This dichotomy created by Clifford on the flimsy excuses that the country was too large, ethnic diversity, etc, which resulted in the failure to integrate properly the North and the South was to be the nation's albatross in the cause of entrenching national unity in later years. However, the outbreak of World War II accelerated and accentuated the pace of political and constitutional developments in a greater dimension.

Following from the criticism of the Americans of British colonial policy and practices as well as the propaganda of the Allied forces which emphasized democracy and the right of all peoples to choose what form of government they would like to be under, stimulated considerably political awakening in the country, which eventually led the colonial government to grant political and constitutional concessions to the colonial nationalists. This scenario set the pace for the establishment of the Richards constitution of 1946 which created a landmark in the constitutional development of Nigeria by bringing together for the first time since 1923 Northern and Southern Nigeria with the aim of paving

the way for national unity as well as widening the basis for peoples representation.

Despite all this, the constitution was characterized by a lot of criticism, chief among them was the non consultation of the people in the formulation of a constitution designed for the country and as such it was regarded as an imposition. Also, the constitution did not give Nigerians greater participation in the whole process of government and administration.

While it is pertinent to state that the aim of the Richards constitution was to provide for unity in diversity in the country in order to douse the threats of division that was brewing in the nation, it was Nigerians themselves who further created and reinforced the schisms that almost destroyed the country by turning this regions into permanent political structure during the 1951 Macpherson constitution which failed to give Nigeria full responsible government. As such the 1946 constitution was described by the Nigerian nationalist as an example par excellence of the policy of *divide et impera* (divide and rule policy) following the establishment of regional councils in each of the three administrative regions into which the country was divided. However, it was the establishment of the 1954 constitution which provided the platform for the creation of a federal structure for the country that was maintained with various transmutations till the attainment of independence in 1960.

The salient feature of this Nigerian federalism that operated before the advent of the military in 1966 was, according to Adamolekun,<sup>3</sup> characterised by choice, incentive and competition, such that political power was decentralised in a manner that allowed each of the two levels of government (federal and regional) to make choices in both the political and economic spheres. And there was also clarity in the allocation of functions and resources between the federal and regional governments. The critical incentive factor during the period that made the Nigerian federalism truly federal was a revenue allocation formula that assigned primacy to the principle of derivation to the tune of 50 per cent. With the regions occupying centre stage in the development of

<sup>3</sup> TELL, No. 1, January 3, 2005, p. 38.



infrastructure and delivery of public goods and services, the federal government was a distant institution for the average Nigerian citizen.

This whole framework changed with the coming of the military government which bastardized the federal experience replacing its basic features of choice, incentive and competition with centralism, arbitrary diktats and uniformity which were subsumed under the centralized political management and revenue allocation of the military. Following the abandonment of the military to renegotiate the structure and operation of the federal structure through a national dialogue during the second half of 1966 and the stark reality of a loomy civil war during the second quarter of 1967, the incumbent military leadership of General Gowon decided in June 1967 to restructure the federal into 12 states: six each in both the northern and southern part of the country. This was followed by more state creations (19 in 1976; 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991 and 36 in 1996) by subsequent military governments through arbitrary decision making process without any consultations.

This was also followed by the establishment in 1976 of local government as third tier of government with uniform organizational structure and operational guidelines. This decision was enshrined in the 1979 constitution and maintained in the 1999 constitution. As with the initial number of state units, the initial 304 local government created in 1976 were increased over the years to the current 744 that are provided as scheduled in the 1999 constitution. One of the apparent features of this process of states and local government creation was that except in 1967 when the very survival of the nation was at stake, the incumbent military leadership created equal number of states in the northern and southern part of the country.

In the subsequent exercises of state and local government creation, more were created in the northern part than in the southern part without any basis on demographic weighting or census figures. With all functions of governance concentrated at the centre from 1966 onwards, it was logical for the federal government to assign to itself a greater proportion of national revenue than was the case before 1966, a situation that has continued afterwards till date where the federal government continued to dominate revenue raising powers and retaining the lion's share of national revenues.

Furthermore, it is evident that subsequent processes of constitutional formation that have midwived the Second Republic (1979-83), the aborted third republic (1990-92) during the Babangida era and the present democratic experiment since 1999 were all carried out under military "guidance" which established the presidential system of government. Besides, all the military doctored constitution formulated to midwife the various democratic processes we have had including the present 1999 constitution had several features of the centralised federal system operated under the military enshrined in the constitution which include among others, the transfer of functions that were previously jointly performed by the federal and regional governments in the pre-military era to the exclusive list of the federal government. These functions include prisons, registration of business names, registration of tourist industry, regulation of political parties, census and public holidays.

It is this form of constitutional development created by the military leadership over the years since 1966 that has thrown up a perilous partisan politics that has been dominated by inter- and intra-party political struggles, political killings, institutionalised corruption, serious dislocations in the social and moral fabrics of the society. These occurrences have brought to the fore unending complaints and discontents about "marginalization" in the distribution of political and top bureaucratic appointments, social services, economic amenities and infrastructural facilities that have been championed in many cases by the ethnic nationalities.

### **Nigeria's multicultural setting and inter-group relations**

The Nigerian geographical units and its vegetation as sandwiched by the unity of its waterways have encouraged a network of relationships and movement of peoples and ideas across the zones from the east to the west as well as the north and south before 1800. River systems played a much larger part as a means of communication and carriers of trade and ideas in the past than they do in modern times. Before the coming of highways, railways and airways, rivers provided the only thoroughfares



for the cheaper transportation of large quantities of commodities over long distances in many parts of Africa<sup>4</sup> (Ikime, 1980).

Given such a geographical environment, we can presume a good deal of interaction existed among the different multiethnic peoples in Nigeria from early times in the area of agriculture, bronze technology, trade in slaves and goods, crafts, etc. across the Niger-Benue rivers which serve as important trade routes for inter-group relations and contact. In all, geographical factors seem to dispose the territory of Nigeria to movement of peoples from one ecological zone to another in migrations or in interdependent relationships of trade exchange.

Be that as it may, since the time of British colonialism, the structure of multicultural societies like Nigeria has often been perceived in terms of segmentation and conflict given the colonialist adoption and entrenchment of the "principle of exclusion" into the nation's multiethnic setting. Under multiculturalism, political and administrative circumstances, fortunes and misfortunes breed ethnicity. Within the context of multiculturalism, the phenomenon of ethnicity is used as an instrument for the struggle for privilege and opportunities. Ethnicity refers to personal or group exploitation of a collective consciousness of difference, identity and exclusiveness, strengthened by symbols, with inherent phenomenon of conflict and discrimination against non members in a situation of social crises and competition over commonly valued political and economic resources.<sup>5</sup>

In looking at inter-group relations, factors which determine harmony and conflict in multicultural-multi-ethnic societies include the comparative size of the groups, the balance between their concentration in and dispersal from their specific territorial location, the underlying cultural patterns, their historical background and the degree of competition for the scarce resources available within the plural society. When the phenomena of class and ethnicity intersect in the competition

<sup>4</sup> O. Ikime, O. ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> O. Otite, "Perspectives on a national integration in Multi-cultural Societies: A Nigerian Overview" in C. I. Uche, A.N. Isamah and J.O. Adesina, eds., *Currents and Perspectives in Sociology* (Ikeja: Malthouse Press Limited, 2002) p.164.

for limited resources, it is possible to argue that the strength of ethnicity in Nigeria contemporary situation is the structural corollary of the phenomenon of class that structures the underlying relationships among the various multiethnic groupings.

Under these circumstances, members of any of the ethnic-cultural groups, classified as rural or urban and in any social class, however incipient or visible, share the same system of symbols and values and protective exclusiveness. This was the attitude that characterised the process of constitutional development among the nationalist elite who held on to their ethnic cleavages in their pursuit for independence and the quest for control of power as exemplified in their formation of political parties, i.e. NPC, AG, etc.

These existential social practices inhibit national integration in multicultural societies in which there is a demand for loyalty of all citizens and interest groups to uphold the supremacy of the nation and symbols. Here, one of the problems posed for national integration and nation building consists in the strategies for transferring loyalties and uncompromising commitment from the micro level and spheres of primordial activities to the macro level of the nation within which citizens can find protection and secure provisions for participation in various arenas of the wider societal life. This creates a problem of mass education and resocialization that underscores the fact that an integrated nation is an absolute necessity for socio-political and economic development to benefit all individuals and multicultural groups.

The elite, as members of the emerging 'upper class' as well as leaders of their ethnic-cultural groups, can constitute an asset or liability in national integration and development. The conflicts, which do involve the elite often, sensitize and divide the nation along the lines defined by multiculturalism. In some circumstances, the elite, as a group, often find it beneficial to submerge their cultural differences, even if on an *ad hoc* basis, and mobilise along class alliances for personal or group gains, and for sharing political and government goods and services. Even here they take care not to destroy their ethnic-cultural base. Indeed, since their access to power rests partly on this ethnic base,



the elite as leaders have an incentive to assert and maintain their multiethnic multicultural boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, political pluralism and ethnic based membership in multi party systems have great potential of heightening ethnic consciousness and creating problems for the integration of multicultural societies. They carry a heavy risk of ethnic competition in the electoral process, thus pointing to the issue that the democratic aspirations of Nigerians needs a diversification of power centres to prevent the monopoly of state power by members of one ethnic group.

### Theoretical Framework

The resource mobilization theory provides the basis for the analysis of inter-group relations among the various multi-ethnic-groups that make-up the nation of Nigeria. In this view, the model sees activities such as protests, conflicts, differences and organized efforts to produce or resist change as a part of the continuing process whereby social goods are distributed among competing groups. The resource mobilization theory (RM) emphasizes (1) the financial, political, and personnel resources that can be activated ("mobilized") by protest organizers and/or multiethnic groups (2) the ability of control agents to resist the demands for change.

The resource mobilization model assumes that there will always be grounds for conflict, differences and protest by various groups in a modern plural setting like Nigeria. Issues that often bring disagreement among multiethnic groups can result from free-floating anxiety, fear of domination and marginalization of one group by another, lack of equal opportunities to leadership and resources by a group, collectivity or nation. The RM model also view participants engagement in collective behaviour as it deals with inter-group relationships as rational decision makers who have weighed the various costs and benefits of collective action and have decided that the goals of the protest are worth the time and effort to fight for them.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Onigu Otite, "Ethnicity and Class in a Plural Society: Nigeria." In C.B Marret and C. Leggon, eds., *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations*. Vol. I (JAI Press, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> B. Klandermans, "A Theoretical framework for comparisons of Social Movement participation." *Sociological Forum* 8, 1993.

In the same vein, Thomas and Thomas (1928) argues further that social behaviour among people in a multi ethnic society such as Nigeria who engage in inter-group relationships is to a large extent determined by the various group's definition of the situation and context in which they find themselves. The reality that the multiethnic groups create from the product of their collective association goes a long way to decide how they respond to the situation that they find themselves within the multicultural setting. Accordingly, interactions among the various multi ethnic groups in Nigeria is a product of the shared reality that the different groups create of themselves that continually shape their actions, perceptions and disposition to the other groups within the corporate entity called Nigeria.

For example, in the motion for independence in 1956 moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro on the floor of the house of the House of representative in March 1953, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduna of Sokoto on behalf of the Northerners strongly opposed the motion on the ground that they were not ready for independence and that to achieve independence as early as that time would be inviting the domination of the North by the South.<sup>8</sup>

### Problems of Constitutional Development in a Multi-Ethnic Society

From the foregoing discourse, it is evident that the primary challenges in a multi-ethnic society is about how to give all the component groups the opportunity to participate in both the elective and non-elective organs, arms and agencies of government, since only thus can each feel that it is a full member of the nation, bound to the others by a common feeling of belonging together. For "national loyalty" cannot immediately supplant tribal loyalty; it has to be built on top of tribal loyalty by creating a system in which all tribes feel that there is room for self-expression" and participation in the government.

<sup>8</sup> *Federal Government of Nigeria*, House of Representatives, official reports of debates, March 31, 1953, p. 98.



A cursory look at the process of constitutional development during the colonial and post colonial period shows that the group boundaries that the British colonialist divided the nation into in terms of regions as a multiethnic society like Nigeria reinforced overtly the distinction between "us" and "them". This distinction among the multiethnic groups, according to Sumner (1906), generates solidarity among members of the different, but at the same time creates hatred and contempt for members of the other, group. Such hostility for him derives from an outgrowth of ethnocentrism, the belief in the superiority of one's own group, a disposition that thrives strongly under conditions of intense competition for resource allocation and derivation formula, leadership positions in government, infrastructural facilities, etc, that have characterized our constitutional development as clearly depicted in the National political reform conference(NPRC) in 2005 which was inconclusive, following the walk out by the South-South delegates over disagreement to concede 50 per cent derivation to the region.

Coupled with this viewpoint is the salient fact that all arts of constitutional development in Nigeria have never truly given Nigerians the free hands to work out their own constitution which was ratified by a referendum such that it was acceptable to all the various ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian state. Rather, the constitution we have had has always been a compromise between the competing interests and views of the various political leaders which do not reflect the overall wishes of the greatest majority. No wonder, every attempt at constitutional development in the nation has always reinforced the era of ethnic nationalism and regional divisions that have shown how more divided rather than united we really are as a plural nation-state.

A more fundamental dilemma that has and is still thwarting our collective drive toward the proper making of genuine constitution development is the factor of weak leadership in the country and their failure to provide the needed political will to openly discuss the political restructuring of the entity called Nigeria along true federalism. This is very crucial because of the fortuitous manner in which the political unity of the country was attained during the colonial period coupled with the socio-economic imbalance that the nation has been thrown

into since independence. Besides, there has never been any genuine desire on the part of Nigerian leaders to ensure the successful operation of the constitution formulated. Their selfishness and lack of high moral standard of behaviour regarding the national question in the country had most time almost torn the nation apart than the perceived unity they tend to defend in the context of serving their own personal aggrandizement.

In all, the increasing social inequalities and inequitable distribution of basic amenities, development projects, resource control agitation, demand for secession, etc. are areas often worked upon by interested elite and ethnic militia that have sprung up in the various parts of the nation, with the aim of whipping up ethnic sentiments and conflicts between the different groups in a multicultural society. For example, the event in the Niger Delta which has metamorphosized into hostage taking and bombing of oil pipeline installation has assumed both national and international dimensions. Nevertheless, it remains true that the constitution of most African nations bear unmistakable imprints of colonialism designed to protect foreign (imperialist) economic interests, to entrench the rule of a favoured group or to perpetuate a bequeathed political system.

### Conclusion

The continuing dilemma of constitutional development that has hampered the process of inter-group relationships among the various multiethnic entities in Nigeria calls for a thorough examination of these divisive tendencies. On the basis of the following suggestions are hereby offered.

To keep Nigeria one, it is important for us as a people to rise up putting aside our tribal and ethnic chauvinistic tendencies, to involve all segments of Nigerians from all walks of life to come together to fashion a constitution we can call our own with the sole aim of promoting the unity of the country.

In the same vein, there is the need for the nation to evolve a service leadership as the head of government that will pull together the rich human and material resources of this nation in order to build a viable



nation that will lessen the drive for multiethnic divisiveness. Coupled with this is the call to engage all Nigerians through massive public education to forge national identities - cultures with unifying ideals. Doing this will help galvanize the various ethnic groups into the spirit of oneness and togetherness, creating a circle of intimacy and care, a haven of *Gemeinschaft* within the *Gesellschaft* settings of a plural modern society.

## Identity Crisis and Indigene-Settler Question in Nigeria: The Constitutional Review Option

Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun

### Introduction

Identity crisis is one of the serious challenges confronting the Nigerian state in the post-colonial period. At the heart of this crisis is the competition for values which are not only limited but could best be accessed through state power. This competition has engendered the categorisation of some Nigerians as "indigenes or natives" and others as "settlers or strangers" which has telling implications for citizenship rights and privileges. Thus, legitimised by the ambiguity in the constitution as regards indigeneity status, the Nigerian ruling coalition (or fractions within it) has continued to interpret constitutional provisions on indigeneity in discriminatory and exclusionary manner which has the effect of constricting political and economic space against Nigerian citizens. While this paper agrees that colonialism is the root of identity question in Nigeria, it contends that appropriate constitutional re-designing is capable of removing inter-group animosity and suspicion bequeathed by colonialism and it can ultimately lead to the actualisation of the ever-elusive nation-state project in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society made up of over 400 ethnic groups which are not only distinguished by language, customs and myth/history of origin but also differ in numerical strength, power and influence within the Nigerian state. This pluralist nature of the Nigerian state presents the country as a classic example of



a nation with ethnic relations. This heterogeneous character has engendered the challenge of managing these contradictions by the Nigerian state, and the conflicts/crises provoked by these contradictions have not only strained democratic governance but have continued to challenge the continued existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity.

Since the introduction of the "indigeneity clause" into the Nigerian statute book through the 1979 constitution, there has been a phenomenal increase in ethnicity-induced communal conflicts in the country. Whatever might have been the good motive behind the introduction of the clause into the Nigerian public laws has been defeated by the massive volume of wanton destruction of lives and property that accompany outbreaks of violence on account of crisis of identity generated by the indigene/settler dichotomy. At the core of the native/settler syndrome is the "quality" of citizenship and its attendant opportunities and privileges. It has both inclusive and exclusionary characters which confer benefits and costs to persons so defined as "natives" and "settlers". These benefits and costs refer to political advantages and marginalization which the natives and settlers respectively are exposed to in the scheme of things within the political community. This brings to the fore the fact that material advantage is the major driving force of the indigene/settler animosity. The animosity is no respecter of religious affiliation as groups belonging to the same faith have disregarded their common religious identity in their quest for primitive accumulation. Reflecting on the perennial conflicts between the Tiv and the Jukun, Abdullahi Adamu rightly observes that:

The Jukun and the Tiv are mostly Christians. If religious differences were the sources of the inter-ethnic problems, these two tribes would live in total harmony with one another as Christian brothers and sisters. Crises in other communities where people are of the same religious persuasion show that the bond of religious affinity is often not strong enough to hold people together in the unending contest for social, economic and political advantages.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Adamu, "Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria". Paper presented at the Presidential Retreat on Peace and Conflict Resolution held at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, 2002, January 23-26.

From the conflict between the Mambilla people and the Bansa/Kumba people to the crisis in Kataba area of Kaduna State between the Hausa on the one hand and other communal groups such as Bajju and Kataba on the other, the conflict between the Kuteb and Chamba in Taraba State, to the unending cycle of communal clashes involving the Egburra, Bassa and Gbagyi people of Nasarawa State, the settler/indigene syndrome has pitched communities that have hitherto lived in harmony against each other.

The hopes and expectations nursed by many people that conflicts rooted in identity would abate upon return to civil rule have been dashed. In fact, there has been a dramatic upsurge in the incidences of ethnic and religious conflicts since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in May 1999. This singular fact challenges the thesis that democratic rule provides the best context to manage ethnically defined differences. It is now increasingly becoming clear that the existing constitutional provisions and policy framework have grossly failed to adequately manage the challenges of Nigeria's pluralist formation.

This paper investigates the conundrum of citizenship in Nigeria. It has twin objectives. First, it interrogates the crisis of citizenship in the Nigerian state with a view to bringing to the fore how citizenship has been used as an "exclusionary" tool to disempower and marginalize Nigerians politically, economically and socially. Second, the paper suggests some policy and constitutional proposals by which citizenship could be used to promote equity, fairness as well as good inter- and intra-group relations all of which have implications for the nation-state project.

### Colonial roots of Identity Crisis

Colonialism could be regarded as the foundation of identity question in Nigeria in two major senses. The first sense is the separate legal regime adopted by the British to govern colonizers and the colonized. The second sense is the nurturing of hostile and divisive feelings in the various ethnic constituencies in Nigeria through colonial policies which



pitched the various ethnic groups against one another in confrontation. The British created two legal orders — civil and customary — which had implications for enjoyment of rights and privileges. The white settlers (Europeans) were to be governed under the civil law which conferred rights on them because civil law was rooted in respect for the rule of law and rights. Under the civil law regime marked by separation of governmental powers, the settlers were regarded as citizens who were entitled to all the rights that accompany citizenship. On the other hand, the natives (Nigerians) were governed by the customary law under the charge of Native Authority. Under this system, the natives were treated as subjects who were not entitled to rights. Powers were fused in the traditional rulers which exposed the natives to the despotism of the rulers. This settler/native divide created what Mamdani calls a “bifurcated state”<sup>2</sup> which favoured the settlers and disfavoured the natives.

In addition to legal dualism, administrative practice of the colonial state also encouraged identity consciousness. As Olukoshi and Laakso observe, “... Colonial domination rested on a system of divide and rule which created or intensified suspicion among different ethnic groups, religions and regions politically, economically and even culturally at the expense of others”<sup>3</sup>. In its efforts to consolidate itself, the colonial state promoted the feeling of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in the management of the pluralist Nigerian society which resulted in the creation of animosity among the diverse groups that constituted the multiethnic Nigerian society under colonialism. As demonstrated by Jega, “religious, regional and ethnic differences were given prominence in development policies and projects under the indirect rule system of colonial administration favoured by the British. Thus, the differential impact of colonialism set the context of the regional, educational, economic and political imbalances which later became significant in the mobilization or manipulation of identity consciousness in order to effectively divide and

<sup>2</sup> M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of late colonialism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> A. Olukoshi and L. Laakso, *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa*. (Uppsala: NIA, 1996).

rule, as well as in the politics of decolonization and in the arena of competitive politics in the post-colonial era ....”<sup>4</sup> It is within this context that one can explain the inter-regional mobilization of identity to capture power in the period before and after formal independence.

It is however tragic that almost five decades after the termination of colonial rule, categorization of citizens as natives or settlers still enjoys prominence in Nigeria’s public administration. Rather than the post colonial Nigerian state coming up with policy and constitutional measures aimed at managing the pluralist character of the Nigerian society in a manner that gives sense of belonging to the constituent groups, it has only succeeded in re-dividing the natives under colonialism into post colonial settlers and post colonial natives.<sup>5</sup>

### Nature of Identity Politics in Nigerian Public Life

In the words of Jeffrey Week,

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality...<sup>6</sup>

Some of the attributes of identity include commitment to a cause, love and trust for a group, emotional tie to a group and obligations and responsibilities in relation to membership of a group identified with by an individual.<sup>7</sup> Identity politics, according to Alemika, represents an

<sup>4</sup> A. Jega, *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*. (Uppsala and Kano: Nordiska Stitutet and Centre for Research and Documentation, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> M. Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism” in Peter Ozo-Eson and Ukoha Ukiwo, *Ideology and African Development*. Proceedings of the Third Memorial Programme in honour of Prof. Claude Ake. PortHarcourt and Abuja: CASS & AFRIGOV, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> J. Week, “The Value of Difference” in J. Rutherford, *Identity, Community and Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> A. Jega, *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*. (Uppsala and Kano: Nordiska Stitutet and Centre for Research and Documentation, 2000).



emotional response by groups to social problems in a multi-cultural society which affords disadvantaged groups to demonize other groups for their circumstances.<sup>8</sup> Politics of identity is targeted at claimed identities of its proponents in the context of inter-group political struggles to access the state and, ipso facto, sites of accumulation in a multiethnic political community. Identities inform and give meaning to social and/or political action in a plural society. Conflicts generated by inter-group contestations for state power and resources have become a recurring phenomenon in the historical development of Nigeria. The root of these conflicts is the practice of denying certain groups rights and opportunities including access to land simply because such groups are perceived as not being indigenous to a particular geographical space which may be a state or a local government area.

Identity conflicts rooted in the distinction between natives/indigenes and settlers/strangers do not only occur in urban and rural contexts, with intimidating ferocity, they also assume intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic character. Thus, while both rural areas and urban centres have become sites of identity-related conflicts in Nigeria, particularly since the restoration of civil rule in 1999 after prolonged years of military dictatorship, the dimension of identity conflicts has also changed as groups who hitherto lived together as homogenous groups are taking up arms against each other. Examples that typify the new dimension are the recurring Ife/Modakeke crisis and the Aguleri/Umuleri conflict in Osun and Anambra states respectively. We will later in this paper examine the patterns and consequences of some of these conflicts.

The bug of identity politics and the concomitant crisis it spawns has caught even the public university system in Nigeria. The university which is supposed to be a site of knowledge production and a detribalized public institution has been corrupted by ethnic and other

<sup>8</sup> E. Alemika, "Ethnic Minorities in Nigeria: Constitutional Democratic Framework for Autonomy and Local Self-Governance" in Nankin Bagudu and Dakas C. Dakas, *The Right to be Different: Perspectives on Minority Rights, the Cultural Middle Belt and Constitutionalism in Nigeria* (Jos: League for Human Rights, 2002).

primordial interests in a manner that erodes the capacity of the university to serve as a source of elite recruitment and circulation as well as a source of manpower for national development. In many public universities today – federal and state – ethnic considerations are given prominence in the appointment of principal officers including the Vice Chancellor. This clearly violates the selection process for such appointment as contained in the statutory provisions governing public university. The scenario is more scandalous in state-owned universities where preferential policies designed consciously to facilitate the emergence of "indigenes" for such positions are put in place. As documented by Jinadu (2003), the Governing Council of Lagos State University expressly stated in the advertisement for the post of Vice Chancellor in 1996 that applicants for the job must be Lagos state indigenes which ultimately denied qualified candidates from other states of the federation the opportunity of competing for the job even if they were resident in Lagos.<sup>9</sup> This kind of practice precipitates inter-group animosities in many Ivory towers across the country.

### Crisis of Citizenship in the Nigerian State

Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All those who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.<sup>10</sup> Citizenship, however defined, entails enjoyment of political rights and civic obligations making it to be reciprocal in nature. It involves both the claims that an individual makes as a citizen of a particular political community and the duties of the individual towards the reproduction of the community. These duties include but not limited to participation in the management of public affairs, defence of the territorial integrity of the community and enhancing the economic capacity of the community through payment of taxes or other levies.

<sup>9</sup> A. Jinadu, "Democratization, Development and the Identity Crisis in Nigeria". Paper delivered at the 2nd Annual Lecture of Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, July 30, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> T. Marshal, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).



The crisis of citizenship in contemporary Nigeria has its root not in the qualification for Nigerian nationality and rights and privileges that go with it as the requisite conditions for acquiring Nigerian citizenship are clearly stated in Chapter 3 (Sections 25-27) of the 1999 presidential constitution. The real problem of citizenship in Nigeria is located in the politicization of citizenship through the distinction that is made between citizens and indigenes or between what some scholars have referred to as universal citizenship and local citizenship. Indigeneship is conceived as being exclusive accommodating only those who can claim nativity of a particular geo-political space and thus are regarded as "owners of the land" or "sons of the soil". The indigenes tend to claim absolute control of public affairs within the geo-political space and this control, according to Alubo, "includes who gets what political appointments, and in many cases, who runs for what political office. In effect, the indigenes are first class citizens and the others are second class"<sup>11</sup>. At the heart of citizenship question in Nigeria is the recognition of indigeneity as the basis of enjoyment of rights and entitlements. For one to be considered an indigene, he or she must be a native of a particular geographical space while to be considered a citizen, one must be an indigene. If one is able to make claim to a particular geographical space, it becomes a license to access power and resources within that space. All those who cannot make such claim are regarded as settlers/strangers that cannot be allowed to enjoy similar privileges. Thus as Momoh has noted "nativity or indigeneity privileges people while settler status disempowers."<sup>12</sup>

The exclusionary character implicit in the practice of citizenship in many African countries today should not, however, be seen as a peculiar "African disease". As demonstrated by Ntalaja, exclusionary character was inherent in the original legal definitions of citizenship in many countries of the North. According to him, citizenship was reserved for only free and native born men in the democratic Greek city-states while

in the Roman Empire, citizenship was initially restricted to only those resident in Rome and was only extended to all free inhabitants of the empire in A.D. 212.<sup>13</sup> Even in the United States, unarguably the most successful democracy in the world, African Americans were not regarded as American citizens and were not granted full voting rights until the emergence of Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, while conscious efforts are being made in other regions of the world to address the conundrum of citizenship through legal and non-legal measures, Africa's governing elites, by their actions and inactions, are deepening the exclusionary character of citizenship practice on the continent with the aim of gaining political advantage over opposition candidates or parties as witnessed in Zambia and Ivory Coast, respectively, over the presidential ambitions of Kenneth Kaunda and Allassane Dramane Ouattara.

The "indigeneity" clause contained in Nigeria's presidential constitution of 1979 was basically introduced to facilitate the implementation of the "federal character principle" consciously designed to forestall the domination of national affairs by people from particular section(s) of the country. This may be a good intention on the part of the framers of 1979 constitution. However, the introduction of biological or ethnic criteria into qualification for indigene status through the requirement that one's parents or grandparents must belong to a community indigenous to a state legitimises the exclusion of certain groups in the intra-elite competition for power, privileges and opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

A major policy manifestation of indigeneship is the adoption/introduction of "preferential policies" by state governments which may be in the form of laws and administrative rules aimed at favouring indigenes of the states ahead of indigenes of other states in competition for values. These policies violate certain provisions in the constitution

<sup>11</sup> O. Alubo, *Ethnic Conflicts and Citizenship Crises in the Central Region* (Ibadan: Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> A. Momoh, A., "Even Birds Have a Home: Explaining the Pathologies of the Citizenship Question in Nigeria", EMPARC Annual Lecture. Series No. 7, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, G., *Citizenship, Democratization and the State in Africa* (Mimeo, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> S. Egwu, F. Adedokun, and O. Igbuzor, *National Scientific Survey on the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform. Research Report, 2003.



relating to the enjoyment of citizenship rights. Such provisions include section 15(2) of 1999 constitution which states that "... National integration shall be actively encouraged whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited", and section 15(3) which provides that "for the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the duty of the state to (a) provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation, (b) secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the federation". It is the combination of the practice of preferential policies and the consequences the implementation of such policies has on non-indigenes that Jinadu refers to as "fractured citizenship"<sup>15</sup>. In another dimension, the way in which indigeneity status is defined in Nigeria has led to the emergence of a multi-layered system of citizenship with varying degrees of opportunities and privileges for occupants of each layer.<sup>16</sup> As rightly observed by Egwu, multi-layered citizenship, apart from being capable of generating confusion and controversy "precludes the development of national unity and the evolution of a harmonious political community."<sup>17</sup>

The actual practice of citizenship in Nigeria today creates a direct relationship between geographical space/location and quality of citizenship. As one moves out of a space he/she can claim indigeneity, the quality of his/her citizenship (defined in terms of rights and privileges open to him or her) diminishes. This is the dilemma being faced daily by millions of Nigerians. Women are the worst hit by these citizenship-related frustrations as they are exposed to discrimination both in their native homelands as well as in their husbands'. Against this

<sup>15</sup> A. Jinadu, "Democratization, Development and the Identity Crisis in Nigeria". Paper delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lecture of Department of Sociology, University of Lagos. July 30, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform, *Memorandum submitted to the Presidential Committee on Provisions for and Practice of Citizenship and Rights in Nigeria*, 2002

<sup>17</sup> S. Egwu, "Citizenship and Ethnicity in a Federal State" in A.T. Gana and S.G. Egwu *Federalism in Africa: The Imperative of Democratic Development* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2003).

background, one cannot but concur with the assertion that Nigerian citizenship has different geographies.<sup>18</sup> The dynamics of geographies of citizenship are partly captured in situations such as denial of scholarship awards to non-indigenes, differential policy of tuition fees for indigenes and non-indigenes, non-employment of non-indigenes in the public sector or at best contract employment for non-indigenes. All these not only challenge the spirit of inclusive citizenship envisaged by the constitution, they make the attainment of nation-state an elusive project.

### Indigene/Settler Crisis in Nigeria: An Overview

The explanation for native-settler dichotomy can be situated within two related contexts namely the ubiquity and immensity of state power and the uneven access to the sites of accumulation by different identity constituencies that constitute the multi-cultural Nigerian society. The immensity of state power is accentuated by the dominant and crucial role it plays in capital accumulation which makes state power rapidly attractive to the various factions of the governing elite. This largely explains the combative character of political contests for state power in Africa. These contests were to become more intense in Nigeria with the export earnings from oil in the 1970s which considerably expanded the revenue base of the Nigerian state. Within this context, identity-based politics becomes an instrument for power acquisition and retention by the ruling factions while those in the opposition mobilize identities to protest perceived injustice and marginalization in power equation. It is however paradoxical that, in spite of the gradual disengagement of the state from production and distribution as a result of market-based economic reform, the contest for the soul of the state has not become less intense. This further tellingly demonstrates the profitability of state power for accumulation and status security.

<sup>18</sup> O. Abah, *Geographies of Citizenship in Nigeria* (Zaria: Tamaza Publishing Co. Ltd, 2003).



In most of the crises that centre on indigene-settler dichotomy, history of migration is used to categorize certain people as indigenes/natives and settlers/strangers and on that account access to political power and resources is granted or denied. This was the fate suffered by the Banyamasisi segment of the Kinyarwanda-speaking groups of Kivu province in Congo. The Banyaruchuru segment of Kivu province who regarded themselves as indigenes of the province considered the Banyamasisi as settlers simply because unlike the former, who had been in Congo before Belgian colonization, the latter only migrated to Congo as labourers during the colonial period.<sup>19</sup> Many contending groups in Nigeria, as will be demonstrated in the analysis of indigene-settler crisis in the country have resorted to historical claims to support their "indigeneity" of a particular political space. The immediate difficulty that this construction of history of migration precipitates is that facts relating to migration tend to be distorted or subjected to conflicting interpretations which often result into confrontations among contending groups.

The Tiv-Jukun conflict in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State provides a classic example of how history of settlement can be deployed to establish "indigeneity" which is then used as a license to access local resources. The main driving force of the conflict was contestation over land, political authority, traditional rulership and fears of domination and marginalization.<sup>20</sup> To the Jukun, their settlement at Wukari predated the arrival of the Tiv in the area which the Jukun had dominated for several centuries. The Jukun contend that they gave permission to the Tiv to establish their earliest settlements while a section of the Tiv community was once placed under the Aku Uka.

<sup>19</sup> M. Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism" in Peter Ozo-Eson and Ukoha Ukiwo, *Ideology and African Development*. Proceedings of the Third Memorial Programme in honour of Prof. Claude Ake. PortHarcourt and Abuja: CASS & AFRIGOV, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> S. Best, A. Idyorough, and Z. Shehu, "Communal Conflicts and the Possibilities of Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: A case study of the Tiv-Jukun Conflicts in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State" in Onigu Otite and Isaac Albert, *Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1999.

Against this background, the Jukun regard the Tiv as "strangers" or "settlers". For the Tiv, they rejected the claim by the Jukun that they are settlers in Wukari. According to the Tiv, they settled in the area before the Jukun and even some of the Tiv people who settled in Wukari at a later date than the Jukun have lived in Wukari for several decades that they could no longer be regarded as "strangers" or "non-natives". These claims and counter-claims by the Jukun and Tiv over the ownership of Wukari have resulted in massive destruction of lives and property since the conflict broke out particularly in the 1980s with the restoration of electoral politics. It was estimated that by the end of 1994, about 500,000 were killed in the confrontation between the two groups.<sup>21</sup> The Jos conflict is another manifestation of crisis of citizenship rooted in native-stranger divide. The "indigenous" ethnic communities of Jos such as the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere regard the Hausa-Fulani as strangers who should not enjoy certain "privileges" particularly appointment or election into public office. This is in spite of the fact that Hausa-Fulani people have had long years of residence in Jos. The appointment of an Hausa-Fulani man as the Chairman of the Caretaker Management Committee of Jos North Local Government led to the communal violence of April 1994. The most recent of the Jos conflict, the September 2001 crisis, which claimed over 3,000 lives was triggered off by the appointment of a Jasawa (Hausa-Fulani Muslim), Mallam Muktar, regarded as a settler by the indigenous people, as the Director of Poverty Alleviation Programme, a federal government poverty reduction agency. It was feared by the indigenous ethnic groups of Jos (the Berom, Anaguta and Afisare) that Mallam Muktar would use his office to service the interest of his ethnic constituency: the minority Hausa Fulani.<sup>22</sup> The same pattern that characterizes the Jos conflict is at the root of the communal conflicts between the Bassa and the Ebira in

<sup>21</sup> Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform, *Memorandum submitted to the Presidential Committee on Provisions for and Practice of Citizenship and Rights in Nigeria*, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> U. Danfulani and S. Fwatshak, "The September 2001 Events in Jos, Nigeria". *African Affairs*, 101, 2002, 243-255.



Nasarawa/Toto area of Nasarawa State. The Bassa people alleged that they were subjected to several years of political, social and economic discrimination by the Ebira and that they were subjected to these discriminations because they were regarded as settlers by the Ebira who claimed they settled in the area around 1750 before the Bassa. But the Bassa rejected the claim of the Ebira and argued that they had settled in the area around 100AD. The first major hostilities between the two groups occurred in 1986 following the refusal of the Bassa community within the Ebira controlled villages to pay their taxes and levies to the State through Ebira village heads. This violence led to mass killings and destruction of property. The area witnessed another round of violence in late 1997 with heavier human and material casualty than 1986 violence.

The conflict between the Mambilla people on the one hand and the Bansa and Kamba people on the other hand on the Mambilla Plateau is also rooted in contestation over the indigeneity of the Mambilla Plateau. The Mambilla people lay claim over the area on the ground that they settled on the Plateau before other ethnic groups including the Fulani, the Bansa and Kamba. On the basis of this, the Mambilla people carried out several attacks against the Bansa and Kamba who are labeled "strangers" because their settlement in the area occurred in the post-Second World War period. In addition to the series of attacks, the Bansa and Kamba were subjected to exclusion and marginalization. The Ife-Modakeke conflict is unique to the extent that it is an intra-ethnic conflict. The dispute between the two sub-Yoruba groups was not over counter-claims to the "ownership" of Ife land. The Modakeke people are generally regarded as having come from Oyo as war refugees after the collapse of the Old Oyo empire and subsequent wars that followed the collapse. The contestation between the two sides has always centred around two main issues namely payment of royalties by the Modakekes to their landlords (the Ifes) for the use of lands belonging to the Ifes and the fear of political domination and marginalization always nursed by the Modakekes. The confrontation between the two warring sides has claimed several lives and property worth millions of naira. The last outbreak of violence between the two sides which occurred in the mid 1990s over the creation of local governments and siting of their

headquarters does demonstrate that at the heart of the seemingly unending conflict is competition for power and resources at the local level.

Concerned with how to cope with the challenges of a multicultural society that Nigeria is, policymakers in Nigeria have over the years adopted some measures aimed at guaranteeing fairness and equity among the ethnic components that constitute the Nigerian state. One of such measures was the introduction of the "federal character" principle into the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic. The adoption of such constitutional measures to regulate competition and access to values with a view to protecting the disadvantaged groups is a common practice in all countries that practise the federal logic. What is however striking about the Nigerian situation is that problems which are meant to be solved by these measures not only persist but are reinforced because of the way and manner the constitutional policies have been implemented by the governing elite.<sup>23</sup> At the constitutional level, the ambiguity in the extant constitutional provisions on Nigerian citizenship stems from the confusion the 1999 constitution (which is a reformed version of 1979 constitution) throws up between universal citizenship and indigeneship. While the former is acknowledged by the constitution as the basis of enjoyment of rights and privileges by the Nigerian citizens, the same constitution in another breath recognizes the latter, perhaps with greater vigour, as the basis of claiming rights and privileges within a geo-political space. Empirical experience in Nigeria demonstrates that universal citizenship merely confers abstract rights on the citizens while indigeneship on the other hand confers material benefits ranging from employment opportunities, political appointment, admission opportunities into educational institutions, and enjoyment of scholarships among other benefits. This represents the

<sup>23</sup> Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform, *Memorandum submitted to the Presidential Committee on Provisions for and Practice of Citizenship and Rights in Nigeria*, 2002.



actual basis of contestations and conflicts between "indigenes" and "settlers".<sup>24</sup>

### Overcoming the Indigene-Settler Question: What is to be done

Mouffe has aptly captured the challenge that the citizenship question poses to the multi-ethnic character of African States. According to him, "...one of the most discussed questions in many countries is how to establish a notion of citizenship that makes room for the increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of the population .... The difficulty seems to lie in the need to create unity without denying multiplicity. How might one combine an effective pluralism as far as cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and other identities are concerned while constructing a common political identity around an allegiance to shared political principles?"<sup>25</sup> This is an herculean task for Africa's governing elite. The task is more daunting because of the disappointing record and image of the political class in political and cultural tolerance. Citizenship remains crucial both to legitimacy of the state and its managers as well as to the feasibility of the democratic project.<sup>26</sup> Against this background, the need for the Nigerian state to come up with proactive measures to engender and sustain inclusive citizenship cannot be over-emphasized in view of the heavy human and material losses the Nigerian state has suffered arising from citizenship or identity-related conflicts. In putting forward proposals for promoting inclusive citizenship and overcoming the nagging problem of indigene-settler crisis, the proposals are divided into constitutional measures and non-constitutional measures.

<sup>24</sup> O. Alubo, *Ethnic Conflicts and Citizenship Crises in the Central Region* (Ibadan: Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> C. Mouffe, "Citizenship" in *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> A. Animashaun, "Genuine Democracy As a Tool for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria" *The Research Journal of the National Council for Arts and Culture. AGMADA* Vol. 2 No. 1, 2004.

### Constitutional measures

To the extent that the constitution represents the legal basis of citizenship and its entitlements, it must naturally be the point of departure in any effort aimed at reforming Nigerian citizenship. The inadequacies of the 1999 constitution to mediate the contradiction between "national" citizenship and its "local" version not only expose the document as incapable of serving as a framework for the management of Nigeria's pluralist formation, they also provide a rationale for reforming the constitution to meet the challenges of managing Nigeria's diversity under a democratic governance. To start with, all provisions relating to indigeneship status in the Nigerian statute books must not only be expunged, the extant practice of requiring Nigerians to state their place of birth or ethnic identity for the purpose of job placement, travel passports and admission into educational institutions should be replaced with place of residence. As for the length of time for a "settler" to become a native and thus enjoy full citizenship rights cum privileges in his or her place of domicile, a ten year residency will be a reasonable time period. This proposal will enjoy the support of many Nigerians as a way of expanding citizenship rights in Nigeria.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, there is a need to expand section 31 of the 1999 constitution to provide that any Nigerian who has lived in any state of the federation consecutively for ten years as a responsible citizen shall be allowed to have access to all the rights and privileges of the state including aspiring to any public office within the state. Also, section 147(3) should be reviewed to provide that anybody who is to be appointed a federal minister from any state shall be a person who has lived continuously in such state for a period of 10 years. Furthermore, section 26(2) of the constitution should be reviewed to allow foreign men married to Nigerian women to acquire Nigerian citizenship. To empower Nigerians economically, provisions on social and economic rights should be made justiciable.

<sup>27</sup> S. Egwu, F. Adalakin, F. and O. Igbuzor, *National Scientific Survey on the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform. Research Report, 2003.



*Non-Constitutional Measures*

Non-constitutional measures being proposed here span governance and policy issues. At the level of governance, responsible and responsive governance represents an effective anti-dote to overcome the conundrum of native-settler phenomenon. Those directing public affairs should do so in an inclusive manner that promotes the legitimate aspirations of all citizens. State powers and resources should not be dispensed in such a way that grants opportunities to a particular group and marginalizes others. Government must be seen to be fair and sensitive in the distribution of social amenities as well as in managing inter and intra-group conflicts. There is a need for government to formulate pro-poor policies that will promote social citizenship through heavy public investment in basic social services such as health, education, water and energy. Government should also intensify its poverty reduction efforts with a view to providing the citizenry with social and economic opportunities. In this era of neo-liberal market hegemony, such enterprise is bound to generate tension between economic rationality of the market logic and state social responsibility to the citizenry. Government should also strengthen state institutions for promoting accountability and transparency to enable them to effectively perform their oversight functions. This will help in restoring public confidence in state leadership which is currently at a low ebb.

It is important to emphasize the point that the successful implementation of the foregoing prescriptions faces certain challenges. The most salient of these are the elitist cum statist character of constitution making in Nigeria and the adversarial rather than coalescent attitude of Nigeria's governing elite. The statist character of constitution building in Nigeria was demonstrated in the way and manner delegates to the last National Political Reform Conference were chosen as well as the way the National Assembly Joint Committee that considered the report of the Conference organized the post-conference public hearings which prevented many stakeholders in the Nigerian Project from either submitting memoranda or making appearance before the committee. To overcome these challenges requires civil society intervention. It is gratifying to note that some civil society

organizations in Nigeria have involved themselves in efforts aimed at democratizing constitution making enterprise with a view to making it an inclusive and non-elitist project. One of these non-state actors is Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), a coalition of about 80 civil society organizations in Nigeria. The Forum has carried out a lot of activities on issues relating to the constitution including the compilation and release of a model constitution which addresses some of the contentious issues in the Nigerian federal framework.

**Conclusion**

The Nigerian state has witnessed and is still witnessing several ethnic-related and communal conflicts which have not only created social and cultural gulf among the different ethnic constituencies in the country but have equally created fetters to the achievement of the nation-state project. While the causes and patterns of identity-related conflicts in Nigeria are multi-dimensional and dynamic making them to be complex and deep-seated, the conflicts are still not insurmountable. To successfully manage these conflicts, however, requires a political or governing elite imbued with statesmanship and spirit of tolerance.



## State Creation and Inter Group Relations: The Nigerian Experience

Solomon Akhere Benjamin

### Introduction

Federalism has come to stay as an important feature of modern politics in Nigeria. As a part of the legacies of colonial rule, its history in Nigeria has been associated with the complex problem of balancing of conflicting claims which include majority-minority claims, north/south dichotomy, sharing spoils of office, state or ethnic representation, among others. Some of these issues are parts and parcel of Nigeria's attempt to redress imbalance in the political system. It is the attempt to associate all important units of the society with the country's management of the above problems which have invariably resulted in the frequent states reorganisations among others.<sup>1</sup> It is designed to cement the relationship among the different socio-cultural groups together. In the beginning, the initiative in the demand for new states was taken by leaders of minority ethnic groups. In an overwhelming atmosphere of ethnic consciousness and the struggle for political power, the minority groups were inexorably drawn into ethnic politics to protect themselves. The focus of their involvement resembles that of the splitting of the nationalist movement.

<sup>1</sup> D. C. Bach, "Managing a Plural Society: The Boomerang effects of Nigerian Federalism" *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. XXVII, July, No. 2, 1989, pp. 218-245.

The minority leaders being unable to achieve power or retain regional power, decided for leadership of sub regional entities with a view to having their share from the socio-economic benefits that could accrue from public service. This option was encouraged by the intense circumstances of ethnic rivalry, divisiveness and tension emanating from the political events of the leaders of the dominant ethnic groups – Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. Invariably, the minority leaders perceived their opportunities for political leadership, contract, senior positions in the public service and loans for business activities as threatened by the tendency of the governing parties to secure these gains for their own ethnic factions. By leading minority group agitation against domination and for regional status for their ethnic homelands, these leaders hoped to carve out a place in the country's political and socio-economic climate for themselves.<sup>2</sup> All these events have inevitably added impetus to the unceasing agitation for States creation in Nigerian federation over the past four decades, thereby instead of states creation enhancing accommodation, it has in the contrary, become a problem area of conflicts among the various social groups.

From all indications evidence abound to prove that states creation in Nigeria over the years has had no ethnic-cultural basis, rather it had been motivated and directed by socio-economic and political foundations. Perhaps the desire for new states was not genuinely motivated by fear of being dominated as people were made to believe. This is because neither the regional governments nor those of the states carved out of them embarked on any clear cut cultural policies such as the institutionalisation of language or cultural traditions different from what prevailed in the past.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in spite of the proliferation of states in Nigeria, none of the new states has come up with a model of dynamic cultural and linguistic policies that is geared towards self-assertion and identity, rather they merely continued with the colonial legacies. Their policies and actions have been limited to socio-economic and political realms. All the same, the new states have been highly welcomed by their

<sup>2</sup> O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> O. Nnoli, *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria* (Avebury: Ashagate Publishing Company, Aldershot, 1995) p. 169.



inhabitants even when they were not ethnically homogeneous' (Benjamin, 1996).

The problem of state and local government reorganisations tends to persist because it is impossible to have a perfect ethno-territorial federation no matter how rationally state and local government boundaries are drawn. This means that multi-ethnic federations face the problem of restructuring. The situation is made worse in highly multi-ethnic federations like Nigeria where the ethno-linguistic groups number over 300. Since it would be impracticable, even undesirable to have as many as 300 states considering the enormous costs involved and considering the fact that not all ethnic units would be viable, the problem is often intractable. The intensity of the problem is however, a function of the salient ethnic factor in the body politic and the extent to which ethnic groups feel accommodated in the federation without necessarily having states of their own.

The proponents of group representation have tended to justify their claims in terms of discrimination against particular groups, who as a consequence find themselves excluded from policy deliberation and determination. The protection of majority groups was in the early period of Nigerian political history paramount and therefore, was explicitly referred to when creating new states (meant to allay the fears of minorities). Although one of the central factors for frequent states creation in the country had been to manage the problem of inter-group relations, but we are not too sure if this problem has been overcome today with the creation of 36 states, a federal capital territory and 774 local government areas.

It is against this background that this chapter critically examines the question of states and local governments creation in Nigeria with regard to inter-group relations. To accomplish this task, the chapter begins with the above introduction, followed by an overview of state creation in Nigeria. Sections three, four and five examine the impact of states and local governments creation on inter-group relations considering the case of the 1996 states and local governments

<sup>4</sup> S. A. Benjamin, *State and Local Government Reorganisations in Nigeria*, NISER Monograph Series, No. 21, Ibadan, 1999, p. 3.

reorganization, the post 1996 states creation development in the country. The final section concludes the discussion.

### An Overview of States Creation in Nigeria

Unlike the classical models, Nigerian federalism has not been operated as an aggregated one. Also, it was not established through the incorporation of external units into an initial core. Nigeria's external boundaries were set by the colonial powers and the country's number of states grew as a result of the fragmentation of an initial territorial entity. Once divided, the states have developed or were endowed with rigorously identical functional characteristics, hence the reference to disparity. In the United States, Canada and India, new states or provinces have at times been carved out in a similar fashion, but this was never done so systematically as in Nigeria where the multiplication of units has become unrelated to internal revenue generating capacities. This means political and other extraneous factors have been considered weightier than economic factors in creating more states in Nigeria.

In most contemporary federal systems, the concept of political restructuring connotes different meanings to different political leaders. Whereas some leaders may find political restructuring as a means of reducing the power of the constituents units of the federation, thereby strengthening the power of the centre, others find it as a mechanism for reducing the power at the centre. Yet some others find it as one of the important factors for maintaining the required linkages between the democratic lead and democratic practice in the political process in the society they govern. Thus political restructuring appears to be informed by the poor praxis of an admittedly formed federal system. Hence, the clamour for restructuring is more stringent in countries with a federal form of government (plus a federal constitution) but with a unitary practice.<sup>5</sup> Here, it suffices to say that political restructuring through

<sup>5</sup> Amuwo *et al.*, "On the Notion of Political Restructuring in a Federal System", in Kunle Amuwo *et al.*, ed., *Federalism and political Restructuring in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books and IFRA 1998) p. 5.



states creation has continued to be a popular issue in Nigerian federalism.

The history of administrative reorganisation can be traced to the colonial days when the colonial office assumed control over the territories of the Royal Niger Company. In other words, the problems of politico-administrative restructuring in Nigeria have their historical origins in the methods of British colonisation and colonial administration in which patterns of penetration, concentration of socio-economic activities and the practices of indirect rule discriminated between and among the composite ethnic and regional groups in the country.<sup>6</sup>

In 1943, Azikiwe published a classic statement on Nigerian nationalism entitled political blueprint of Nigeria, wherein he proposed a federal system of government based on eight geographical zones denominated "protectorates". Eme Awa observes accurately, that Azikiwe's federal scheme would have produced an "overcentralised government," albeit "in the interest of all." This tendency characterized NCNC federalist thought during the entire period of its existence.

Similarly, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1947) on reflection of the structure of Nigeria then recommended that the country be divided into ten states based on the old ethno-linguistic provinces. However, none of the foregoing suggestions by the early nationalists was actualised. Perhaps it is for this reason that the question of states and local governments' creation remains an unresolved problem in the country. Undoubtedly, state and local government reorganisations in the country came to acquire a new dimension particularly since 1987 when the factor of political expediency outweighed other factors in such exercises. Moreover, the attempt to associate all important units of the society with the country's management of the complex problem of balancing of

<sup>6</sup> Irikefe Panel, Nigeria Federal Republic Report of the Panel Appointed by the Federal Military government to investigate the issue of the creation of More States and Boundary Adjustments in Nigeria, Lagos, Government Printer, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> E. Awa, Federal Government in Nigeria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964) p. 27.

conflicting claims invariably results in the frequent states reorganisations, among others.<sup>8</sup>

The acknowledgment of equality of federating units is fundamental to achieving meaningful accommodation. This is true because stability in multi-ethnic states is best guaranteed if it equals acceptance and accommodation of the interests and benefits of all constituent parties. Thus, federalism and decentralisation offer a genuine hope for successful inter-group relations in Nigeria. In other words, it appears to be the solution to many actual or potential ethnic and other minority problems). It is for this reason that states and local government reorganisations became a central issue in the Nigerian politics in the last four decades. Indeed, the issue of state and local government reorganisations remains one of the most intractable problems in the Nigerian federal system.

The forgoing points to the fact that states creation in Nigeria did not begin with the creation of the defunct Midwest Region in 1963, as many Nigerians are always tempted to argue. What is true however is that the issue of state creation in Nigeria has since ages remained a constitutional one, perhaps due to the way and manner it was introduced into the country's politics. In short, the demand for the creation of states is as old as the Nigerian federation. The inadequacies of the federal structure which resulted from colonial conception are clearly at the root of the problem of state and local governments' creation. As it is, the search continues for a true federalism in which all groups, large and small, are guaranteed a right place.

Between 1946 and 1966, Nigeria could be described as a federation premised on regionalism. Within this era of regionalism in Nigerian federalism, the practice was such that it forms a basis for people's representation in major political events or institutions as well as a platform for the main political parties which competed for offices. Also, regionalism as it were, formed the basis for power sharing among the

<sup>8</sup> D.C. Bach, "Managing a Plural Society: The Boomerang effects of Nigerian Federalism" *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. XXVII, July, No. 2, 1989, pp. 218-245.



ruling elites as well as the major ethnic groups in the federation. Besides, it forms the basis for political accommodation among the heterogeneous groups and the existing political parties in the federation.

### Political Economy of States Proliferation and its Implications for Inter-Group Relationship

The issue of state creation exercise in Nigeria has undoubtedly accentuated ethnic minority consciousness in several significant respects. For instance, some groups such as the Tiv and the Urhobo who are minorities in the larger national contexts constitute ethnic majorities in their respective states. The same charges of domination and marginalisation which such groups level against the dominant groups at the national level are hurled at them when they constitute ethnic majorities at the state level. The Idoma of Benue State, for instance, accuse the Tiv of using their numerical superiority to dominate and sideline them in the allocation of resources in the state. Moreover, the state creation exercise is frequently interpreted by ethnic minorities as a political device to increase economic and political prerogatives of the majorities. This accusation derives from the practice of sharing federal resources on state basis. Thus, from this perspective, the Yoruba with six states and the Igbo with five states get six and five shares respectively instead of one share each that would have accrued to them if states were created on ethnic basis.

Indeed, the Nigeria's ethnic minorities have consistently found themselves being dissatisfied with the distribution of power and resources in the country. Invariably, this has remained so because the majority ethnic groups have often used their numerical superiority to exploit, oppress and dominate the minorities. Thus, the minority agitations over power, representation and control over resources pose fundamental challenges to the nature and processes of federalism in Nigeria. Besides, the potency of minority agitations is the unsettled issue

over the appropriate basis for the constituent units of the Nigerian federation.<sup>9</sup>

From the foregoing, state creation has become one creative response to the problem of the national question. But by 1976 the increasing demand for more states had found different justifications. The biggest reason for more states was no longer that of rescuing minorities from domination but that of achieving more balanced development or promoting more development by bringing it closer to the people. At this point, both majority and minority want more states created. Justice Irikefe Panel on States creation in Nigeria was clear on this when it states that:

The basic motivation for more states is rapid economic development. All other reasons adduced by state agitators are in the view of the panel, to a large extent mere rationalization to achieve the basic purpose of development.<sup>10</sup>

The merit of the post 1967 state creation as one package of policy solutions to the problem of accommodation is the manifestation of its ambiguous character. Once states are created as avenues for promoting development, the states begin to see themselves as primary units for participating and sharing in the development of the system. Permitting "non-indigenes" of a state to share equally in the services of the state means depriving the indigenes" of the state some of their "due" national share. If states have become the primary units for participating in the development of the nation-state, then states also begin to become primary units of loyalty and emotional attachment in the system. This is the basis of the dual citizenship phenomenon in Nigeria. You are the citizen of a state and the citizen of Nigerian but the state (home state) comes first for you because you gain more from it: you are an indigene of a state from which you get your full entitlements but from which

<sup>9</sup> Pita Agbese, "Federalism and the Minority Question in Nigeria", in Aaron T. Gana and Samuel G. Egwu, eds. *Federalism in Africa*, vol. 2 (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003) p. 238.

<sup>10</sup> Irikefe Panel, Nigeria Federal Republic Report of the Panel Appointed by the Federal Military government to investigate the issue of the creation of More States and Boundary Adjustments in Nigeria, Lagos, Government Printer, 1975, p. 10.



“non-indigenes” are excluded or discriminated against. Neither the first nor the second helps in achieving meaningful accommodation in the federation.

In short, Nigerian federalism over the years has been a matching trend towards centralisation.<sup>11</sup> This development started with the creation of more states especially since 1976 when the central government demonstrated an increased capacity to alter unilaterally and in its own favour, the existing distribution of power between it and the regional governments and, indeed, among the various levels of government. Second, there has been an increasing accretion to the federal governments of functions previously allocated to the regional (or state) governments. Third, the resources-coercive, bureaucratic, ideological and financial- directly available to the component units (regions or states) for carrying out their constitutional functions have steadily diminished in range and quantum while those at the disposal of the federal government have increased.<sup>12</sup>

The development resulting from state creation has been such that only insignificant number of states is able to raise enough resources to meet with the requirements of their workers and essential responsibilities. The pervasive trend has been heavy dependence on the centre for its revenue while the contribution of internal revenue is yearly becoming less significant. It is even worse with the local governments. The implication of the foregoing is such that states are becoming weaker and weaker to the extent that they can no longer challenge the overbearing attitude of the central government which is becoming over powerful and domineering, thereby making the states and local governments prowess to the central government which until 1999 was essentially a northern preserve. This also means that the Nigerian federation no longer provides sufficient guarantees for equity, territorial justice, and mutual security.

<sup>11</sup> Even as there is general consensus among scholars that ‘over-centralisation’ or ‘over-robust centralisation’ of power and public policies has weakened or damaged Nigerian federalism (Ekeh, 1997:7-8; Tamuno, 1998:19), the).

<sup>12</sup> Assisi Asobie, 1998, “Centralising Trends in Nigerian Federalism”, In Tunde Babawale, Kola Olufemi, and Funmi Adewumi, eds., *Re-inventing Federalism in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited).

Little wonder, therefore, that there is loud cry for a national conference to address<sup>13</sup> the basis of the association of Nigerian citizens. The situation has also necessitated the occasional call for confederal arrangement as a solution to the country’s national question. Perhaps the pertinent question to ask is why in spite of the foregoing has the issue of state creation remained a recurring one? The answer to this question is not far-fetched, as it has become obvious that states are now used as units of representation and outlets for distribution of resources. Thus, the more states an ethnic group has, the more powerful an ethnic group can be, though this argument cannot be stressed too far, especially from the prism of chief Anthony Enahoro’s point of view.

Unfortunately, the dependency culture continues to create the erroneous belief in many (and perhaps, most) Nigerians that the economic resources of Nigeria belong to the Nigerian government. Be that as it may, the Nigerian government is seen as synonymous with the people who are holding the reins of power. Hence, it is vital for every ethnic group in the country to endeavour to be holders of the rein of power. Everybody aims for the ideal situation, to have his own state and to be in control of the federal government, thus, to be able to control and share the national economic resources, first to self, to own state and then to as many others that would condescend to beg for favours.

However, state creation in Nigeria has always been based on certain criteria which include: population, land mass, economic viability, and cultural affinity. In the consideration for the past states created the points for and against each case are hardly ever exhausted fully. Thus, other factors include politics, influence, selfishness and sentiments which are brought to bear on the exercise. For instance, the creation of only Akwa-Ibom and Katsina States in 1987 out of the multitude of states demanded for by Nigerians appeared to have been motivated by political factors including the influence of some power-brokers from the states in question.

Apart from the fact that the aforementioned principles have been regularly employed in the successive state-creation exercises, it is a fact

<sup>13</sup> Association of Nigerian Scholars for dialogue intervened rather robustly in the Nigerian federalism debate during its Wilberforce Conference in May 1997.



that they have not succeeded in preventing opposition to the state-structure and further demands for new states. Perhaps this has been due to the inconsistency or arbitrariness with which the principles have been put into use. In short, one popular view has been that the phenomenon of state creation in Nigeria had been informed more by overt or covert political maneuvers, gratification and manipulations as against other considerations such as objective principles or neutral criteria.

The question of states creation may be rightly attributed to a number of other factors such as grievances, injustice, marginalisation and unfairness particularly in relations to the minorities in the country. Without fear of contradiction, it is apt to argue that states creation in Nigeria with specific reference to 1996, has undoubtedly failed to put into consideration economic viability, while the desire to conquer the centre and to satisfy class interests remains the basic yardstick (for states creation). Consequently, states creation is being anchored on manipulation of ethnicity and exploitation of the innocence of the people. For this reason the various exercises have hardly achieved their desired objectives, as they merely encouraged ethnic consciousness or hostile attitude towards none members of a given state by invoking the notion of non-indigene to deny many fellow citizens their privileges, rights and opportunities. This is what has been described as an "over-powering statism which inextricably intertwines political and economic power."

In Nigeria, state creation during civilian regime had not been an easy task. The uncompromising attitude of the regional leaders to have states created from their regions compounded the rigidity of constitutional provisions. The provisions of 1979, 1989 and the current 1999 Constitutions relating to states creation were no less rigid. It is against this backdrop of rigidity in constitutional provisions that states creation in Nigeria remains virtually a military affair. It has been relatively easy for the military to create new states because, in all military regimes, the nation's constitution is always under suspension, while daily governance is carried out through promulgation of decrees and edicts.

Furthermore, the self-serving elitist agitation for the creation of their own state was made more legitimate by the fact that all newly

created states were given special treatment by the federal government through the diversion of resources to the new states. Thus, as soon as a new state was carved out of an existing one, the two states together would get almost double what the former unit used to get. Apart from the special allocations to make it possible to duplicate all the administrative structures of the carved-out state, the federal government readily makes available special funds to provide state-symbol projects such as a Television Station, a Radio Station, an ultra-modern secretariat, two-lane double-carriage way lighted streets, modern markets, and so on.

It is against this background one can argue that one of the achievements of states creation in Nigeria is the entrenchment of class formation and intra-class struggles within the locally dominant class.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, having access to and/or control of state apparatuses or institutions are vital for this class in consolidating its dominance and as its members seek opportunities for personal wealth or accumulation of capital. Given the primacy of the state and the critical importance of access to and/or control over its apparatuses, those members of the dominant class that lack this access and/or control initiated or strongly supported, the demand for new states. They sought to create in other words, an arena which would permit them the access and/or control that they lacked.

Truly, the rapid rise in the number of states within two decades has no doubt led to the multiplication of personnel and administrative facilities in the public sector. Needless to say that any attempt to create more states will further aggravate the existing problems, especially that of overhead expenses.

However, a more authentic explanation for the unceasing pressures for states and local government areas reorganisations in the country relates to the distributive imperatives and advantages of state-creation within the context of Nigeria's unique federal practice. The evolving distributive approach to federalism and territorial reforms in the country have invariably promoted the establishment of constituent

<sup>14</sup> Eme Ekewe, *Class and States in Nigeria* (Lagos: Longman, 1986) p. 1.



governments into a veritable source of socio-economic opportunities and political patronage for sectional elites and communities. Even outside the formal revenue sharing framework, the federal government has consistently involved the principle of inter-state equality in distributing a wide range of tangible benefits among the citizenry. These benefits include such socio-economic amenities and physical infrastructures as educational institutions, hospitals, roads, electricity, office complex and state-level branches of key federal agencies and ministries. Prior to the creation of nine new states in 1991, for example, the Federal Government approved expenditures of ₦70 million each for the construction of governor's office complex and executive council chambers in new secretariat, ₦17.5 million for each new state high court complex, ₦10 million for township roads in every new state capital, ₦5 million for each new state police headquarters and another ₦5 million for the headquarters of the Federal Ministry of works in every state capital.

A similar approach was adopted by the Abacha regime for the six new states it created in October 1996, to enable them establish their state houses of assembly, high court and secretariats. In view of the foregoing, there is an ongoing debate by Nigerians to redefine and redesign the federal system of the country. For the protagonists efforts had been geared towards restructuring the system, through a national conference (purposely to address the national question). Largely due to this development, the Abacha military regime convened a constitutional conference on June 27, 1994, in an apparent attempt to curtail then the mounting pressures for a national conference (to re-examine the basis for the Nigerian federation). Hence one of the resolutions reached by the constitutional conference before its expiration was the recommendation of 20 states out of the 45 cases that were brought before it. This recommendation later formed one of the reference points for Mbanefo Committee on States and Local Governments Creation (1995/96) and Boundary Adjustment, the final event of which was the creation of six states in 1996.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Mbanefo Committee, *The Guardian*, Lagos, "Focus", Monday January 22, 1996, p.11.

Perhaps we need to appreciate one significant fact that although citizens' demand for states have been geared towards promoting even development within their respective states and to allay the fears of minorities through fairness and justice in all government matters, it has not in any way stopped the agitation for the creation of new states. Although the minorities' fear of domination by the major ethnic groups have been at the heart of the demand for the creation of new states, other more overriding economic justifications have down-graded all the initial reasons for them. Remarkably, if assuaging minorities' fear was the only reason, there would have been no need to carve six states out of the former Western State, nor would there be any need to break the former East-Central State into Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi States. The ethnic groups in the former Western and East Central States are internally as homogeneous as the people of Kano State, for which reason Kano demanded for more states and it has since 1991 got that.

For purpose of emphasis, the amount of "national cake" Nigerians are expected to grab when their separate states are carved out for them have proved most significant in states creation in Nigerian federation. This appears to be the dominant factor particularly in recent years when creating new states and local governments have become one of the easiest sources for certain people in the society to achieving their life ambition, especially in terms of power and wealth.<sup>16</sup> As Nwabueze argues: "an efficient, effective balanced, and cohesive federal system thrives upon multiplicity of states and interest groups reacting upon one another to produce equilibrium."<sup>17</sup> In essence, therefore, a multiplicity of units creates a feeling of inter-dependence, which in turn encourages cooperation and mutual balance. This means with the present structure, Nigeria ought to be in a better footing (as a united nation) as against the prevailing situation.

One major issue which agitates the minds of scholars and commentators, on states creation in Nigeria, is the question of what

<sup>16</sup> S. A. Benjamin, *The Problems and Prospects of State Creation in Nigeria: The Case of Oyo and Osun States*, NISER Monograph Series No. 4, Ibadan, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> B. O. Nwabueze, *Nigeria 93: The Political Crisis and solutions*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1995.



should be the minimum number of states required to enhance a structurally balanced and politically stable federation?

Our response to the foregoing has been clearly stated (42 states may be optimal) earlier on in this chapter with reasons. Nevertheless, no agreement had been reached on this issue. The reality of course, is that state creation in Nigeria has been a matter of realpolitik of elite accommodation in the accumulation process, depending, among other things, on the political clout of state agitators and their access to military regimes. Therefore, to finally resolve the question of states creation we might need to recognise the fact that it is an inherent part of Nigeria's efforts at resolving the national question. Be that as it may, it entails a consideration of the ethnic regional and other sectional sub-national identities and interests. The problem of nation-building is not about eliminating sub-national identities but how to make them compatible with national identity and loyalty to the end that whenever there is a conflict, the later prevails.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Ogoni people in the present Rivers State and the issue of Ijaws being scattered among a number of states in the southern part of the country and the issue of creating a new Delta State with its capital located within its own domain. By this we mean that Anioma State should be created with its capital at Asaba. Likewise, the creation of a separate state for southern Kaduna minorities needs to be looked into if the issue of states creation must be resolved once and for all.

At this point, it is imperative to note that the issue of state creation has become relevant since the Fourth Republic only when situations arise such as campaign periods and when national debates/conferences (for example, the National Political Reform Conference) are held. At the moment, in terms of north-south imbalance, the north has an edge over the south (19 states to 17 states). If the intermittent clamour by the north to making Abuja be treated like a state is granted, such would further increase the number of states in the north to 20, which would invariably widen the gap between the north and the south in relation to north-south imbalance.

<sup>18</sup> E. Osaghae, "The Crisis of National Identity in Africa: Clearing the Conceptual Underbush", *Plural Societies* vol. Xix, No. 2 & 3, March, 1990, p. 116.

With the present 36 states and the 774 local government areas in the federation, no single state is large enough to threaten the stability of the country or become the source of fear of domination to other states. Nigeria's multi-state federal system enhances some measure of political and policy autonomy for territorial communities at the sub-federal level. A major weakness of the present 36-state structure is that none is as strong as the former regions. They are devoid of a robust diversified productive agricultural economic base or their own constitutions or local -level forces. They cannot effectively restrain the centre from regulating the conduct of local government affairs, and must operate within a centralized federal constitutional framework in which the federal government can legitimately intervene in practically every matter of public importance. The foregoing notwithstanding, the states nevertheless enjoy some degree of authority to spend the federally devolved revenues, to promote local languages and cultures, and develop local laws and courts.

In the Fourth Republic, the constitutional accommodation of sharia legal system was put to test by a number of northern Muslim states, probably to extend the scope of Islamic law from mainly personal and civil cases all the way to criminal issues, including the enforcement or codification of strict Islamic sanction. The multi-state structure obviously has functioned to diffuse and decentralize the sharia crisis partly because of the fragmentation of the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani north into several states. Indeed, a major achievement of multi-state federalism in Nigeria has involved the use of federal structure to fragment, crosscut and sublimate the identities of each of the major ethnic formations of Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. Unlike the old regional structure, which had more or less consolidated each major group into a single strong constituent unit, the current 36-state structure distributes the major ethnic groups into approximately 22 states, including about 10 Hausa-Fulani states, 7 Yoruba states, and 5 Igbo states. This distribution has helped to expose and reinforce historic sub-ethnic cleavages within each major group, as evidenced in the conflicts between otherwise ethnically homogeneous major ethnic states over the sharing of assets of subdivided regional or state units, revenue allocation,



and the employment in state-level bureaucracies of so-called non-indigenes.

The proliferation of each of the major ethnic groups into several states has functioned both to relegate each group into smaller states that cannot individually threaten the authority of the federal government, and to generally dilute and moderate the aggressive Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo chauvinisms that had found expression through the old regional system, generated bitter inter-ethnic and secessionist conflict, and brought the country to the brink of disintegration. To be sure, the major ethnic groups have continued to demonstrate considerable internal cohesion as they compete with each other in bidding for supremacy in national politics. But such major inter-group conflicts now take place in a more ethnically fluid, decentralized and crosscutting context than the defunct regional framework.

Again, state proliferation in Nigeria has no doubt helped to empower the ethnic minorities in the federation. Whereas the old ethno-regional federal structure had corralled the minorities into majority-controlled regions, the present 36-state structure includes some 14 ethnic minority-controlled states. Also, political restructuring through states creation should ideally lead to the establishment of a national identity (even as the range of inter-group relations are enlarged) that would progressively lead to the emergence of national character in spite of the plural nature of Nigeria. It is expected to enhance ethnic preferences or what can be referred to as local captures, to enhance effective management of crisis of national integration. But in the post independence Nigerian politics, imbalance in the federal structure has been allowed to generate and aggravate crises, while proffered solutions have tended to be of an ad-hoc nature, leading often to debates on the national question. To this extent states creation in Nigeria has not fully attained its purposes and objectives.

As it is the present thirty-six administrative political structure of Nigeria is deficient and economically unviable. It is not an overstatement to say that the creation of more states has given rise to multiple looting, a massive bureaucracy, corruption and embezzlement of public funds on a scale that was hardly seen when Nigeria had regional governments. This is not by any means suggesting our going

back to the old regional system nor does it imply that creation of more states is totally evil. But what we are saying is that with so many states in existence, the assets and resources of the nation are being frittered away by the numerous federal and state establishments. And some of the states are so poor that they hardly afford basic amenities for their citizens (cf. *West African*, 31 January/February, 1994:156). Consequently, the dependency syndrome and the commonality of inadequate economic resources have created an atmosphere conducive to grabbing and scrambling for economic benefits and advantages.

More importantly, a number of lessons can be drawn from states proliferation in the country. For instance, states proliferation has undoubtedly helped to strengthen the centre, while weakening the parts and thus making the states ever more dependent on the federal superstructure. Invariably, the states have merely graduated into glorified local governments, but too weak to meet the challenges of state reorganisations in the country. It is perhaps for this reason Larry Diamond remarked that "... the greater the number of states, the weaker and less viable individual states will become, with the direct consequence that the centre would actually gather more powers and initiative.<sup>19</sup> This implies that no single state or an association of a few states can bring about the experience of 1967 (secessionist attempt). This is not to say all is well with the Nigerian federal system already, after all there is still political disaffection as exemplified by the frequent calls for national conference to resolve the Nigerian question by prominent Nigerians.<sup>20</sup> The proliferation of states has indeed whittled down the economic base of states as well as weakened the federal system.

Moreover, if past experience is anything to go by powerful states within a federation are necessary concomitant for guaranteeing individual liberties in addition to group liberties. In essence the

<sup>19</sup> L. Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of First Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

<sup>20</sup> Among these prominent Nigerians are: Tony Enahoro, Richard Akinjide, Alex Ekwueme, Bola Ige, Wole Soyinka et al. See also, Alex Ekwueme: *Faults Practice of Federalism*, Proffers Options, *The Guardian*, Nigerian, Friday 2, May, 1997 p.1; *Daily Sketch*, Ibadan, Wednesday, 14 May, 1997, p. 15.



proliferation of states obviously mellow down the power of states to check the excesses of an overbearing federal might. This again means while powerful states can threaten the stability of the federation small states without viability can neutralize the deterrent effect of states in inter-state and centre-state relation.

Proliferation of states tends to create a vicious cycle which results in frequent demand for new states. Yet, the balkanisation of the country into numerous states and local government areas has equally meant the ultimate death of the erstwhile competitive spirit in the days of three or four regions. Then, the regions were powerful engines for economic and social development. All the same, states creation has to some extent strengthened the spirit of federal principles, in particular, by meeting the yearnings and aspirations of some citizenry in the country. Also, it has contributed to the government objectives of increasing mass participation both at the state and local government levels through decision-making process as well as participation in national and local politics. By this we mean that expansion in the number of Nigerians who are now involved in domestic politics and decision-making process have been enhanced.

However, failure to adequately address the problem of minorities still persists. Whereas the major ethnic groups get more states and, therefore, more federal patronage and largesse, the minorities get a proportionally lesser number of states and end up more the losers. For instance, out of the six new states created in 1996, only two belong to the minority group, while the remaining four belong to the main ethnic groups. Also, out of the present 36-state structure in the federation only fourteen are minorities as against twenty-two for major ethnic groups.

Though the minorities account for as much as 45 per cent of the population, they have something close to 35 per cent<sup>21</sup> of the states while the other big three groups possess a disproportionately high 65 per cent

<sup>21</sup> See Allison A. Ayida, *Reflections on Nigerian Development*, Malthouse Press Limited and Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Limited, 1987, p.55. Here, it is stated that the three-prong approach ignited the wishes and the stability role of the minorities who form about 45% of the Nigerian population.

of the nation's resources.<sup>22</sup> The injustice of the system takes a frightening dimension as the producers of oil, now 90 per cent of the nation's wealth, are the southern minorities who get less than 15 per cent of the nation's revenue. These gross inequalities have in the past led to the Movement for National Reconciliation and Ogoni formulae calling for federations based on nationalities and historical ties.

However, there are lessons to be derived from the last two editions (1991 and 1996) of state and local government reorganisations relative to the previous ones, particularly the 1991 case. Whereas the 1991 state creation inevitably, defeated the essence of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Babangida regime, the 1996 states reorganisation tried to some extent to avoid extra-budgetary expenses. In particular, the 1991 state creation resulted in overriding extra budgetary expenses thereby causing the nation and the states to incur internal and external debts. This was paradoxical in the sense that SAP was enunciated, partly to avoid deficit in the nation's budgetary system and also to bring about expansion/growth and development in the non-oil sector of the country's economy.<sup>23</sup> In line with this policy, at the swearing in-ceremony, the Military administrators to the 1996 new states were reminded of the need to look inward rather than depending on special grants for the development of their respective states. They were advised to mobilise the people in developing their new states.

The exercise itself results to a shift in the political transition time table as earlier mentioned. As it came to be, some communities which lost out in the aforementioned exercise refused as a matter of protest to participate in the voters' registration exercise as well as the local government elections, during the Abacha Political Transition Programme. Indeed, a number of ugly incidents occurred as a result of the 1996 states and local government areas reorganisations. Some of these problems started to emerge months after the exercise of

<sup>22</sup> S. A. Benjamin, "Federalism, Identity Crisis and Resurgent Nationalism in the fourth Republic," in Olu Ajakaiye and Roberts Nyemutu, *Meeting the Challenges of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria*, NISER, Ibadan, 2000, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> S. A. Benjamin, *The Problems and Prospects of State Creation in Nigeria: The Case of Oyo and Osun States*, NISER Monograph Series No. 4, Ibadan, 1996.



reorganisation. In many of the instances, the resultant effects have been very unpalatable and costly too, as they tend to undermine the stability of the country. What was initially thought to bring joy, progress and development to many communities (the creation of a new local government and more importantly, sitting the council headquarters proved to be harbingers of strife, acrimony, death and destruction.<sup>24</sup>

Soon after the federal government effected some adjustments in the structures of some local government areas created in October 1996 and the adjustments of March 13, 1997, an unprecedented number of protests evolved in virtually all the affected local government areas. Critical among them are those from Osun, Delta, Rivers, Ondo, Kwara, Sokoto, Zamfara, Imo, Bauchi and Akwa-Ibom states. In these states, protests erupted like volcano, thus resulting to hundreds of lives being lost, and properties destroyed, while a number of other citizens fled their homes for safety. What is more, in areas where violence has not erupted, there was deep hostility with the neighbouring communities perhaps waiting for an opportunity to strike the adversary.

## Conclusion

The creation of 36 states and the 774 local government units between 1987 and 1996 by the military remains a major achievement towards wide participation in the political process in Nigeria. State creation in Nigeria has indeed heightened the problems of states especially as it pertains to federal-state relations and the ability of the states to generate revenue. Politically, in spite of a harrowing civil war undertaken to make for national unity and integration, Nigeria has not substantially moved beyond the concept of a "mere geographical expression" as her quest for nationhood has been buffeted by ethnicity, regionalism, religious bigotry and communal hostilities. In other words, while a geographic entity called Nigeria exists, she is yet to mould her constituent units into Nigerians. Primordial identities have continued to take precedence over national ones.

<sup>24</sup> S.A. Benjamin, "1999 Constitution: Implications for Political Structure", Olu Ajakaiye and Solomon Akhere Benjamin ed., *Issues in The Review of the 1999 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria* (Ibadan: NISER, 1999).

Thus, within a space of 36 years<sup>25</sup>, Nigeria evolved a process of internal fragmentation rather than of outward expansion, from a federation of three regions to a polity of 36 constituent states. Similarly, local governments have metamorphosed from 229 in 1970 to 301 (1979) and then to 781 (1981) before they were reverted again to 301 (1984) and increased first to 449 (1987), 500 (1991), 589 (1991) and 774 (Table 3.1) in 1996.

Importantly, a number of defects such as unmitigated abrupt dissolution of elected local government councils, the use of federal might to remove local government chairmen from office and the elite blockage of 'government to the people', the far reaching changes introduced under the state and local government systems touch many fundamental aspects of democratisation at the grassroots. Interestingly, more 'representatives of the people' now have access to the decision-making processes as compared with the immediate post-independence and the early period of military rule in the country. In essence, the fragmentation of the centres of power provides a handsome basis for the articulation of the country's diverse interests and the aggregation of leaders' and community demands. However, this is not to say that the quality of the demands made and satisfaction on behalf of the people can not be questioned. It is rather too paradoxical to observe that virtually all the vices that becloud national democracy also apply to the local democracy in all ramifications.

Finally, the creation of additional states and many new local government areas have in no small measure altered the relationship between the federal and the existing states on one hand, and the various socio-cultural groups on the other. In spite of this, local government in Nigeria has precisely moved from the parochial confines of the traditional elite to that of mass concern. It touches the lives of the masses more than those of any other level of government. Thus in Nigeria, the role of local government as a provider of service to the local community and as instrument of democratic self-government is being accorded its due recognition though slowly. Indeed, local government constitutes the level at which the impetus to sustain national

<sup>25</sup> 1960-1996 when the last edition of states were created.



development can be established. It is obviously the closest level of government to the people. In Nigeria, it constitutes an effective instrument for initiating, promoting and executing rural development policies, projects and programmes and has also been involved in broader issues of nation-building. The strength of these obvious facts in enhancing grassroots democracy can be seen or viewed from the dynamic nature of the international community, coupled with the principle of inter-dependent nature of the various units in the global world systems.

## 7 State Creation and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria: The Izzi-Ukelle Experience Since 1996

C.O. Mgbada

### Introduction

The creation of twelve states out of the four regions by General Yakubu Gowon in 1967 marked the beginning of a new era in Nigeria's political history. Beyond Gowon's strategic reasons for creating the new states, it was intended that state creation would minimize or eliminate marginalization and quench all flaming embers of rancour and acrimony, which characterized the relations between and among ethnic groups in Nigeria. But this has not been the case. State creation has given rise to other myriads of problems in the inter-group relations of the Nigerian peoples – one of which is boundary. Since the creation of Ebonyi State in 1996, the relationship between the Izzi of Ebonyi State and their Ukelle neighbours in Cross River State has remained very souring. This essay examines the cordial relations that had existed between these two ethnic groups before the creation of Ebonyi and the state of antagonism arising from the creation of Ebonyi due to the inability of government to properly demarcate the boundary between them. It suggests that in the event of future creation of states, efforts should be made to define the boundaries in all specific terms before any public pronouncement to that effect.

Precisely on 27th May, 1967, General Yakubu Gowon announced a decree dividing Nigeria into 12 states "as a basis for stability."<sup>1</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> J. O. Ojiako, *13 Years of Military Rule* (Lagos: Daily Times of Nigeria Ltd) p. 47.



February 1976, General Murtala Mohammed again re-divided the country into 19 states, following "the governments consideration of the report of a panel led by Mr. Justice Irikefe, which traveled the country hearing evidence..." General Mohammed remarked that the states would no longer be identified simply by their geographical locations but would all be given names, to "erase memories of past political ties and emotional attachments."<sup>2</sup> To give the people of Akwa Ibom and Katsina states a sense of belonging, again the government of General Ibrahim Babangida further divided the country into 21 states by creating Akwa Ibom and Katsina states in 1987. By 1991, more states were created to bring the number to 30 and by 1996, general Abacha created additional six, bringing the number to 36. Today, the country has 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory in Abuja.

Though the exercise of state creation has brought a lot of joy and succor to most Nigerian people, in terms of inter-group relations, it is not a success story, for inter-state boundaries, inter-local government boundaries and even inter-community boundaries require proper adjustment to reflect the new order. Ironically, the boundaries have been often left in their former state, to cause all kinds of inter-state, inter-local government and inter-community clashes that have claimed so many lives and caused destruction of million naira worth of properties. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that state creation is bad but it is just bad to allow it cause the kinds of inter-group feuds it has continued to cause since the beginning of the exercise.

To conveniently accomplish the objective of this study, we shall address the question of who are the Izzi and Ukelle peoples? Their relations before 1996 and after 1996 and then make recommendations and a conclusion to clearly reflect the position of the writer on state relation.

### Who are the Izzi and Ukelle People?

Both the Izzi and the Ukelle peoples are found in the North Eastern fringe of Igbo land. With regard to their origins and migration to their

<sup>2</sup> Idike Igboji, 1989: oral interviews, August 18, 1989.

present abodes, they have different accounts that we may just briefly attempt to narrate here.

According to both oral and written accounts, all the major ethnic groups in Abakaliki are of one father called Ekuma Enyi, though some argue that the name is Ezekuna. For instance, in an oral interview with the late Chief Idike Igboji of Igbeagu Izzi, he said that "the whole of Abakaliki people are of one father called Ezekuna. Ezekuna begat four sons and eight daughters. The four sons were as follows (in order of age), Ezza Ezekuna, Ikwo Noyo, Izzi Nnodo, and Ezzangbo Obanjala.<sup>3</sup> According to Nico Van Steensel, who worked on Izzi History:

The Izzi are usually mentioned together With Ikwo and Ezza. They have a common ancestor called Enyi. Those sister tribes supply his full name as Enyi Nwegu. He had three sons who become the founder of the Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo tribes. These facts are argued upon by the oral tradition of each of the three tribes. About the details however is much difference of opinion.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Professor C.C. Ifemesia observes that: "Bordering on the Northern Igbo were the Northern Igbo of Abakaliki ... the largest groups among them were Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo."<sup>5</sup>

While the groups, including Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi, Ezzangbo and Agba, all agree that they are of one stock and origins, their account of that fact tends to be different. Here we may not need to narrate all the versions. It appears rather necessary that we concentrate on what the Izzi people say about their origin and perhaps relationship with others.

Details of the Idike version shows that the Abakaliki-speaking people came from one father called Ezekuna. According to him, Ezekuna descended from the sky through a string called "Ihalafum" and settled at Amegu. Ezekuna had two wives whose name he could not recollect. Rather, he proceeded to say that Ezekuna begat four sons and eight daughters. The four sons included Ezza Ezekuna, Ikwo Noyo, Izzi

<sup>3</sup> Idike Igboji, 1989: oral interviews, August 18, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> N. V. Steansel, *The Izzi: Their History and Customs* (Abakaliki: Abakaliki Literacy and a Transition Committee, 1996) p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> C. C. Ifemesia, *South Eastern Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century: An Introductory Analysis*. (Lagos: Nok Publishing, 1978) p. 7.



Nnodo, and Ezzangbo Obanjala. Each of them became the father of the various groups. Ezza Ezekuna was the founding father of the Ezza people. Ikwo Noyo was the founding father of the Ikwo people, while Izzi Nnodo and Ezangbo with the Ngbo people, respectively. Memories about the names of the eight daughters are already lost. But it is remembered that when they grew up each of the sons got married to two of the daughters.

According to this account Ezekuna was a great farmer. But when the children grew up, the four sons developed their own profession of interest, except Izzi Nnodo who remained a farmer like their father. Ezza Ezekuna was interested in cutting palm fruits and Ikwo Noyo practiced fishing, while Ezzangbo Obanjala engaged in cloth-weaving and carving masks.

Ezekuna, their father, was however not happy to see them adopting other occupations outside farming. This was because the sons refused to work for him on the farm. When Ezekuna could no longer endure it, he summoned them together and asked them to go and live each on his own. Then, he shared his eight daughters among the four sons for marriage. He blessed each according to his occupation and charged them to increase and multiply. Thus he sent each of the patriarchs to different areas which were to be regarded as foundation grounds (Amegu). Ikwo Noyo was sent to Amegu in the East, Ezzangbo Obanjala to Amegu in the West, and Izzi Nnodo to another Amegu in the East. According to tradition, Ezza Ezekuna, his eldest son, was to live in their father's compound. This was in conformity with the practice of primogeniture which confers on the first son the right of an heir. This was the circumstance that compelled Ezekuna to allow Ezza Ezekuna to live with him, in spite of their misunderstanding. Thus, Ezza Ezekuna retained their father's compound which was also Amegu (now Amegu Ezza).

When all of them had settled each with his two wives, they procreated and developed into the various groups that make up Abakaliki Igbo - the Ezza, the Ikwo, the izzi and the Ezzangbo and Ngbo (ie Izhia/Ngbo) as well as Agba. Most people who are more inclined to this account hold the view that the man who descended from the heavens was Enyi and the cradle home is Amana. Within the context

of this account, some people also tend to differ in the names of the Enyi's sons. For such people, Enyi begot three sons - Ezekuna, Ekuma, and Noyo (in order of seniority), where Ezekuna became the father of the Ezza people, Ekuma, the founder of Izzi people; and Noyo, the father of Ikwo people, with Izhia Ngbo being grand children of Ekuma, the father of Izzi. Also within this account, some people hold the view that Enyi married (or had) two wives. Noyo and Ekuma were from one wife, while Ezekuna was from another wife (or rather is said to have been an in-law who married their sister). This, however, is very unpopular.

Further still, within the context of this account of Enyi descending from heaven or the sky, names of the foundation grounds or cradle homes, including the missions or professions of the sons are also controversial. It is the view of some group that it was Nnodo who remained with their father and became the founder of Amegu, the cradle home of Izzi; Noyo founded Ekpeli, the cradle home of the Ikwo; while Ezekuna is the founder of Amana, the cradle home of the Ezza people. Here, it is said that he used to send out his sons to gather food. Ezekuna would go far and rarely returned. When he returned, he would bring human heads. Their father, Enyi, decided to send him to Ezza as a warrior and he engaged largely in picking kernels which he made his food. On the other hand, Noyo would always return with fish. Enyi therefore sent him to Ikwo where there were many streams and the Cross-River. And Ekuma, on his own part, would always return with yams gathered in the forest and Enyi sent him to Izzi, where there was fertile land for him to farm on. Before Enyi died, this version continued, he blessed his children. He blessed Ezekuna with success in war and in trading; Noyo was blessed with success in fishing and farming; and Ekuma was blessed with success in yam farming.

But it would appear that most of the controversies in the account are recent developments borne out of imaginations about the mysteries surrounding the skills and professional inclinations of the various groups in the modern times. What is important about the account is the fact that the three groups were of one father and original inhabitants of where they are today or the first in might to conquer and possess. It is



also possible to treat the Ezzamgbo and Ngbo as grandsons of Izzi. This is more popular than the original account of Obanjala being a co-ordinate brother of Izzi and others.

Another version of the origin of the Abakaliki Igbo, which has been backed by available records states that the Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi, Ezzamgbo and Ngbo are of one father who migrated from somewhere. What is not certain about the account is the name of the actual person that migrated. Where he first settled is also not very clear. However, all speculations point to the Abakaliki Area.

One of the sources argued that the man who migrated was Enyi and that Enyi traveled between Afikpo and Ezekwe.<sup>6</sup> But C.C. Ifemesia, as earlier noted, observed that bordering on the Northern Igbo were the North Eastern Igbo of Abakaliki and that the largest groups among them were the Ezza, izzi and Ikwo. According to him, these major groups asserted that their ancestors had blood and marriage ties with, and that they migrated from the Item and Arochukwu to the South. However, Ifemesia maintained that it is possible that they had some connections with the Igbo in Owerri area whose dialect appears to be related to theirs.<sup>7</sup>

Edward Nwandegu is also silent and virtually uncertain about the name of this founding father who migrated when he said "...one man migrated from an uncertain place and settled at a place around Ekeimoha market in Ezza."<sup>8</sup> Nwandegu, however, speculates that the man migrated from northern part of Nigeria, "thus, a mixture of Northern, Western and other sub-regional cultures like that of the Tiv, Efik, etc can be found in Izzi culture"<sup>9</sup>. This seems to have been supported by Ifemesia when he argued that Abakaliki people have culture traits of Igalla, as noted in their use of horses for social and

<sup>6</sup> C. O. Mgbada, *Abakaliki Since 1900: A Case Study of the Transformation of a Rural Society* Ph.D Dissertation Department of History, University of Calabar, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> C. C. Ifemesia, *South Eastern Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century: An Introductory Analysis*. (Lagos: Nok Publishing, 1978) p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> E. Nwandegu, ed., *Know Abakaliki* (Abakaliki, 1988) p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

religious purposes and that their mode of dressing also reflects the Tiv tradition.<sup>10</sup>

This Izzi people also have some traditions of migration that are very peculiar to them. For instance, the Izzi reject association with the account of migration from somewhere else to Amegu. They have the strong belief that the Izzi originated from where they are today; they indeed insist that every Izzi group dispersed from Amegu, except that different versions of the dispersal from Amegu.

On the other hand, the Ukelle people who are also found around the Northern fringe of Igbo land or what is popularly regarded as Northern Cross River belongs to the semi-Bantu group of African languages. It constitutes one of the fairly large groups in the old Ogoja division.

The origin of Ukelle people is still largely speculative, just like other ethnic groups in the country. Major anthropological reports left by the British reveal that the "tribes" now occupying their present localities in the Ogoja area migrated from divergent sources, "some came from the Ikom division; some from Obubra; others were forced in from the Tiv division and from the Abakaliki division."<sup>11</sup> According to archival documents, the original name of the Ukelle is 'Ikerri'.

After a deep review of some traditions of origin of peoples of the 'Upper Cross River' to which the Ukelle belong, Professor Erim O. Erim has observed that the tradition of origin suggests three discernable waves of migration into and around the upper Cross River region over the centuries. These include tradition claiming autochthony, that the people originated in their present abode; tradition claiming origins around the Nigeria-Cameroon border line, and tradition claiming central Benue valley as the ancestral home land within the upper Cross River region.<sup>12</sup> But he is inclined to believe that the Ukelle people are

<sup>10</sup> C. C. Ifemesia, *South Eastern Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century: An Introductory Analysis*. (Lagos: Nok Publishing, 1978) p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> NAE, No. 01985/5, Office of the Resident Commissioner, 1st September, 1944, p.15.

<sup>12</sup> M.B. Abasiattai, ed., *A History of the Cross River Region of Nigeria* (Enugu: Havis Publishing, 1990).



the descendants of the Benue-Congo speakers who migrated from the Nigeria-Cameroon border about 500 B.C. to settle in their present abode.<sup>13</sup> Professor Erim after a deep analysis came to the conclusion that "it is, therefore, reasonable to associate the early migration of some groups within the upper Cross River region with the Bantu expansion from the Nigeria-Cameroon border."<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, the Ukelle people themselves do not seem to have much on their own to say about their origins and migration to their present settlement. It is possible that they have lost all memories of how they came to settle where they are today. They generally require further investigation.

#### Izzi-Ukelle Relations before the Creation of Ebonyi State

The Izzi people have argued that their earlier neighbours are the Awkum, and not the Ukelle. For the Izzi people, until the 1940s there had not been any contacts between the Izzi and the Ukelle. According to the account, the Ukelle people constitute "fishermen, hunters, and palm-tapers who hail from Wanokun area where they call North Ukelle in the 1940s."<sup>15</sup> This account further states that the Ukelle crossed the Anyim River (Okporku) into what is now South Ukelle to superimpose themselves on the Awkum. But the Ukelle people are hardly comfortable with this story. What is, however, more important for our propose here is that all manners of rancour and acrimony over land and other issues which would have brought the Izzi and Ukelle into serious conflicts were quenched through a deliberate accord they freely entered into to maintain absolute unity and peace between the two groups.

<sup>13</sup> M.B. Abasiattai ed., *A History of the Cross River Region of Nigeria* (Enugu: Havis Publishing, 1990) pp. 50-51.

<sup>14</sup> O. E. Erim, 1990, "The Upper Cross River Region: Early Migration and Settlements", in M.B. Abasiattai ed., *A History of the Cross River Region of Nigeria* (Enugu: Havis Publishing, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> A Memorandum Submitted by the People of South Ukelle on the South Ukelle/Izzi Conflict to the Joint Standing Peace, p. 2.

Both the Izzi and Ukelle have clear record of covenant which their ancestors entered into for the purpose of maintaining cordial relations between the two groups. Ukelle people date the ceremony as far back as 1914, though the Izzi dates it to 1940. However, when it took place is not as important as the agreement that such bond was ever entered into by the Izzi and Ukelle groups. With the bond, both Izzi and Ukelle must not shed each other's blood, no matter the degree of provocation. Up till today, evidence of the bond represented by a goat head shared into two and each half kept by both Izzi and Ukelle is still on the historical record of the two groups.

Since the covenant or bond, there had often been emotional outburst over land and other things between the Izzi and their Ukelle neighbours but they never dared to fight. According to the Izzi people, the Izzi and the Ukelle neighbours lived very peacefully. Izzi and Ukelle shared in many things, including economic activities, commerce, education and sports, marriage, politics, etc. In terms of economic activities, for instance, mention could be made of land leasing and wage labour of the Abakaliki people. The Izzi and other Abakaliki people are well noted for their migrant wage labour and it could be said that the Ukelle people benefited immensely from this cheap supply of labour by highly impoverished people. In return, they leased out land for cultivation to the Izzi people for their own farming activities and equally used the money derivable from land to train their children.

In the area of commerce, we can easily recall that all the markets within that vicinity were shared by both the Izzi and Ukelle groups who shared very high understanding in their wholesale and retail distribution of their products such as yams, rice and other agricultural products, fishes, fruits, etc. Both groups shared local market such as Nwakpu, Ntrigom, Mfuma and Ijiraga, where they interacted and junketed excessively. Also, on market days, transport business and visits were shared lavishly with high mutual understanding and love.

In the area of education and sport the two groups were not reserved in their co-mingling to make educational institutions conducive for their children. They shared many primary and secondary schools all over the place. The parents had their Parent Teachers' Associations



together and the children knew no bounds in their own level of interaction. They played friendly football matches and accepted gifts and prizes with joy and the minimal grudges associated with winning and failing in sports among children in sports. Teachers were posted largely indiscriminately across Izzi and Ukelle areas.

Equally, marriage and politics were areas where the Izzi and Ukelle had good understanding. There was organized inter-marriage and political campaigns that took each group far and wide into domains of friends and interest groups. Though the Izzi were not given chances to contest most elective positions, the Ukelle people solicited their support at all times. Sometimes, it was within Ukelle and Izzi communities, sometimes it had to do with state constituency that embraced some other smaller groups like Yala and Yache who were very close neighbours in the local government system.

All these activities and many more combined to sustain the cordial relationship that they had to share for so long a time. It could be recalled that up to 1958 Abakaliki had existed as a division under the Ogoja province which was split into two – Ogoja and Abakaliki in 1959.<sup>16</sup> At independence in 1960, Abakaliki thus existed as an autonomous province consisting of Abakaliki, Afikpo and Obubra divisions, within the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria. Until 1967 when Abakaliki was placed under East Central State and it lost Obubra to South Eastern Nigeria, the Izzi and Ukelle remained as one political monolith within the Obubra axis. The same thing applied to the Abakaliki Ogoja axis, where the Izzi and the Ukelle had a greater concentration of the population. *The spirit of ethnic differences began to develop when in 1976 General Murtala Mohammed created a 19-state structure in which a substantial population of the Izzi remained in Anambra and a few villages of Izzi people were allowed to be administered under Cross River State without a clear boundary demarcation.* From that moment it became a matter of choice for some Izzi people to live and pay taxes under Cross River State or do so under Anambra State. Those

<sup>16</sup> E. O. Eyo, *The Demand for the Creation of States in the Cross River State: A critical Political Analysis*, p. 7.

who opted to live under Cross River were always treated like strangers with their Ukelle neighbours assuming the status of government of all kinds to them, particularly with regard to tax collection and renting of farming land. This situation eventually turned the Izzi people under Cross River state Administration at the axis into hewers of wood and drawers of water in their own land. This was why when Enugu State was carved out of Anambra in 1991, the Izzi of Cross River administration struggled to change government and be under Enugu State. That movement was to no avail. But when Ebonyi State was created in 1996 out of Enugu and Abia States, the Izzi people under Cross River Government vowed to change to Ebonyi State Government or perish. Unfortunately, the Ukelle people had so enjoyed the servitude of their Izzi neighbours that for them it was suicidal to voluntarily allow their servants or slaves to go. The Izzi people, for lack of educational experience, turned themselves into slaves in their own land.

This was the situation in existence when in April 2005 the Ukelle wanted to burn all the Izzi people alive when they (the Ukelle) got hint that the Izzi were deep into their irredentist movement and call for a proper demarcation of boundary between Ebonyi and Cross River States so that they (the Izzi) would be delivered from the claws of their Ukelle neighbours. This marked the beginning of an era of severe souring relations between the Izzi and Ukelle, precisely between the Izzi of Igbeagu community in Ebonyi State and South Ukelle clan of Cross River State

### Izzi Ukelle Relations since the Creation of Ebonyi State

By the time Ebonyi State was created in 1996, Igbeagu villages forced to stay under Cross River administration included Odarikor I and II, Ndubia Mfuma, Nduezoka Mfuma, Azungele Mfuma, and Okpagala Mfuma; others are Ndiogoga, Nkaleke, Ogbodo, Ngijiola, Okworike, Edufu-Uzashi, Ndunwankwo, Ekor and Ndiagoni. All these constituted one community in a clan of four communities. The remaining three communities belonged to the Ukelle of South Ukelle clan. These three communities were Ntrigom, Ijiraga and Ujigatum, of



the three communities the Izzi was incomparably the largest in land mass and population.<sup>17</sup> When new clans were created, all these communities became autonomous and the Izzi Community now distributed into the Ukelle clans, to further weaken the Izzi.

Every effort the Izzi people made to drive home their demands where they would be heard by the Cross River State government was suppressed and frustrated and all these combined to breed an accumulated rancour and animosity that culminated in the declaration of open hostility on the Izzi by their Ukelle neighbours in April 2005 in which many lives and property were lost.

It would not have been our objective here to access the causes of that war, remote or immediate, than to analyze the grave consequences of creating state without proper demarcation of boundaries; yet, if we do not, this discourse cannot be complete.

It is the position of the writer that if boundaries were properly demarcated at the creation of these East Central states, Anambra, Enugu and lastly Ebonyi State, in particular a degree of peace that hitherto existed between the two groups of Izzi and Ukelle at that boundary would not have been jeopardized and made to degenerate into a full-blown communal clash which they experience today.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The exercise of state creation cannot be condemned as unworthy in terms of the benefit derivable from it. It may, indeed, be extremely difficult to condemn state creation in its entirety as an exercise in futility. In many ways, state creation has contributed in a physical and infrastructural development of Nigeria in General and the affected areas, including Cross River and Ebonyi State, in particular. It has enhanced urbanization through the infrastructural development and provision of essential amenities such as electricity and water in areas hitherto neglected. As such areas assume their new status of state capital and local government headquarters, they begin to attract government attention

<sup>17</sup> Letter to the Paramount Ruler of Ogoja Local Government Area by the "Group Leader" of Izzi Community 29th September, 1988.

for development. Beyond development of physical structures, the clamour for self-determination within the context of having an autonomous state or local government is also actualized and this offers some psychological relief that people are given some sense of belonging in the Nigerian federation.

All the fouls we are crying is that sometimes a good thing is badly done. Thus, if state creation is done with some definite sense of purpose and accomplished in the manner that the affected groups of people are well informed about their position, it is bound to bring about succour and jubilation.

In Nigeria, ethnic groups are often arbitrarily divided by a state boundary in the manner that irredentist spirits are bound to develop either way. More often than not, the affected groups are not even aware of where they actually belong, as in the case of Izzi of Ebonyi/Cross River boundary areas. Our first recommendation, therefore, is that the people that may be affected by the exercise of state creation should be well informed about it. By so doing, they are given opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination. People should determine in all practical realities where they choose to belong prior to exercise of state creation no matter the inconveniences it entails.

Again, it is also advisable that permanent structures be used for the delineation of boundaries, be they natural or artificial, so that boundary evidence cannot be easily destroyed. Loss of lives and property to inter-community or state clashes has revealed that the boundaries are too porous without enough security. The paper recommends that more security be provided at boundary areas, particularly where they are identified to be so volatile. Boundary problems have become so sensitive that between the groups at the boundary areas, security men of neutral status should be stationed. It is also being suggested that Nigeria creates a Ministry of Boundary and Border Affairs. While it does not entail to blackmail the Ministry of Land and Survey or to indict the National Boundary Commission, it appears rather imperative to mention that within the Ministries of Land and Survey as the case may be, an ordinary unit or department so attached cannot handle issues of expediency, when there are clashes. On the other hand, the power of



the Boundary Commission are so limited that more often than not, it ends pleading helplessly in very sensitive cases. Alternatively, the commission could be given more powers or freedom to act in resolving some cases requiring urgent attention.

Nevertheless where peoples at the boundary are trapped into confusion such as in the experience of the Ukelle and Izzi of Cross River and Ebonyi area, they should be encouraged to live harmoniously. Until recently, the Ukelle and Izzi has demonstrated exemplary sense of harmonious living and they should be encouraged to continue doing so pending the final determination of the matter before the National Boundary Commission. The people had inter-married and shared in sports and other social activities that all they need is just some further orientation to appreciate their past, even after boundary demarcation.

From the analysis above, the only conclusion to be reached here is that state creation by fiat as had been carried out by the military in Nigeria is very dangerous. So much lives and property have been lost all over the country in a bid to redo what had been done. Now that we are in democracy, state creation exercise must be based on the constitution. Action should be expedited to save people of boundary areas from further loss of lives and property by ensuring that all boundary matters are resolved.

## **Babangida Administration and the Crisis of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria (1985-1993)**

Paul K. N. Ugboajah

### **Introduction**

The long period of military rule and its seeming non-performance has not only led to a crisis of legitimacy but also a crisis of civil-military relations. One sector the military deliberately attempted to squash was civil society. Confrontation between the state and civil society has been a general nature of military regimes emanating from lack of political legitimacy and worsened by non-performance of these regimes. General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida's regime (1985-1993) demonstrated this state-civil society confrontation more than any other rulers in Nigerian history. Civil society was seen as a threat to the regime. As a result, Babangida created and entrenched a culture of timidity and fear within civil society. While it could be said that renewed militarisation started with the General Buhari regime (1983-1985) thus facilitating the mushrooming of a rich array of pro-democracy and civil liberty groups, they later developed both qualitatively and quantitatively during Babangida regime as the regime became more repressive. Thus, state repression did not discourage the civil society in Nigeria, implying that the Nigerian State under General Babangida had less freedom from societal pressures and rightful demands. That General Babangida did not eventually succeed in becoming a sit-tight dictator was not for want of attempt, but because of superior non-military forces in the civil society. This chapter examines the root cause of this crisis which is lack of



legitimacy to rule and the crisis resulting from the failure to build one through performance. The resultant repressive rule, as well as the various stringent economic and political policies adopted by Babangida regime, which eventually destroyed the already tensed civil-military relations, is critically examined.

From the early 1950s to the late 1990s, the military had found themselves in the reins of power especially in the Third World even though bereft of the necessary skills of ruling. However, their intervention in politics, as it is always called, had always brought them into confrontation with the civil society because of their failure to build a political legitimacy which they lacked because they were not established to rule but to protect a state. Most often than not, therefore, military rule had always resulted into crisis between them and the civil society which always resulted from non-performance. The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida is an example *par excellence* of an attempt by the military to establish cordial relations with various strata of the civil society the failure of which had rather destroyed the already strained relations thus leading to a serious crisis which eventually led to his abdication of power.

Be that as it may, this chapter has three subheadings. The first discusses the conceptual analyses. The second considers the legitimacy mobilization strategies of General Ibrahim Babangida's regime meant to attain political legitimacy and popular support from the civil society and the entire citizenry. The third analyses the subsequent crisis of civil-military relations emanating from Babangida's failure to sustain the legitimacy built on performance alone.

### Military Rule and Civil-Military Relations

After the spate of coups and other forms of military intervention in politics in the mid-1960s, Western political scientists and analysts were alerted to the importance of the military elite in African development. Characteristically, attention was shifted from the then popular topics such as one-partyism, mobilization systems, African socialism, charismatic leadership, and bureaucratic elites to the more urgent need to understand and explain the nature of military interventions. Whereas

in 1962 European authors did not have a single book or article listed for Africa South of the Sahara, suggesting either a lack of interest in African armies as a factor in political development or the underdeveloped nature of research on that subject, Claude E. Welch in 1970 listed a total of 13 books and 58 articles dealing specifically with African military and authored after 1964, an indication of the fertility of this newfound land for research.<sup>1</sup> As one would expect, many researchers have tried to determine just what had happened, others have tried to explain particular instances of military intervention.

Two types of explanation of military intervention in African politics have emerged. The first argues that there are certain characteristics inherent in the nature of modern military organizations which dispose the military to intervene in politics.<sup>2</sup> According to this school, African armies, as outgrowths of European colonial armies and with their officer corps trained by ex-colonial powers, are *ipso facto* modern institutions. The officers are said to have imbibed, while in training, such qualities as a puritanical ethic, professionalism, nationalistic ethos, and an in-group cohesion which make them act together and decisively in carrying out their military and, if necessary, political functions. Furthermore, because of this training abroad and the fact that each state likes to equip its army with the most modern weapons it can afford, the military also tends to be the most modernized sector of the society, thus creating what has been called a "competence gap" between the military and the rest of society.<sup>3</sup> According to one proponent of this school, "Military organisation has little to do with the structure of traditional society, from which it is set off by its technology, most of its ethos, its organisation and its training, all of

<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Robin Luckham, *The Nigerian Military* (Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> Members of this school certainly include Morris Janowitz, 1964, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Fred Greene, "Toward Understanding Military Groups," *Africa Report*, 11 February 1966, p. 10.



which are either imported or follow foreign models." Given this attributes — structural and ideological cohesion, technological and administrative expertise vis-a-vis the rest of society and an ethic of public service — armies are said to look askance at political corruption and inefficiency; therefore, when politicians become disruptive, the army intervenes.

The second school of thought argues that the explanation of the military role in politics and military intervention is not to be sought in the organizational characteristics of the army as such, but in the nature of the society.<sup>4</sup> For example, Huntington has stated that "the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military establishment but the political and institutional structure of society." According to this view, if the political institutions of a society are weak (in the sense that they are not effective as instruments for mediating societal conflict), then other social forces may begin to impinge on the political arena, e.g., wealth, churches, trade unions, students, or the military. It is then argued that the imported political institutions have failed to take African roots. Parliaments and constitutions hastily put together take on the form and not the spirit of their mentors; political parties that mushroomed on the eve of decolonization withered almost as quickly in the blazing sun of independence. In such a situation of institutional fragility, only one institution can save the country and lead to modernization — the army. "As long as the central political symbols and institutions are weak and national cohesiveness is elusive (a condition that may persist for generations in most African countries) the politics of force will frequently supersede the politics of persuasion."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Samuel P. Huntington changed his mind in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), esp. chap. 4. See also Robert M. Price, "A Theoretical Approach to Military Rule in New States," *World Politics* 23 (April 1971): 399-430. Cited in Uma O. Eleazu, "The Role of the Army in African Politics: A Reconsideration of Existing Theories and Practices", *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Jan., 1973), p. 266.

<sup>5</sup>Ernest W. Lefever, *Spear and Scepter* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1970).

The argument that the army, being a borrowed modern institution, will tend to make its members think and act modernly cannot be sustained. When the colonial powers departed, the army was not the only modern institution the African states had borrowed. They had adopted legislative assemblies, police force, civil service, educational systems, political parties, formal constitutions, and courts. These were all thought to be the accoutrements of modernism. If for purposes of argument we accept the notion that colonialism was "a school for democracy," those groomed for modern leadership were and are mainly to be found in the other borrowed institutions rather than in the army.<sup>6</sup> In British West Africa, parliamentary participation, however feeble, started in the early 1920s. At that time, Africans in the army were not trained for leadership but as instruments in the hands of the colonial powers to maintain internal order and to patrol frontiers. The fact is that the military has made itself a political institution. Hague and Harrow<sup>7</sup> situate graphically the problem by stating that the military presents special problems of political control in virtually every society. Not only are the armed forces specialists in the use of violence but their organizational qualities of firm discipline, good communication and substantial *esprit de corps* make the military at least as important a political institution as the bureaucracy.

Admittedly, too, the civilian politicians have not always performed well; some have been dictatorial, others have been corrupt, and on the whole, although they ushered in the expected "political kingdom" little more has been added to it. Yet military men in power have not been different; some have become corrupted by power as well as by wealth, and others have similarly banned opposition and all forms of political activity. There has been no case in which military rule has resulted in increased political and economic returns. If, then, the civilian and military elite must operate on the same level of society, there is only one

<sup>6</sup>Uma O. Eleazu, "The Role of the Army in African Politics: A Reconsideration of Existing Theories and Practices", *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Jan., 1973), p. 278.

<sup>7</sup>R. Hague & M. Harrow, 1982, *Comparative Government* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd).



reason why the army and no other group can take over (they have guns and the others do not).

Nordlinger<sup>8</sup> identifies three models of civil-military relations. There is the traditional model in which there is usually no conflict in relationship between the military and the civil society. This is characteristic of the monarchical and aristocratic systems of the past. The second is the liberal model in which civil control of the military is the acceptable norm. The military in this respect, is confined to security roles only, while politicians administer the state. In this respect, the emphasis is on the supremacy of the civil society over the military like in Britain, USA and France. This is a common phenomenon in the West. From the point of view of western scholars, therefore, civil-military relations refer broadly to interactions between armed forces as institutions and the sectors of society in which they are embedded. Most commonly, civil-military relations focus on the relative distribution of power between the government and the armed forces of a country. They involve, as one specialist recently wrote, a process in which civilian control is measured and evaluated by weighing "the relative influence of military officers and civilian officials in decisions of state concerning war, internal security, external defense, and military policy (that is, the shape, size, and operating procedures of the military establishment)."<sup>9</sup>

The third is the penetration model in which the military holds political power like civilian leaders as it usually was the case in the communist countries. The variant of this holds true in the developing countries like Nigeria where the military has made itself the locus and focus of political power through its intervention in politics.

No doubt, military intervention in African politics has produced antagonistic relations between military regimes and civil society which represents the entire citizenry. The depiction of antagonistic relations with the state is typical in the circumstance of the postcolonial state in

<sup>8</sup> E. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "How Democracies Control the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 8 October 1997, p. 143.

Africa, with its authoritarian, absolutist, personalistic, corporatist, hegemonical and patrimonial characteristics. The state is prone to abuse, lawlessness, predation and a tendency to appropriate and exploit on behalf of office holders, clients, sectional and ethnic constituents. Consequently, the political, social and economic space for autonomous action is very constrictive. As African states experienced failures of development projects and expectations of independence, particularly in the 1980s, with consequent depreciation of legitimacy and resulting internal discontent, the state became emasculated and decomposing and resorted to coercion, repression and restriction of rights. Consequently, the relationship of civil society to the state in Africa has been characterised by struggle and antagonism (Young 1992: 33-50; Bratton 1992: 64-75).

The military had intervened in the Nigeria's politics so much so that it has not only become a major actor and force, but was considered the only state institution capable of leading the vast and yet to be built nation-state. Military coups have been part of Nigeria's political equation since the first of January 1966, led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu. Their causes have already been examined, as well as some theoretical postulations.<sup>10</sup> Suffice to note that all the successful, and most of the failed armed challenges mounted against those in authority, have taken place during very high levels of political, social, and economic unrest in the country. This has made it easy for the military, largely because it legally monopolises the means of coercion, to intervene, usually on behalf of the dominant classes, to contain popular pressures and stabilise the system. To be sure, the fractionalisation of the ruling elites, the weakness of civil society, and the fragility of the state help to explain, why the military has emerged as the most powerful contender in the struggle for power in contemporary Nigeria.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Toyin Faiola and Julius O. Ihonvbere, *The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic, 1979-84* (London, 1985); Julius O. Ihonvbere, "Are Things Falling Apart? The Military and the Crisis of Democratisation in Nigeria", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1996, p. 194.

<sup>11</sup> The Nigerian military has never been able to demonstrate that it is more efficient, less corrupt, and better disciplined than other interest groups in the country. According to Olawale R. Olarewaju, *TELL* (Lagos), 14 February 1994, this has led



One sector the military deliberately attempted to squash was civil society. The military incursion and dominance of Nigerian politics had introduced more personalisation of power, authoritarian rule, hegemonic agendas, patrimonialism, clientelism and repression. These characteristics meant intolerance of civil society and restriction of the space for autonomous action, civil rights and rule of law. The strategies of restructuring, control and repression of labour, media houses, and social critics were utilised to weaken and undermine civil society. But the military did not succeed in fully subordinating civil society as 'elements of confrontation, peaceful and violent, persisted in the relations between state and civil society. Confrontation between the state and civil society was more intense during Babangida's and Abacha's regimes than other rulers in Nigerian history. Civil society was seen as a threat to the regimes. As a result, Babangida and Abacha created and entrenched a culture of timidity and fear within civil society. Between June 1993 and late 1994, Amnesty International reported that as many as 200 pro-democracy activists were killed by state security in Nigeria. Prominent amongst the political casualties were Dele Giwa and Ken Saro-Wiwa, including eight of Saro-Wiwa's fellow environmentalists. Abacha abolished core labour rights, severed unions' ties to international allies and placed the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and a number of its affiliates under direct state control.<sup>12</sup>

### Babangida's Legitimacy Mobilization Strategies and the Transient Amicable Civil-Military Relations

General Ibrahim Babangida was Nigeria's sixth military ruler. Compared with Buhari, Babangida was a somewhat more methodical ruler, and his style was different. Whereas Buhari was stern and resolute, Babangida was deft and tactical. Babangida came to power as a champion of human rights. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Like his

some to reach the conclusion that "if there is any society where destruction in all aspects of life is at its peak, it is the Nigerian society under the military". For a detailed analysis, see 'How the Military Wrecked Nigeria', *TELL*, 24 January 1994.

<sup>12</sup> M.H. Kukah, *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2003), p. 154.

predecessors, he wanted to build a legitimacy to rule. Moreover, Nigerians themselves were already tired of the high handedness of General Buhari's rule. When General Ibrahim Babangida therefore seized the reins of power with a classical palace coup on August 27, 1985, there was a general relief amongst Nigerians. The 'celebration', as in the past, was not to welcome the arrival of a new military junta but to celebrate the demise of the *ancient regime*. This is a politico-psychological behaviour of Nigerians. The departure of a government is often seen, rightly or wrongly, as a decisive opportunity for a new beginning towards nation-building and development.

However, General Babangida's ascendancy to the *magistrature suprême* brought something additional in its trail. In contradiction to the grim-faced, unsmiling General Buhari and his deputy General Idiagbon, Babangida brought smiles as well as a personal aura and warmth to the Nigerian political landscape. There was something seemingly arresting about him which was transmitted to the nation and the people by the media, in particular the press, namely, no matter how bad the Nigerian economic crisis, people could still afford a smile whilst tackling it.

Moreover, Babangida proceeded to insinuate himself into the people's sympathy by pushing a liberal human rights agenda in the first days of his regime: he released most of the Second Republic politicians incarcerated by Buhari-Idiagbon, set up two judicial panels to review the cases of the detainees, both tried and yet to be tried, abrogated the notorious anti-press freedom Decree No. 4 of 1984, and threw open the National Security Organisation's detention centres, styled 'Rafindadi's chambers of horror', after its Director, Alhaji Rafindadi.<sup>13</sup> By throwing open the prison gates for many of the political detainees; unchaining the press through a repeal of Decree 4 of 1984 as well as promising respect of fundamental human rights, Babangida rapidly concluded his initial mobilization for political legitimacy and support. Before the close of that year, virtually all civil societies, non-State groups and interests had, either explicitly or implicitly, indicated their willingness to give the regime the benefit of the doubt. Thus, behind this smoke-screen of

<sup>13</sup> S. O. Osoba, "Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives", *Review of African*



promoting the people's human rights and the rule of law, Babangida succeeded in recruiting the best brains among the civil society drawn from all sectors of the Nigerian elite (civil service, academia, the professions, the business community etc.). It would appear that the widespread and systematic use of corrupt means by IBB to 'settle' many actual and potential critics among civil society groups rested on the impeccable presupposition that if he corrupted enough Nigerians there would be nobody to speak out on the issue of corruption or public accountability and so the matter would disappear conveniently from the national agenda. To some extent the strategy worked as many university professors and other academics, leaders of the main professions, leading trade unionists, top clerics and evangelists and the shakers and movers of the 'organised private sector' of the national economy scrambled to jump on the Babangida regime's gravy train. Babangida established innumerable commissions, directorates, centres, bureaux, task forces, committees etc. with open-ended budgets, woolly and indeterminate agendas and arbitrary powers to accommodate his multitudinous army of cronies, lackeys and opportunists.<sup>14</sup>

### Babangida's Non-Performance and the Crisis of Civil Military Relations

The crisis of civil-military relations began to surface over time as Babangida's record deteriorated due to his inability to fulfil his promise of reviving the Nigerian economy and lack of performance. At the time he seized power from Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon in August 1985, the Nigerian economy was in shambles. Three years of civilian rule in the Second Republic had bled the nation dry, mismanaged huge oil 'rents', more than doubled the foreign debt profile, destroyed the manufacturing and productive base, and accentuated social tensions and conflicts to unprecedented proportions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Osoba, "Corruption in Nigeria...", p. 382.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Joseph, "Class, State and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1983, pp. 21-38, and Tom Forrest, "The Political Economy of Civil Rule and the Economic Crisis in Nigeria,

Unfortunately, the Babangida regime made things worse through gross incompetence and unbridled corruption, waste and mismanagement, the privatisation of public office and public resources, the neglect of non-oil sectors, and misplaced priorities. The adoption of a World Bank-supervised structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986 made the situation worse, because this was pathologically fixated on the exchange rate of the naira rather than on building investor confidence, strengthening the local bourgeoisie, integrating the sectors of the economy, and promoting growth and development.<sup>16</sup> The pain, poverty, uncertainty, frustrations, and hunger which accompanied Nigeria's economic decline, and the implementation of an adjustment programme without any protection for vulnerable groups, created an environment which directly challenged possibilities for stability and sustainable democracy.<sup>17</sup> With over 45 per cent of foreign-exchange earnings going into debt servicing, with run-away inflation, and with increasing bankruptcies among indigenous investors, the economy sank deeper into crisis, and the social fabric of the nation deteriorated to unprecedented levels. Crime, child abuse, marital violence, disease, institutional decay, urban dislocation, and frustration came to characterise the society.<sup>18</sup>

The year after seizing power, the Babangida regime declared a National Economic Emergency. The options open to the country, Babangida said, were either to accept an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan and the conditions attached or to embark on more austere economic measures that would require great sacrifices. Although the people favored a non-IMF option, they soon discovered the hardships

1979-84", *Review of African Political Economy*, 35, 1986, pp. 4-26; See also Adebayo Olukoshi ed., *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (London, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> See Adebayo Olukoshi, ed., *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (London, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Friday N. Ndubuisi, "Wreckage of a Nation", *National Concord* (Lagos), 9 December, 1993; See also, Keith B. Richburg, "Future Nigerian Government May Find Empty Treasury", *The Washington Post*, 31 December, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> Julius O. Ihonvbere, "Are Things Falling Apart? The Military and the Crisis of Democratisation in Nigeria", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No.2., 1996, p. 197.



eventually imposed differed little from the IMF's conditions. The economic recovery program recommended by the World Bank was instituted as a self-imposed structural adjustment program (SAP) that involved a drastic restructuring of the country's economy. Under SAP, unemployment rates soared, food prices increased significantly, and numerous user fees for education and health services were imposed. These hardships did not dissuade the government from SAP, which it believed to be the only approach to the country's social and economic problems. The benefits of SAP, such as longer inflation and more balanced budget, began to be seen but SAP was adhered to less stringently in the late 1980s.

Apart from these economic reforms leading to a market system, important changes were made in the basic structures of military federalism. For the first time, a military leader was called president, presumably to emphasize the executive power he wielded. The name of the supreme lawmaking body was changed from Supreme Military Council to the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). There was also a new Armed Forces Consultative Assembly, formed in 1989, which functioned as an intermediate legislative chamber between the AFRC and the rest of the military. In spite of these elaborate structural changes, Babangida adroitly increased the powers of his office. He changed his ministers and state governors frequently. Even supposedly powerful members of the government were not spared, as was demonstrated in 1986 when he dropped his second in command, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe. In his place, he appointed Rear Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, former chief of the naval staff. The most dramatic of these changes were made at the end of 1989, when Babangida reassigned several ministers, including General Domkat Bali, the powerful minister of defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The changes were perceived by southerners and Christians as resulting in an AFRC that consisted mainly of northern Muslims. The service chiefs of the army, navy, and police were Muslims; only the chief of the air staff was a southerner. The ministries of external affairs, petroleum resources, internal affairs, and defense, considered the most powerful cabinet posts, were held by northern Muslims (the minister of defense being the president himself). These changes generated heated contro-

versy and antigovernment demonstrations by Christians in some northern cities. Babangida emerged from the changes more powerful than before.

### Conclusion

The above analysis has revealed how the state dominated by a military president — General Babangida — sought to build legitimacy and negotiate with civil societies. Having failed to mobilize for legitimacy due to corruption and lack of performance. The Babangida Government suddenly abandoned this strategy and began to oppose and even ban associations of workers, students, journalists and other professionals. This did not deactivate civil society. Rather, it experienced an exponential growth and development. The twin problem of economic crisis and the political blunder of cancellation of the result of the 12 June election could not be wished away. Civic action over these problems continued to plague General Babangida's regime until he was forced to give up power.<sup>19</sup>

The state confronted civil society in many instances to control dissent and block the popular will for alternatives. Many unions and professional associations were banned; the state security and transition to civil rule decrees (Nos. 2 and 25) were used extensively to silence critics; academics and journalists were dismissed from their jobs on political grounds; students, labour activists, journalists and academics were consistently arrested and detained; organizations were formed to undermine industrial strikes and intimidate student activists; and the formation of a special anti-strike squad was contemplated to control national demonstrations against the adjustment measures.

However, the state could not be able to impose its hegemony on civil society. State repression was resisted by several interest groups and voluntary organizations. Internal differences within the military, which at times mirror the geopolitical divisions in the country, also helped to

<sup>19</sup> Democracy in Nigeria: Continuing Dialogue for Nation-building, pp. 201-204,



strengthen the resistance of the civil forces. New organizations also emerged specifically focusing on human rights abuses and civil liberties. Traditionally conservative organizations,\* such as the Nigerian Bar Association, were pulled into the arena of democratic politics. Thus, civil society educated, mobilised and led popular struggles and mass political action for the protection of civil liberties, the challenge to state repression and repressive laws through the courts, and agitation against transition inconsistencies and economic policies.

## SECTION C ECONOMY AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY



## Globalization and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria

Olisa G. Muojama

### Introduction

Since the end of the civil war in Nigeria and its aftermaths<sup>1</sup>, there has been a flurry of interest in inter-group relations as an area of study. However, available studies have concentrated attention on the internal impetus to the phenomenon. Apart from few allusions to colonialism, little or nothing has been written on the exogenous factors of inter-group relations in Nigeria.

The attention of this paper is geared towards examining the external motivation to the inter-group relations in Nigeria. To appreciate the discourse, the clarification of the concept that forms the kernel of the essay is essential.

### Globalisation

Globalisation is one of the compelling theories of the late 20th century. It is a pervasive force that evades easy analysis, for which reason it has been used in a multiplicity of senses. All areas of academic endeavour today try to establish an idea of globalisation in their sphere. Various dimensions of globalisation have thus been introduced.

---

<sup>1</sup> The aftermath of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) include: ethnic chauvinism, discrimination, the preponderance of ethnic militia, incessant coup d'etat along ethnic lines, etc.



Donald *et al* observe that 'social scientists discuss the political, social, environmental, historical, and geographical, and even the cultural implications of globalisation and the like'. Manfred Steger and James Mitterrand present economic, political, cultural and ideological dimensions of globalisation'. Upon this characterization, scholars have seen globalization as a buzz word, a phenomenon that can be approached from any angle.

Geographers have made efforts to carve a niche for themselves in the discourse of globalisation. In so doing, they have tried to show the spatial distribution of globalization, which they have comfortably termed 'Geography of Globalization'.<sup>4</sup>

In the same way, socio-cultural theorists have concentrated effort on examining the concept as it relates to what they call the global society. For instance, a renowned cultural theorist, Arju Appadurai maintains that it is no longer possible to imagine the world as a collection of autonomous monadic spaces whether these spaces are imagined as nations, regions within nations, or cultures demarcated by region or nation.<sup>5</sup> In the bold look at the cultural effects of a shrinking world, Appadurai places the changes and pleasure of contemporary life in a broad global perspective.<sup>6</sup> Jagdish Bhagwati notes that globalisation leads not to cultural white breed but to a spicy hybrid of cultures.<sup>7</sup>

In a multi-dimensional approach, Brenner Neil conceives globalization as a reterritorialization of both socio-economic and political

<sup>2</sup> Donard Ball, Wendell Mc Culloch jr., Paul Frantz, Michael Geringer, Michael Minor. *International Business* New York: Mc Graw- Hill, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Manfred Steger, *Globalization: Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Eric Shephard, "The Spaces and Times of Globalization: Place, Scale, Networks and Positionality" *Economic Geography*, Vol.78 No3 (Jul.), 2002, pp.307-330; Henry Wai-chung Yeung, "The Limits of Globalization Theory: A Geography Perspective on Global Economic Change" *Economic Geography*, Vol.78 No3 (Jul.), 2002, pp. 285-305.

<sup>5</sup> Arju Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Public World's vol. 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Imre Szeman Review of Modernity at Large; *Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

<sup>7</sup> Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (US: Oxford University Press, 2004).

institutional spaces that unfolds simultaneously upon multiple, superimposed geographical scale.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding these dimensions already reviewed, there is more preponderance for economic dimension to take upper hand on the basis that it is the major and ultimate driving force behind globalisation. In the words of James Petros, concepts like the global interdependence of nations, the growth of a world system, accumulation on a world scale, the global village and many others are rooted in more general notion that the accumulation of capital, trade and investment is no longer confined to the nation-state. In its most general sense, globalisation refers to the cross-national flows of goods, investment, production and technology.<sup>9</sup> Globalisation, Thomas Friedman writes, is the integration of markets, finance, and technology in a way that shrinks the world from size medium to a size small.<sup>10</sup>

Although Donald *et al* note various dimensions of globalisation as has been seen, they argue that 'the most common definition...is that of economic globalisation, the international integration of goods, technology, labour, and capital, that is, firms implementing global strategies which link and coordinate their international activities on a worldwide basis.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, Mansfield makes a single thematic framework, but eventually submits that the discussion of economic matters must be a significant part of any comprehensive account of globalisation.<sup>12</sup>

International Forum on Globalisation sees the concept as the present worldwide drive toward a globalized economic system dominated by super national corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic process or national governments.

<sup>8</sup> Brenner Neil, "Globalization as Reterritorialization: The Re-Scaling of Urban Governance in the European Union" *Urban Studies*, Vol 36, number 3, March 1, 1999, pp. 431-451.

<sup>9</sup> James Petro, "Globalization: A Critical Analysis". *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 29, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Friedman in *Techno Logic*. *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2002, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Donard Ball, Wendell Mc Culloch jr., Paul Frantz, Michael Geringer, Michael Minor. *International Business*. (New York: Mc Graw- Hill) p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Manfred Steger. *Globalization: Very Short Introduction*.



Anticipating more systematic theories of globalisation, the historian contributing to the *Times Atlas of World History* (Barraclough 1978) decided that by the middle of the 20th century, a period of European dominance had ended and the world had entered the age of global civilization. Interestingly, the editor reasoned that this development was economic rather than political or cultural.<sup>13</sup>

Recognizing other dimensions, *The World Book Encyclopedia* states that globalisation involves an emphasis on international financial transactions; the removal of international restrictions and the increase in worldwide communication.<sup>14</sup>

With due regard for the reviewed perspectives, the idea of globalisation as a systematic philosophical concept can be traced to the ancient period, but its eventual fulfillment or manifestation came in the late 18th century, while the word as we have it today was coined in the late 20th century. The implication of this position is that globalization is a product of the interplay of various forces over a long period of time.

The present writer has identified the idea of globalisation in the Stoic school of Philosophy founded by Zeno of Cyprus, opened around 300 BC. After the battle of Pidna in 168AD, the Stoic library was taken from Athens to Rome by Aemilius Paulus as war booty and placed at the disposition of a group of Roman youth.<sup>15</sup> This was the famous club of Scipion Aemilianus, which included historian Polybius (202-125BC), whom Professor Norman Cantor credits with the formulation of 'humanitas', the sense of decorum, and natural law<sup>16</sup>, or in Cantor's characterisation, 'the idea of brotherhood of all men.'<sup>17</sup> This idea can be said to be the precursor of what is today known as globalisation. It was then pursued by various Roman Emperors through conquest and expansion. However, due to the unavailability of a practical driving

<sup>13</sup> Jagdish Bhagwati. *In Defence of Globalization*.

<sup>14</sup> *World Book Encyclopedia* Chicago: Encyclopedia inc, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Dario Composta, *History of Ancient Philosophy* (Bangalore: Theological Publication, 1990) p. 322.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp.323-333.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Cantor, *Western Civilization: Its Genesis and Destiny* (USA: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1969).

force as well as agents, the idea was never achieved. In 476AD, Roman Empire collapsed and the idea collapsed with it.

The feudal society which followed the fall of Roman Empire was agricultural with the use of serf labour, therefore had no propensity to expanded reproduction that could propel globalisation. However evidence of inter-continental trade was recorded in the 9th century<sup>18</sup>, but featured insignificant number of people and unspecialized system of exchange.

In the 16th century the situation began to change drastically. The mariners' compass rediscovered during the period of renaissance gave rise to revolution in the sea transportation which accentuated exploration. Commercial revolution typified in merchant capitalism set in. By this process, the Europeans established world wide trade connections on their own terms, brought their culture to different regions by settling vast areas, and defined the ways in which different peoples were to interact with each other. However, in this mercantile period, globalisation was unable to blossom out into fruition, due to yet some fundamental and structural obstacles. For instance, Hopkins observes that in the mercantile period, the European frontier did not extend inland; it did not even cover all parts of the coasts.<sup>19</sup>

However, in the late 18th century a new wave known as Industrial Revolution, a mundane name for industrial capitalism, swept across Europe starting from Britain. Production, no longer commerce, became the basis of the economy. Commerce was an appendage of production, a channel of realisation of surplus value. Due to expansionist tendency of this mode of production, its advocates clamoured for private property in the means of production and for recession of government control and involvement in the economy that was characteristic of mercantilism. Through various means: lobbying, diplomacy, and war, the bourgeoisie gained upper hand, freed labour from the land, the ultimate result of

<sup>18</sup> Philip O'Hara, ed. 2001, *Encyclopedia of Political Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 1176.

<sup>19</sup> A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman Group, 1973).



which was proletarianisation and urbanisation.<sup>20</sup> With the rise of industrial capitalism, the idea of globalisation became consummated. By then it was not known by the word 'globalisation', but the phrase 'international economy'.<sup>21</sup>

The position of the present writer is that globalisation is the product of revolution in industrial capitalism. Capitalism is the only mode of production whose immanent laws of motion are capable of producing it. Globalisation may therefore be used interchangeably with global economy or global capitalism. To appreciate its dynamics, a clear understanding of the inner workings or governing principles of capitalism is essential.

Capitalism is a term used by political economists to designate the type of economic system in the industrialised world today.<sup>22</sup> It denotes an economic system based on private property in the means of production; prevalence of commodity production; the use of money as pervasive features of the society and the rule of the bourgeoisie.<sup>23</sup> John Eaton puts it in a more graphic way and comes to the same conclusion:

Three main features give capitalism its essential characteristics:

- (1) Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few people, the capitalist class who own the means of production.

<sup>20</sup> Gavin Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982) p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Works describing interconnectivity of countries appeared with those titles in: John Park Young, *The International Economy* (New York: The Ronald Company, 1951); A. J. Brown, *Introduction to the World Economy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1959); William Ashworth, *A Short History of the International Economy* (London: Longmans, 1962); Emmanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979); T. Elsworth, 1961, *The International Economy* (New York: Macmillan, 1961); A. G. Kenwood and A. L. Laugheed, *The Growth of the International Economy 1820-1960* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971); W. W. Rostow, *The World Economy: History and Prospect* (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1978); Shahid Alam, *The Global Economy Since 1800: A Short History*. [www.counterpunch.org/alam07262003.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/alam07262003.html)

<sup>22</sup> Eric Schutz, 'Capitalism', in Anthony O'Hara, *Encyclopedia of Political Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Eugene Kamenka, ed., *The Portable Karl Marx* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) p. 561.

- (2) Wide masses of the people have no means of getting a living except by selling their labour power for wages (proletariat).
- (3) Virtually all production is not for the personal use of the producer, but for exchange, for sale in the market.<sup>24</sup>

In Marxist usage, capital is a social relationship in which the capitalist is constantly seeking to expand and extract surplus value.<sup>25</sup> This compulsion acts as the engine of economic development in capitalism, directing investment in an insatiable pursuit of profit. Marx was at pains to show that the capitalist mode of production was governed not by the satisfaction of human needs, but by the drive to extract surplus value from a class of wage-labourers, to realize surplus value by finding a market for the commodities in which it was embodied and to capitalize this surplus value in new means of production.<sup>26</sup> According to Marx:

The development of capitalist production makes it constantly necessary to keep increasing the amount of capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking, and competition makes the immanent laws of capitalist production to be felt by each individual capitalist, as external coercive laws. It compels him to keep constantly extending his capital in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by means of progressive accumulation.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the conditions of capitalist enterprise impose on the individual firm the necessity to expand continuously.<sup>28</sup> It is this propensity to accumulation or expanded reproduction of capital that has produced globalisation. In the words of Marx, 'the tendency to create

<sup>24</sup> John Eaton, *Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1979) p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> "Transnational Corporation" in *Encyclopedia of Political Economy*, p.1178.

<sup>26</sup> Tomp Kemp, "The Marxist Theory of Imperialism" in Rogger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1972) p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital I* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1957) p. 555 cited in Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present* (New York and London: Monthly Review, 1978) p. 166.

<sup>28</sup> Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present* (New York and London: Monthly Review, 1978), p. 166.



the *world market* is directly given in the concept of capital itself'.<sup>29</sup> The same point has been made by Osvaldo Sunkel namely, that 'one of the essential elements of the development of capitalism has been from its very beginning the creation of an international system'.<sup>30</sup> 'The need for a constantly expanding market for its product chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connections everywhere'.<sup>31</sup>

Being the first industrialised country, Britain emerged the leader of the first phase of globalisation, which commenced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the pioneer industrial nation, it preached the doctrine of free trade. This was the essence of the Corn Laws debate, which preoccupied the nation in the 1840s.<sup>32</sup> Free trade was to Britain's advantage because it needed market for its manufactures and investment opportunities for its savings. Britain also became the headquarters of the international money market with the Gold Standard, 'first put into operation in 1821',<sup>33</sup> 'to maintain [international] monetary discipline'.<sup>34</sup>

But this British industrial leadership and resulting dominance of world trade was challenged as other countries industrialised in the nineteenth century. This ushered in a period of international capitalist competition.

As competition intensified, changes in the structure of capitalism in the industrialised countries continued to take place. In the period after 1870 there arose a new form of interstate rivalry culminating in the carving up of the world into colonial empires and spheres of influence

<sup>29</sup> Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 308-408 cited in Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism*, p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> Osvaldo Sunkel, "The pattern of Latin America Dependence". *Latin America in the International Economy*. Victor L. Urquidí and Rosemary Thorp eds., 1973, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels. *Communist Manifestoe* in Engene Kamenka. Ed. *The Portable Karl Marx* p. 251.

<sup>32</sup> Meghnad Desai, *Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of Statist Socialism* (London, New York: Verso, 2002) p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Gold standard, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 5 Macropedia (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica inc, 2003) p. 337.

<sup>34</sup> Meghnad Desai. *Marx's Revenge* p. 84.

which marked the beginning of the epoch of imperialism.<sup>35</sup> For Marxists, imperialism is not a political or ideological phenomenon such as colonialism but the working out of the laws of motion of capital as discovered by Marx. V.I. Lenin sees imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism and it is characterised by five basic features:

1. The concentration of production and capital to such a high stage that has created monopolies which play decisive part in economic life.
2. The merging of bank capital with industrial capital and the creation on the basis of this 'finance capital' of a financial oligarchy.
3. The export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance.
4. The formation of international monopolist capitalist combines which share the world among themselves.
5. The complete territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers.<sup>36</sup>

According to Magdoff, in this stage of capitalism, 'concentration of capital reaches the stage conveniently called monopoly capitalism (as distinguished from competitive capitalism), in which competition among only a few giant corporations is the typical pattern in each of the leading industries'.<sup>37</sup>

Foreign investment played a major role in the international economy of monopoly capitalism. A host of new industries based on major technological breakthroughs appeared on the scene. Examples are steel, electric power, oil refining, synthetic chemicals, aluminum, and automobiles. Industrial process relied more and more on the conscious application of science. The new industries created a demand for a wide

<sup>35</sup> Tom Kemp. 'The Marxist Theory of Imperialism', p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> V.I. Lenin, 1970, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970) p.86. Also see Grazia Ietto-Gillies, *International Production* (Cambridge: Polity 1992) pp.49-50. and in Tom Kemp. 'The Marxist Theory', pp. 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Harry Magdoff. *Imperialism*. p. 167.



variety of raw materials, often entailing the discovery and development of new sources of supply in distant lands. Under the impact of the new industries, and advances in transportation associated with the new technologies, the world market reached a new height in integration: the remaining self-contained areas were transformed into adjuncts of international markets. A more or less uniform world price came into effect for the more common commodities of world trade.<sup>38</sup> The state assumed an important role in stimulating, influencing, and resolving conflicts among the emerging giant corporations. Protective tariffs and other trade barriers no longer for protection of infant industries, but for the benefit of more advanced, export-oriented manufactures, became the order of the day. Britain under the leadership, in particular, of Joseph Chamberlain began to turn from free trade. According to Thomson, 'the age when Great Britain and the United States had stood for almost complete freedom of trade had passed. All countries were seeking to protect their manufactures or their trade by governmental controls, subsidies and tariffs'.<sup>39</sup> 'But the protectionism of the last quarter of the 19th century was mild by comparison with the mercantilist policies that had been common in the 17th century and were to be revived between the two world wars. Extensive economic liberty prevailed by 1913. Qualitative restrictions were unheard of and customs duties were low and stable. Currencies were freely convertible into gold, which in effect was common international money. Balance of payments problems were few. People who wished to settle and work in a country could go where they wished with few restrictions; they could open business, enter trade, or export capital freely. Equal opportunity to compete was the general rule, the sole exception being the existence of limited customs preferences between certain countries. Trade was freer throughout the

<sup>38</sup> Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism*, p. 168.

<sup>39</sup> David Thomson, *World History 1914-1918* (London and New York: Oxford, 1969). 3<sup>rd</sup> Edn. p. 26.

Western world in 1913'<sup>40</sup>. 'Then between 1914 and 1918, a horrendous war stopped all of this, sinking globalization'.<sup>41</sup>

The First World War distorted the international trade and monetary arrangements. It entails severe restrictions by the European belligerents on all forms of current foreign investment. Outstanding foreign portfolio investments in the US were commandeered to fund munitions and other purchases.<sup>42</sup> A definite phase in the story of European migration closed in 1914.<sup>43</sup> To bring some order into the chaotic situation was one of the first post-war concerns. Conferences of Brussels (1920), Genoa (1922), and that held at the instance of the League of Nations (1927) are epitome of this concern.

However in 1929, the Wall Street collapsed. The great crash was followed by the Great Depression. This crisis of capitalism of the 1930s gave rise to a volatile and unstable international economic environment. National economic chauvinism manifested itself in the authoritarian version of capitalism, namely fascism. Various measures such as competitive devaluation were adopted as a means to a competitive edge in international transactions. Economic isolation replaced economic internationalism. Amidst this situation, the Second World War broke out in 1939 with the same effects on the international economy as the First World War. The need to restore order prompted the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944, where 44 nations met and discussed the proposal for a post-war internationalization in a United Nations' Monetary and Financial Conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. Out of these deliberations came the articles of agreement for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as the Agreement for

<sup>40</sup> "International Trade", *The New Encyclopedia Britannica vol 21. Macropedia* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica inc, 2003) p. 906.

<sup>41</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Sinking globalization" *Foreign Affairs*. December 2005, WTO special edition. [http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20057201faessay84711-P30/niall\\_ferguson/sinking-globalization.html.p.1](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20057201faessay84711-P30/niall_ferguson/sinking-globalization.html.p.1) Retrieved Nov.6,2006

<sup>42</sup> Mira Willins, *The History of Investment in the United States 1914-1945* (Cambridge Ma: Harvard University press, 2004), <http://ch.net/bookreviews/library/0894.shtul.pl>, Retrieved 17-11-2006.

<sup>43</sup> A. M. Carr-Saunders, "Introduction" in Julius Isaac, *Economics of Migration* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1974) p. xi.



the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank),<sup>44</sup> which were established to correct the ailing world economy.

With the end of the Second World War, capitalist economies began the process of loosening the international barriers to private investments.<sup>45</sup> This was aided by forms of economic integration, such as the common market, which provided for 'the free movement of labour and capital among the members'.<sup>46</sup> The financial system was liberalized and concerted attempts were made to open up trade (and institute regional groupings).<sup>47</sup> Cross-national mobility of commodities and the growth of international investment as well as international money and finance have been on the increase.<sup>48</sup>

Following this development, the word 'globalize' began to emerge as a way to explain the increasing interlocking of the world. According to Malcolm Waters, "although the word 'global' is over 400 years, the common usage of such words as 'globalization', 'globalize', and 'globalizing' did not begin until about 1960. The Economist (4/4/59) reported that Italy's 'globalised quota' for imports of cars has increased; and in 1961 Webster became the first major dictionary to offer definitions of globalism and globalization. In 1962 the Spectator (5/10/62) recognized that: 'Globalisation is indeed a staggering concept'.<sup>49</sup>

By the 1980s, world trade as a share of world output had returned to the general level of 1913 (ie up from 7% of total GDP in 1945 to 15% in 1988); foreign direct investment (5-10% of capital stock) in most major economies, and about a third of all trade between countries had

<sup>44</sup> P.T. Ellsworth, 1961, *The International Economy* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 421.

<sup>45</sup> John Q. Adams and Phillip A. O' Hara, "International Political Economy" *Encyclopedia of Political Economy*. Anthony O' Hara ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 572.

<sup>46</sup> "International Trade" *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. vol 21 *Macropedia*. Knowledge in Depth (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica inc., 2003), p. 709.

<sup>47</sup> John Q. Adams et al. "International Political Economy" p. 572

<sup>48</sup> Dick Bryan "Internationalization of Capital" *Encyclopedia of Political Economy* p. 580.

<sup>49</sup> Malcom Waters. *Globalization* (Routledge, 2001).

come to consist of the movement of goods between different national branches of one or another multinational company.<sup>50</sup> Fund raised in international capital markets increased from just over \$100 billion in 1979 to over \$1500 billion in 1996. The mobility of money and capital associated with the growth of these markets has broken down the notion of discrete national markets.<sup>51</sup> The IMF system of pegged exchange rates collapsed and the floating exchange rate system emerged.<sup>52</sup> Thus devaluation and revaluation moved lower or higher than the IMF parity band.<sup>53</sup> The abandonment of the post-war international trading regime was followed in 1979-80 by the abandonment of Keynesian economic policy.<sup>54</sup> By the late 1980's, and early 1990s, Russia and other former communist countries lowered or eliminated their trade barriers to increase their economic productivity and welfare. During these years, they began seeking to transform their economies from communist central planning to market-based capitalism.<sup>55</sup> These changes initiated the new process of internationalisation of capital. Capitalism once again becomes global.

The immediate outcome of this new wave of global interlocking was the staggering of the concept into the academic circle. Robertson informs us that 'globalization' was not recognised as academically significant until the early or possibly the mid-1980s, but thereafter its use has become well globalised. Overall, the number of publications which use the word 'global' in their titles has now probably reached five figures but the processual term 'globalisation' was still relatively rare at the beginning of the 1990s. In February 1994 the catalogue of the

<sup>50</sup> Colin Leys. *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*. (London: James Curry, 1996), p. 20.

<sup>51</sup> Dick Bryan. 'Internationalization of Capital'. *Encyclopedia of Political Economy*, p. 572.

<sup>52</sup> 'International Trade'. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vol. 21. *Macropedia*, p. 927.

<sup>53</sup> Colin Leys. *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, p. 20. Also see William Wsiely. *A Tool of Power: The Political History of Money* (New York, London: A Wiley-Interscience, 1977) p. 334. See Bernard S. Katz. "Smithsonian Agreement" in Douglas Greenwald, ed., *Encyclopedia of Economics*. (New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1982) p. 863.

<sup>54</sup> Colin Leys, op. cit. p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *World Book* Vol. 10 (Chicago: Encyclopedia, 2002), p. 348.



library of Congress contained only 34 publications with the term or one of its derivatives in the title. By February 2000, this number had risen to 284. None of these was published before 1987.<sup>56</sup>

The major argument of this section is that 'globalisation' as an idea or thought is an age-long phenomenon. The stage for its manifestation and consummation was set by mercantilism, while it blossomed out into fruition as a result of the revolution in the industrial capitalism. The driving force of the process is economic, while social, political, and other dimensions are either the effect of economic globalization or its agents.

### Inter-Group Relations

Inter-group relations mean the interaction between different groups from different backgrounds, historical experience, etc. Different peoples can interact with one another through various ways. These include economic, social and political dimensions.

In addition, theories have been established to underpin various opinions as regards the dimension or pattern of relationship that exist among various peoples in a given period. For instance, there is the theory of 'fundamental diversity' or 'strange-bed-fellows'. There is also that of 'unity in diversity', which is in opposition to the former. To appreciate this analysis, there is need to state the major tenets of each of the theories.

The theory of strange-bed-fellows or fundamental diversity maintains that the peoples of Nigeria are fundamentally different from one another; that there is a marked difference in their cultures namely: language, religion, political system and structural configuration, to mention but a few. On this understanding, they argue that, there had never been interaction among various peoples of pre-colonial Nigeria before the coming of the colonial masters who amalgamated them; hence, the amalgamation can be characterized as a marriage between strange bed-fellows. This idea is mooted up in the bid to explaining why

it has become difficult for these peoples thus amalgamated to co-habit peacefully without acrimony and rancour.

To negate this idea, the theory of unity in diversity was coined. The proponents of this theory argue that before the coming of the colonial masters, various peoples of Nigeria had been interacting in various ways, such as trade, intermarriage, and other socio-economic dimensions of human relationship. To them, difference in language cited by the proponents of strange-bed-fellows theory for the impossibility of relationship among the pre-colonial Nigerian peoples is something which could not stand as a viable evidence, allowing for the fact that linguists have, in categorizing various African languages, noticed that most languages of the Sub-Saharan Africans belong to one language family known as Niger-Congo family. On the other hand, most Nigerian languages such as Igbo, Ijo, Edo and Idoma, belong to Kwa language sub-family, and they started diverging from their ancestral root between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the difference in languages is not as grave as it has been conceived. To be sure, there is a marked relationship between languages of various groups, which is an indication of their belonging to one language family or close interaction among them. Again, the geography of Nigeria gives room for the interaction among various sections of the country, even before the coming of the Europeans. For instance, those living in the mangrove area produced salt and fish, which their environment permitted. Therefore, in order to survive, they required tuberous plants derived from the forest zone for their subsistence. In the same way, those living in the forest zone entertained difficulty in rearing animals because of the menace posed to animals by tsetse fly sustained by the forest zone. To provide for this, the inhabitants of the forest zone depended and still depend on the people of savanna zone for the supply of meat, among other things. More so, there were track and pathways as well as

<sup>57</sup> R. G. Armstrong:

(i) *The Study of West African Languages* (Ibadan, 1962), p.26.

(ii) 'Glottochronology and West African Linguistics', *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1962. C. C. Wriigley, 'Linguistic clue to African History', *Journal of African History*, Vol.3, No. 2, 1962.

<sup>56</sup> Malcom Waters. *Globalization*.



waterways maintained by both the interior and the river-line areas respectively for easy movement in and around different zones.

All these are pointers to the fact that prior to the coming of the colonial masters various peoples that make up the present Nigeria had been interacting among themselves, thus negating the theory of strange-bed-fellows. In this way, the differences and the limitations cited by the proponents of the theory of fundamental diversity is more apparent than real. The position of this paper is that there had existed socio-economic relationship among the various peoples of Nigeria in the pre-colonial era. Although wars and conquests as well as exaction of tribute and taxes from the vassal states featured in the pre-colonial era, only in the colonial and postcolonial periods could political interaction among various sections of Nigeria, on mutual ground, be said to have been achieved. Globalization through colonialism, for the first time, provided a common goal for the whole sections of peoples that constitute the Nigerian state.

#### *Globalisation and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria up to 1960*

Long before the rise of globalisation, the peoples of Nigeria had traded with one another, intermarried, and become aware of the presence of neighbours around them.<sup>58</sup> Various scholars of Nigerian history have demonstrated how the communities of Nigeria exchanged commodities; established diplomatic ties in terms of inter-marriage between friendly neighbours or business associates.<sup>59</sup> According Afigbo, it is known that

<sup>58</sup> Obaro Ikime. 'Inter-Group Relations in Pre-Colonial Nigeria: a call for Re-examination of Political Relations among Nigerian Peoples in the Period up to C.1850'. Paper presented to the History Department Seminar, University of Benin, Febuary 1982. Also see Obaro Ikime. *History, The Historian and The Nation* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 2006) p.17.

<sup>59</sup> G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London, 1920); D. Fordes and G.I. Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of Southern Nigeria* (London, 1950); K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* (Oxford, 1956); R. S. Smith, *The Kingdoms of Yoruba* (Great Britain, 1969); A.G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and its Tribes* (London, 1960); J.S. Boston. 'Notes on Contact between the Igala and the Ibo', *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. II, No.1, 1960; A.E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand, Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Ibadan: University Press, 1981); R.A. Adeleye, *Power and*

different Nigerian ethnic and cultural groups sought, through their richly varied traditions of origin and migrations and through accounts of the rise and expansion of their socio-political systems, to preserve, inter alia, their perceptions of the relationships which existed between them and their neighbours ... It shows that the colonial administration believed that Nigerian peoples enjoyed, at a very deep level, an ethnological and cultural unity whose origin goes back to antiquity. The differences in language, institutions and customs which they found amongst Nigerian groups they tended to attribute to relatively recent historical developments traceable to the disruption caused by the slave trade and the rise of Islam in Northern Nigeria.<sup>60</sup>

"Linguistically and culturally", it was argued,

There is no part of Nigeria where a line can be drawn and it can be said here the North ends and the South begins. The inheritance of culture and ideas has been without exception through thousands of years from North to South and East to West. Tribe has followed tribe, cultural conception has followed cultural conception, but though the extremes visibly differ, there is a distinguishable woof running through the whole while the web is mainly varied by environment.<sup>61</sup>

For example, an Igbo, writes Professor Obaro Ikime, whose name is given as Achadu as having married a female Igala Atta may well represent a period of Igbo-Igala relation.<sup>62</sup> In the same way, exchange of goods also existed in the pre-globalized period between the various states that are known today as the Hausa as well as their neighbours even before the Fulani incursion in the early 1800s. Notwithstanding, it will be noted that inter-group relation in the period before globalization of the territories was not intensive because only insignificant number of people were involved. It was also socio-economic, but not political.

*Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906* (London: Longman, 1971); O.N. Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Enugu: Magnet, 2001)

<sup>60</sup> A. E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their Neighbours, Inter-Group Relations in Southeastern Nigeria to 1953* (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1987) pp. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Obaro Ikime, *History, The Historian and The Nation*, p. 29.



Although some empires did exist, not a single one of these brought all of the territories of Nigeria under one political umbrella.<sup>63</sup> Thus in the period up to 1800, studies of inter-group relation have tended to concentrate attention on social and economic relations. This was because no pre-colonial empire had the driving force that could accomplish the task of incorporating other peoples into its sphere of political influence. Therefore inter-group relation existed in the years before globalization of the territories, but it was not intensive.

However, following the concomitants of globalization such as the institution of legitimate trade and the industrialization of other European and non-European nations alike, the process of shrinking the distance among various territories through communications and transport networks as well as establishment of law and order via administrative machinery became on the increase, and helped to generate new patterns of inter-group relation. Some scholars of inter-group relations have explained the development of the new trends in terms of the establishment of colonial rule and its components.<sup>64</sup> I hereby argue that colonial rule itself was an effect, and later agent, of globalization.

To be sure, colonial rule in Nigeria commenced in 1914, but before that year, intensive inter-group relation had been in existence except in political circle. For instance, the legitimate trade which was an outcome of the industrial revolution which created globalization intensified the relation between the coastal areas of the Niger Delta and their interior neighbours no longer in the areas of primary sector of the economy such as exchange of agricultural produce, but in both secondary and tertiary sectors such as industrial labour and services (invisible product) respectively. Legitimate trade, writes Hopkins, enabled small-scale farmers and traders to play an important part in the oversea exchange economy for the first time<sup>65</sup>. According to Forrest, the incorporation of

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> Obaro Ikime, "In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving State." Inaugural Lecture as President, Historical Society of Nigeria, delivered at the 30th Congress of Historical Society of Nigeria, Nsukka, May, 1985. Also Obaro Ikime, *History, The Historian and The Nation*, p. 97.

<sup>65</sup> A.G. Hopkins. *An Economic History of West Africa* p. 133.

Nigeria into the world economy was achieved through the expansion of the peasant commodity production.<sup>66</sup> This development also accentuated inter-group relation. Comparative advantage of various peoples gave rise to inter-dependence among them. Those who live on the coast of the Niger for instance were fishermen as well as salt producers and, because of their terrain, cultivated little or nothing. To survive, they needed to exchange their product for agricultural produce from the hinterland. In the same way the position of the coastal peoples gave them the advantage of becoming the middlemen between the oversea capitalist firms on the coast and the peasant farmers of the interior. Therefore the expansion of the peasant commodity production also meant the expansion of the number of people involved in inter-group relation.

Again, owing to the laws of motion of globalization there followed the erection of the infrastructure of exploitation. In 1898, railroadisation began in Nigeria from Lagos. Ibadan was reached in 1901 and Jebba in 1909. Two years after, the Baro-Kano line (serving the Niger by river from Burutu in the delta) was completed, and in 1912 joined Lagos line at Minna.<sup>67</sup> Road construction began in 1906. In 1908 the first two motor vehicles were imported for the first time.<sup>68</sup> Nigeria's leading ports are all obstructed by bars, and, with exception, of Lagos, are located on rivers or creeks, and connected to the sea by tricky channels. Dredging the 11-foot bar which blocked the channel to Lagos Harbor was begun in 1899 and the entrance to it was opened in 1913.<sup>69</sup>

The establishment of transportation network, as has been seen, connected various regions and peoples. Labour relations among various peoples also became intensified as it provided opportunity for increased urbanization. Evidence exists to show that tin industry in northern

<sup>66</sup> Tom Forrest, "Recent Developments in Nigerian Industrialization" in Martin Fransman, ed. *Industry and Accumulation in Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1982) p. 224.

<sup>67</sup> Alan Sokolaski, *The Establishment of Manufacturing in Nigeria* (New York; Fredrick A. Praeger, 1965) p. 97.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 107.



Nigeria utilized labour from various sections of the country.<sup>70</sup> All the infrastructure of exploitation inevitably, and as a matter of externality, gave impetus to the new patterns of inter-group relations in Nigeria.

The foregoing review shows that the evidence (such as network of roads and railways, as well as urbanization) cited by other scholars to demonstrate that the degree of Nigerian-ness that Nigerians can boast of owes a great deal to colonial rule<sup>71</sup> had started to be put in place before the establishment of colonial rule. What colonial rule did was to extend the process that had hitherto begun.

Colonialism here treated as an effect and agent of globalization also contributed immensely to fostering the new dimensions of inter-group relation. Its achievement was enormous. It brought Nigerian peoples together in new purpose.<sup>72</sup> With colonialism, inter-group relation in Nigeria, for the first time, became political. In the colonial period, the geography for inter-group relation in Nigeria was wider and more expanse, allowing for the fact that parts of what is today known as Cameroon were also part of Nigeria. Although few parts joined Cameroon, others have remained united up till today with various dynamics of mode and basis of relationship.

That colonialism as a component of globalization enhanced inter-group relation does not contradict the point that 'colonial administrative arrangement also had the effect of emphasizing existing differences and introduced new ones'<sup>73</sup>. However under colonial rule, inter-ethnic conflicts were less fierce than they have become, while inter-group relation became more intense than it is today.

<sup>70</sup> Penelope Bower, 1948, "The Mining Industry" in Margery Parham, ed., *Mining, Commerce, and Finance in Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948) p.24; Bill Freud, *Capital and Labour in the Nigerian Tin Mines* (Longman, 1981); Bob Shenton, Bill Freund, "The Incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the world Capitalist Economy". *Review of African Political Economy*, 13, Nigeria (Sep-Dec., 1978) p.16.

<sup>71</sup> Obaro Ikime. *History, The Historian and The Nation*, p. 97.

<sup>72</sup> Obaro Ikime. *History, The Historian and The Nation*, p. 97.

<sup>73</sup> Obaro Ikime. *History, The Historian and The Nation*, p. 97.

### *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria in the Post Independence Era*

The independence of Nigeria on October 1, 1960 was attended by new dimensions of inter-group relations. By this time, so many things had happened around the world. Technological advancement, most especially in communications industry, has continued to reduce Nigeria to a clan. News of what happened in the North could now travel to the South more easily than before. The Niger Delta militants could now lodge a bomb at the Atlas Cove in Lagos, with the help of technology.

Besides, exploration of oil which began in 1906, but was truncated by the outbreak of the First World War, had eventually yielded result as crude oil was found in Oloibiri in Bayelsa in 1956. Added to this was the growing demand of crude oil in the world market as well as the resumption of international investment which seized as a result of the World Wars and Bretton Woods Arrangement. By so doing the Niger Delta area became a beehive of activities of European oil exploring firms. By 1970s, oil had become the major foreign exchange earner of Nigeria and was to define the future of inter-group relations in Nigeria.

In the colonial period, although there were structures put in place to stave the proper integration of the various Nigerian peoples as demonstrated by Okwudiba Nnoli, there was less friction in the inter-group relations among the Nigerian peoples. The state was regionally structured which offered each set of people the opportunity to take charge and control both their resources and their destiny.

Following the rise of oil as the major export product of the country, the structural configuration of the country began to change. Some scholars argue that the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 drew some of its causes from the rising position of oil in the scheme of things. According to Ihonvbere and Falola,

It is possible to isolate the extent to which oil interests influenced the calculations of transnational corporations, the Biafran and federal sides, and the greater powers .... There is no doubt that oil significantly influenced the calculations of the Biafran leaders in their decision to secede from the Federation of Nigeria .... The foreign press in its comments on the civil war constantly highlighted the role of oil either in Lt. Col. Ojukwu's desire to secede or as a



factor likely to spur the Nigerians into not allowing the East to break away with huge oil reserves.<sup>74</sup>

After the Nigerian civil war in 1970, crude oil boom followed three years after. Due to Israeli-Yankupu war, the demand for oil increased in the world market. This put surplus revenue into the coffers of the oil producing countries of the world under the umbrella of OPEC. Nigeria as an oil producing and exporting country benefited from this oil windfall. As a consequence, oil became the major revenue yielding resource in Nigerian economy. The control of oil was the control of the finances of the nation. On this understanding, the government amended the Land Use Decree in such a way as to vest the federal government through state governments the power of ownership and control of land and things beneath the land. This is the theory of over-centralization of power and finance, which opened the channel and struggle for occupying the centre on the condition that the control of the centre is *sine qua non* for the control of power and resources of the whole country. This new arrangement determined by oil also affected inter-group relations in Nigeria. The militarization of the country's politics can be traced to this situation.

Added to the foregoing is the inoculation of the Nigerian elites with the so called ideological orthodoxy arising from global integration. In the colonial period, the economic system of Nigeria was mercantilist in the form of exports of commodities produced by the peasantry, a process through which the country was integrated into the global economic system during the colonial period. Part of the post-independence era is coeval with the neo-libertarian dispositions. This created a different economic regime and environment. The elements of this neo-libertarian mood include free trade, *laissez faire*, liberalisation, privatisation, commercialisation, democracy, etc. This neo-libertarian posture of the post-independent Nigerian elites has affected inter-group relations in the country. The elites have become more individualistic,

<sup>74</sup> Julius Ihonvbere and Toyin Falola. "The Economy, the Civil War, and Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 1967-1970" in Julius Ihonvbere and Toyin Falola, eds., *Nigeria and the International Capitalist System* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988) pp. 36-37.

more ethnic oriented, and the country more polarised. Individual or group monetary gain has replaced general interest. And since ability and legitimacy to be in charge and in control of the national treasury is tied to the acquisition of power, contest for power among various groups in Nigeria has become more tense and fierce than ever.

Globalisation has also created class formation along the line of economic interests, thereby uniting elites of various sections of the country. The idea of global exploitation in which elites, or put more directly the bourgeoisie of the world, would unite in the act of exploiting the working class is also apparent in Nigeria. For instance, examples abound to show that mega political parties that have made waves in the country have been formed by people of diverse ethnic groups, who share the same economic and political interests.

### Conclusion

First, globalisation is the product of the revolution in industrial capitalism. Put succinctly, capitalism is the only mode of production whose immanent laws of motion are capable of producing globalisation. Although scholars insist on multidimensional approach, globalisation is of economic origin; other spheres of its manifestation are effects not dimensions or genres, unless when those words are used to mean effect. The phenomenon as a thought draws its origin from stoicism; mercantilism set the stage for its realisation, while capitalism brought it to fulfillment. Its first name was international economy, later used interchangeably with world economy and global economy. Due to the effects of the First World War, Great Depression, Keynesianism, Second World War, and Bretton Woods's arrangement, the interconnectivity of the world which had existed between 1800 and 1913 remained shattered, and for which reason interest in the area of study dwindled and diminished, until after the Second World War.

Second, before the incorporation of the thousands of communities that make up Nigeria into the vortex of globalization, there had been interaction among them, which were social and economic, but apolitical. What looks as if there were political interactions was in the event of war and hostility. With globalisation of Nigerian territories,



and the institution of its concomitants, inter-group relations in Nigeria became accentuated. A component of globalisation, colonialism introduced political dimension to inter-group relations in Nigeria, as it for the first time brought various Nigerian peoples together under one political umbrella. Much as globalisation enhanced inter-group relation, it also emphasised existing differences and introduced new ones.

10

## The Dog-Palm Oil Trade Between the Jos Plateau and the Niger Delta

S. U. Fwatshak

### Introduction

This chapter examines the evolution and development of the over-twenty years flourishing trade in dogs and palm oil between Ngas people of the Jos Plateau and their counterparts from Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom States in Nigeria's South-south region. Anthropological and historical methodologies were used to generate data, while the qualitative method was used for the analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among traders at the Dawaki market on its Thursday market days based on random sampling of male and female participants. I earlier on took one day to familiarise myself with the market, observe transactions and make preliminary inquiries before designing research questions and conducting interviews using research assistants both in Plateau State and in Calabar, Cross Rivers State. Supplementary secondary sources were also used. We established that the two-way trade between the two regions is a post-colonial development. We argue that the evolution and sustenance of the trade shows that dogs play significant roles in the lives of the communities involved, as palm oil is the major cooking oil among many households.

Indeed the significance of the trade becomes obvious from the following facts. Each week, Thursday and Saturday, Ngas traders of Plateau State, Nigeria's central region, sell an average of about 1000 dogs at their two local market centres (at Dawaki and Amper) to their



counterparts from Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom States in Nigeria's South-south region. Traders from the South-South region in turn sell between 5,200 litres and 10,400 litres of palm oil to the Ngas and other peoples of Plateau State in the same deal, sustaining an economic relationship that spans over twenty years. The volume and regularity of the trade agitate the mind, as the following questions beg for answers: When, and how did this trade develop between these two very distant communities? Why are dogs and palm oil the main trade items in this economic relationship? What are the sources of the dogs traded? How is the trade organised? What is the volume of the trade and what are some of the problems and benefits of the trade? In the sections following, attempts are made to answer these and other related questions.

### Origin and Development of the Dog-Palm Oil Trade

It is not certain when the two-way trade between the two communities began. Wakyilla argues that the dog trade in Dawaki started in the 1950s when Ngas people of that area started buying dogs at the Tuesday market in Bwai (Kaye) in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi Province, adding that in those days the dogs were smaller in size and shorter and came from neighboring Bauchi Province, being bought from the Jarawa (Afizere/Izere), Dass, and Tafawa Balewa communities. Dawaki traders who bought dogs from Bwai sold them out in their homes, as dog meat was popular among the Ngas and their neighbours. Sales of dog meat in Ngasland started in Nyalang Wednesday market in Fier District, where donkey meat was also sold.<sup>1</sup> Gokum who also claims that the trade originally started within Ngas people, supports this internal trade theory.<sup>2</sup> In the early days of the dog trade, dogs were not given out to the traders for free, rather, traders paid for them in various ways including hoes, knives, axes, baskets, and their labour.<sup>3</sup> Participants interviewed claimed different dates for the two-way trade between the

<sup>1</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas of Kabwir District Area, With Specific Reference to the Nature and Volume of the Trade From c.1900 to the Present" NCE Dissertation, Akwanga: College of Education, 1996, pp.38-40, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Nenlap Gokum (42 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006

<sup>3</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, p. 41.

Ngas and their South-south counterparts. According to Udoka, the trade started in 1975<sup>4</sup>. Gokum, however, claimed it started in 1976.<sup>5</sup> Uban-Doma asserted that it started in 1984 when three Calabar people were introduced to it in Kano.<sup>6</sup> Gonyok, is however of the opinion that until the 1980s, the Calabar-Akwa-Ibom peoples did not come to Dawaki to buy dogs.<sup>7</sup> Although it is not possible to point with certainty to the exact date of the commencement of the dog-palm oil trade between the Ngas and those of Calabar/Akwa-Ibom areas, the century of the development of the interactive trade between the groups is not in doubt; that is the 20th century.

As to the reason for the development of the trade, participants explain it from the point of view of complementarities of demand. According to Udoka, the trade was stimulated by complementarities of demand. While the Ngas people needed palm oil, which they did not produce, Calabar people needed dogs, which were scarce in their area. In his words, there was "lack of dogs in Calabar" and "lack of Palm oil" in Ngasland.<sup>8</sup> John supports this view.<sup>9</sup> The point that there is lack of palm oil in Dawaki should be taken seriously in view of the fact that Dawaki and the Jos Plateau in general is not a forest region and therefore not a palm oil producing region. It is not however clear why there should be a shortage of dogs in the South-south, but the fact that Dawaki is a bulking and bulk-breaking centre for dogs give it a comparative advantage over the South-south. Although Palm oil and dogs were/are the principal items traded, other products entered the trade. Thus, apart from dogs, Ngas people also sell pigs and goats to traders from the South-south; in turn traders from the South-south in addition to Palm

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Udoka (45 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Nenlap Gokum (42 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Uban-Doma (32 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> C. K. Gonyok is a Lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos. He is from the Ngas ethnic group and talked to me on the dog trade; gave me a copy of the *Daily Trust*, which I cite in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Udoka (45 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Edet John (40 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.



oil sell oil palm brooms, yams, ugu leaves and other vegetables.<sup>10</sup> Dog meat, palm wine, kola nuts are also sold in the market, but these are all later introductions. Other neighbouring Ngas markets where dog meat is sold include Kabwir (Wednesdays), Amper (Saturdays), Myet (Sundays), and Kalin (Mondays). When the sale of dog meat started, men mainly carried it out, now both men and women are involved.<sup>11</sup> The main items purchased by traders from the South-South (who bring between three to four lorries carrying drums and jerry cans of palm oil as well as palm-wine) are dogs, pigs and goats.<sup>12</sup>

### Sources and Significance of Palm Oil and Dogs

Palm oil is one of the products of the oil palm tree, a basically forest product. It has a long and important place in the history of Nigeria and the Niger-Delta to which the South-south states in the two-way trade belong. Palm trees grew wild in the bush and were exploited by forest peoples and became a major item of the legitimate trade, which made the Niger-Delta popular in the 19th century. In the colonial period palm oil was one of the major cash crops the British expropriated from Nigeria. The significance of palm oil in the legitimate trade and in the colonial economy of Nigeria has been adequately documented.<sup>13</sup> Despite the overbearing influence of petroleum oil in the national economy, palm oil is still a major agricultural resource produced in the Niger-Delta area. Thus, the palm oil used in the trade between the two communities, is locally derived. The significance of Palm oil in Nigeria is well established by its being found in virtually all families where it is daily used as a household cooking oil. As noted earlier, the Ngas do not

<sup>10</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger-Delta, 1830-1885*. Oxford, 1956; A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973); P. T. Bauer, *West African Trade, A Study of Competition, Oligopoly, and Monopoly in a Changing Economy* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1963).

produce palm oil because their savannah vegetation does not support the growth of palm trees.

While palm oil is used nationwide as a major food and income earner, dogs on the other hand, do not have such national profiles. Admittedly, many families and homes keep dogs but for purposes other than food and trade. In many parts of the world, dogs are kept as pets; in Africa and Nigeria in particular, most communities keep dogs to keep the security, and for hunting. Strict adherents of the Islamic faith, as a matter of religious injunction, do not eat dog meat neither do they sell the dogs they rear. In a similar manner, some Christians, also do not eat dog meat on account of Mosaic Law. But in the indigenous cultural settings of many non-Muslim minority peoples of Nigeria's Central region, and those in the South-south, trade in live dogs and dog meat is popular. Jos Plateau communities like Berom, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Mupun, Taroh, among others; the Eggon people of Nassarawa State and the Koro of Niger State etc, exemplify Nigerian people that use dogs in this latter sense. There are also indications that some Nigerian majority groups including the Igbo and Yoruba living in the central Nigeria area are also beginning to indulge in consumption of dog meat.<sup>14</sup>

The Ngas and their neighbours have a tradition of keeping dogs as domestic animals. The antiquity of dogs in their economies is shown in the indigenous names each ethnic groups has for dogs, some of which are similar. Among the Ngas, Mupun, Mwaghavul and linguistic kin groups, dogs are called *as*. In the traditional and modern economy and society of the Ngas, dogs occupy an important place in their lives as stocks of wealth (Dogs were/are kept as stock of wealth as they could be exchanged for goats, given to young men in exchange for their labour on the owner's farm), sources of animal protein (meat); dogs are also used for hunting, and to keep the security at home and on farmlands.<sup>15</sup> In African Traditional Medicine (ATM) and religion, dogs were also used for rituals (Mupun used dogs for a healing ritual called *Ngizim*; Ngas used dog meat to cure stomach ailments (*mbibut*), as prescribed by

<sup>14</sup> Daily Trust, "Inside the Dog Trade", 13/7/2006, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, p. 35-36; *Daily Trust*, "Inside the Dog Trade", 13/7/2006, p. 24.



traditional medicine healers.<sup>16</sup> Some current patrons and sellers of dog meat (Ngas and non-Ngas alike) claim further uses of dog meat as cure for malaria, antidote against attack by witches, and a viable business source of income for the family.<sup>17</sup>

Ethnic groups in the South-south put dogs to many uses among which are security, hunting, consumption, trade, and ritual.<sup>18</sup> According to a male informant named Nsa, Akpabugo, Efik, Quos, and Efut communities in Cross Rivers State eat dog meat, as the Efik are the main traders in dogs to the Jos Plateau. Nsa claims that dog meat is eaten by Calabar people for medicine for typhoid on the recommendation of traditional healers.<sup>19</sup> Another male informant who chose to be anonymous asserts that all communities indigenous to Calabar eat dog meat as medicine for epilepsy, malaria and typhoid. This development he argues is new as in the olden days dog meat was meant for kings. He also confirms the point made by others,<sup>20</sup> as all agreed on the point that the Efik are the main traders in dogs and that the dogs were used for consumption and for trade. Joseph who is Ibibio claims that his people ordinarily do not eat dog meat being a taboo, but that some other ethnic groups eat dog meat. The instance where an Ibibio person may eat dog meat is when it is sacrificed for a ritual on the prescription of a medicine man. The medicine man or diviner may prescribe any animal including dog to be sacrificed by an individual to propitiate his wrong or prescribed for a community to make a pact when there is a problem, war for example. The type of dog usually prescribed for pact-making is the "four-eyed dog". Having the normal two eyes and having some

marks on both eyelids similar to normal eyes distinguish the four-eyed dogs.<sup>21</sup> The claims by our informants point to the fact that many peoples indigenous to Cross Rivers State, like their counterparts in Plateau State are culturally, economically and religiously attached to dog meat, while the Efik are the main entrepreneurs in the dog trade to the Jos Plateau.

Following the development of the trade in dogs, and the increase in demand for dog meat on the Jos Plateau (dog meat is sold in Pankshin, Kugiyia in Jos South LGA) and various locations in Jos town and its environs daily), local sources of dogs proved inadequate; additional supplies had to be obtained. Ngas rose to the challenge by outsourcing dogs. To procure additional dogs, dog traders travel far and wide within Nigeria to procure supplies. Thus apart from Bauchi state, Ngas dog traders travel to mainly Muslim dominated states of Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Adamawa, Yobe and Borno, as well as the neighbouring country of Niger Republic to procure dogs.<sup>22</sup> In most of these states dogs are given to the Ngas mainly for free but in some instances cash payments are demanded. Where dogs are given out for free, the owners are Muslims who obey the Islamic injunction of restraint from eating dog meat and also do not believe that they should make money out of dogs. In some areas like Darazo, Shira, Gidan Mewa, and Birnin Kudu in Bauchi and Jigawa states, though the owners are Muslims, the forces of demand and supply are at work and cash transactions prevail.<sup>23</sup> These long distance traders who are male may travel singly or in groups to the procurement areas but return in groups by hiring lorries, as an individual Ngas dog trader going to these areas could return with

<sup>16</sup> Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, pp. 35-36

<sup>17</sup> This was the claim of Dan Gwari, a Koro man from Niger State and Rose Chuwang, Berom woman from Plateau State, both interviewed at Abuja by the *Daily Trust*, edition of 13/7/2006, titled "Inside the Dog Trade", at p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Ha James (45 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Edet John (40 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Joseph R. Bassey (c. 40 years), interviewed at Keffi, 26/7/06; Nsikak Prince Udoh (25 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Nsa (33 years), interviewed at Calabar, Cross Rivers State, 12th November 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Five people were interviewed in November 2007 of which three chose anonymity and two Nsa and Nnanke Ibiang (female) gave their names.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph R. Bassey (c. 40 years), interviewed at Keffi, 26/7/06.

<sup>22</sup> Nenlap Gokum (42 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Edet John (40 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Emma Rotkang (25 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Gobum Peter (38 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006

<sup>23</sup> Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, pp. 41-42; Gobum Peter (38 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Dawuleng Clement (36 years), interviewed at Dawaki, 2006.



between 20-50 dogs.<sup>24</sup> Since the Ngas traders obtain dogs by purchase or by gift from stock they themselves did not originally rear their ability to tame the dogs, thus chaining and loading the dogs into lorries or cars back to Dawaki is a matter of great puzzle. But the puzzle is simple; they use charms to achieve their aims. The dog traders usually carry local herbs and charms and sell in the Muslim communities and obtain cash, which they use to purchase dogs. Sometimes it takes dog traders between one to two weeks to return to Ngasland from the Muslim areas.<sup>25</sup>

### The Organization of the Trade

The main market centre for the dog-palm oil trade is the Dawaki market in Kabwir, Kanke LGA of Plateau state; it is on the Kabwir- Bauchi road and holds each week: Thursday. The original/indigenous name of the town is Pwel, but the Hausa traders named it Dawaki in the 19th century. The market centre was established in the pre-colonial period and developed faster especially with the coming of Hausa traders to the town. In the 19th century Hausa traders and returnee ex-slaves contributed to the development of market centres in many communities adjoining the Jos Plateau including Pwel (which was named Dawaki), Amper (which they named Chika), Langshi, where cloths, pepper, Islamic talismans, goats, sheep, precious stones, among other items were traded.<sup>26</sup> In the early days the items sold in the market were guinea corn, goats, sheep and local beer (*mos*). Pioneer attendants of the market were people from Ampang, Amper, Tal, Pankshin, Dalong, Bwai, and Morgi (Sayawa) of Tafawa Balewa. The market received a boost in the colonial period as the colonial government formalized operations for purposes of

raising internal revenue.<sup>27</sup> In the post-colonial era, the Pankshin LGA improved the market by building a fence around a section of the market reserved for the dog-palm oil trade. The market attracted/attracts traders from distant areas of Shendam, Dengi, Langtang, Mangu, Bukuru, Jos, and the South-south states of Akwa-Ibom, Calabar, etc, as the range of goods traded in the market grew to include pigs, onions, cassava,<sup>28</sup> goats, fowls, palm wine, vegetables, yams, brooms etc. In the dog-palm oil section, dogs, pigs, goats, palm oil, are the main items sold. Next to it is the section for dog meat, and transporters of goods and human passengers. Outside the fenced area various other items are sold like cloths, grains and other crops, local beer (*mos*) etc. Dogs not purchased at the Dawaki market on Thursday would be taken together with new supplies to the Amper market holding each week Saturday, also attended by peoples of the South-south and other Nigerian communities. Thus, the Amper market is just a subsidiary market for the dog trade with the South-south.

While Ngas dog sellers and other traders from Plateau state attend each week, from their homes in Dawaki or from their localities and are transported in mainly busses, pick-up vans, and wagon cars, those from distant Calabar and Akwa-Ibom come in sets each fortnightly in lorries/trucks: that is, the set of traders that come in one week would not be the same set that would come the following week. The lorries hired for the journey also alternate the weeks as such. Traders from the South-south usually leave their areas in the evening of Wednesday and arrive the Dawaki market on Thursday morning about 9 am. Those coming to Amper would leave on Friday evening and arrive on Saturday morning. At the Dawaki market they would off load their wares in the section of the market reserved for the dog-palm oil transactions where dog/pig/goat sellers would be waiting or would come to meet them. From about 10am, buying and selling of palm oil and dogs, pigs, goats etc would commence and continue until about 2pm when traders from the South-south would be preparing to return, so caging and loading of

<sup>24</sup> Mark Uban-Doma (32 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Goshit, a lecturer in the Department of History and International studies, gave this information to me. He is Ngas from Amper district of Kanke LGA.

<sup>26</sup> S. U. Fwatshak, "The Origin of the Chadic-Speaking Groups in the Central Nigeria Area: A Reassessment of the Bornoan Tradition" in A. Idrees Aliyu and Y. A. Ochefu, eds., *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, Vol. 1 (Lagos: CSS Limited, 2002) p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, pp. 65-68.

<sup>28</sup> Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, pp. 39,44,40.



animals bought would begin. By about 4pm loading would have ended and traders from the South-south would start their homeward journey.

In the mid 1990s, Goladi Rotgak Wakyilla estimated that about 820 dogs were brought to the Dawaki market each week in 7 buses and 3 lorries.<sup>29</sup> Nenfort Juryip estimates that one lorry takes between 180-190 dogs; Samuel Udoka's estimate is 50 cages of dogs per lorry.<sup>30</sup> When I first saw the dog caravan passing through Langtang in year 2001, I saw four lorries and this figure remained the same in 2006 when I visited the Dawaki market. The difference between the 2001 and 2006 figures is that in 2006 there were also pigs, and goats in some of the lorries. Palm oil is brought in drums (Plastic and metal drums of 200 litres each), and Jerry cans (of 50 litres). Udoka estimates that between 50-100 Jerry cans of palm oil are sold each market day. This translates to between 13 to 26 drums or 520- 1040 litres of palm oil.<sup>31</sup> What I observed approximates more to the latter figure, as each of the four lorries brought drums and jerry cans of palm oil.

The typical African system of bargaining/haggling is used, as there are no fixed prices for dogs, pigs, goats and palm oil. The current transactions are by cash, not barter. South-south peoples who want to buy dogs, goats and pigs do so with cash, as Plateau peoples who want palm oil buy with cash. A medium-sized dog sells for between ₦1500-₦2500. Large-size dogs may attract as much as ₦3000-₦4000.<sup>32</sup> It is not clear whether cash transactions have been the tradition since the establishment of the trade. It would not be surprising if that is the case since both communities had been well adjusted to cash transactions since the colonial era, during which indigenous currencies were abolished and British currencies imposed. In 1973 Nigeria adopted the Naira and Kobo as its national currency with nationwide circulation.

<sup>29</sup> Rotgak Wakyilla, "Dog (As) In the Economy of the Ngas, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Juryip Nenfort (19 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Samuel Udoka (45 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Udoka (45 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that not all Ngas dog traders buy palm oil and that not all South-south palm oil traders sell palm oil. Most of the dog buyers come with their cash from home.

English, but mainly Pidgin English, is the main language of communication. Where one party does not understand any of the two, such a party uses an interpreter. The veracity of the use of the two closely related languages cannot be in serious doubt given that the two-way trade developed in the 70s or 80s during which western education had been well spread in the two areas.

### *Benefits and Problems of the Dog-Palm Oil trade*

#### *Benefits:*

#### (i) *Development of ancillary Crafts*

The sale of dogs to peoples of the South-south led to the development of ancillary crafts like the production of chains (tied round necks of dogs), cages, ropes (to pull dogs around: sometimes chains are used instead), short metal clubs (used for loading dogs into cages, and ropes. It is not clear when these ancillary crafts developed in the business, but the significance of such a development is that it creates jobs for smiths, and rope makers; it also shows the innovative capacity of Nigerians craft producers as those who respond to changing circumstances.<sup>33</sup>

#### (ii) *Boost to Transportation*

Each week four lorries bring goods and people from the South-south to Dawaki and back and equally four lorries carry people and goods from the south south to Amper and back. At the same time several lorries, cars, and buses transport Ngas traders from Dawaki to Muslim states and back. On the Dawaki market day, many transporters are also engaged to carry the palm oil bought by retailers to their various destinations.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Personal observation.

<sup>34</sup> Personal observation.



(iii) *Development of entrepreneurship in dogs and dog meat*

The purchase or procurement of dogs from Muslim areas for sale locally has produced entrepreneurs. Hopkins' classification of pre-colonial traders into four namely, professional, regular, target marketers and official traders has relevance to the dog-palm oil entrepreneurship.<sup>35</sup> In this regard the traders in the dog-palm oil trade can be classified into mainly two groups, professional traders and target marketers. For some of the traders trade in dogs or palm oil is their main business. These traders live on the profits they get from the business. These can be regarded as the professionals. Some of the traders participate only to meet certain immediate needs, for example, students who want to raise part of their tuition or some other school requirement; these can be regarded as target marketers. Regular supply of dogs and the expansion of the dog meat business have also led to the development of professional traders in dog meat. Not all the dogs brought to Dawaki market are sold; the unsold stock may not be alive till the next market day in the following week or taken to Amper next Saturday. There is a strong domestic market for dog meat on the Plateau. Dog meat is sold at the Dawaki market and in various local market centres as noted earlier. Dog meat is sold daily at Vel in Pankshin, and Kugiya and various other locations in Bukuru (Jos South LGA), and various locations in Jos metropolis. In fact some traders leave Kanke/Pankshin daily to Bukuru and Jos to sell dog meat and return home.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973) pp. 60-62.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Uban-Doma (32 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Samuel Udoka (45 years), interviewed at Dawaki, Plateau State, 12-13th July, 2006; Dawuleng Clement (36 years), interviewed at Dawaki, 2006.

(iv) *Loading Business*

Dogs are wild animals and not every one can handle them in situations of transfer. Peoples of the South-south buy dogs; Ngas youth and men do their caging and subsequent loading into the lorries for fees. The caging specialists use specially made short metals to which a thick chain is attached. They tie the chain around the dog's neck and push it into the cage. There are different sizes of cages. Some are square shaped-about four feet by four feet and can carry up to four dogs; some are rectangular, measuring about six feet by four feet and can carry up six dogs or eight dogs. After caging the dogs, they are loaded into lorries also by mainly Ngas youth. The cages are placed on top of one another but separated by thick cartons cut into large pieces. After the first two layers, thick planks are placed across the lorry for subsequent layers of cages to be placed. This is done to make for proper ventilation so that the dogs would not suffocate to death. The loading process continues in this way until the lorry is filled from bottom up. Pigs and goats are loaded into separate lorries, but if there are many cages of dogs, they may to be loaded together subject to the lorries being partitioned with separate sections for the different animals. Each buyer marks his animal in a particular way with scissors cut of the hair or paint mark for easy identification.<sup>9</sup>

*Problems*

The traders both Ngas and South-south generally identified three main problems associated with the trade:

One is armed robbery. According to the traders they face occasional attacks by armed robbers who demand for money from them and if they do not have money the robbers could release the dogs. This happens when Ngas traders have used up all their money to buy dogs from Muslim areas and are returning home; or in the case of traders from the South-south, when they have used all their money



to purchase dogs/pigs/goats etc from Dawaki and are returning home. The traders could lose all their money.

The other problem identified by the traders is disturbance by police who set up checkpoints and slow down their movements. Thus, the journeys usually take longer hours.

The third problem is lack of accommodation. Ngas traders to Muslim areas do not have homes in those areas and since there are no dog markets in Hausa land as in Dawaki, it is not possible for traders organize a one-day journey like their South-south counterparts coming to Dawaki do. South-south peoples do not have homes in Dawaki. Moreover there are no hotels there. By contending with these problems, the traders have shown themselves to be risk-taking entrepreneurs. Some young men involved in the trade have died from road accidents. In the last week of October 2006, corpses of some Ngas dog traders were brought back from a trip to Hausa land. Some of the Ngas young men engaged in the trade abandon farming, the main occupation of the village community but have not shown signs of prosperity. The trade also affects school attendance by students. Some of our respondents/interviewees were students of the University of Calabar. By engaging in the trade, their schoolwork would suffer for the period of their trips. There is also a health implication implicit in consumption of dog meat. There are no known abattoirs for slaughtering dogs; the dogs killed and consumed as meat are not always vaccinated before they are killed.

### Conclusion

The trade in dogs and in dog meat satisfies the cultural matrix of some groups. For the Ngas and their neighbours in Plateau state and their counterparts in the South-south states of Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom states dogs mean more than pets, and security/hunting personnel; they mean a lot in rituals, medicine, sources of meat and of family income. In the modern economy, they provide a range of entrepreneurial opportunities from sale of live dogs to sale of dog meat. The sale of palm oil, like that of dogs, also provides entrepreneurial opportunities for Nigerians. The two-way trade demonstrates the success of economic

cooperation, and cultural understanding, and provides lessons for political bridge building in a nation badly in need of true integration based on recognition and appreciation of our diversities and common interest. It is however important that governments of the states whose populations consume dog meat set up and enforce standards for processing dog meat among other sources of animal protein to protect the health of citizens, especially consumers.



## Land Disputes and Inter-Group Relations in West Niger Igboland\*

J.G. Nkem Onyekpe

### Introduction

A major problem of predominantly agrarian rural communities in Nigeria is the growing scarcity of cultivable land. This is especially true of areas that were associated with commercial tree-cropping during the colonial period. The commitment of large portions of rural lands to tree-cropping had drastically reduced the portions left for food crops. The problem is today aggravated by the large-scale expropriation of communal lands by urban-based private interests. Land disputes are the natural results of the growing problems of land scarcity. An interesting aspect of the disputes is the claim of ownership of land by strangers and tenant communities. Land disputes have been associated with bloody violence and deaths. The problem of land scarcity is further aggravated by a combination of factors, viz, the absence of modern agricultural inputs, the use of obsolete tools and technologies, the absence of alternative employment opportunities and the total neglect of the area by successive administrations. The response of the state to the disputes have been largely superficial and out of touch with the practical realities on the ground. Consequently, state responses have been an abysmal failure. It is the argument of this chapter that the phenomena of land disputes are not only a reflection of the crisis in the agrarian economy of the area, but also the major factor that has turned most West Niger Igbo communities against one another.

Land and its allocation and distribution are fundamentally important in economies where crops production is the major economic activity and especially where scientific methods and modern technologies are not widely used. The West Niger Igbo area is a rural economy based on the cultivation of the land. The area is largely culturally homogeneous and this was a major factor in the harmonious inter-group relations among the communities. There were occasional disagreements and even skirmishes among the communities but these were generally short-lived and easily resolved. It is very important to note, however, that up to about the 1920s - 30s land was never a factor in the disagreements and conflicts among the communities. Of course, land was plentifully available in relation to the population. Moreover, the pressure for expansion of production was minimal until the 'transformation' of the area's economy following its incorporation into the colonial capitalist mode of production. It was the dynamics of this 'transformation' which disrupted the 'natural' or 'traditional' economy and its equilibrium and tranquillity. A major manifestation of this disruption was the emergence and accentuation of disputes over land. The subject of this chapter has been examined under five subheadings, viz, (1) the peopling of the area and the nature of the settlements and land use, (2), capitalist penetration of agriculture and economic change, 1920s-1950s, (3) post-colonial realities: encroachment by the elite and the state, (4) intercommunity disputes over land, and (5) the continuing nature of land disputes. There follows a conclusion.

### The Peopling of the Area, Nature of the Settlements and Land Use

Research on the West Niger Igbo communities reveals that the area was peopled between the 15th and 18th centuries by migrants from Benin, Igala and the East Niger Igbo area.<sup>1</sup> There are three categories of settlements, viz, (1) the proto settlements such as Adiani (later Onicha Ugbo) which was the cradle of the Eze Chima communities - Obior,

<sup>1</sup> J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis and Land Question in West Niger Igbo Area, C. 1886-1987', Ph.D Thesis, University of Lagos, 1996, pp. 33-62.



Onicha Olona, Onicha Ukwu, Ezi, Obomkpa, Issele Uku, Issele Mkpitime, and Issele Azagba; Umusu (later, Eziokpor), the cradle of the Akashiada communities - Ezionum, Umuebu and Ovilil (or Ovirri), the nucleus of the present day Abraka; Owa Oyibo, the cradle of Owa communities; Ute Okpu, the cradle of Ute communities; other proto settlements included Utagba Unor, Aboh, Agbor, Ahaba (Asaba) Igbuzo (Ibusa) Ababu (Abavo) Ogwashi Uku and the Enuani communities such as Ejeme, Nsukwa and Egbudu Akah; (2) the offshoots of these settlements which emerged between C.1550 and 1750; and (3) new settlements which emerged between C.1750 and 1900. The third category was made up of communities of migrants, who had moved out of their indigenous homelands in search of cultivable lands. Among these were the Isumpe migrants from Utagba Unor settled in Ejemeland, Etua migrants also from Utagba Unor settled in Ejeme and Nsukwaland, Umusam and Umusedeli from Utagba Unor settled in Ejeme Unor and Ejeme Aniogor respectively, Agbor migrants settled in Agbor Alidimma and Ekuku Agbor in Ejemeland, and Owa migrants settled in Owa Alidimma in Ejemeland. There are many others such as Ani Efume jointly peopled by Egbudu Akah and Ute Okpu migrants and Ichi-Mili (Obi Okoh) jointly peopled by Ejeme, Nsukwa and Ukwani migrants.

The proto settlements and their offshoots, which are the secondary settlements, may be regarded as the indigenous settlements with rightful claims of autochthony. The third category of settlements, to the extent that they emerged as communities of migrants who had relocated from their homelands, may be classified as stranger communities. The point here is that those who arrived in the local area after the area had been settled were regarded by their hosts as strangers. The first sets or waves of settlers or "founders" usually laid claim to the local area. They were historically responsible for the initial development of the land. This was achieved through the colonisation of the high forests for cultivation, the establishment of permanent settlements and the development of small farm colonies. All areas cultivated by the first settlers (i.e. those under crops and those lying fallow) and the uncultivated areas separating them constituted the group's land.

As their basic means of production, land occupied a central position in the people's philosophy, religion and cosmology.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the land or the earth (known among the people as *ani* or *ali*), and the spirits, and ancestors who, in their belief, dwelled in it were all worshipped. It would appear that through this form of worship, which is said to have started in the very early period of the settlements, their founders and their descendants established primordial and ritualistic relationships with the land before the arrival of the later migrant groups.

There were two categories of later migrants. The first comprised those who arrived in a locality in which settlements were in their formative stages. In most cases such migrants were incorporated into the earlier group or groups. The second category of later migrants were groups who arrived in the different localities long after settlements had been established and consolidated. These sets of migrants were accommodated in farm colonies belonging to the founders of the settlements or their descendants. These colonies formed the nuclei for the expansion of the migrant settlements. The migrant settlements maintained their distinct identities as stranger communities in the land of their host communities. The farm colonies or new settlements in which they were accommodated either belonged to the entire host community or a subdivision of it which was either a lineage or a patrilineage.

There are no traditions of outright sale of land to migrant groups. The migrant groups paid land rents, but this was not in the classical economic sense, for rents were not monetised. They were paid in kind. Usually the stranger-community assisted the head of the host or landlord community (i.e., the village head or the head of the landowning lineage or patrilineage) in his farm work.

<sup>2</sup> Oral Interviews with H.R.H. Obi S.O. Aghaunor and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Aniogor, 4.9.87; Diokpa O. Uzu, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.9.87; Chief Odigadefu Odozie, Nsukwa, 24.8.87, Chief J.N. Osundu, Obiaruku, 14.12.90. see also C. Ifemesia, *Traditional Humane Living Among the Igbo* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1979) pp. 33-37.



Apart from direct labour assistance, the stranger groups were tribute-paying.<sup>3</sup> Tributes were generally paid in lumps by each stranger group. They were usually paid in foodstuffs, especially yams. Kolanuts, goats, sheep and fowls were also involved. Yam tributes were counted in hundreds, with each member of the tenant-group contributing yam tubers never exceeding ten and much less in cases where the strangers were large in population. Berry's remarks apropos of migrant cocoa farmers in Yorubaland hold apt for our area. In his words, tributes were merely "a token payment acknowledging the limitations of a stranger's right to land."<sup>4</sup> Tributes paid by the stranger groups to the landlord communities were therefore of little economic significance and were demanded not because of their economic value but essentially to give the strangers the consciousness of tenant groups.<sup>5</sup>

Tributes received from stranger groups were usually shared among the various lineages making up the community. Where the host-community was a descent group the tribute belonged to the group alone.<sup>6</sup> It is instructive that indigenes also helped their village and lineage heads in working their farms and also offered gifts to them. To that extent, it may be argued that in rendering labour services and offering gifts the stranger groups were only conforming with the tradition of their hosts. But nevertheless, it is important to note that, while the services rendered and gifts offered by the indigenes to their heads were social obligations, in the case of the stranger groups such services, gifts and tributes were more significant in the sense that they represented rent paid on land. Although they were of little economic value

<sup>3</sup> Oral Interviews as cited in note no.2. Also Diokpa Chukwuka Modeme, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.9.87; Diokpa Okoh P. Nwaka and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Unor, 19.9.87; Chief Okonye Asua and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Umutu, 12.12.90.

<sup>4</sup> S. Berry, *Cocoa, Custom and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 108. see also G.I. Jones, 'Ibo Land Tenure', *Africa-Journal of the International Africa Institute*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, October 1949, pp. 309-323, especially, p. 320.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Oral Interviews as cited in note no. 3. See also N.A.I, C.S.O 26, File No. 30927, Intelligence Report on Asaba Clan, Asaba Division, Benin Province, p. 22.

considering their sizes (the amount involved), especially those of the tributes, politically they underlined the status of the stranger groups as *users* as opposed to *owners* of land; they were an acknowledgement of the fact that the ultimate title to the land belonged to the host group (or groups).<sup>7</sup>

It is relevant to stress once again that land was abundantly available in the West Niger Igbo area in relation to population. As a result of this, migrant groups were given farmlands on very liberal terms and those who were absorbed by the autochthonous groups in the villages acquired ownership rights.<sup>8</sup> Generally, land areas allotted to the strangers were never defined and so the strangers expanded the plots under use year by year.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the value of tributes was not determined by the size of land.<sup>10</sup> In cases in which a host community had different stranger groups on its land, the stranger groups paid more or less the same amount regardless of the land area they cultivated.

It remains to add that the low level of political centralisation and the absence of the state (as it exists in the classical Marxist dialectical sense as an instrument of class rule, conquest and exploitation) were a basic factor in the liberal orientation in land matters. There was the absence, in most of the area, of complex state systems and the accompanying political class and army such as were boasted in Hausaland, the Benin and Oyo Kingdoms, nineteenth century Ibadan, and so on. This in turn meant that there was no mobilisation of surplus (that otherwise would have been necessary for the maintenance of the state and its organs and functionaries), no feudalisation of land and tax-farming.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the stranger communities were largely left on their

<sup>7</sup> S. Berry, *Cocoa, Custom*, pp. 96-97, 108; and G.I. Jones, 'Ibo Land Tenure', p. 320.

<sup>8</sup> Oral Interviews as cited in notes nos.2 and 3

<sup>9</sup> Oral Interviews as cited in notes nos 2 and 3 Also, Chief Obi Ibolokwu, Umutu, 12.12.90.

<sup>10</sup> Oral Interviews as cited in notes nos. 2 and 3. This is true of most other areas not associated with critical land pressures. An example of such other areas was Yoruba land studied by S. Berry in *Cocoa, Custom and Socio-Economic Change*.

<sup>11</sup> This contrasted sharply with other areas such as Ibadan, Benin, Nupe and Hausa land. See S.A. Akintoye, 'The Economic Foundations Ibadan' in A.I. Akinjogbin and S.O. Osoba (eds) *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History* (Ile-Ife: University of



own. An important dimension of the prevalent liberalism in land matters was the fact that the strangers were given a free hand in production. Indeed, production and its organisation were planned and controlled not by the landlord but by the stranger who was the direct producer.

Generally, the massive availability of land in precolonial West Niger Igboland in relation to the population meant that friction over land was never a frequent feature of intercommunity relations, whether among the indigenous settlements or between them and the stranger communities. The healthy and peaceful relations ensured by the absence of a land question was further promoted by such potent unifying and centripetal forces as common traditions of origin, common experiences of migration, ancestral and genealogical affinities, common exploitation of shared natural resources, especially streams, rivers and forests, trade and commerce, exogamous marriages and the necessity to come together in times of external threats.<sup>12</sup>

### Capitalist Penetration of Agriculture and Economic Change, 1920s-1950s

Colonial Nigeria was incorporated into the British capitalist system as an appendage to meet the industrial raw material requirements of

Ife Press, 1980), esp. p. 57, P.A. Igbafe, 'The Pre-colonial Economic Foundations of the Benin Kingdom', in Akinjogbin and Osoba (eds) *Topics*, esp. p. 24; P.A. Igbafe, *Benin Under British Administration. The Impact of Colonial Rule on an African Kingdom, 1897-1938* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 26; R.E. Bradbury, *Benin Studies*, P. Morton-Williams (ed) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), Chapter 3, pp. 44-75; T. Falola and D. Oguntomisin, *The Military in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Politics* (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1984), pp. 56-58; A. Mahadi and J.E. Inikori 'Production and Exchange in Nigeria up to 1900', paper prepared for the workshop on the Teaching of Nigeria History from a National Perspective, organised by the Historical Society of Nigeria, at the University of Lagos, 3-8 February, 1986; M. Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1981), pp. 89-90, 113.

<sup>12</sup> Studied in J.G. Nkem Onyekpe, 'Conflict and Cooperation among West Niger Igbo Communities before 1900', in G.O. Oguntomisin and S.A. Ajayi (eds) *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture: Essays in Memory of Professor J.A. Atanda* (Ibadan: Hope Publications Limited, 2002), chapter 18.

factories in the Mother Country and for the sale of metropolitan industrial products and consumables.<sup>13</sup> To meet the first aim, i.e., the desire for industrial raw materials, the British government and its colonial state in Nigeria emphasised agricultural production. In the West Niger Igbo area, the major crops were oil palm and rubber.<sup>14</sup> Initially the peasants depended on wild oil palm trees and the communally owned palm grooves for fruits. Similarly, they depended on wild rubber trees such as *Funtumia Elastica*, *Landolphia* and *Clitandra*. Up to the 1920s, the peasants depended on wild sources for production. The wild sources were, however, inadequate for the ever-increasing demand of the expatriate trading firms such as John Holt and Company and United African Company. To meet the growing demand, the peasantry took to planting. Progress in planting was quite fast. For example, by 1937, 75 acres had been committed to oil palm planting in Aboh Division alone, and by 1938 152.5 acres had been committed to the same crop in the Agbor District of Asaba Division.<sup>15</sup> The 1940s witnessed greater expansion. British demand for these products rose steeply during the Second World War. In particular there was an aggressive colonial campaign for expansion in rubber production. The demand for these products was further increased by post-war reconstruction requirements. At the same time, the Korean war of 1950 - 51 affected rubber supplies from Korea which had been a major source. This gave an additional fillip to expansion in the industry during the period.<sup>16</sup>

A number of factors contributed to the expansion in the agricultural raw material sector of the economy. Apart from the ever-

<sup>13</sup> J.G.N Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis and Land Question', chapters 3,4 and 5; R.W. Shenton, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria* (Tororito: University of Townto Press, 1986; O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria* (London & Ibadan: Heinemann, 1977), Part one.

<sup>14</sup> J.G.N Onyekpe, *Agrarian Crisis and Land Question*, chapters 4 and 5,

<sup>15</sup> J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', Tables 4.2 and 4.3, pp. 296-297.

<sup>16</sup> JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', Table 5.2, p. 341, from R.O Ekundare, *An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860-1960* (London: Muthuen and Co; 1973), p. 285. See also G.K. Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria*. (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1966), p. 121.



increasing demand, or what is referred to as "vent-for-surplus",<sup>17</sup> the colonial economy had become pervasively monetised.<sup>18</sup> Everyone needed some cash earnings on a regular basis to survive in the "modern" economy. Cash earnings were required for the purchase of imported items such as cutlasses, hoes, cloths, bicycles, radios, kitchen utensils and corrugated roofing sheets; for obligations such as colonial taxation and levies; and for meeting the people's social needs, especially children's education.

Besides, labour was available.<sup>19</sup> The peasants continued to use the "free" labour resources of members of their households, friends, in-laws and members of their rotational labour cooperative units. In addition to these traditional, precapitalist sources of labour, the relatively bigger planters also depended on the wage labour of migrants from Urhoboland and the East Niger Igbo districts. A good number of them were Efik.

It should be noted that planting was done after the harvest of food crops. It therefore did not demand much of extra labour for clearing fresh plots. This was an important factor in the spread of rubber. Again, those who did not want to plant rubber were approached by prospective

<sup>17</sup> Integration with the "world market" created the opportunity for export of agricultural commodities, or what Adam Smith terms the "vent for surplus". See A. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) ed. E. Cannan (New York Bantam Dell Edition, 2003). For a summary of the subject of "vent for surplus", see J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 2554-258; A. Apena, 'A Socio-Economic History of the West Delta, 1914-1960', Ph.D Thesis, University of Lagos, 1988, pp. 8-9, 97-99, 137-138. See also H. Myinth, 'The "Classical" Theory of International Trade and Underdeveloped Countries', *Economic Journal*, June, 1958'; idem, *The Economics of the Developing Countries*, 4<sup>th</sup> Revised Edition (London: Hutchinson, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> Moretisation refers to the pervasive use of money in transactions and exchange. It is part and parcel of capitalist development and its commoditisation process. Commoditisation itself is the transformation of products from use-values (i.e. products created for the consumption needs of the direct producers) to exchange-values (i.e. products created with the market in mind). Products are said to be commoditised when they are produced primarily to meet the producer's needs for cash. See J.G.N. Onyekpe, *Agrarian Crisis*, pp. XIX and XX.

<sup>19</sup> See JGN Onyekpe, *Agrarian Crisis*, pp. 310-313.

planters and their farmlands were acquired on liberal terms. Some peasants also sold their young rubber plantations to others.

The massive availability of land was by far the most important factor in the development of the agricultural export crops industry. It is important to note that, owing to the availability of land, migrant capitalist farmers penetrated the area and acquired land from both individual peasants and the communities. These were mostly Urhobo planters who had long been introduced to the colonial system both as traders and planters. Indeed, participation in colonial trade had enabled many of them to accumulate capital and, from the outbreak of World War II onwards, they began to acquire virgin lands outside their homelands for rubber planting. Notable among the planters were Chiefs Dafe, Agagara, Ogboru and Palmer.<sup>20</sup> Some Ukwani "native strangers"<sup>21</sup> who had been introduced to the expatriate firms as agents and subagents, and to the rubber industry, also acquired land in the West Niger Igbo area and planted rubber. A notable example was Chief Nelson Oji Anamali of Umutu.<sup>22</sup> Other notable Ukwani planters were Chief Obi Ibolokwu of Umutu and Chief Joseph Osuya of Abbi. Two areas of West Niger Igboland where Urhobo and Ukwani planters left a lasting impact are Ejeme and Nsukwa communities. At Ejeme, they acquired expansive areas and converted them to large plantations. Here, Urhobo and Ukwani planters were aided in the acquisition of land by

<sup>20</sup> Oral Interviews with Diokpa. C. Modeme, Ejeme Aniogor, 1.9.87 and 12.9.87; Diokpa O. Uzu, Ejeme Aniogor, 19.8.87 and 1.9.87; Chief J.N. Osondu, Obiaruku, 14.12.90; Mr. Uwabayo Oji-Anamali, Umutu, 12.12.90.

<sup>21</sup> A term used by colonial writers and proconsuls to refer to the indigenous stranger or migrant. In their context, the Native Stranger is "a native of Nigeria who does not belong to the tribe or community having control over the land...". See Lord Lugard, *Political Memoranda. Revision of Instructions to Political Officers on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative, 1913-1918*. Third edition with a new Introduction by A.H.M. Kirk Greene (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd 1970), pp. 390-391. By this definition, the following are Native strangers: An Urbobo migrant in Isokoland, a Tiv migrant in Nupeland, an Egba migrant in Ijeboland, etc; or An Asaba migrant in Onitsha, an Ibadan migrant in Ile-Ife, a Kano Migrant in Zaria, an Ogwashi Uku migrant in Ibusa, an Utagba Unor migrant in Ejeme, an Owa Migrant in Agbor, etc.

<sup>22</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. Uwabayo Oji-Anamali, Umutu, 12.12.90; Mr. Gabriel E. Ashimoye, Ejeme Aniogor, 3.9.87.



the fact of their settlement on the River Adofi at Iyi-Ogbe and Mmokolokpor and their integration with the host towns of Ejeme Aniogor and Ejeme Unor.<sup>23</sup> Some of the migrant Etua settlers from Utagba Unor took part in the large-scale planting of rubber at their three settlements, viz, Etua Uzor (or Etua Ukpo), Etua Eiti and Etua Ime (or Etua Oliogo).

The massive conversion of the land to tree crops especially rubber and the expropriation of communal lands by Urhobo and Ukwuani planters generated fundamental contradictions in the economic life of the people. First, the spread of rubber had serious implications for a people whose only means of revitalising the soil was rotational bush fallow or shifting cultivation system. Moreover, the cultivation of rubber introduced the phenomenon of privatisation of land.<sup>24</sup> Privatisation was a major manifestation of the planting of tree crops even in situations where there was no large-scale planting. In the area under study, rubber planting stimulated and progressively accelerated this tendency. Tree crops are permanent crops which conferred ownership of the land on which they are planted on the planter.

There was also the development of peasant differentiation,<sup>25</sup> a phenomenon generated and promoted by privatisation of land. Differentiation of the peasantry refers to the objective stratification of

<sup>23</sup> Oral Interviews, H.R.H Obi S.O. Aghannor and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Aniogor, 4.9.87; Diokpa O. Uzu, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.9.87; Diokpa C. Modeme, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.9.87, Diokpa Okoh P. Nwaka and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Unor, 19.9.87.

<sup>24</sup> JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 401-402; P.A. Igbafé, *Benin Under British Administration*, pp. 370-371, Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 5th Edition (London: Frank Cass, 1965), pp. 286-287; H.A. Oluwasanmi, *Agriculture and Nigerian Economic Development* (London: Oxford University Press 1966), pp. 41-43. T. Falola, *The Political Economy of a pre-colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830-1900* (Ibadan: Africn Press Ltd, 1984), p. 183; G.B. Kay, *The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana A. Collection of Documents and Statistics 1900-1960* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 7-8, note 13.

<sup>25</sup> JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', p. 401-407; see also, V.I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), chapter 2, p. 71-190; Y.M. Ivanov, *Agrarian Reform and Hired Labour in Africa* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), chapter 3, 93-170.

the peasantry into different strata each identifiable by (1) its distinctive position in the allocation, distribution and, ultimately, ownership of land; (2) the methods and technologies of cultivation, (3) the extent to which wage labour is employed, (4) the extent to which the producer is alienated from his produce, (5) the degree of commoditisation (or production for the market) and (6) the degree to which agricultural production is combined with industrial production; etc. In the area under study, the peasantry were, for the first time, split into "poor" and "rich" strata, defined by the sizes of their holdings.

The most serious contradiction in the growth and expansion of tree or permanent cropping was the reduction of the land areas available for food crops. This was simply a dialectical phenomenon, as the gains of tree-cropping were paid for by the losses of food-cropping. By the 1940s, this contradiction had become so acute that it attracted the attention of the colonial authorities.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, efforts were made to regulate and control the planting of tree crops and also to control the prices of foodstuffs, although the efforts achieved no significant results.<sup>27</sup> For one thing, the efforts were half-hearted and superficial. Again, the policies were circumvented by those who were charged with their implementation. Moreover, the planters thought they could not cope in the monetised economy without export agriculture which was the major source of cash earnings. With regard to the attempted control of foodstuffs' prices, the people resisted, albeit subtly, because the prices of imported items were not similarly controlled.

<sup>26</sup> JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', p. 407-421; see also NAI. Agbor District I. File No. Ag 600. Extract from Minutes of the Conference of Agbor Obis at Agbor on 3.8.1942; NAI. Kw DT 1, File No. 72c, Letter No. 72c/67 of 1.4.43, from D.O Aboh Division to kwale Executive Connul, Amai, and Letter No 72c/169 of 5.1.44, from D.O. Aboh Division, Kwale to Senior Resident, Warri Province, see esp. para. 7; NAI. Kw. DT. 1/1, File No. 72c; NAI. Asa Div. 5/2, File No. AD/PA/BA; NAI. Agbor Dist 8/1: Annual Reports for the years 1940, 1942 and 1943; NAI. Asa Div. 8/2.

<sup>27</sup> JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 407-421. *Idem*, 'Export Agriculture and Food Crisis in colonial Asaba and Aboh Divisions of Western Nigeria: An Example of Contradictions in Colonial Economy', *Ilorin Journal of History*, Vol 1, No 1. 2003, pp. 57-68.



### Post-Colonial Realities: Encroachment and Expropriation by the State and the Elite

From the 1950s to the 1980s, there was an unprecedented upsurge in the acquisition of communal lands. In addition to private individual acquisitions, there was also the involvement of the state in plantation agriculture. There were many reasons for state involvement in plantation agriculture.<sup>28</sup> First, there was a need for raw materials to feed the Pioneer Oil Mills and Rubber Factories established by the Western Regional Production Development Board (which later became known as Western Regional Development Corporation). Second, it was felt that plantation system would pave the way for scientific methods and thereby improve on the traditional precapitalist methods and technologies adopted by the average peasant planter.<sup>29</sup> There was also the additional argument that the plantation system would provide employment for the youth.<sup>30</sup> Thus, between 1952 and 1954 the Board acquired large acres of land from local communities in the West Niger Igbo area. Between 1952 and 1953 about 1040 hectares of land was acquired between Umutu and Urhonigbe for rubber.<sup>31</sup> By 1987 the total area under the management of the estate was 4012 hectares out of which 2405 hectares were fully planted.<sup>32</sup> Between the same period, 1952 and 1953, about 1300 hectares were acquired at Utagba Unor also for

<sup>28</sup> For a Comprehensive discussion of the subject, see JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 362-367.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 365. see also, United Africa Company, 'The future of the Nigerian Oil Industry', *African Affairs. Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 47, 1948, pp. 41-51.

<sup>30</sup> Traditional rulers and Chiefs were generally promised job opportunities for their people by the prospective large-scale farmers. Oral Interviews, H.R.H Obi S.O. Aghannor and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Diokpa Okoh Nwaka and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Diokpa O. Uru, Diokpa C. Modeme, Chief J.N Osondu, as already cited. Also Chief Ikehi Oba, Ubulu Uku, 22.12.90; Mr. C.O. Ojianwuneh, Egbudu Akah, 10.9.87, Diokpa Eboka Ojonoebos and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Agbor Alidimma, 26.8.87.

<sup>31</sup> NAI Kw. DT. 1/1, 149/2, Letter No. J. 61/33 of 25.8.52, from D. Westmacott, Unit Manager Agbor to Project Manager Western Regional Production Development Board (WRPDB), Regional Secretariat, Ibadan.

<sup>32</sup> I owe this information to the Estate Manager, Mr. Mike Okolo, Interviews and discussions were held with him at the Urhonigbe Rubber slete, Urhonigbe, 13.2.90.

rubber.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the Board acquired large expanses of land at Ubulu Uku and Akwukwu Atuma for oil palms.<sup>34</sup> With the creation of the Midwest Region in 1963, its Development Board acquired about 2023 hectares at Egbudu Akah in Ika Division for the Atochi rubber estate.<sup>35</sup> By 1975 about 651 hectares of the Atochi Rubber Estate at Egbudu Akah had been planted.<sup>36</sup> It was projected that about 1053 additional hectares of new planting would be done during the Third National Development Plan period, between 1975 and 1980.<sup>37</sup> Between 1974 and 75 the Midwest State Government acquired 3012.35 hectares at Nsukwa in Aniocha Local Government Area for an additional oil palm estate.<sup>38</sup> By 1987 55% of the land had been planted.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the state, private individuals were involved in the acquisition of communal land with some of them such as state bureaucrats and 'super' civil servants hiding behind the state in their land deals with the local communities. Among private individual acquisitions were 1000 hectares acquired by Chief Clifford Eneli at Ejeme Aniogor in 1961-62, 250 hectares at Ejeme Unor by Dr. Ajuebor and Professor Ndika (1973), 234 hectares at Agbor Alidimma by Ika Business Association (1974) and transferred to National Root Crops Production Company Limited, Enugu in 1981, 816 hectares at Nsukwa by Dr. Isaac Okonjo (1974-75), 278 hectares at Nsukwa by Mr. Tayo Akpata (1974-75), an unspecified area at Nsukwa by Dr. S.O. Ogbemudia (1974-75), 1000 hectares at the Isumpe settlement in Ejemeland by Mr. Ebinim Njede (1976-77) (By 1987 the Njede farms

<sup>33</sup> A.I. Apena, 'A Socio-Economic History of the Western Delta', p. 146.

<sup>34</sup> Oral Interviews, Chief Ikehi Oba, Ubulu Uku, 22.12.90; Mr. Joseph Aighobahi and Mr. Amaechi Emeni, Oil Palm Company, Nsukwa, 28.8.87.

<sup>35</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr.C.O. Ojianwuneh and Mr. Patrick Okocha, Egbudu Akah, 10.9.87.

<sup>36</sup> Federal Ministry of Economic Development, *Third National Development Plan, 1975-80*, Vol. I (Lagos: Central Planning Office, 1975) p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> I owe this to Mr. Joseph Aighobahi and Mr. Amaechi Emeni, Estate Officer and Personnel Officer respectively, Oil Palm Company Estate, Nsukwa, 25.8.87.

<sup>39</sup> As in note 38.



had extended to 1500 hectares), 175.709 hectares at Ejeme Aniogor by National Root Crops Production Company Limited, Enugu (1981), 718 hectares at Nsukwa by National Root Crops Production Company Limited, Enugu (1981), and an unspecified area between Ogidi - Nsukwa and Etua Settlement by Group Captain Akaraiwe. Others included 500 hectares acquired in 1984-85 at Ejeme Unor by Mrs. Dele Ehikwe, 200 hectares at Ejeme Unor by Mr. J. Aroro (1984-85), 250 hectares at Ejeme Unor by Mr. Okpa (1984-85), 500 hectares at Egbudu Akah by Mr. Augustine G. Modeme and 200 hectares at Ejeme Unor by Mr. Sam. Akam (1985-86).<sup>40</sup>

The pervasive acquisition, indeed expropriation, of communal lands in the West Niger Igbo area, particularly in the Ejeme, Nsukwa and Egbudu Akah triangle was facilitated by a number of factors.<sup>41</sup> First, the government presented itself as the harbinger of progress which needed the support of the local people. Similarly, private individuals posed before the local people as agents of the government. It should be added that the local communities were generally abysmally bereft of social amenities and public utilities. Thus it was very much easy for the prospective expropriators to bamboozle them with talks about bringing development to them through the provision of amenities, utilities, infrastructure and employment. The problem of land disputes of the period (to be disused shortly) provided the expropriation with leverage. Some of the communities leased out their lands to big private interests to forestall the encroachment of their neighbours.

The Land Use Decree (later Act) of 1978 played a cardinal role in the loss of land by the local communities.<sup>42</sup> The Decree vested all land in the territory of each state in the Governor. Besides, it placed no limit on

<sup>40</sup> The information on land expropriation is based on interviews and discussions with traditional rulers and Councils of Chiefs and Elders in the area, Leaders of Youths' Associations and Movements, Members of various Progressive (or Welfare) Unions and Development Committees, Management Personnel of the various farms and the caretakers of lands not developed, etc.

<sup>41</sup> For details, see JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', p. 372-383.

<sup>42</sup> For all references to the Decree or Act, see Federal Government of Nigeria, 'Land Use Decree, 1978' in Official Gazette Vol. 65, No. 14 of 29.3.78 (Lagos: Government Printer, 1978).

the extent of land the state may acquire from the local communities for "public purposes". The idea that the entire land within each state belonged to the government was foisted on the people. Thus, it was very much easy for the government and its functionaries to acquire the people's land. Thus again, the Decree became an ideological instrument for the growth of capitalist interests in a hitherto existing communalistic economic and social order.

We end this section with an important emphasis, that the phenomenon of loss of communal lands which began during the 1920s-50s, was exacerbated by the highly unbridled capitalist penetration of the area in the 1960s-80s and its concomitant of large-sale expropriations.

### Inter-Community Disputes over Land

With the loss of community lands first to permanent tree crops plantations developed by local peasants and then to large-scale private capitalist farmers and the state, the areas available for food production became progressively diminutive. The results have been the phenomena of: (1) intensive use of available small plots, (2) reduced variety of crops cultivated, (3) fragmentation of the available land, (4) rent payment, (5) poor productivity and declining incomes, and (6) land disputes.

The last of the phenomena, i.e., disputes over land, are our major focus.<sup>43</sup> Disputes over land have been the major manifestation of the land problem and indeed "the agrarian crisis."<sup>44</sup> Over the last three or four decades, the West Niger Igbo area was associated with fierce struggles for farmlands. The struggles were at two levels, viz, (1) within

<sup>43</sup> The other phenomena (i.e. 1-5) have been examined in JGN Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 455-485.

<sup>44</sup> For an authoritative examination of the subject, see J.G.N Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis and Land Question', see also Y.M. Ivanov, *Agrarian Reforms and Hired Labour*; V.I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*; idem, *The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx"*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised edition. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), R. Ulyanovsky, *Agrarian India between the World Wars. A study of colonial-Feudal Capitalism*. Translated from the Russian edition by Jane Sayer (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985).



the communities, i.e., intra-community struggles and disputes and (2) between communities, i.e., inter-community struggles and disputes.

Within the communities the beginning of the farming or planting season was usually characterised by claims and counter claims on different portions of the landmass.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting that this involved not only members of the same lineages and patrilineages, but also those of the same units of production, the households. Thus, there were disagreements between father and children and among the children. The phenomenon of fragmentation of land in the area mentioned earlier was the direct result of the struggles among children over their common inheritance. This was especially associated with polygynous household units. Women were also drawn into the disputes. In some cases the women started it. In such cases their children naturally became involved.

The dispute in each case resulted either from conflicting definitions of boundary or from conflicting claims to a portion of land. Where the rivals disagreed, they embarked on clearing and slashing of the same portion for cultivation. Disputes involved some combination of: burning of each other's farms and barns, and destruction of farm huts, work equipment and seedlings. Rivals were said to have sometimes employed the use of deadly charms, 'juju' and witchcraft against their 'more powerful' claimants.

The settlement of disputes at this level was usually through traditional mechanisms. Cases brought before the traditional administration were investigated. Usually the areas in dispute were visited by the representatives of the traditional administration. The rivals were invited to prove their claims and where necessary with the support of witnesses. Adjudication in each case was based on the history of land use. Finally, new boundaries were fixed. Where the dispute was not over boundary but over whole portions, claimants who were able to prove their ownership beyond doubt were recognised as rightful owners. Those

<sup>45</sup> Based on oral interviews with traditional rulers and their Council of Chiefs and Elders already variously cited. Also interviews with individual farmers: Diokpa Nduka Ugbejei, Ekuku Agbor, 18.9.87; Mr. Omeleze Nwaibeli, Obi-Anyima, Abavo, 17.8.90; Mr. Austen A. Osiegbu, Ogwashi uku, 28.9.90.

who were not satisfied with the ruling reserved the right to take their case before the customary court.<sup>46</sup>

Some of the disputes involved violence. Where such disputes could not be resolved by the traditional administration, they were referred to the police.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, disputes associated with bloodshed were reported straightaway to the police. In this case, it was either that one of the parties in the dispute or both by-passed the traditional authorities and took their case directly to the police, or that the traditional authorities invited the police. Where the police were unable to resolve the case, it was referred to a court of competent jurisdiction for adjudication.<sup>48</sup> We will now turn to the second level of disputes, i.e., inter-community disputes.

Inter-community disputes were extensions of intra-community ones. Disputes among the peasantry in each community were generally incapable of any meaningful resolution either by traditional mechanisms or by the intervention of the police or the customary court. Indeed, the resolution of a dispute did not mean that there would not be a recurrence of it; and where it did, the loser was simply turned by his loss against some other peasants or peasant households in the community over land.<sup>49</sup> Consequently areas of dispute within the community were progressively extended through the inevitable occurrence and recurrence of disputes. As the pressure of land became more and more aggravated, the phenomena of disputes also became increasingly accentuated in their spread to all directions from the community. The result was greater cultivation of the frontier and boundary areas shared with other communities.<sup>50</sup> This in turn produced

<sup>46</sup> Oral Interviews, HRH Obi S.O. Aghaunor, Ejeme Aniogor, 4.9.87, Mr. Clement Chidi, Ejeme Aniogor, 1.9.87; Diokpa M. Uyamasi, Agbor Alidimma, 26.8.87; Inspector Stephen Obi, Ogwashi Uku, 29.9.90.

<sup>47</sup> Oral Interviews, H.R.H. Obi S.O. Aghaunor and Inspector S.Obi, as Cited in note no. 46 above.

<sup>48</sup> Oral Interviews, as cited in note no. 46.

<sup>49</sup> Oral Interviews, Diokpa M. Uyamasi, Agbor Alidimma, 26.8.87; Mr. C. Ojianwuneh, Egbudu Akah, 10.9.87; Chief Edward Ogbodo, Abbi, 25.5.89.

<sup>50</sup> Oral Interviews, as in note no. 49. Also, Diokpa O. Uzu, Ejeme Aniogor, 1.9.87. See esp. O. Adejuyigbe, *Boundary Problems in Western Nigeria. A Geographical Analysis*



greater contact between peasant communities sharing common boundaries. It was this greater contact which often generated friction in the form of claims and counter-claims on boundary positions and their direction.<sup>51</sup> The disputes were however not only over boundary positions. Indeed, many of them were over whole territorial areas.<sup>52</sup> These involved the cases *between* the historically stranger communities which began to reject their status as strangers or tenant communities *and* their host communities which naturally insisted on their status as owners and landlord communities.

Over the postcolonial period, there have been four main areas of inter-community disputes in West Niger Igboland, viz, (1) Umunede - Mbiri - Ekpon, (2) Ute Okpu - Owa - Agbor, (3) Ejeme - Nsukwa - Egbudu Akah, and (4) Ukwani mainland.

As already noted, the disputes were all the logical results of extreme scarcity of land in the aftermath of large-scale expropriations. The loss of land had generated greater pressure on the available land and placed greater commercial value on it. Greater commercial value meant that new terms were imposed in cases where only tokens had been paid in the form of tributes and rents in the form of labour services. The host communities which had given out large areas of land for settlement on liberal terms began to demand economic rent or encourage their members to cultivate the land.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, some of the stranger groups in the settlements refused to pay on the grounds that such terms were strange and oppressive.<sup>54</sup> Some of them began to argue that having lived in their settlements for 100-200 or more years, they

(Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1975), p. 58; G. Parker and P. Pfukani, *History of South Africa* (London: Bell and Hyman Ltd, 1975), chapter 5.

<sup>51</sup> Oral Interviews, cited in notes nos 46-50 see also O. Adejuyigbe, *Boundary Problem in Western Nigeria*, pp. 58, 70.

<sup>52</sup> Oral Interviews, as cited in notes nos. 46-50.

<sup>53</sup> Oral Interviews, Diokpa O. Uzu, Ejeme Aniogor, 1.9.87; Mr. Christopher Onwubuyah, Agbor Alidimma, 26.8.87, Mr. Wilson Otono, Obiaruku, 14.12.90.

<sup>54</sup> Oral Interviews, as cited in note no. 53 Also, Diokpa C. Modeme, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.9.90; H.R.H Obi S.O. Aghaunor, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.4.92; Mr. Austen Ebinim, Lagos, 15.12.93.

could not be properly regarded as strangers.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the stranger communities began to hide behind the Land Use Decree which had vested all land in the state in the Governor and thereby reduced both owners and strangers to tenants of the government.<sup>56</sup>

Some of the settlers or stranger communities began to deny their status as settlers or strangers, rejected their designation as such and even laid claim to the settlements.<sup>57</sup> Typical examples of these stranger communities were the Isumpe community on Ejemeland and Etua community on Nsukwaland. There were also some stranger groups who went beyond the claim of ownership - over the areas in which they were accommodated - and laid claim to areas settled by their hosts.<sup>58</sup> In such cases, the stranger groups distorted historical facts not only to claim autochthonous status, but even to present their hosts as the actual strangers and tenants. The Isumpe community on Ejemeland are an epitome of these groups.

Most of the land disputes in the west Niger Igbo area began in the early colonial period.<sup>59</sup> During the period the disputes were associated with disagreement over the royalties on the exploitation of timber resources. Communities in each locality simply laid claim to the forests so as to benefit from royalties paid by timber concessionaires. Besides, the Native Administrations and Native Court Areas and their agents sought to improve their tax returns, fees and fines by laying claim to communities outside their jurisdiction, especially communities in the boundary areas.

<sup>55</sup> Based on interviews and discussions with informants cited in notes nos. 53 and 54

<sup>56</sup> Oral Interviews, H.R.H. Obi S.O. Aghaunor, Ejeme Aniogor, 4.9.87; Mr. Austen Osiegbu, Ogwashi uku, 29.9.90; Mr. Austen Ebinim, Lagos, 15.12.93. See also the High Court Judgement of 20.4.79 on the Ejeme vs Isumpe Land Suit No 0/18/75 (High Court of Justice at Ogwashi uku).

<sup>57</sup> Oral Interviews, as cited in note no. 56. Also Diokpa Chukwuka Modeme, Ejeme Aniogor, 12.9.87

<sup>58</sup> Oral Interviews, as cited in notes nos. 56 and 57. Also Diokpa Eboka Ojienoeb and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Agbor Alidimma, 26.8.87; Diokpa Okoh P. Nwaka and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Unor, 7.8.87.

<sup>59</sup> J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 502-506.



However, the disputes from the 1940s onwards and especially those of the post-independence period were of greater intensity and agitation than those of the preceding decades. As has already been emphasised, this was the natural result of the pervasive expansion of private capitalism in agriculture and the greater commitment of the land to permanent tree crops. Thus, the incidence and intensity of disputes were highest in neighbourhoods most hard hit by land expropriation. For example, the loss of large areas of land to rubber and later to the production of cassava on a commercial scale in Agbor Alidimma and Isumpe communities led to dispute between them in 1940s-1970s.<sup>60</sup> The disputes between Ejeme Aniogor and Ekuku Agbor in 1939-1960s, Nsukwa and Etua in the 1960s-1980s, Umutu and Urhonigbe in the 1950s-1980s, Mbiri and Ekpon in the 1970s, and so on, were the logical results of extreme scarcity in land in the aftermath of large-scale expropriations.

The high cost of the disputes, in both human and material terms, and the desire to secure the land often forced some of the communities to lease out or sell off the disputed areas or some portions of them to some powerful interests, usually among the private capitalist class.<sup>61</sup> However, the unilateral transfer of a disputed land by a party in the dispute to a third party simply aggravated the problem of scarcity and provoked more conflicts. The cost of disputes was not only in financial terms. Indeed, litigation on which huge sums were spent was mostly in the last state of each dispute. Disputes generally started with physical clashes and conflicts. Most of these were associated in different degrees with violence and arms. The extent of violence and the level of resort to arms – usually sticks, clubs, machetes and guns – in each case depended primarily on the depth and height of the land problem in the neighbourhood. It is important to note that inter-community clashes and conflicts were generally more complex and startling than the internal ones and, consequently, far deeper and greater in their impact and significance. Apart from the involvement of larger populations and

<sup>60</sup> Oral Interviews, Diokpa Eboka Ojienoibe and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Agbor Alidimma, 26.8.8.

<sup>61</sup> J.G.N 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 507-510.

indeed whole communities, inter-community disputes concerned larger areas of land.

It should be stressed more particularly that inter-community conflicts involved greater degree of violence and use of arms. While the internal ones did not go far beyond the exchange of blows and sometimes the use of clubs and sticks, most of the inter-community conflicts took the character of war and were associated with bloodshed and loss of human lives. In 1965, for example, an indigene of Ejeme, Maduamalije, was gunned down by the Isumpe in the armed conflict between both communities (i.e. Ejeme Aniogor and Isumpe).<sup>62</sup> The Ekpon-Mbiri conflict of 1974 also led to some killings. Although the casualty figures are not available to us, it would appear to have been high on both sides. It is quite intriguing, even, that people who were neither Ekpon nor Mbiri got lost in the conflict. As an Ekpon informant told the writer, "strange persons found in Ekpon and thought to be working as intelligencers for Mbiri were killed. Non-natives seen in Ekpon were regarded as spies; even mad people were thought to be spies in disguise."<sup>63</sup> In 1984, the Ute Okpu – Egbudu Akah conflict over Ani Efume claimed over ten lives, most of whom were indigenes of Ute Okpu.<sup>64</sup> Apart from those gunned down and those knifed to death in these conflicts, there were people killed with 'juju' and poison – simply applied to their water, palm wine and foods in the farmsteads and farmland. There were also cases in which certain persons were not reported killed but the conflict ended with such people missing.<sup>65</sup>

Part of the cost of the conflict were the huge material losses in terms of destruction of, crops, barns, work equipment and even whole farmsteads. In some cases the disputed areas were set ablaze. In such

<sup>62</sup> Oral Interviews, H.R.H. Obi S.O. Aghaunor and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Aniogor. 4.9.87.

<sup>63</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. Victor Igbogbo, Lagos, 1.2.90.

<sup>64</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. C.O. Ojjanuwuneh, Egbudu Akah, 10.9.87. Madam Onyebuchi Nwaefene, Egbudu Akah, 24.6.84; Mr. Patrick Okocha, Egbudu Akah, 10.9.87; Mr. Kingsley Isichei, Ute-okpu, 19.5.87; Pastor Chuks Omeje, Egbe-Lagos, 18.7.05.

<sup>65</sup> Oral Interviews, Diokpa O. Uzu, Ejeme Aniogor, 1.9.87; Inspector Stephen Obi, Ogwashi Uku, 29.9.90.



cases the land was not only rendered useless for the season, economic trees and wildlife were also destroyed. Where violent conflicts were extended into the towns they were associated with large-scale looting. An Ekpon informant on the Ekpon-Mbiri conflict of 1974 captured the phenomenon of looting when he told the writer that:

After Mbiri had taken us unawares, killing some of our people, Ekpon prepared and on the following day drove Mbiri farmers from their farms and even invaded their town. This was followed with looting and destruction by our people. The looting was so much that the young boys in our area became rich.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, during the conflict between Agbor and Owa in 1980-81 many shops in Boji Boji Agbor and Boji Boji Owa were looted.<sup>67</sup>

A critical aspect of the cost of disputes was the paralysis of economic activities in the neighbourhood. Generally the disputes were associated with insecurity of life and property. In times of conflict, people naturally dreaded to go about their normal, everyday activities. Consequently, in each case the farms and market places were abandoned while the conflict lasted.<sup>68</sup> In most cases the affected towns or villages were even deserted as a result of the flight of people to neighbouring communities.

For a rural people whose bio-material existence and social survival depended on cultivation of the land, the implication of economic paralysis associated with conflicts is quite obvious. In each case the affected communities suffered untold hardships resulting from food shortages. The seriousness of their situation is boldly underscored by the fact that the conflicts occurred mostly during the crucial stages in food production: bush clearing and planting.

### The Continuing Nature of Land Disputes

Over the post-colonial period, the problem of land scarcity or the land question has been compounded by a number of factors. Thus disputes

<sup>66</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. Victor Igbogbo, Lagos 1.2.90.

<sup>67</sup> This is an eye witness account; the writer was vacating in Agbor during the conflict.

<sup>68</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. Igbogbo, Lagos, 1.9.90.

over land have become a permanent feature of inter-community relations in the area. One of the factors is that the system of cultivation in terms of inputs and technology has not changed in spite of the difficult land situation. While intensive land use has been imposed on the people by the reality of loss of their land, production has not transcended the traditional "hoe and cutlass" technology.<sup>69</sup> Besides, the use of scientific inputs such as fertilizers was generally unknown.

Second, much of the land lost to expropriators has remained undeveloped.<sup>70</sup> The few portions that were planted in the colonial and early post-colonial periods depended largely on casual workers.<sup>71</sup> These included the rubber estates at Umutu-Urhonigbe and Egbudu Akah and the oil palm estates at Ubulu Uku and Nsukwa. The private holdings of Chief Eneli at Ejeme Aniogor, National Root Crops Production company Limited at Agbor Alidimma and Ejeme Aniogor, and Nwaokobia farms at Ejeme Unor also depended on casual workers until they stopped operation in the 1980s.

In the Ejeme, Nsukwa, Egbudu Akah triangle where the most rapacious expropriation took place, the above farms were examples of farms where there was some operation, and that was the nature and level of employment. On the other hand, most of the lands acquired during the period were left undeveloped. These included those acquired by: (1) Dr. Ajuebor and Professor Ndika at Nsukwa, (2) Dr. S.O. Ogbemudia at Nsukwa, (3) Mr. Tayo Akpata at Nsukwa, (4) Dr. Isaac Okonjo at Nsukwa, (5) National Root Crops Production Company at Nsukwa, (6) Akaraiwe Farms at Nsukwa,<sup>72</sup> and (7) Mr. Sam Akam at Ejeme Unor.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, while most of the areas expropriated from the peasantry were not developed, others where there was some development operated

<sup>69</sup> W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle L'Ouverture Publications, 1972) 23; J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 586-597.

<sup>70</sup> J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis' chapter 6 (3) pp. 421-435.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. Joseph Aighobahi and Mr. Amacchi Emeni, Oil Palm Estate Nsukwa, 25.8.87; Mr. F. Odozie, Nsukwa, 25.8.87; Mr. Austen Osiegbu, Lagos, 28.9.90.

<sup>73</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. R. Okolo and Mr. S. Otuya, Ejeme Aniogor, 17.8.87.



far below capacity. The import of this was that the dispossession of the peasantry of their land could not lead to the provision of job opportunities. Yet, once an area was acquired, usually for 99 years in the first instance, it was a loss to peasant cultivation.

The land expropriators were mostly absentee urban-based landlords whose interests were more in activities other than agriculture, such as import-export trade, shipping, local distribution of goods, and transportation.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the land acquired from the various communities in the area were simply for the purpose of promoting the expropriators' other business interests. What little initial development some of them effected on their lands was merely deceptive, to ensure that they were taken seriously by officials of the banks and other financial institutions with which they negotiated 'agricultural' loans. As soon as the loans were granted, they were diverted to comprador concerns based in the urban centres. The point, therefore, is that the urban based landlords used the lands acquired from the communities primarily as collateral for loans.<sup>75</sup> A major factor exploited by the landlords was that the top management cadres of the banks were not concerned about how the loans were utilised - far from it. Their concern was their own share of the deal, their commission and percentage. Thus, even when it was crystal clear that there was no intention of utilising the loans for agricultural developments the loans were never obstructed. This has been one of the major factors that make nonsense of the agricultural credit schemes of the petty-bourgeois state.

There was also the factor of speculation. Where the expropriated lands were not used for Bank credit, they were given out to other investors. For example, the Ika Business Association which had earlier acquired 234 hectares of land at Agbor Alidimma without compensation<sup>76</sup> later handed it over to the National Root Crops

<sup>74</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. S.U Onyekpe, Ekuku Agbor, 22.8.87, Ejeme Aniogor, 24.8.87; Mr. P. Okwuseogu, Ejeme Aniogor, 24.8.87.

<sup>75</sup> Oral Interviews, as in note no. 74.

<sup>76</sup> One of the biggest rubber plantation owners, Mr. Christopher Onwubuyah, took his case against the Modern Gari Industry (or Ika Business Association) and the National Root Crops Production Company to court at Agbor (Suit No Ag/15/77). Mr. Onwubuyah was claiming ₦16,000.00 "being special and general damages" for his

Production Company Limited at the cost of ₦62,015.00.<sup>77</sup> At Egbudu Akah, the 500 hectares of land acquired by Mr. Augustine G. Modeme was later handed over to Mr. Sam Akam who, in return, provided him with a machine for his palm oil mill at Ekuku Agbor.<sup>78</sup> At Ejeme Unor, the large area converted to cassava farm by Mrs. Dele Ehikwe was later handed over to the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority.<sup>79</sup>

The obvious effect of 'encroachment without development', or what might be termed the Indian type of development,<sup>80</sup> was the absence of a rural agrarian proletariat. In other words, the rapacious expropriation of land was not accompanied by the creation of a working class out of the peasantry. In the very few estates where jobs were created there was overdependence on casual labourers and hirelings. This meant that the dispossessed peasants were merely reduced to a large reservoir whence casual workers could be 'hired and fired' at will by the estates. This was the universal reality in the area, the reality of pseudo-proletarianisation.<sup>81</sup>

economic trees. He lost the case on the grounds that he was a member of the Agbor Alidimma Community which gave the land to the Modern Gari Industry. See, Court Judgement, 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1980, on the dispute relating to damage and compensation, between Mr. Christopher Onwubuyah and Modern Gari Industry (Nigeria) Ltd. and others, in suit No AG/15/77, High Court of Justice, Agbor, signed by Justice J.W.A. Ohiwerei.

<sup>77</sup> I owe this information to the Project Manager, National Root Crops Production Company, Agbor Alidimma (Mr. R.J.A. Lawal), 28.8.87.

<sup>78</sup> Oral Interviews, Mr. C. Ojianwneh, Egbudu Akah, 10.9.87.

<sup>79</sup> Oral Interviews, Diokpa Okoh P. Nwaka and his Council of Chiefs and Elders, Ejeme Unor, 19.8.87. Messrs R. Okolo and S. Otuya, Ejeme Unor, 17.8.87.

<sup>80</sup> A major feature of India's agriculture especially in the inter war years, was large-scale landownership characterised by absenteeism, and lack of employment for the mass of the landhungry and landless peasantry. For an incisive study of this reality in India, see R. Ulyanovsky, *Agrarian India between the World Wars*

<sup>81</sup> Pseudo-proletarianisation is the process of creating what only appears as, but not really, a proletariat. While the emergence of a proletariat is associated with an organised workforce, labour unionism organisational stability, permanence and job security (or a possibility for it), the pseudo process is associated with casualism and the characteristic lack of organisation, instability, and insecurity of job. Proletarianisation itself is the process of creating a proletariat or working class. See J.G.N. Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', chapter 6(3), pp. 421-435.



As we discuss the factors which compounded the problem of land scarcity, it is important to note the absence of an industrial sector all through the colonial period.<sup>82</sup> The situation has remained unchanged. Consequently agriculture has remained the only source of employment. Thus the expropriation of communal lands without their development was a critical issue. For, while the people were not provided with regular wage employment, the factor of loss of their land drove them out of their traditional economic activities.

State response was generally incapable of resolving the conflicts and disputes.<sup>83</sup> State response usually involved some combination of: deployment of the police to the disputed area, setting up of an inquiry, division of the disputed area, and take-over of the disputed area. The disputes usually ended up in litigation. The judiciary in each case relied on the history of the settlements and occupation of the land, tradition of land tenure and land use, and more especially the performances of the counsels to the parties in the dispute.

It must be emphasised that these orthodox responses of the state could not revolve the problem of disputes among the communities. The responses were totally blind to the fundamental issues of: (1) private expropriation of land and the failure to develop the large areas involved, (2) the necessity to improve the methods and technologies of rural agriculture, (3) the necessity to create alternative employment for the people and (4) the necessity to radically transform the communities through the provision of amenities, utilities and infrastructure that are basically required for the development of small-scale economic activities and self-employment outside agriculture.

### Conclusion

The expansion of tree crops agriculture under the impact of colonial capitalism, and the wanton expropriation of land by the state, its agents

<sup>82</sup> J.G.N Onyekpe, 'Agrarian Crisis', chapter 8.2(ii), pp. 5 98-618; A.A. Lawal, 'Industrialization as Tokenism' in Toyin Falola (ed) *Britain and Nigeria. Exploitation or Development?* (London. Zed Press, 1987), pp. 114-123.

<sup>83</sup> For an examination of the poverty of state response, see J.G.N Onyekpe 'Agrarian Crisis', Chapter 9(2) and 10-Conclusion.

and private individuals over the post-colonial period have had a serious implication for inter-group relations in the West Niger Igbo area. As the communities and the peasantry lost more and more of their lands to tree crops agriculture to satisfy interests outside the area, the portions left for cultivation and material subsistence became progressively fragmented, diminutive, intensively used and, consequently, less and less productive. The result was that conflicts and disputes over land became a regular feature of the economic and social life of the people.

While the different communities had maintained healthy and peaceful inter-group relations in the period up to the growth and expansion of tree crops farming and state and private capitalism in agriculture, the last four to five decades have been associated with violence, armed and sanguinary conflicts, deaths and mutual destruction of farmland and farm-work equipment. It is important to note that as the communities engaged in their conflicts and disputes over land, they were still conscious of their common traditions of origin and migration, historical relationships, commercial ties, etc. But the consciousness of their historical relationships and shared traditions and experiences was (and still is) of little or no import where the critical issues of subsistence and bio-material survival were (are) concerned.

If the contradictory nature of agricultural change under colonialism was at the root of inter-group conflicts and disputes over land, the expropriations of the post-colonial period and the blindness of the state to the fundamental problems of the communities have compounded them. For example, when an inquiry recommends that a people who had inhabited an area for 100-200 or even more years should vacate it on the grounds that they were settled as tenants, or when the judiciary so rules through the courts, where are the people affected expected to go? This problem and others such as large-scale expropriations are critical ones and must be addressed as the people and the state search for solutions to inter-group conflicts and disputes over land.



UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

**SECTION D**  
**ETHNICITY, RELIGION, GENDER**  
**AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS**  
**IN NIGERIA**



## The Press, Ethnic Politics and Struggle for Political Control in Nigeria

Galadima Danladi John

### Introduction

The amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 brought many ethnic groups together into one entity. At independence in 1960, these different groups were put under three administrative regions of North, South and East with headquarters at Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu respectively.

This arrangement brought up many leaders who were representing their groups at the level of the federal government in Lagos. The regional leaders and their political parties were involved in fierce struggle for the control of the centre. Apart from military interregnum, the struggle has continued up to date among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

In this struggle for political power what has been the role of the press? This paper reviews the pattern of news coverage which Nigerian newspapers accorded the political struggle by different groups during democratic regime since 1960. The essence is to find out how such news coverage has affected inter-group relations in Nigeria.

The political struggle for power by the different groups in the country has been a continuous one. This is because of the socio-economic and political importance attached to such power. Here, a review of the group struggle for power from the pre and post independence is carried out. The use of newspaper press and ethnicity as



tools of group struggle during democratic campaigns and elections has been analyzed. The objective of this chapter is to bring out the relationship between group struggle for political power and the use of newspaper press as one of the instruments necessary for such struggle. To do that, a review of the historical accounts of the activities of the press in the inter group struggle for power during electoral politics is presented.

The relationship between the different ethnic groups in Nigeria changes in line with the transformation in the administrative structures of the country at every material time. The pre-colonial Nigeria was an area occupied by people who belonged to different kingdoms, clans and chiefdoms. Inter-tribal war which led to the defeat and occupations of one kingdom by another witnessed competitive inter-group relations during such period.

However, between 1861 and 1906, the British colonial forces used wars and treaties to subjugate the different nationalities in the territory now called Nigeria. These nationalities, which are over three hundred, were amalgamated at various times thereby leading to the creation of the colony of Lagos in 1861 and the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1900 and 1906 respectively. The amalgamation of these two protectorates into a single colonial state with Lagos colony as its headquarters in 1914 brought all the different groups of the pre-colonial era under the control of one administrative government.<sup>1</sup> This period changed the relationship between different groups in Nigeria because the colonial policies and the demarcation of administrative units had profound impact on people and their interactions. With the 1914 amalgamation, people were made to see group relationship in terms of Northern and Southern areas as against empires and kingdoms or clans.

The colonial constitutional provisions and its amendments created administrative units in the country that further changed the configuration of group relations in Nigeria. The Macpherson constitution of 1951 instituted regionalism which the 1954 constitution

<sup>1</sup> O. Ikime, "The Nigerian civil war and the national question: a historical analysis" in Osaghae E., Onwudivine E. and Suberu, R., 2002, *The Nigerian Civil War and Aftermath* (Ibadan: PEFS, 2002) p. 54.

consolidated thereby expanding the country from two protectorates to three regional units.<sup>2</sup>

As explained by Idang<sup>3</sup>, the composition of the regions were thus: Northern region, with 75 percent of the country's land mass and about 60 percent of its total population had the Hausa-fulani as the dominant ethnic group. Together with the Kanuris, the Tiv and the Nupes they constituted about 65 percent of the region's total population in 1963. The remaining 35 percent of the region's population consisted of various minorities that differ in sizes and population. They include the Jukun, Angas, Birom, Idoma, Yoruba and Igbira. Similarly, the Western region had the Yoruba, as the dominant ethnic group with the Edo, Itsekiri, Uroboh, and Ijaw as minorities and in the Eastern region, the Igbo was the dominant ethnic group, while the Ibibio, Anang, Oron, Efik, Ijaw, Ekor, Bekwarra, Yala and Ikwerre were the minorities.<sup>4</sup>

By 1963, the regional arrangement was expanded to four with the creation of mid-western region. Scholars<sup>5</sup> have agreed that the creation of another region was to satisfy the yearnings and dispel the fear of ethnic domination of minority groups by the majority in each region. However, the creation of Mid-western region was a conspiracy between

<sup>2</sup> Professor Ikime said the southern protectorate was broken into western and eastern in 1939 by the British colonial government in order to give the northern region an edge in national politics, which the north exploited positively, O. Ikime, "The Nigerian civil war and the national question: a historical analysis" in Osaghae E., Onwudivine E. and Suberu, R., 2002, *The Nigerian Civil War and Aftermath* (Ibadan: PEFS, 2002) p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> G. Idang, "Ethnic minorities in Nigerian politics" in Akinsanya A.A. and Ayoade, J.A., *Readings in Nigerian Government and Politics* (Ibadan: Gratia associates international, 2005, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> Studies on minority-majority ethnic equation have indicated that Hausa-Fulani and Igbo ethnic groups were minorities in the pre-colonial days but are now majorities in the political equation of Nigeria. (see Peter Ekeh's 1999 work on political minorities and historical dominant minorities in Nigerian history and politics - as an example).

<sup>5</sup> B. Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria (1940-1979)* (Ibadan: Heinemann Books, 1995) p.244, O. Nnoli, *Ethnic politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension publishing company, 1978), p.170; O. Ikime, "The Nigerian civil war and the national question: a historical analysis" in Osaghae E., Onwudivine E. and Suberu, R., 2002, *The Nigerian Civil War and Aftermath* (Ibadan: PEFS, 2002) p.55.



the leaders of the Northern and Eastern regions to weaken the political base of the Western region. The state of emergency period of 1963 provided the opportunity for the actualization of the creation of such additional region which was not equally created in Northern and Eastern regions for the Middle Belt and the Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers (COR) minorities, respectively.

In 1967, the military regimes changed the nomenclature of the units of administration from regions to states and expanded it to twelve. The political space and channels of group relationship not only opened up but also increased. However, the pattern of political struggle for power also changed because political activities were slow, discreet but sometimes manifestly violent as witnessed in the various change of governments during military era of 1966-1979 and 1983-1999. The period of military regimes witnessed the expansion of administrative units (states) to 36 in 1996 from twelve in 1966, nineteen in 1976, twenty-one in 1987 and thirty in 1991.

What is to be noted about the changes in the unit of administration is the fact that these are centres of attraction and reasons for political struggle by different groups in the country. Therefore, the form, direction and the structures of changes in the administrative units always determine the methods and strategies adopted by groups in their efforts to capture retain or change political power at any given period. The transformation of administrative units from pre-colonial era to the present democratic government presents an interesting scenario. This is because it is almost turning full circle to the former era of many clans, chiefdoms, kingdoms, etc which were units of administration of the pre colonial era.

This can be seen from the changes in the following:

- (a) Names of administrative units- from protectorates to regions and states. Provinces and divisions have changed to local government areas.
- (b) Number of administrative units- From one to 36 (states) with sub-units of 774 (LGAs).
- (c) System of government-from colonial, parliamentary, military to presidential government.

The impact of these changes on inter group relations is the fact that struggle for political power normally takes on the colour and reflect changes in the number, name and system of government in operation.

Two changes have very strong impact on group relationship and politics in Nigeria. These are the regionalism of politics of 1951/4 and the informal geo-political zonal arrangement of the present period. This is to be seen in the fact that the regional politics has brought up the issue of ethnicity, majority and minority, which has affected intergroup relations both negatively and positively. Ethnic politics has divided Nigeria into four groups - Hausa Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba and minorities. The geo-political zonal arrangement, an informal one though, seeks to reduce the negative problem of ethnicity by dividing Nigerians into cultural zones.<sup>6</sup>

From the foregoing it is clear that the competing groups in the country are people from the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani and minority ethnic groups.

### Party Politics, Minority Group and Struggle for Power

The development of party politics in Nigeria is always linked to ethnic politics. It is on record that the commencement of party politics witnessed the formation and control of political parties along regional lines. In terms of political party formation, Mohammed argued that the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a cultural group of Yoruba descendants of Oduduwa metamorphosed into Action Group in March 1951.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Jammiyar Mutanen Arewa, another cultural group based in Northern Nigeria, transformed into the Northern People's Congress in October 1951. The National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (later, of *Nigerian Citizens*) founded in 1944 as first national political

<sup>6</sup> The present geopolitical zonal arrangement, as explained by John Paden (1995) corresponds to the original cultural zones of the British colonial rule. These are emirate states, (north west), Borno and environs (north east) middle belt minorities (north central), Yorubaland (south west) Igbo land (south east) and southern minorities (south south).

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Mohammed, *The Nigerian Press And the Ibrahim Babangida Administration, 1985-1993* (Ibadan: book builders. 2003) p.16.



party became bogged down into the affairs of Igbo State Unions based in Eastern Nigeria.

Nnoli explained that leaders of these parties were from the dominant ethnic groups of each area. While Chief Obafemi Awolowo led the Action Group, Sir Ahmadu Bello headed Northern People's Congress. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe led the National Council of Nigerian Citizen. The supporters of each of the parties were from Hausa-fulani (North) Yoruba (West) and Igbo (East) predominantly.<sup>8</sup>

The minority ethnic groups who were to support these three parties were instead being supported by political parties from the regions other than their own. As Idang observed, the Action Group supported the minority groups of the middle belt and the East while the NCNC supported the NEPU of Aminu Kano and the NPC supported minority group of Rivers-Niger Delta congress. As a result, in the 1959 general election, each of the parties captured power in its region of origin.<sup>9</sup> It was only through a coalition agreement that a central government was formed between the NPC and NCNC on October 1, 1960.

From this pattern of party formation (leadership structures and support base), the struggle for political power became interpreted in ethnic terms. This continued from the immediate post independence to the first post-military regime. In 1979 when the first military regime left, all the political parties except the Great Nigerian People's Party of Waziri Ibrahim and National Advance Party of Tunji Braithwaite had links with the defunct parties of the First Republic. Even though the creation of more state out of former regions and the formation of more political parties affected the regionalization of politics, the presence of Dr. Azikiwe (NPP) and Chief Awolowo (UPN) did not eliminate such politics especially in the Eastern and Western areas. It was only in the former Northern region that such politics was reduced and this was

<sup>8</sup> O. Nnoli, *Ethnic politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension publishing company, 1978), p. 154.

<sup>9</sup> G. Idang, "Ethnic minorities in Nigerian politics" in Akinsanya A.A. and Ayoade, J.A., *Readings in Nigerian Government and Politics* Ijebu-Ode: Gratia associates international, 2005, p. 292.

because of factors such as the death of Ahmadu Bello, the control of federal government by northerners through military rule and the creation of many states in the region. This explained, as one of the reasons, the emergence of National Party of Nigeria (NPN) from a coalition of the rump of defunct NPC and factions of prescribed NCNC, NNDP, AG, NEPU, UMBC, etc in 1979.<sup>10</sup> The NPP of Dr. Azikiwe and UPN of Chief Awolowo were new platforms of defunct NCNC and AG of 1944 to 1966 and 1951 to 1966 respectively. People's Redemption Party of Aminu Kano emerged from the relics of NEPU.

The regional politics pitched Igbo-Yoruba-Hausa Fulani against one another as the major ethnic groups in the struggle for power. However, by the late 1950s, the minority group became another force in the political equation of the country, hence the constitution of the Willink commission of 1957.

The problem of domination and marginalization of minority ethnic groups was not completely addressed by colonial government before the end of independence struggle. Osaghae asserted that the efforts of the Middle belt and Mid-west political groups have come to be taken seriously as an issue for political and constitutional considerations.<sup>11</sup> So far, these efforts have produced the following changes in the political structures of the country:

1. The adoption of geographical zonal arrangement that have given the minorities two out of six zones in the country. They share the other two zones (Northeast and Northwest) with people from other majority groups.
2. The minority ethnic groups have ruled the country during military regimes. While the Northern minorities have ruled the country as head of state (General Gowon, 1967-1975), the southern minorities have ruled Nigeria as vice presidents (Admiral Augustus Aikhomu 1987-1993, Admiral Mike Akhigbe 1998-1999).

<sup>10</sup> A. D. Yahaya, "The political parties and crisis of instability" in Imobighe, T.A., *The politics of the Second Republic* (Kuru: NIPSS, 1992) p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> E. Osaghae, "Changing patterns of ethnic politics in Nigeria" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* vol.9 no.3, 2003, pp: 54-74.



The clamour for the presidency by the minorities in the south is because the present zonal arrangement has shown that it is only their zone that has not produced the president for the country.

3. The creation of states came as a part of the resolve to redress the problems of marginalization of the minorities. Idang has explained that "While nineteen states are in the areas controlled by the three dominant ethnic groups, seventeen states are in the ethnic minority areas"<sup>12</sup>
4. Out of the nine states in the oil producing Niger Delta areas, six are for the minority ethnic groups and this has made the struggle for power factual. In the struggle, the minority groups have been adopting different strategies. Apart from the violent methods adopted by the late Major Gideon Orkar (military coup), Isaac Jasper Boro (secession) and the youth militancy (hijackings, kidnapping, etc.), other viable methods such as political alignments and coalition and press campaigns were always used for the achievement of set goals.<sup>13</sup>

### *Press, Ethnic Politics and the Struggle for Power*

The use of ethnicity and newspaper as tools for the struggle for political power in Nigeria by the nationalists during the colonial era is well

<sup>12</sup> G. Idang, "Ethnic minorities in Nigerian politics" in Akinsanya A.A. and Ayoade, J.A., *Readings in Nigerian Government and Politics* Ijebu-ode: Gratia associates international, 2005, p. 300; Benjamin argued that minority groups occupy only twelve states. I think his calculation is based on states in the north central and south south zones unlike that of Idang which is based on former provinces. S. A. Benjamin, "The place of the minority in power sharing in Nigerian federalism" *NISER. monograph series* no.10, 2007, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> Ige (1995;269) explained that Jasper Adaka Isaac Boro proclaimed the Republic of Yenogoa because the eastern regional government refused to allowed the creation of a region for them in the same way Mid-west was created. Major Gideon Orkar excised states of the far North because of the problem of domination of minorities of North and South. The action of the youths in the Niger Delta presently has signs of criminality than struggle for power or fair treatment.

known. Researchers have documented how politicians have used their newspapers to mobilize their ethnic groups for their political interests.<sup>14</sup>

What has been contested about ethnicity and the press is the question of who started the ethnic politics in the press and can the Nigerian political activities, as it relates to press coverage, be seen from ethnic perspective? In other words, who started using newspapers to promote ethnic group interest in Nigerian politics? Can we see press (newspapers) coverage of political groups from the angle of the ethnic ownership of such press (newspapers)?

The origins of the use of the press to promote ethnic interests during colonial era and in the post-colonial periods are many. However, three versions are germane for our discussion here. The first version as explained by Nnoli is the use of negative description and reckless allegations to denigrate opponents in speeches at political rallies in their effort to win election against such opponents. According to him, the early political activities of Nnamdi Azikiwe generated much ethnically loaded remarks as he "used his journalistic enterprises to portray them (his opponents) in very unfavourable light to the public."<sup>15</sup> His newspapers carried all his remarks against other groups whom he referred to as "misleaders". The Yoruba leaders saw his remarks as character assassination and this led to a press war between *West African Pilot* (for Azikiwe) and the *Daily Service* newspaper (for Yoruba leaders).

The second version of the origin of ethnicity and press politics is given by Jose (1987:36) who said that it was the Yoruba leaders who introduced ethnicity into the body politic of the country. And they used their newspapers to promote it.<sup>16</sup>

Jose cited two instances of how ethnicity was brought into politics by the Yorubas. The first was in 1952 when the Yoruba politicians of the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) ganged up and

<sup>14</sup> See Bola Ige (1995) Nnoli (1978), Adigun Agbage (2005) Mohammed (2003) Fred Omu (1978) etc. for detail of how ethnicity and press interact in Nigerian politics.

<sup>15</sup> O. Nnoli, *Ethnic politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension publishing company, 1978), p. 228.

<sup>16</sup> I. B. Jose, *Walking A Tight Rope: Power play in Daily Times* Ibadan: university press, 1987), p. 37.



denied Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe a place in the House of Representatives as a member in Lagos because, to them, an Igbo should not represent Lagos, a part of the Western Region. The second was when the Northern members of the House of Representatives were publicly ridiculed and abused by the Yorubas when they did not support the motion for self-government. This was after the agreement reached between the Yoruba Obas and Northern Emirs about the issue three years earlier.

The last version of this issue is explained by Ige who said Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe introduced "tribal politics" into Nigeria politics using his *West African Pilot* in 1939. As Ige puts it "the newspapers published in Lagos before Zik started the *West African Pilot* hardly ever mentioned the ethnic origin of whomever they reported on". However, with the arrival of *West African Pilot*, there were news reports that: (i) identified people in stories with their tribes and places of origins (ii) support the formation of the "Igbo state union" and welcome the "Ibiobio state union", (iii) publicized the efforts of Igbos in Northern Nigeria to build "Ibo union schools" or raise funds to send their sons on scholarship abroad. (iv) published notices of town unions and their meetings, etc.

These innovations brought by the *West African Pilot* newspapers were good in as much as they increased the revenue of the newspapers. However, these publications increased and broadened tribal and ethnic consciousness and awareness among the people especially the political group and that explain the action of the western regional politicians against Azikiwe.<sup>17</sup>

In the colonial period, the political leaders established, owned, and operated newspapers to articulate, propagate, and defend their political parties and groups' interests. These newspapers were used for the struggle for independence but when independence was assured, the political leaders decided to use these newspapers for their political interests.

As expressed by Mohammed, in the Northern region there was the Hausa language newspaper, *Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo* established in 1939 with its English language version *Nigerian citizen* established in 1944.

<sup>17</sup> B. Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria (1940-1979)* (Ibadan: Heinemann Books, 1995), p. 29.

This newspaper was renamed *New Nigerian* in 1966. These newspapers became instrument of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), which controlled the region after independence. In the western region, the *Tribune* group of newspapers which was established in 1948 and *Sketch* established in 1964 were used effectively by chief Obafemi Awolowo led Action Group (AG) political party.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's *West African Pilot* established in 1937 and its chains of publications became the media of political mobilization and control in the Eastern region. In their efforts to get political power, these leaders adapted many strategies including the use of newspapers to get support in other regions in addition to maintaining the support they had in their region of control. Some of the strategies, which were used by the newspapers, include:

- (a) Appeals to ethnic sentiments: According to Ige, the *Nigerian Tribune* and its sister, *Irohin Yoruba*, were plainly political newspapers which were mainly anti-Zik while *Nigerian Citizen* and *Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo* were anti-southern politicians. The newspapers of Dr. Azikiwe were also blatant in their anti-Yoruba vituperations. The crisis in Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) between its leaders, which took ethnic coloration, brought out a typical example of the use of newspapers to appeal to ethnic sentiments<sup>19</sup>. As Nnoli has put it "a press war ensued between *Daily Service* and the *West African Pilot* in which appeals to ethnic sentiments and arguments were dominant".<sup>20</sup>
- (b) Publication of intemperate utterances: The political attacks on opponents during campaign speeches at rallies and conferences were always given prominence by newspapers. The prominence given such speeches was done either favorably or

<sup>18</sup> J. B. Mohammed, *The Nigerian Press And the Ibrahim Babangida Administration, 1985-1993* (Ibadan: book builders, 2003), p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> B. Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria (1940-1979)* (Ibadan: Heinemann Books, 1995), p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, 1978), p.142.



otherwise depending on the politicians involved or the ownership/political leanings of the newspapers with the reports. Nnoli and Ige gave examples of the use of intemperate utterances published in *Gaskiya* and *West African Pilot* newspapers respectively. Such publications increased ethnic sentiment to an intolerable level and led to politics of mutual suspicion.<sup>21</sup>

- (c) Support for the formation of factions within ethnic unions: As a part of their struggle for power, the politicians encouraged factions in the opponents' ethnic unions so as to divide the political base of such opponents. For example, Dr. Azikiwe encouraged the formation of Egbe Omo Yoruba and later Egbe omo olofin as a faction of Egbe Omo Oduduwa. His papers publicized this group and their activities to spite Chief Awolowo's group. This prompted the *Daily Service* to write an editorial appealing for an all-inclusive association for the Yoruba's:

We anticipate an era of wholesome rivalry among principal tribes of Nigeria. While they must guard against chauvinism and rapid tribulation, the great Yoruba people must strive to preserve their identity. (Nnoli 1978:104)

- (d) Banning newspapers from the other regions from circulation in one region: Mohammed and Ige gave vivid explanation of how the Western and Eastern regional governments banned certain newspapers from circulation in their regions:

In the populous Eastern region whose political powers are aligned with the opposition Action Group in the West, key city councils adopted ordinances banning papers that stayed neutral or actively backed the western government's return to power. This group includes the

<sup>21</sup> O. Nnoli, *Ethnic politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension publishing company, 1978), p.228; B. Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria (1940-1979)* (Ibadan: Heinemann Books, 1995), p. 28.

federal government-owned *Morning Post*, and the western government *Daily Times* and *Daily Sketch*. The net effect of the ordinances has been to block the entrance of these newspapers into the eastern region by either road or air. In retaliation, city councils in the West have made it a crime not only to read pro-opposition *Pilot*, *Telegraph*, and *Nigerian Tribune* but also to tune in to the Eastern region radio. If caught, errant newspaper readers and radio listeners are subject to a year's imprisonment. The East has imposed no such penalties but purple uniformed political thugs have set up road blocks, search cars for "wrong" papers and beat the occupants who possessed them.<sup>22</sup>

This method used by the politicians was because they believed newspapers are powerful tools of political mobilization.

The use of newspapers to recruit followers and propagate the agenda of political leaders did heighten ethnicity and as Omu has argued the "inter ethnic rivalry between the newspapers contributed to regionalization of nationalism and crystallization of inter group tension and animosity which characterized political development for a long time."<sup>23</sup> Olukotun acknowledged the extreme degree of partisanship, which the press displayed during the period of AG crisis of 1962-63, the census of 1963-64 and 1965 election crisis.<sup>24</sup>

The same players of the first republic did not purely use the political parties and the newspapers that existed in the Second Republic. All newspapers except *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Sketch*, *Gaskiya* and the *New Nigerian* were no more in circulation. However, of the existing newspapers only *Nigerian Tribune* remained the property of Chief Awolowo because the Federal government had taken over the

<sup>22</sup> This is a quotation from the New York Times report of Nigerian political crises (20/11/1965). See B. Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria* p.250 and J. B. Mohammed, *The Nigerian Press* p.34 for more details.

<sup>23</sup> F. I. A. Omu, *Press and politics in Nigeria* (London: Ibadan history series, 1978) p.248.

<sup>24</sup> A. Olukotun, "The media and the Nigerian civil war: an overview" in E. Osaghae, E. Onwudiwe and R. Suberu, *The Nigerian Civil War and its after math* (Ibadan: PEFS, 2002) p. 384.



ownership of *New Nigerian* from the Northern region, the *Daily Sketch* was jointly owned by Oyo, Ogun and Ondo state governments. So this neutralized the regionalization of politics using newspapers as tools in the Second Republic politics.

The use of newspapers was along political party lines and not ethnic affiliation. The establishment of *National Concord* newspapers by M.K.O Abiola in 1980 as a counter force to *Nigerian Tribune's* persistent attacks on the NPN-led government is a good example. Chief Awolowo and Chief Abiola were both Yorubas but while Chief Awolowo was in UPN, Chief Abiola was in NPN.

Yusuf explained that the mass media in the Second Republic fall under the political parties, which influenced news reports that satisfied the various political parties. While the Federal government had *Daily Times*, *New Nigeria* and broadcast stations, the state governments also had newspapers and television/radio stations to propagate their programmes.<sup>25</sup> Alongside these government-owned newspapers, there were some political privately owned newspapers in existence.

The most prominent ones were *National concord* and *Nigerian Tribune*, which were leading what was called the "NPN-press" and the "opposition press" respectively. These newspapers were notorious for publishing untruth, half-truth, distorted stories etc all with the aim of blackmailing the opponent while promoting their political party interests.

Nigerians welcomed the return to democracy in 1999. However, no sooner had the democratic government settled down for the business of governance than the politics of sectional lines cropped up with newspapers and magazines as tools of mobilization. These were witnessed during:

- (i) allegations of perjury, forgery of certificates and false declaration of ages levelled against Salisu Buhari (Speaker, House of Representatives) from the North, Evans Enwerem (Senate President) from the East and Bola Tinubu (Lagos state

<sup>25</sup> B. Yusuf, "The mass media: The revolt of conscience" in Imobighe, T.A., *The Politics of the Second Republic* (Kuru: NIPSS, 1992), p. 240.

governor) from the West. It was found out that in the coverage of these cases, newspapers on all sides supported the "man from my place" while extensively giving negative coverage to "their man."<sup>26</sup>

- (ii) The Shariah crises in Kaduna in February and May, 2000 and
- (iii) The threat of impeachment of the president by the House of Representatives also clearly brought out sectional inclinations of Nigerian press. (Haruna, 2006:167).<sup>27</sup>

Oyovbaire also pointed out that there was "Ethnicisation and Afeniferisation" of Obasanjo by the South-West press who saw him as a celebrity when he was elected as president though he was rejected by them as a candidate in 1999. This ethnicisation of politics by the press was also noticed in 2003 elections.<sup>28</sup>

Even though the first three presidential candidates for the 2003 elections were from the former North, West and Eastern regions dominated by Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups, none of them had newspapers as their predecessors of the First Republic. However, in the absence of individually owned newspapers, these candidates had generous publicity support from papers owned by their fellowmen. President Obasanjo was favourably publicised by the *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Comet*. General Mohammadu Buhari was supported by *Daily/Weekly Trust* and *Today* while the *Post Express* and *Daily Champion* gave favourable publicity to Dim Chukwemeka Ojukwu. It should be noted that the performance of the press during

<sup>26</sup> D. J. Galadima and J. Enighe, "The press in Nigerian politics: An historical analysis of issues, and pattern of news coverage" *The Nigerian Journal of Communication* vol.1. No.1., 2001, p. 68.

<sup>27</sup> During the period of threat of impeachment by the house, The *Punch* never published any story on its front page apart from the day the threat was issued. Tell magazines mounted campaign of corruption against the speaker, Alhaji Ghali Na Abba up to the time he was sidetracked during the preparation for 2003 election. M. Haruna, "A Tame Press for the Fourth Republic" in A. T. Gana and Y. B. C. Owelle, *Democratic Rebirth in Nigeria* vol.1 Abuja: AFRIGOV, 2006, pp. 163-170.

<sup>28</sup> S. Oyovbaire, "Pluralism and the media" in *Report of Workshop on Media and Democracy* Abuja may 21-23, NPC, 2000, p. 6.



the first tenure of president Obasanjo witnessed group and sectional partisanship because there were many ethno-regional and religious crises and the press coverage of such crises were mainly ethno-regional and religious based.

As a result, the newspapers were perceived as sectional hence the proliferation of newspapers and magazines, to promote and project the interests of those who had no outlets and felt their interests need promotion. In the north, *Daily/Weekly Trust* was perceived as Hausa-Fulani Muslims newspapers which promote only northern interest more and above other interests. As a result, the minorities reacted by publishing many newspapers and magazines such as *Newsmouth, Newsgate, Pinnacle, Prism, Ultimate, Citywatch, Prime, News line, Africa news, Vision*, etc which all professed middle belt struggle.

In the Southwest, more newspapers have also been introduced to support the effort of the *Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune*. The *Western Voice*, the *Westerner*, *Oodua News*, *Akede Oduduwa*, etc. are on the newsstands now.

The political group in the Southeast who expressed interest in the 2007 presidency has *Daily Champion* and *Daily Sun* (a replacement for the *Post Express*) and the *New Republic* (a publication of MASSOB) to promote the Igbo interests.

The South-South group, in their struggle adopted a multiple media approach. Firstly, the political group decided to influence the news structures of the newspapers published by their sons especially *Vanguard* and *Daily independent*. These two newspapers now have pages devoted to what *vanguard* called Arewa news, Niger Delta news, southeast news and southwest news. The *Daily independent* newspapers also has news pages devoted to North-Arewa news, East-Ndigbo news, West-Oduduwa, and south-Niger Delta news.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, like their Northern counterparts, the Southern minority groups are publishing many regional and local newspapers to promote their interests. In August 2006, there were more than twenty

<sup>29</sup> Thisday and the Guardian newspapers whose publishers are from the South-south zone are yet to adopt what *Vanguard* and *Daily independent* are doing.

newspapers published in Port Harcourt alone by people from the zone.<sup>30</sup>

There are two factors that are responsible for the use of newspapers by these groups. The first is the need to mobilize the people for the struggle for the presidency of the country, which they believed, was their turn. The second is the need to publicize their struggle for equal share in the revenue accruing from the crude oil that is being extracted from their soil. As Agbese (1989:18) has said, politicians believe the media are powerful. The media are accepted to a larger extent as the voice of the people. And since power belongs to the people, the media exercise that power on behalf of the people.

From all that we have reviewed, it can be said that Nigerian politicians see newspapers as weapons of power, which you have to get in order to wield it.<sup>31</sup>

### Conclusion

The discussion of intergroup relationship in Nigeria always concentrates on the political, economic, religious and other group activities. Little attention is always paid to the role that the mass media have played and is playing in such inter- (and intra-) groups activities. Using the role of newspapers in the struggle for political power in Nigeria, this paper has highlighted the historical role of the media in inter-group relations.

<sup>30</sup> The following are some of the newspaper – *Niger Delta Standard, Niger Delta Today, The Scoop, Siren, The Beacon, Environment Watch, The Mirror, The Hard Truth, The News Desk, The Wish, Port Harcourt Telegraph, Port Harcourt Sunrise, Surveillance, Moonlight, The Beam, The Argus, Independent Monitor*, etc.

<sup>31</sup> D. J. Galadima, "The press, Middle Belt group and the struggle for power in Northern Nigeria", A paper presented at an international conference on the *Media and culture in Northern Nigeria* at Bayero University, Kano, July 5-7, 2006, p.12; Galadima, D.J 2007, "Political communication in a democracy: Are newspapers still the favourite of Nigerian politicians?" E. M. V. Mojaye, A. Salawu and O.O. Oyewo, *Ebenezer Soola Conference on Communication: Proceedings: Department of communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, 2007*, p. 384.



From our analysis the newspaper was mostly used for unedifying role of publicizing what differentiate, rather than bind us as members of a country.

However, the shift from the use of newspapers purely as political organs to being run as business outfits is a blessing, as business interest will override political consideration in the editorial outputs of these media. More so the location and ownership of newspapers are not always based on ethnic consideration.

What has been in practice is the appropriation of privately owned newspapers for ethnic and regional or sectional gains. And that is what has come to be known either as Ngbati press, Lagos-Ibadan axis press, Igbo press, Kaduna press, etc. This is also a reflection of their influence and impact on the people especially the political elites.

## The Impact of Shari'a on Inter-Group Relations in Post-Colonial Nigeria

Nathaniel D. Danjibo

### Introduction

As most identities begin to wane with an increasing pressure imposed by globalization, religious identities have rather re-emerged with uncontrollable vigor, more or less a global catalyst, determining group and national relations often times in a very negative way. This assertion is buttressed by Huntington (1993; 1996). With the collapse of communism and the supposed triumph of capital democracy in 1989, people expected to find a uni-polar world system championed by the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> However, Samuel P. Huntington prefigured a world that would rather be sharply divided not based on political ideology as was the case between communism and capitalism, but based on other forms of ideologies, especially religious ideology. Huntington expressed the fact that the greater pressure would emanate between the Western and Arab civilization, which he referred to as "the clash of civilization". And of course, the recent happenings in the world today, for example, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA, the 2002 terrorist attacks in Spain, the 2005 terrorist attacks in England, the Iran nuclear problem, the ethno-religious crisis in the Sudan are all pointers to this clash of civilization between the West and the Arab

<sup>1</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1993); Harry Shutt, *A New Democracy: Alternatives to a Bankrupt World Order* (London and New York: ZED Books, 2001).



world. With these emerging trends, religion can no longer be referred to only as the opium of the people as the classical Marxists would have us believe. Therefore, today, religion has become a major factor in determining national ideologies.

Religion is one of the oldest (if not the oldest) identity phenomenon. Virtually every group in the world practices one form of religion or the other. Among the world's oldest religions are Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and in Africa, the African Traditional Religion (ATR). Also in Africa, Islam and Christianity have successfully displaced the ATR with the majority of African people adhering to either Christianity or Islam. From time immemorial, religion has remained a metaphysical search of an inner (spiritual) fulfillment by humans, sometimes expressed in a violent manner. But what exactly is religion? How is it expressed? How does the expression of a religion affect the other? And why does the expression have to be violent? These are some of the questions that beat our imagination, especially the fact that the two great religions that are the bane of peace are themselves the root cause of the destruction of lives and properties.

Religion has been defined as the "Relation of human beings to God or the gods or to whatever they consider sacred or, in some cases, merely supernatural."<sup>2</sup> According to Haralambos and Holborn, one way to define religion is in terms of its functions in the society.<sup>3</sup> In this wise, religion is defined by Yinger as "a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life."<sup>4</sup> But this functional definition completely isolates the supernatural for it is not in all cases that religion is viewed in terms of problem solving. For example, one major element of religion is worship, which has a wider expression than sacrifice. At the other extreme are the substantivists who see religion in terms of supernatural beliefs. For example, Robertson says religion "refers to the existence of

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Haralambos and Martin Holborn, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004) p. 405.

<sup>4</sup> M. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*. (London: Routledge, 1995).

supernatural beings that have a governing effect on life."<sup>5</sup> Certainly, a religion like Buddhism is not incorporated by this definition as it does not believe in the supernatural.

Bronislaw Malinowski has extensively discussed religion in terms of its function, but his thesis summarizes religion as an identity that promotes social solidarity by dealing with situations of emotional stress that tend to cause instability in the society.<sup>6</sup> In the same vein, Talcott Parsons sees religion as meant to address problems in the society. For Parsons, if people do not have to face the challenges and difficulties of everyday life, then religion would not have the significance that it does have in the society.<sup>7</sup> The functional approach to the definition of religion was informed by Karl Marx's definition of religion as the "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of the heartless world and the soul of the soulless condition. It is the opium of the people."<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Lenin posited that "religion is a kind of spiritual gin in which the slaves of capital drown their human shape and their claims to any decent life."<sup>9</sup> Both Marx and Lenin were materialist and so could not have defined religion otherwise.

Drawing from the Marxists' position, a common belief among most sociologists was that changes in society would automatically affect religion. Modernity and secularism would definitely wane the influence of religion in the society. In other words, as the world experiences modernization in the form of industrialization, science, capitalism and the power of rational thinking, societies would become more and more secularized as religion would become less significant in the lives of humans.<sup>10</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, modernization theory became dominant in the field of politics and sociology. "The paradigm predicted the factors inherent in modernization, including economic develop-

<sup>5</sup> R. Robertson, *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1954).

<sup>7</sup> Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1964).

<sup>8</sup> Marx cited in T. B. Bottomore and M. Rubel, eds., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> D. Lane, *Politics and Society in the USSR* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> Marx Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1963).



ment, urbanization, growing rate of literacy and education as well as advancement in science and technology would inevitably lead to the demise of the role of religion in politics.<sup>11</sup> Scholars like Deutsch,<sup>12</sup> Almond,<sup>13</sup> Apter,<sup>14</sup> and Smith<sup>15</sup> were the proponents of modernization theory in relation to ethnicity and religion. Their main thesis was that unprogressive (savage) identities like ethnicity would only find their demise if modernization took root. Sociologists like Appleby,<sup>16</sup> Heynes,<sup>17</sup> and Sahliyah,<sup>18</sup> share this theoretical perspective to religion, suggesting that religion would experience its demise with modernization.

Unfortunately, modernization theory has not been able to send religion to the grave. In fact, both Marx and Weber did not agree with the position that religion would die away. Marx believed that modernization would rather set in motion chains of events that would eventually erode the influence of religion in the society. On the other hand, Durkheim sees religion as an eternal phenomenon; for him, "there is something eternal in religion." The eternal nature of religion has gained credence in modern day politics as world political systems are increasingly shaped and divided by religious identities. The potency of religion in modern day politics disapproves of the Marxists' description of religion as opium in the sense that religion serves as a catalyst of

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Fox, "Religion and State Failure: An Examination of the Extent and Magnitude of Religious Conflict from 1950 to 1996", in *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2004, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1953.

<sup>13</sup> G. Almond, "Introduction: A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics", in G. Almond and J.C. Coleman, eds., *The politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

<sup>14</sup> D. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

<sup>15</sup> D. E. Smith, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> R. S. Appleby, *Religious Fundamentalism and Global Conflict* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> J. Haynes, *Religion in Third World Politics* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> E. Sahliyah, ed., *Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990).

change as was the case in Latin America through the influence of liberation theology and in the Arab world through the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism. It is on this basis (of religion as a political force) that we shall discuss the impact of Shari'a law on inter-group relations in some selected states of northern Nigeria.

Many modern scholars of politics and sociology believe that religion inevitably contributes to conflict in the society as it provides legitimacy to governments and opposition parties. This is particularly the case in Sudan where Islam legitimizes government tyranny against the blacks in the south of Sudan mostly Christians and animists. Among those who hold tenaciously to this position are scholars as Lincoln,<sup>19</sup> and Gill.<sup>20</sup> Several other scholars (Girard,<sup>21</sup> Rapoport,<sup>22</sup> Zitrin,<sup>23</sup>) believe violence is intricately linked with religion and this can be buttressed by the activities of religion in Ireland, Sri-Lanka, the Sudan, Iran, Lebanon and Nigeria. For the most part, violence as a result of religion has to do with faith and conviction, where people of a particular faith build walls around their faith to the exclusion of others. Faith, which needs to be protected at all cost, becomes the symbol of life here and here after. The belief by many that their faith is superior to the faith of others often leads to violence if those who acknowledge the superiority of their faith attempt to impose it on others.

The contention is that there is a strong religious ring associated with ethnicity and nationalism. People of a particular religion see themselves as "chosen" with a "providential" mission and a superiority of some cultural values that cannot be replaced. "Hebrew scripture, whether interpreted by Jews or Christians, the Qur'an, and some significant Buddhist doctrines and texts, for example, all provide the

<sup>19</sup> B. Lincoln, *Religion, Rebellion and Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> A. Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Translated by P. Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1977).

<sup>22</sup> D. C. Rapoport, "Some General Observation on Religion and Violence", *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> S. Zitrin, "Millenarianism and Violence", in *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 12, No.12, 1998.



foundation and the inspiration for enlisting political and military power in the cause of defending and advancing certain sacred values and ways of life."<sup>24</sup> This is what accounts for the numerous cases of religious nationalism and conflict, the world over. Typical examples are the Sudan, Somalia, China, Tibet, Iran, Ethiopia and Nigeria. The fact that religion is often used as a tool of discrimination and a cultural badge is enough to trigger violence in these countries. This is typically the case in northern Nigeria where the preponderance of Islam, which is used to discriminate and suppress the ethno-religious and cultural identities of groups other than the Hausa/Fulani Muslims spur violence intermittently.<sup>25</sup>

In Nigeria, religion is a potent catalysts of inter ethnic and group relation.<sup>26</sup> The Nigerian society is one of multi-ethnic and multi-religious complexities with two dominant religions Islam and Christianity expressing high level of competitiveness.<sup>27</sup> Unmindful of the fact that these two religions were actually alien to the Nigerian society, adherents of both religions express fundamentalism as if these religions originated from Nigeria. For example, religion has caused a divide between the north and the south that most scholars sectionalize

<sup>24</sup> David Little, "Belief, Ethnicity and Nationalism", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, March-April, 1995.

<sup>25</sup> Rotimi Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflict and Governance in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1996); Rotimi Suberu, "Religion and Politics: A View from the South", in Larry Diamond, A. Kirk-Greene and Oyeleye Oyediran, eds. *Transition Without End* (Ibadan: Vintage Publishers, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Ibrahim Mu'azzam, "Shari'a and the National Question: Managing the Politics of Difference", in Eghosa E. Osaghae and Ebere Onwudiwe, eds., *The Management of the National Question in Nigeria* (Ibadan: The Lord's Creation, 2001); Samuel Egwu, *Ethnic and Religious Violence in Nigeria* (Jos: St. Stephen Inc., Bookhouse, 2001); Simeon Ilesanmi, "Constitutional Treatment of Religion and the Politics of Human Rights in Nigeria", in *African Affairs*, 100, 2001; Frank Salamone, "Religion and Resistance in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Nigeria", in J. Olupona and T. Falola, eds., *Religion and society in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Sa'adu Ayinla Alanamu, ed., *Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria* (Ilorin: Hamson Printing Communications, 2005), Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Shaneson, C.I. Limited, 1990).

the country as 'Muslim north' and 'Christian south' as if Christians are not in the north and Muslims are not in the south. This fallacious divide has impacted negatively on inter-ethnic group relations to the extent that every person from the north of the country is often viewed as Muslim despite the fact that there are numerous ethnic group identities that are not Muslims. The Igbos, for example, are generally seen as non-Muslims and are treated so; likewise the Hausa-Fulani are generally seen as non-Christians and are treated so. Yet in the north, a majority of non-Hausa/Fulani are Christians while a great number of the Yoruba are Muslims.

This study is all about making an exposé about how religion, in the face of the adoption of Shari'a law by some states in northern Nigeria created a negative impact on group cohesion in northern Nigeria. More than ever before, people in northern Nigeria have come to be sharply divided based on religious attachment after Sharia's law was adopted in 1999/2000. Our case study will reflect cases in Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi and Niger States.

### Islam and the Shari'a Legal System in Nigeria

In Hausa language, the word *shari'a* means judgment, but in Islam, the word has a wider conceptual scope. In a wider context, *shari'a* connotes Islamic jurisprudence, which accepts the totality of the infusion of theology in politics. In Islam, religion "is inseparably interfused with most public, economic and cultural affairs."<sup>28</sup> Islamic theology upholds that life and society are indivisible. Life in the society must be guided by religious all-embracing law (*shari'a*), which is a matter of necessity and not interest.<sup>29</sup> As Kumo observed, "... the state is subordinate to Sharia and it is Sharia which lays down the general norms and functions of the state and all the public institutions of the state."<sup>30</sup> The emphasis of

<sup>28</sup> Victor Low, *Three Nigerian Emirates: A Study in Oral History* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Erwin Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1962) p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Suleiman Kumo, *The Organization and Procedure of Sharia Courts in Northern Nigeria*, Ph.D Thesis, SOAS, London, 1972.



Islamic religion as public policy gives rise to two related processes: (a) the supremacy of *shari'a* as Islamic jurisprudence and the sovereignty of Islamic community, hence the sovereignty of Islamic religion.<sup>31</sup> The supremacy of the *shari'a*, especially among Sunni Muslims can be manifested in two ways: the priority given to jurisprudence in religious training, and the dogmatic insistence on the comprehensiveness of religion. In this case, Islamic jurisprudence is derived from three sources—dogma, custom and history.

Every Islamic community is the community of the *al'umma* (Islamic brotherhood), which believes in the fusion of state and religion. The state is guided by Islamic injunction (*shari'a*), which recognizes Islam as the only religion. And since Islam is the only religion, only Muslims must continue to rule. Leadership must not be bequeathed to infidels (*kafir*). Thus, Islam must draw a border line between the servants of God and the prophet (*umma Muhammadiya*) and the infidels (*al'kafir*).<sup>32</sup> Islam holds that the task of the state must be backed by moral foundation, what Von Grunebaum (1961: 27) refers to as "foremost civic-religious duty."<sup>33</sup> The Islamic society must acknowledge and accept *shari'a* as the canon law as qualifying executive and judicial powers. The *shari'a* propagates that Muslims are equal before the law and Allah, and the significant correlate is that individuals who refuse to accept Islam as the only 'true' religion cannot be awarded full citizenship in the Islamic state. Therefore, in an Islamic society backed by *shari'a*, Christians and non Muslims are regarded and treated as second-class citizens.<sup>34</sup> According to Khuri (1990: 34), "Formal Islam does not conceive of Muslim occupying a minority status even if non-

<sup>31</sup> Fuad Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sect in Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Erwin Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1962) p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Gustave Von Grunebaum, *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961) p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> Simeon Ilesanmi, "Constitutional Treatment of Religion and the Politics of Human Rights in Nigeria", in *African Affairs*, 100, 2001, p. 547.

Muslims were to constitute the majority of the population."<sup>35</sup> This, perhaps, was the reason behind the declaration of *shari'a* by some northern states of Nigeria at the advent of civil rule headed by a Christian in 1999. The Islamic state must protect Muslim faithful against the infidels, and this obligation has been constructed in terms of holy war (*jihad*), which has two warrants:

- (a) the propagation of faith by force when every other means fails;
- (b) the assurance that only the servants of Allah (Muslims) are entitled to the highest political reward.<sup>36</sup>

By obliging Muslim rulers to defend the faith and the interest of the faithful against the infidels, *shari'a* has effectively segregated the society into two: *Dar-al-Islam* (the community of believers) and *Dar-al-harb* (the community of unbelievers, infidels). In a plural society, therefore, the main task of Islam is to transform the *dar al-harb* (unbelievers) into *dar al-Islam* (believers). With this injunction, Islam, backed by *shari'a*, has provided the opportunity to its adherents to take total control of politics and economy to the exclusion of other groups in the society.<sup>37</sup> This is what forms the basis of the discrimination of non-Muslim groups in the society or any Islamic state.

The contest between Islam and politics or the state revolves around understanding the concept of secularism. Section 10 of the Nigerian Constitution holds tenaciously to the fact that Nigeria is a secular state and that no sub-unit (states) of the federation has the right to declare state religion in the same vein that section 38 (1) of the same 1999 constitution gives right to the freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of thought. This is where the concept of secularization of the state is derived from based on multi-diversity of

<sup>35</sup> Fuad Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sect in Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Victor Low, *Three Nigerian Emirates: A Study in Oral History* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> D. N. Danjibo, "Minorities in the Throes of Domination Politics: A Case Study of the Zuru in Northwestern Nigeria. Ph.D Thesis, 2005, Chapter 5.



religions in Nigeria. This position runs contrary to Islamic theology and theocracy where God (Allah) is the sovereign king and the only religion before God is Islam. This translates to mean that shari'a is the only acknowledged divine law, which must guard the supremacy of the Islamic community (umma) and the sovereignty of Islamic religion.<sup>38</sup> Khuri explained thus: "If Islam – Sunni Islam – is a legalistically oriented religion, a formulation of public policy, sent by God to organize human society, it follows that religious specialization must concern itself with matters of marriage and divorce, inheritance and ownership, commercial transaction and contractual dealings, government, banking, investment, credit and debt. The proper execution of these contractual matters according to the dictate of the shari'a constitutes the way to salvation."<sup>39</sup>

Following from the pervasive role of theocracy and shari'a, Islam literally does not conceive of secularism other than atheism. Therefore, to declare a state a secular one is to isolate Allah from the affairs of the state, which is intolerable and unacceptable. This position was emphatically stated by Abdul Lateef Adegbite, the Secretary General of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs when he defended the declaration of shari'a by some northern states and in response to the view of the patriots on shari'a. According to him, "*We hereby re-assert our often-repeated position that Nigeria is not a secular state but a multi-religious country... To the Moslems, the notion of secularism is anti-God, and we reject it totally and irrevocably. We are wholly committed to the sovereignty of Allah to whom we submit without reservation. That is Islam.*"<sup>40</sup> The critical issue here is not to argue whether Nigeria is a secular state or not but to project the minds of many a Muslim on the concept of secularism, and for the Muslims, secularism is synonymous with atheism, which means anti-God.

<sup>38</sup> Fuad Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sect in Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 1990) pp.28-29; Koran 3: 19.

<sup>39</sup> Fuad Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sect in Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> Modupe Oduyoye, *The Shari'ah Debate in Nigeria: October 1999 – October 2000*. Ibadan: Sefer, 2000, p.61; *The Guardian*, July 12, 2000.

Some of the cardinal principles of democracy are the freedom of speech, freedom of association and the freedom to practice any belief system. Shari'a is not new to the Nigerian state. As a matter of fact, the pre-colonial legal system among the Hausa/Fulani of northern Nigeria thrived on Shari'a. For example, J. N. Anderson, a British expert on Islamic law remarked that "nowhere else outside of the Arabian Peninsula was Islamic law more widespread"<sup>41</sup> than in Nigeria. Even during colonialism, the only book of (customary) laws in the Alkali courts was the Koran. To this present time, magistrate courts in the north are actually alkali courts that use the Islamic penal code as the book of law to attend to legal matters.

However, shari'a became controversially pronounced at the threshold of civilian governments of 1979 and 1999. During the Constitutional Drafting Committee debates of 1977/1978, the debate on shari'a took a very controversial dimension to the extent that the House was divided into two- those in favour of shari'a and those who opposed it. In defense of shari'a, Abdul Mashi representing Kaduna argued that: "To deny shari'a which governs the life of millions of its adherents is like passing a bill in parliament or enacting a law in the constitution suspending all Christians in the country from attending Sunday worship" (see, Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly 1977/78, Official Report, Volume 1. Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, Column No. 666). The good side of the debate was that while some of the Christians saw everything wrong with the shari'a for the fear that it was like Islamizing the Nigerian state, others (Christians) saw nothing wrong in it and establishing the Shari'a Court of Appeal and even gave a compromise for shari'a cases to be attended to in the Federal Court of Appeal.<sup>42</sup>

The most important aspect of the whole debate was not the compromise reached at but the democratic manner in which solutions were suggested, the fact that even Christian representative were willing

<sup>41</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Power and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1994) p. 116.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Power and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1994) pp. 121-132.



to concede and accommodate the position of their Muslim counterparts who were advocating the establishment of Shari's Court of Appeal. For example, Rotimi Williams, though a Christian, recounted thus: "...the suggestion which I have to propose is that the section under consideration be deleted and that we should substitute a provision which will enable the Federal Court of Appeal, when sitting on appeal from the State Shari'a Court of Appeal, to sit with a panel of three assessors... I believe that this ought to meet the need to ensure that whatever is declared to be Muslim personal law would be the decision of people versed in that law in view of the peculiar interconnection between the law and the religion of Islam."<sup>43</sup> The most important aspect is the recognition by some Christians of the inseparability of shari'a and Islam. Islam is shari'a and shari'a is Islam. Therefore, to deny Muslims the practice of *shari'a* or to let their lives not to be guided by *shari'a* is actually to deny them their democratic right of the freedom to practice their religious belief.

The bone of contention is not whether or not in a democracy Muslims have the right to practice shari'a; it is rather where would their freedom begin and end especially the fact that every part of Nigeria reflects the identities of the three religions. In other words, is it democratically permissible to adopt a state religion by a majority and impose same on several other minority identities? If democracy permits such, then it would reflect the tyranny of the majority against the interest of the minorities. This is actually where the problem lies; thus the critical problem bothering inter-group relations in a multi-religious society as Nigeria. Another crucial observation derives from the fact that, as Khuri has observed, in Islam, the state is hierarchically understood to mean Muslims occupying the first position, and that Islam does not permit Muslims occupying a minority status even if they are numerically less.<sup>44</sup> This is the political dimension that is dangerous to inter-group relations, and it is from this complexity that we shall

<sup>43</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Power and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1994) p. 124.

<sup>44</sup> Fuad Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sect in Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), p. 34.

discuss the impact of shari'a on inter-group relations in northern Nigeria.

### Shari'a Crises and their Impact on Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria

No one can deny the fact that the introduction of shari'a law in northern Nigeria has resulted into massive loss for the Nigerian state, considering the number of lives lost and properties of inestimable value damaged, which has not only retarded but has halted the prospects of development in the affected places.

Nigeria has a chain history of inter-religious conflicts, but the magnitude of these conflicts especially in northern Nigeria heightened in the 1980s and the cruel expression of these conflicts manifested with the adoption of shari'a by some northern states. For example, it is opined that the February 2000 shari'a violence that engulfed Kaduna city was described as the "worst since the riots that set off the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970."<sup>45</sup>

On Thursday, October 28 1999, the Zamfara state Governor, Sani Ahmed Yerima declared the Islamic legal system (shari'a) as operational in the state. Speaking to a large crowd that converged for the inauguration, Yerima stated thus: "It has become pertinent that we wake up from this sorry state of slumber and live up to our responsibility to the Almighty in order to avoid his curse... Let me make it unequivocally clear that we are not unaware of the multifarious nature of our society as a multi-religious and multi-ethnic one and we do not intend to impose the shari'a law on the non-Moslems in the state as is being deliberately and mischievously falsified by agents of blackmail."<sup>46</sup> In the same vein, the Governor of Niger State, Abdullahi Kure reiterated the neutrality of shari'a towards other religions thus: "Certainly, it (shari'a) will not pitch one religion against another."<sup>47</sup> By the mid of the year

<sup>45</sup> Modupe Oduyoye, *The Shariy'ah Debate in Nigeria: October 1999 - October 2000*. Ibadan: Sefer, 2000, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Sani Ahmed Yerima cited in Modupe Oduyoye, *The Shariy'ah Debate in Nigeria: October 1999 - October 2000*. Ibadan: Sefer, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *The Guardian*, December 22, 1999.



2000, many other northern states of Nigeria with Islamic strength had declared the shari'a legal system operational in their respective states promising the neutrality of the law towards other religions by promising to protect and guarantee the rights of the adherents of other religions. The Zuru branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), given the proximity with Zamfara state, was the first to react to the inauguration of shari'a law in Zamfara by allaying the fears of the Christian minorities in Zamfara, especially the Maguzawa. The Zuru branch of CAN contended that it was impossible not to infringe on the rights of Christians in Zamfara if shari'a was to be implemented, it rather saw the adoption of shari'a as a ploy to impose Islam and Islamic culture on non-Muslims.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the critical issues surrounding shari'a in relation to public life are the forbid of:

- the selling and drinking of liquor
- prostitution
- gambling
- educating boys and girls in the same environment
- dressing other than in the Islamic code
- men and women sharing same transport facility
- picking women on motorbikes.

These offences have their attendant punishments ranging from caning, amputation, execution by stoning and beheading, depending on the gravity of the offence committed.

Under the Islamic legal system and theology, the strict observance of sharia law cannot guarantee the protection of the rights of non-Muslims. As a matter of fact, one of the cardinal principles of shari'a, the jihad, obliges the Muslims to convert, if need be, by war, the non-Muslims into accepting Islam. In this respect, the practice of shari'a inevitably engenders conflict. In Zamfara, for example, as soon as shari'a was inaugurated and the shari'a courts established, local law

<sup>48</sup> D. N. Danjibo, "Minorities in the Throes of Domination Politics: A Case Study of the Zuru in Northwestern Nigeria. Ph.D Thesis, 2005.

enforcement agents were recruited to impose strict compliance of the Islamic legal system without respect for fundamental human rights or respect the right of people to adhere to other faiths than Islam. These agents combed nooks and crannies and tried to make sure the shari'a tenets were strictly adhered to, even by people of other creeds. The shari'a law enforcers, for example, embarked on the destruction of beer parlors, mostly controlled by Christian Igbos. Apprehended "offenders" were taken to shari'a courts and the judgment meted was based on shari'a law in defiance of protecting fundamental human rights or the right to civil liberty. For example, the goods of a certain Tobenna were seized on the pretext that they were stolen and after receiving serious beating from the hands of the shari'a law enforcers, Chinedu was forcefully taken to a shari'a court. And although the court declared him not guilty, he was unable to recover his merchandise.<sup>49</sup> The Chairman and Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Gusau branch had also reported cases of kidnaps and attempted kidnappings of mostly females with the intent to force them to embrace Islam. Such serious arson cases were reported to the police who had helped secure the release of the victims. One of the victims was in fact, the daughter of a police chief who was stationed in Anka Local Government Area of Zamfara state. Again, many tenants of Christian extraction were forcefully ejected out of their rented houses, which were mostly left vacant or turned into Koranic schools. Christian women were not allowed to ride on motorbikes and were also prevented from joining taxis and buses meant for secluded Muslim women.<sup>50</sup>

Shortly after the Niger State Government declared shari'a in early 2000, the over-zealous Muslim fundamentalists swung into action to force its compliance not minding the multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diversity and complexity of the state. For example, in August 2000, Muslim fundamentalists and shari'a law enforcers loaded themselves in trucks from Minna, the capital city to Salka, a town about

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Chinedu in Gusau, August 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Interviews with Rev. Fr. Linus Awuhe, the Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Evangelist David Ishaya, the Chairman of Public Complaint Commission of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Gusau branch on 11 August 2000



3 hours' drive in the northwest of Niger State to go and force the Kamberi people who are mostly traditionalists to comply with the *shari'a* law. The main economy of the Kamberi people is farming and the brewing of local beer,<sup>51</sup> which is used for recreation on market days. The Muslim fundamentalists and *shari'a* law enforcers first came on a market day in August 2001 and destroyed the big clay jars containing the local beer and burnt market huts in which the beer was sold. Words went round the Kamberi communities and the Kamberi people besieged the Muslims and massacred a large number of the 'intruders', and for a long time no Muslim was allowed to do any commercial activities in the market.<sup>52</sup> Although normalcy has since returned to the market, it was not until the Niger State Government guaranteed non interference in the life and culture of the Kamberi people.

There is no recorded inter-group conflict in relation to *shari'a* than the one experienced in Kaduna city in February 2000. The number of both Muslims and Christians in the state is more or less equal. While the Muslims inhabit the northern part of the state, the Christians inhabit the southern part formally known as southern Zaria (then under the ruling Zaria Emirate), but now with the transmutation of identity, the region is referred to as southern Kaduna connoting the rejection of the people's identification with Zaria emirate. With the adoption and introduction of the Islamic legal system by the State Government in early 2000, groups of Muslims went about the streets of Kaduna city celebrating. Few days later, the Christians embarked on a peaceful demonstration to reject the adoption of sharia's in the state. Some Muslim groups barricaded some streets refusing to allow the Christian easy passage while some among the Muslims started to stone the Christians. Conflict broke out when the Christians tried to enforce their way through leading to massive loss of lives and properties.

During the conflict that lasted for about 2 weeks, many churches and mosques were razed down, while several inestimable lives and

<sup>51</sup> Frank Salamone, *Gods and Goods in Africa*. (Salem, Wisconsin: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1985); Ceslaus Prazan, *The Dukkawa of Northwest Nigeria* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1977).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Rev. Fr. Bulus, a Kamberi Catholic Priest, August 2001.

properties were destroyed. On 26 February 2000, the Zenith News Service reported that the death toll in Kaduna had reached 400. By 1 March 2000, the Ecumenical News International (ENI) in Geneva had reported that "many mosques and at least 36 churches were destroyed, and more than 200,000 people were forced to flee". To show the magnitude of the crisis, the police was unable to restore law and order until the army was drafted. By 19 March 2000, the Anglican Communion News Service (ACNS) based in London reported that "Much of the infrastructure of the city of Kaduna has been destroyed; churches, mosques, homes and businesses have been burnt. 800,000 people have been made homeless, and hundreds have been killed". Maison and Talbot (2000: 9) stated thus; "Reports speak of rival armed gangs of Christian and Muslims roving the streets. Churches and mosques have been put to torch. Corpses were seen lying in the streets and people's bodies hanging out of cars and buses, apparently killed while attempting to flee the violence". Reported figures of the damages to human lives and properties are underestimations. In fact, the radical Abubakar Umar accused Governor Sani Yerima of Zamfara state of being the cause of the death of over 10,000 people. According to Umar, "I need to mention that his (Yerima's) decision to launch his version of *shari'a* had resulted in the violent *shari'a* riots which claimed the lives of 10,000 people."<sup>53</sup>

The impact of *shari'a* crisis on group relations can be viewed from two basic perspectives – on the economy and development, and on social cohesion.

- On Economy and Development: The destruction of lives and properties resulting from the *shari'a* crisis was on a very large scale. Going by Abubakar Umar's claim, for instance, losing over 10,000 lives to a religious ideology is a generational loss by a nation. Among such victims were teachers, clergy men and women, business people, professionals, children and women. This is a hard blow on human resource development

<sup>53</sup> Abubakar Umar, "Yerima's Shari'a claimed over 10,000 Lives", in *ThisDay*, April 2, 2005, p. 2.



in Nigeria. It would take years to bridge the gap left by the people killed. Secondly, the destruction of properties, especially businesses was not only a minus to the economic prospects of Kaduna city, but also to economic development of the entire country.

- Gambari<sup>54</sup> and Ohadike<sup>55</sup> have both x-rayed the role of religion in Nigeria as an instrument of instability and social disintegration. For a long time in the history of Nigeria's political development, religion and its sister identity, ethnicity, have been cataclysmic as potent factors of instability and social disorder. In this respect, *shari'a* as a religious ideology has brought about group displacement and social disintegration in northern Nigeria since 1999 in two dimensions. First, as a result of the adoption of *shari'a*, most business people who ran liquor business have either relocated to non-affected areas such as the Army barracks, where they could not be harassed and molested. Secondly, the violence in Kaduna, for instance, has caused internal migration within the city to the extent that Christian and non Hausa no longer felt safe living in the northern parts of the city such as Kawo, Tudun Wada, and Unguwan Rimi and began to move southwards to such places as Kakuri, Television-Garriage and Gwanin Gora; while the Muslims, mostly the Hausa/Fulani began to move out of the southern parts of the city to the northern parts for safety and security. This has created tension and mutual distrust amongst the people. Moreover, as a result of insecurity borne out of religious violence, most of the displaced affected victims who were from the south-eastern part of Nigeria, mostly the Igbos, have refused to return to Kaduna city after the February 2000

<sup>54</sup> Ibrahim Gambari, "The Role of Religion in National Life", in John O. Hunwick, ed., *Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Don Ohadike, "Muslim-Christian Conflict and Political Instability in Nigeria", in John O. Hunwick, ed. *Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992).

crisis. The same for most Christian non natives who have fled the northern states for the south for refuge. In this case, one is right to observe that religion, instead of fostering national unity, rather helps to polarize Nigerians.

### Conclusion

What we have tried to do thus far is to show the character of religion on national stability and social cohesion. We have seen that, contrary to popular belief, religion, instead of dying away, has re-emerged as a potent force of nationalism accounting for most of the conflicts experienced in the world today. One of the reasons that can be attributed to religious conflict is the clash of cultures and civilization. Islam, for example, does not believe in the secularization of the state but theocracy. Again, in Islam, the state or public affairs must be guided by the Islamic legal system, the *Shari'a*, and this is because both religion and politics are fused together. We have analyzed the concept of *shari'a* and its implication for a democratic society. The argument is that in a democracy, the practice of *shari'a* by Muslims cannot guarantee human rights and the right to religious liberty. We also analyzed *shari'a* and inter-group relations especially in some of the affected states and how that led to conflict. Be that as it may, *shari'a* has impacted negatively on human and economic development, but also worked against national cohesion in general. Finally, we discussed the impact of *shari'a* and the attendant conflict resulting from its adoption on economic and human development and social cohesion at large. In this wise, we can conclude that religion, instead of bringing about peace, harmony, development and national unity, has in fact, become a catalyst for conflict, underdevelopment, and disintegration in Nigeria.



## Intergroup Influence and Conflicts in Yoruba Muslim Family

Abdulwahab Tijani

### Introduction

Nigeria, and indeed the entire human race is faced today with fierce and complicated problems of finding peace for individuals, families, group and nations. The problems are indeed genuine human problems, such as corruption, embezzlement of public fund, and its attendant social crises, widespread drunkenness, drug addiction, armed robbery, murder, prostitution, swindling, hooliganism and ethnic conflicts. A number of scholars have sought to understand the root causes of these problems in Nigeria. Some have attributed the problems to the economic crisis, while some others have put the blame on the political system. For instance some have the opinion that the crisis in Nigeria and indeed in Africa is a product of the uncritical acceptance of western political structures, institutions and values.<sup>1</sup> This is because these systems, institutions as well as values "are inadequate for the needs of the artificial constructs of African nations and their multiethnic structures, as the abuse of the multiparty system or the prospering corruption in most African nations show."<sup>2</sup> Others view these crises as emanating

<sup>1</sup> T. Ebijuwá, 'Towards Universal Values' in *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* Vol. XXI No. 1, January - March, 2004, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> A. Graness, 'Wiredu's Ethics of Consensus: Model for a global ethics' in O. Oladipo, ed., *The Third Way in African Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Kwasi Wiredu* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2002).

from the consequences of the capitalist economic system in Nigeria and in many other countries. Fayadh observes that the consequences of capitalist economic system in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe was the:

wretchedness and degradation of individuals and families after the emigration of the poor working class and their subsequent settlement around industrial cities in terribly cruel conditions.<sup>3</sup>

As I have discussed elsewhere, there is excessive glorification of reckless acquisition of properties in Nigeria which is a part of the effects of the capitalist economic doctrines and values inherited through the colonial and neo-colonial structures. The fierce competition for wealth and position have hardened the hearts of administrators as well as those of the citizens towards fellow human beings. This has led to an increase in cases of assassination, murder, drug trafficking, corruption armed robbery, etc.<sup>4</sup> While all these are undeniable facts, however, these economic and political explanations do not serve as antidotes to these social problems. It is a fact that these problems do not exist in a vacuum, they have their moral bases. This essay, therefore, explores these social ills beyond the economic and political explanations.

There are worse crises in Nigerian society than the economic and political crises. These are the spiritual and moral crises. Ibrahim Sulaiman, quoting Tahir, rightly suggests that the root of these social ills in Nigeria is in the moral crisis. He argues that although the widespread corruption in the society has connection with the problem of scarcity, its real cause can be found in its moral origin. Tahir further argues that:

Corruption as such is really a function of not merely a scarcity and the individual nature of man, but essentially of the moral state of the person. (Ibrahim S. N.D.)

<sup>3</sup> M. Fayadh, 'Religion and Science in Western Civilization' in Muktar Aziz (ed) *Risalat-Al-Jahd* Feb, 1989, 9.

<sup>4</sup> A. Tijani, 'Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions - Perspectives from Islam and Social History', in *Islam and the Modern Age* (New Delhi, 1997)



Similarly, social ills in Nigeria are consequences of irrational excessive materialism and neglect of spiritual and moral developments of Nigerians.

And most regrettably there is lack of adequate parental care for the Nigerian Youth.<sup>5</sup> Based on this moral threshold, there is the need to identify the locus of moral development in the society. Invariably the family institution is identified as the primary locus and custodian of moral development. Social ills therefore could be traced to the demise of moral values and disregard for the socializing and protective values of the family system.<sup>6</sup>

This paper traces the causes of societal corruption in Nigeria to the family institution as the custodian of moral development. This is because the marriage and family institution is the fibre that binds the human society together. Consequently, conflicts within the marriage and family institution are fundamental in the society. Because the Yoruba Muslim family is the focus of this study, the conflicts within it will be appraised in the light of its Islamic role as custodian of moral development vis-à-vis the influence of other groups on the Yoruba Muslim family.

### The Yoruba Muslim Family

The structure of the Yoruba Muslim family is not static, i.e. it has changed from one generation to another. This is due to various factors that have influenced the family. These influences may be traced from the pre-colonial period, to the colonial days. Generally, in West Africa, in the pre-colonial days "the status of women was defined as secondary to that of men. Colonial influences exacerbated the problem by undermining whatever status women held in pre-colonial societies as important agricultural producers and relegated them to a dependent

<sup>5</sup> A. Tijani, "Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions – Perspectives from Islam and Social History".

<sup>6</sup> A. Tijani, "Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions – Perspectives from Islam and Social History", in *Islam and the Modern Age* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 247.

position they had not occupied formerly."<sup>7</sup> The Yoruba Muslim families were not left out of this colonial influence. However, Islam did provide certain individual rights to women that they had generally not enjoyed under the traditional societal norms, including respect for specific inheritance privileges, and the right to whatever income they earned. It required their husbands to support them and set up certain rules for divorce."<sup>8</sup>

Islam appeared in Yorubaland as an important consequence of the commercial contact and relationship between the Yoruba people and her northern neighbours, primarily the Hausa traders. The exact date of the entry of Islam into Yorubaland cannot be fixed, but by the seventeenth century mention was made of Islam in Yorubaland. Many of the Hausa traders in Yorubaland doubled as traders and Islamic preachers, and many others traversed Yorubaland as preachers.<sup>9</sup> Before the nineteenth century, Islam had faced hostilities from the Yoruba traditional religions priests. There were Yoruba poems which showed the conflict between Islam and Yoruba traditional religion and "depict Islam as a faith embraced by former slaves of Ifa (a Yoruba traditional god) who were bought up by Ifa but who later deserted him". There were many such poems that show the initial hostilities faced by Islam in Yorubaland, but by the 1840s when Christian priests appeared in Yorubaland, strongly condemning 'pagan' practices, the Babalawo (Ifa priests) and Muslim clerics tolerated the presence of one another and directed most of their preachings against the Christian. For example, a Yoruba poem goes thus:

Aye labafa; Aye labamale, Osan gangan ni gbagbo de  
i.e.

<sup>7</sup> C. Barbara and C. Lucy, *The Heritage of Islam Women, Religion, and Politics in West Africa* (USA Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994) p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> C. Barbara and C. Lucy, *The Heritage of Islam Women*, p. 188.

<sup>9</sup> A. Tijani, "Sabo Communities in Yorubaland, Nigeria" (1916-1967). Unpublished Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2003. .



we met Ifa religion in the world, we met Islam in the world, Christianity came in broad day light.<sup>10</sup>

This poem shows the disaffection which the Ifa priests had for Christianity. The Muslims were gradually tolerated mainly due to the dependence of many Yoruba rulers on Muslims for charms and divination. Even at the time when the Yoruba were fighting with the Muslim Jihadists at Ilorin, many rulers such as the Oluyole of Ibadan, and Ogbunna of Abeokuta, neither of whom was a Muslim, gave the Muslims protection and freedom of worship in their domain. This sale of charms was not limited to the courtyard, they penetrated even the general public. The Muslim priests also engaged in public preachings. Therefore, before the nineteenth century, there had been considerable presence of Islam in Yorubaland<sup>11</sup>, such that by the 1780s, when al-Salim (Alimi) traversed the northern Yorubaland, preaching and spreading Islam, he met thriving Muslim communities.<sup>12</sup>

Generally, most of these early Muslims came from Mali or Songhai, they were regarded as having introduced Islam into Yorubaland. Their generation was succeeded mainly by Kanuri, Dendi, Hausa and Nupe Muslims. It was from some of these families that the first few Imams were selected. Some of these families remain one of the families where the chief Imam of the Yoruba towns was selected. For example the Muse Family at Oke Masifa, Ogbomoso and the 'Imole Compound at Ede.<sup>13</sup>

Yoruba Muslim families actively played hosts to Hausa and Nupe learned Muslims as well as Islamic teachers and preachers, from Ilorin. For example, the Oyo speaking refugees in Ife later known as Modakeke hosted Muslims from Ilorin and Modakeke. This was a general practice

<sup>10</sup> A. Mahdi, *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria: ABU/Oxford Press, 1978) p.130.

<sup>11</sup> A. Mahdi, *The Hausa Factor in West African History*, p.130.

<sup>12</sup> T. G. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among Yoruba 1841-1908* (London: Longman, 1978) p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> T. G. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among Yoruba 1841-1908*, p. 24.

among Muslims, as Islam attaches divine blessings to playing hosts to people and especially 'men of God.'<sup>14</sup>

By 1830s, the Fulani Jihad had spread to Yorubaland. It had significant impacts on the spread of Islam in Yorubaland. Although up till 1840 when the Jihad forces were halted by Ibadan forces at Oshogbo, the Muslims in Yorubaland were in disarray and they could not find any place to organize the community, but between 1840 and 1860 the refugees from northern part of Oyo empire (Yoruba empire) contained large number of Muslim clerics who assisted in the spread and re-organization of Muslim communities in Yorubaland. The second group of migrants was Muslims from overseas, such as Brazil and Sierra-Leone who spoke more of English and Portuguese than Arabic. They also assisted in the re-organization of Muslim communities especially in the local region of Yorubaland.

In the pre-colonial period, the Muslims in Yoruba co-existed and faced the challenges of multi-cultural interaction by organizing various Muslim societies and organizations. This included the *Alasalatu* Muslim women association which was organized throughout Yorubaland. It concerned itself with the religious activities and education of Muslim women. These associations were generally concerned with the improvement of level of Islamic awareness and education among members, and they were also involved in ceremonies and festivals. They had different nomenclatures at the Yoruba towns. In Ogbomoso they were generally named after the Giwa (Its Chief Officer). In Oyo and Osogbo, there was the 'Egbe Ilupeju' etc.<sup>15</sup>

These Islamic associations and activities complemented the functions of the Muslim families in upholding morals in the societies especially among the youth. "Islam encourages the education of women, especially those of more elite families, often receive elaborate training in the rituals and philosophy of their religion. In turn, these women can and do teach others (and their children), primarily women. Further-

<sup>14</sup> A. Tijani, *Sabo Communities in Yorubaland, Nigeria (1916 - 1967)*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2003

<sup>15</sup> T. G. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among Yoruba 1841 - 1908*, p.32



more, in their roles as wives, daughters, mothers and sisters of powerful Islamic leaders, women have considerable influence in their societies."<sup>16</sup>

### Colonial Period

During the colonial period one of the most significant factors that challenged the impact of Islam on the West African society is the spread of Western Education. With the aid of Western Education, Christianity and Euro-Christian values and ideas spread. Muslims in Yorubaland were averse to the acquisition of Western education in reaction to the evangelizing role of the system of acquiring western education. The advent of the Christian missionary activities in southern Nigeria in 1842 heralded the establishment of the mission schools. These schools doubled as education centers as well as centres for the propagation of Christianity. Consequently, less Muslim children enrolled in schools.

During this period, the Muslim families faced these problems of multicultural co-existence with the Christians initially by preventing their children from attending schools, later by the proliferation of Muslim organizations which provided both Western and Islamic education for Muslim children. The Ahmadiyya Movement was established in Lagos in 1916, the Ansarudeen Society was also established in Lagos in 1923, the Nawarudeen society in Abeokuta in 1939, the Ansarul-islam in Ilorin in 1943 etc. Invariably many Muslim children acquired western education either in the Muslim schools, Christian schools or even later in government schools. The significance of this was that Muslim children were now exposed to new value systems, i.e. the Euro-Christian values.

Colonialism and neo-colonialism also brought new economic relations and new political system, the party politics and its vagaries, utilitarianism, individualism and quest for material progress, to the detriment of moral values. Utility as one of the dominant 'moral' principles of materialistic civilization conveys the idea that man needs to

<sup>16</sup> C. Barbara and C. Lucy, *The Heritage of Islam Women, Religion, and Politics in West Africa* (USA Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994) p. 189.

pursue activities that would enhance his material profits as an individual or as a member of a group.

"The crisis of Africa emanates from the long years of colonial rule and domination - a process which led to the dislocation of the socio-political and moral values which hitherto served as a vehicle for social cooperation in many African societies."<sup>17</sup>

### Post-Colonial Period

Colonialism and neo-colonialism brought certain social structures that affected the level of morality in African society. These are race for material acquisition and rapid urbanization, both of which are manifestations of the capitalist doctrinal values and economy. These weakened the ability of the family in strengthening the moral values of their ward and that of the youth and the society.

African residents of large cities no longer have the benefits of either the support or the sanctions of the system of caring that was the mainstay of traditional community life. The circles of obligations, rights, and privileges which radiated from the center of household relations of kinship to the larger circumferences of lineages and clan affinities provided a natural school for training in the practice of sympathetic impartiality which, in its most generalized form, is the root of all moral virtue.<sup>18</sup>

In Islam, the family is the ordained first training institution for human beings. The prophet says:

The mother is the first school of the child (Hadith).

The family is the starting point of the Islamic social security system. The care, love and affection provided by the family has no substitute. Day care centres, dormitories, hostels etc. could provide material comfort but the subtle human emotional requirements that assists in

<sup>17</sup> T. Ebijuwu, 'Towards Universal Values' in *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* Vol. XXI No. 1, January - March, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> T. Ebijuwu, 'Towards Universal Values' in *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* Vol. XXI No. 1, January - March, 2004.



nurturing and developing the human being into a socially responsive, responsible and humane individual is absent in the dormitories. The Islamic culture and values are mostly absent in the westernized schools. Therefore, the role of the Muslim family in moral development has been hampered by the school where various socializing agents such as novels, video clips, age-group that teaches western values confront the children. The well known existence of cultist groups, indecent dressing, drunkenness, abortion etc. in public schools is proof of the limited capabilities of the moral equipment of westernized schools in Nigeria. As I have observed elsewhere:

The family institution should provide the environment to train morally sound and good matured human beings, but the disintegration of the family institution which is due to the rat race to acquire wealth has seriously affected the extent to which the home could bring up disciplined youth. The brutal impersonal nature of the modern society has a lot to do with it.<sup>19</sup>

The greatest challenge before Muslim families, scholars, and organization is how to cope with the benefits of Westernized schools, and the 'modern' society without incurring its distasteful fall outs such as the ethic of austere individualism, criminality and immoralities. The moral and spiritual conflict in the Yoruba Muslim family and indeed all Muslim families that acquire western or modern education is succinctly put by Hussein and Ashraf thus:

Modern western education places an exaggerated emphasis upon reason and rationality and under-estimates the value of the spirit. It encourages scientific inquiry at the expense of faith, it promotes individualism, it breeds skepticism, it refuses to accept that which is not demonstrable; it is anthropocentric rather than theocentric. Even where it does not directly challenge faith, it relegates it to the background as something much less important than reason.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Tijani, "Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions - Perspectives from Islam and Social History", in *Islam and the Modern Age* (New Delhi, 1997) p. 255.

<sup>20</sup> S. Sajjad Hussein & S. Ashraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton & King AbdulAziz University, 1979, p. 2.

Consequently, the education received by the Muslim children is in conflict with the Islamic value system, and ideology. The Western schools have been "the laboratory where the consciousness of Muslim youths is moulded into a caricature of the west."<sup>21</sup>

In the same vein, Ebijuwá rightly observes "boundaries which otherwise served as the locus of values. Priorities in different societies are beginning to collapse, giving credence to the fact that what happens in one place cannot be isolated from global, socio-economic and political concerns" (Ebijuwá, T. 1995). The developments in the information technology have made it possible for western cultures to transcend borders and penetrate homes. The Television, video, radio, magazine etc. have been major ways through which Muslims have imbibed non-Islamic values. The watching of American films that teaches violence, amorous life etc have invaded the Muslim homes.

Even, Bob Dole cautions against the negative influence of the Television films, when he observes that:

The present popular American culture ridicules family values and that music, movies, and advertisement continually surpass the boundaries of morality and promote irresponsibility, profanity and aggression in the young generation, adding that Hollywood should be reprehended for setting financial gain above that of moral values.<sup>22</sup>

The Yoruba Muslim parents and preachers have to contend with the 'de-Islamizing' influences of the western culture. This has increased the focus of the 'tarbiya' training of the youth. Similarly, the capitalist culture of *laissez-faire* or individualism and the economic structure based on wages have limited the size of the family with nuclear monogamy formerly popular among the wage earners.

Also, there developed among the Yoruba people various new Islamic groups and movements that sought primarily to protect the

<sup>21</sup> Al-Faruqi, R. Ismail, "Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Perspectives", in *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (IIIT Virginia, 1988) p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Echo of Islam*, 1995.



muslim youths not only from the challenge of being christianized but also from the various corrupting influences of western civilization. In the early nineteen eighties, there developed youth organization such as the Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters (YOUNBAS), A Group of Muslim Brothers and Sisters (AGOMBAS), Young Muslim Society (YOUMSON), etc. All these organizations formed the Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (COMYO). Later, when it became a national organization, it transformed to National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO). Public lectures, especially on comparative religion were given by these organizations. Others formed musical groups that preached against the youth converting to Christianity or against the youth involving in indecencies. By and large, the challenge before Yoruba Muslim families is how to maintain morality and spirituality in the face of strong cultural influence from the western culture and excessive materialism.

15

## Market Women and Inter Group Relations in Ibadan Since 1960

Mutiati Oladejo

### Introduction

Until recently, there seems to be dearth of literature analysing women's changing roles and influence in the society, most especially in the African context. The use of the phrase "she is always a tool, never a person" was a summation on the study of "Roots of Oppression of Women of Africa" as regards socio-political inequalities and hindrance.<sup>1</sup> Some studies on African women the status of women in contemporary times as a result of traditional beliefs and cultural practices, while colonialism is adduced as a causal factor. A proper comprehension of the lives of women extends beyond examining women's worth or contribution to male dominated organization, rather the focus should be on what is central to women and its relevance in the society. There is no doubt about the fact that the family is the basic unit of relationship, hence the bid to strengthen and promote the well being of the family exposes women to dynamics associated with inter-group relations. Thus, it is the focus of this chapter to examine the features of inter-group relations among women in Ibadan. Although there are various mediums of inter-group relations, intermarriage, etc, market centre will be the focus of this study, with a particular reference to Bodija market in Ibadan.

<sup>1</sup> M. R. Cutrufelli, *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression*, (London: Zed Press, 1983) p. 2.



Market centres in Ibadan could then be described as a meeting point for women from various indigenous and migrant communities to inter-relate and interact. This was the case in the 1930s when there were conflicts on the settlement of migrants in Ibadan, but recent developments as a result of the expansion of trade and market centres have led to the establishment of migrants (Hausa) in rural communities. The search for convenience and better life makes women (migrants and indigenes) come in contact with a new set of people different from their former society which results in adaptation and integration.

The nature of the changes could be described as a re-assessment of the influence of urban development on the activities of women in a post-colonial and multi-ethnic society when compared to the pre-colonial times. Trading still remains the major occupation of women, but there seems to be new gender-trade relations. As it were, Yoruba women in the pre-colonial era are enterprising. The popularity and prestige from the commercial activities enhanced their political positions in their respective communities. Some of the women among whom were Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan, Madam Efunroye Tinubu of Abeokuta.<sup>2</sup>

The colonial phase in Nigerian History provided an interregnum to the peculiar nature of trade relations. Akinwumi's "Notes on the Yoruba *Alajapa* and *Alarobo*" contends that women's commercial activities were affected during colonialism as they continued to dominate small-scale petty business. Yoruba women migrants in town, in spite of colonial developments chose to trade rather than work as labourers and their relative success is attached to long experience in trade. However Afonja described the long experience in trade as a nineteenth century development because the traditional mode of economic co-operation in subsistence production was altered and it affected the nature of gender division of work. Women were actively involved in farming, but the civil wars discouraged women's participation as a result of insecurity. Hence, the clear cut division of work-men as farmers, women as traders was an immediate pre-colonial

<sup>2</sup> O. Akinwumi, "Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria" *Nigerian Culture and Society*, Vol. VII, no 3, 2000, p. 3.

development. Then, it could be upheld that the interregnum in the colonial phase as analysed by Akinwumi was just a change in the nature of enterprise as foreign or modernized products became objects of trade. Though colonialism which ushered in the Lebanese and European trade stations swept off some group of women and their exit on the other hand welcomed another group of women in Ibadan with new dynamics to inter-group relations. This shall be subsequently analysed in this discourse. Thus, new markets were formed based on commodity specialization.

### Market Women and Inter-group Relations in Ibadan

Women form large chunk of the informal sector and emerge as micro entrepreneurs. They have succeeded in creating urban markets in the cities. Initially, women in the rural areas had been used to migrating on irregular basis to areas where there were promising sales. Then, adapting to such in the urban areas appeared less difficult. Furthermore, studies on African women observed that by the 1960s and 1970s, women trooped into the cities to form urban markets because the sole operation of the farm was difficult. Bodija market in the works of Olaoba is an operative model showing the nexus of rural-urban markets across ethnic groups, because the pre-colonial society (traditional) is a precursory to contemporary urban market. The market emerged in 1987 from the relocation of markets in Oje, Oja'ba and Orita-merin with specialization in foodstuffs.<sup>3</sup> Since then, it has been the combination of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria with the sections harboring the Ibo and Hausa.

The nature of the market is such that it was created to foster inter-group relations among various communities with small markets. Government's decision to design and plan the market was meant to ensure proper urban planning. It also symbolizes a rural market scene in an urban setting. As Hodder described the phases of movement for supply of goods, the supply of fruits to Bodija market showed that

<sup>3</sup> O. B. Olaoba, *Bodija Market in Ibadan, 1987-1995* (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers, 2000) p. 17.



women travel to sub-urban towns such as Ajia, Badeku, Ipetumodu and so on. The emergence of Bodija market has precedence from the existence of markets in migrant communities.

Sango market was originally a cattle market, because *Zango* the real word is a Hausa word for cattle market.<sup>4</sup> The market has existed long before 1960; the cattle were brought from Northern states. It is not apt to describe the dealers and retailers as Yoruba, because the Hausa established their residential quarters around the railway beside the market, more so, they were responsible for moving the cattle to Ibadan. As trading in livestock developed in Sango market, the fact that it is not absolute for exclusiveness or specialization in a particular article of trade, brought in women from rural communities such as Apete, Akufo, Awotan, Agbaje and so on. These women traded in tomatoes, pepper and onions, with sources of supply from farm produce and from Hausa men who diversified to supply of foodstuffs. However, the establishment of Bodija market provided a multiplicity in the movement of traders – Hausa men, Yoruba men and women relocated together.

The relocation to Bodija market introduced and added to the residential communities of the Hausa in Ibadan, the transportation of cattle was diverted to a section in the market referred to as *Kara*. The emergence of *Kara* made another Hausa settlement along the railway in Bodija. These were part of the contributory factors that expanded the market, apart from the series of persuasion and coercion that brought in Yoruba women from Oje, Orita-merin, Oja-Oba, and so on.

In the case of Mokola and Sabo markets, they had also been in existence long before 1960. It was a formation of Hausa kola nut and cattle traders with the latter as a major market centre and residential area. The overcrowding of the community (Sabo) made Mokola an alternative for Nupe, Epira and Ibo migrants.<sup>5</sup> It is trite to contend that migrant communities are prone to transforming to markets; this is in line with how Sudarkasa has described the processes of female migration

<sup>4</sup> A. Cohen "The Social Organization of Credit in a West African Cattle market" *Africa*, Vol 35. no.1, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> C. Okonjo, "The Western Ibo" in Awe B. (et al), *The City of Ibadan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p. 99.

and innovation of market places as the making of Yoruba women.<sup>6</sup> If not absolutely, this assertion to a large extent is true because the existence of migrant Yoruba women from Ijebu, Ilesa, Ibo among others contributed to the expansion of some Ibadan markets such as Mokola, Old Gbagi, Agbeni, Dugbe and Amunigun. In other words, women traders from these communities facilitated trade in imported consumables from European trade stations which is proximal to these areas and it is unlike the nature of Bodija market. But since it is a characteristic of market to lack exclusiveness in articles of trade, the presence of Hausa men and their roles in the supply of fruits (carrot), dried fish and onions still created a nexus with Bodija market. This is because the relocation of cattle market from Sango which is proximal to Mokola provided complex features to inter-group relations as women traders especially Ibo and Yoruba women (non-indigenes) depended on Bodija market as a source for foodstuff supply.

In addition, the increased congestion in the market, in the late 1990s informed the decision of government to re-create another market site for Hausa cattle dealers at Akinyele on the outskirts of the town. The purpose was to reduce environmental threat such as incessant smell and traffic hold up. In spite of this it has been a natural phenomenon for markets and residential quarters to spring up in migrant communities coupled with the fact that Onidundu rural market is absolutely proximal to the new Hausa base at Akinyele.

The centrality of market trade and its necessity in urban life has enhanced Bodija market as a nexus for inter-group relations, apart from the fact that there are gender-trade relations; it is a centre for diffusion of languages because there is the need for language mix in transaction and bargaining. Although, the common bargaining language is Yoruba, but the presence of other groups of people has enhanced the use of other languages and in most cases women are the main actors because they are generally better than males in bargaining.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> N. Sudarkasa, "Women and Migration in Contemporary West Africa" *Signs*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Vol.3, no.1, 1977, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> B. Ojediran, "Odo-Oba: The Village that Feeds the Multitude", *Sunday Sketch*, May 27, 1988, p. 8.



Table 1: Trading Languages in Bodija Market, 1995

No.	Commodity	Yoruba traders	Hausa traders	Igbo traders	Edo traders	Urhobo traders	Pidgin traders
		%	%	%	%	%	%
1	Rice	70	-	15	15	-	-
2	Beans	50	30	15	15	-	-
3	Cassava flour	100	-	-	-	-	-
4	Gari	90	-	5	5	-	-
5	Maize	100	-	-	-	-	-
6	Soya beans	30	-	50	10	10	-
7	Yam	100	-	-	-	-	-
8	Cocoyam	50	-	50	-	-	-
9	Plantain	20	-	50	30	-	-
10	Meat	60	30	5	-	-	5
11	Fish	50	10	25	10	-	5
12	Vegetables	80	-	20	-	-	-
13	Pepper	80	-	5	-	-	5
14	Tomato	70	-	5	5	-	20
15	Onion	60	40	-	-	-	-
16	Okro	70	-	25	-	-	5
17	Palm-oil	70	-	30	-	-	-
18	Melon	30	-	50	-	20	-
19	Groundnut	30	60	10	-	-	-
20	Guniea corn	50	50	-	-	-	-

Source: O.B. Olaoba, *Bodija Market in Ibadan, 1987-1995* (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers, 2000) p. 70.

The table above shows that each group concentrates most in the articles it produces.

However, the indices depicts a survey of retail traders, by the nature of supply of goods such as beans, onion, tomato, pepper and meat, it is difficult to differentiate the group that outweighs among Hausa men, Yoruba men and women. They are all involved as large scale entrepreneurs (dealers); it is only in retail that women dominate massively.

Bodija market by virtue of the multi-ethnic nature over the years has the feature of multi-ethnic consumers. Given the fact that both Ibo and Yoruba women sustain business in the market, the inter-group relations transcend buying and selling. As observed by Olaoba, it is a centre for recitation of praise poems. The Ibo and Hausa women also opined that they admire the co-operative system (*Ajo*) by Yoruba women in which some of them are involved and has always been a source of upliftment. Furthermore, the food culture of each ethnic group has been imbibed and consumed by each other.

### Conclusion

Having examined the status and position of women in migratory settlements, it can be said that women migrated and intensified efforts towards attaining a convenient life within the changing nature of the Nigerian society. Since most of the migratory settlements involved women from each ethnic group, the inter-group relations should extend beyond trade. There should be other forms of social interactions which will aim at providing and improving societal welfare, conflict resolution and so on. In order to achieve this there should be an improved medium for interactions and participation. Apart from trade, it seems there are limits to inter-group relations beyond trade because of residential seclusion. Probably, religion might be a binding factor, but most of the missions are based on ethnicity. Furthermore, the uniqueness about women migrants and their relations with the socio-economic variables in the whole community has contributed and facilitated growth and development. Lives of market women are suitable theme to expose inter-group relations, as they tend to understand each other irrespective of religious inclination and apart from the basic economic relations, social relations is vivid because it is a centre for re-enactment of African culture.



UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

SECTION E  
THE RESURGENCE OF  
SELF DETERMINATION

<sup>1</sup> A. Cohen, "The Social Organization of the Arab Bedouin", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 1, 1931, p. 1.  
<sup>2</sup> G. Chomsky, "The Structure of Language", in *The Structure of Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> N. S. Sussman, "The Social Organization of the Bedouin", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 1, 1931, p. 1.  
<sup>4</sup> S. Chomsky, "The Structure of Language", in *The Structure of Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 1.



## **Variables and Constants: Self-Determination and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960**

Sylvanus I. Okoro

### **Introduction**

The philosophical basis of self-determination can be traced to the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment of 18th century Europe. These phenomena aroused great concerns for freedom and the primacy of the individual will. It subsequently began to apply to every kind of group with some collective will, culminating in its 20th century application to nations. The notion of national self-determination thus saw to the breakup of such 19th century empires as Austro-Hungarian, German and Ottoman in the 20th Century. The notion equally played a significant role in the breakup of colonial empires that saw the liberation of Afro-Asian peoples and territories from the late 1950s to the 60s. Having issued from the colonial enterprise, Nigeria emerged as an independent state in 1960 with a variety of nations and national identities. Consequently, the idea and predilection to national self-determination has not only continued to reverberate across the land, but to define inter-group relations. In doing this, some paradigms have remained constant, while others have continued to change in accordance to local, national and international dynamics and developments. This paper considers these paradigms and how they have helped to shape the Nigerian Federation up to the present time. The paper equally seeks to determine how statecraft can avoid the negative fall-



outs of self-determination in terms of national unity and harmonious inter-group relations in a 21st Century Nigeria, and beyond.

An overwhelming majority of members of the present international community live in multiethnic societies. In the place of the less than 200 nation-states in the present international system, there are "several thousands of ethnic groups." In Nigeria, it is believed that there are well over 250 ethnic groups. There appears to be a continuing confusion as to what constitutes ethnic groups, and the actual number we have in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps to underscore the equivocal nature of the issue, A. Gundonu subtitles his article on the subject "Realities and Assumptions."<sup>2</sup>

These ethnic groups or constellations of them are referred to simply as "groups". At independence in 1960, Nigeria emerged a sovereign state with a variety of these groups. Ever since, the antagonisms and mutual suspicions acquired during the colonial period have continued to define the nature of relationship between the groups. Due among other things to the peculiarities of the Nigerian situation, relations between and among the groups have tended to coalesce around the three major ones — Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Except in rare circumstances, other groups are considered as appendages to these three in relationships and interactions.

As in most multi-ethnic societies, the struggle to acquire a monopoly of power and the patronage it offers for the in-group as opposed to the out-group has continued to manifest itself in various ways, one of which has been calls and agitations for self-determination, and even outright secession.

Self-determination as a strand in inter-group relations in independent Nigeria has tended to depict two major paradigms: a mechanism for drawing attention to perceived injustice and alienation from the national commonwealth, and a conscious and determined

<sup>1</sup> S. I. Okoro, "The Evolution, Prognosis and Trajectory of Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: 1945-2003" Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Historical Society of Nigeria. Jos: 1-5 May, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gandonu, A., "Nigeria's 250 Ethnic Groups: Realities and Assumptions" in R.E. Holloman and S. A. Arutiunov, *Perspectives on Ethnicity* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978).

predilection for the pursuit of group interest and well-being outside the national sovereignty. While the former represents the variable, the latter portrays the constants in terms of how the out-groups see, respond and interact with the groups pursuing the various agenda. As the analysis may depict, one variable tends to give rise to the other. That is to say an agitation for self-determination for the realization of perceived group interest may harden into a secessionist disposition over time, and vice-versa.

### The Concept of Self-Determination

The philosophical basis of the concept of self-determination has been traced to the eighteenth century concern for freedom and the primacy of the individual will.<sup>3</sup> Since then, the concept has been applied to every kind of group with collective will. But in the 20th century, it came to apply specially to nations both as a cultural group and as a politico-legal sovereignty. This ambivalent nature of the concept has been responsible for much of its problematic for statecraft in the contemporary era. Whereas the principle of national self-determination as embodied in Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" was largely responsible for the break-up of such 19th century empires as German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman, it also played a major role in the de-colonization process in Africa and Asia, which saw the emergence of modern nation-states from these areas from the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The importance of the concept for the life of the modern man was further underscored by its embodiment not only in the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence of Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the 1970 Declaration of the Principles of International Law; but also, and more importantly, in the Charter of the United Nations. Despite its widespread use and acceptance, the doctrine of self-determination has remained vague and vicious in application. It has been used to justify repressive national regimes, as well as agitations for group solidarity, even secession from nation-states. Even such extreme and

<sup>3</sup> Allison, L., "Self-Determination" in I. McLean, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996) p. 446.



vicious phenomena as the holocaust in Nazi Germany, and ethnic cleansing in former Federal Yugoslavia have received some justification on the basis of self-determination.<sup>4</sup>

But this attractive concept of self-determination was given an idealistic boost after the world wars of the 20th century. However the conflict in Bosnia shows how dangerous sudden secessions rationalized on the basis of self-determination can be. Attempts at creation of new states by sudden secession may, and do trigger fierce fighting not only within states, but also across international borders. Although, as Czechoslovakia has proved, secession may be carried off democratically and peacefully, but this has remained an exception rather than the rule. Given this rather dangerous fallout, self-determination as a concept and as a practice will need to be reassessed in the light of contemporary realities, and its conflictual values clarified and dealt with peacefully.

In Nigeria, self-determination disposition has been a recurrent decimal in national politics. It is probably in this light that Eskor Toyo acknowledged the dominant ethnic pattern of the Nigerian crisis, arguing that the National Question is about inter-group relations; and that it arises when a culturally integrated and self-conscious group of people seeks advantage over other peoples in the nation.<sup>5</sup> When this happens, as in Nigeria, those groups that are shortchanged will seek to ameliorate their situation through various means. Self-determination not only becomes one of the strategies that may be adopted, but it also defines the nature of the relationships that will exist between the dominant group and the dominated; and within the dominated.

### Self-Determination and Inter-Group Relations in Colonial Nigeria

The germ of ethnicity and self-determination could be seen to have begun its self-destructive role in Nigeria from the very inception of the Nigerian state. But from the immediate pre-independence period of the 1950's, the phenomena became more pronounced and to increasingly

<sup>4</sup> Allison, L., "Self-Determination" in I. McLean, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996) p. 446.

<sup>5</sup> Eskor Toyo, "The Guardian", Lagos: 23 June, 1993, p. 17.

mar inter-group relations. A most auspicious moment for this was the criticisms that attended the Richard's Constitution, and subsequent preparation of the Macpherson Constitution.

In response to the charge of non-involvement and non participation of the locals in the preparation of the constitution of 1944/45, Sir John McPherson, the new Governor, proceeded to consult as widely as possible in line with the recommendation of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council set up to "examine the problems of introducing a new constitution". Following further recommendations of the Council, bordering on whether or not Nigerians wished to have a unitary or federal structure of governance, Regional Conferences met at Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna, respectively. Though the Regional Conferences generally settled for a federal structure for the country, there were slight modifications.<sup>6</sup>

It must be noted however that due to the fact that the regions represented the three major groups in the country, those so-called "slight modifications" represented fears and anxieties harboured by each against the other in terms of domination and safeguards against it.

This was to manifest itself most poignantly in March 1953 when Chief Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group member of the House of Representatives; a Federal Legislative House created by the Macpherson Constitution, moved a motion urging the House to accept as its primary objective the attainment of self-government or independence for the country in 1956. The altercations and misrepresentations that arose from this incident caused the North to be the first group to propose what amounted to secession or self-determination on the basis of its conviction that "it was impossible to work with the Southerners."<sup>7</sup>

This perception, coupled with the bad blood generated during the constitutional conferences of the 1950's, bordering on demands and counter demands of the North vis-a-vis the South<sup>8</sup> worked to ensure not

<sup>6</sup> O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980) p. 536.

<sup>7</sup> O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980) p. 536.

<sup>8</sup> G. O. Olusanya, "Constitutional Developments in Nigeria: 1861 - 1960" in O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980) pp. 530-533.



only a constant re-enactment of self-determination agitation in the post-independence era, but to define group relations ever since.

### Self-Determination Agitations in the Post-Colonial Era

The various groups, in voicing its preferences regarding the structure of governance for Nigeria during the regional conferences of the 50's, also inadvertently avowed their stance on self-determination, at least, as at that time. For instance, while it would be worth noting that the Western Regional Conference recommended a federal government made up of all states formed on ethnic and or linguistic basis, the North was not averse to this except that it went further to canvass a continued exercise of executive powers by a colonial officer, the Chief Commissioner, on the advice of a purely advisory Regional Executive Council made up of officials. It was only the Eastern Regional conference that wanted and canvassed a strong central government supported by a Central Legislature, and Regional legislatures that can only exercise such powers as the central legislature might delegate.

So, while the East advocated for a unitary system, so to say, with a strong centre; the West and the North were at home with a federal, if not confederal structure that can be easily undone to let everyone go his separate ways should the occasion arise – self-determination.

But following the events of the First Republic which saw a military intervention in Nigerian political experiences, and the subsequent events that culminated in the civil war (1967-70), situations tended to reverse themselves on the issue of self-determination and inter-group relations.

Nigeria's first experience and attempt at self-government following independence in 1960, the so-called First Republic, was fraught with difficulties and controversies: Alhaji Tafawa Balewa who became Prime Minister in a parliamentary system of government in 1960 owing to the dominant position of his Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the Federal Parliament, ran a federal administration that was fraught with problems. In forming the Federal Government, the N.P.C had gone into a coalition with the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC). In spite of this however, the NPC was seen as focused on the problems of Northern Nigeria, and to be favouring the Islamic religion, while the

NCNC remained largely nationalist, Christian and populist.<sup>9</sup> To make matters worse for the coalition, the NCNC supported opponents of the NPC by supporting regional elections in the Northern Region.

The main opposition party in the Federal parliament, the Action Group (AG) based mainly in the Western Region also had its own internal squabbles. These eventually saw the leader of the party, Obafemi Awolowo pitted against the regional governor (Premier) Chief Akintola. This squabble which resulted in the division of the party in the region, eventually culminated in a declaration of a state of emergency, and an ultimate near total breakdown of law and order in the region. It will be recalled that Chief Akintola had formed the United People's Party (UPP) from his own faction of the Action Group (AG). This group sought a closer tie with the conservative NPC as opposed to the democratic socialist bent of the mainstream Action Group.

In the prelude to the 1964 federal parliamentary elections, further political alignments and realignments were consummated. The Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) emerged to incorporate elements of the NPC, Akintola's Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) – a coalition of UPP and NCNC elements, and opposition parties representing ethnic minorities in the Midwestern and Eastern region. We also had the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), which was made up of the NCNC, remnants of the AG, and two minority Northern groups: the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and the United Middle Belt Convention (UMBC).

The NNA, reflecting the views of the Northern political elite, opposed the UPGA, and emerged as a subterfuge through which the NPC sought to garner a firmer control of federal power by an alliance with the Western Region. It subsequently began to arouse fears among the Yoruba about Igbo domination of the federal government. The NNA continued to argue and to insist that the UPGA was forced by the NCNC to use the two regional governments it controlled as a springboard to dominate the federal government. Though there was no

<sup>9</sup> O. I. Anyabolu, *Nigeria: Past to the Present* (Enugu: Classic Publishers, 2000) p. 112.



convincing evidence for this, but because the UPGA continued to propose and to agitate for the division of the country into states that reflected ethnicity, that is to say as many states as possible to be created in each region to vitiate the domination of a tribe or group in any region – an extension of a strong centre as proposed by the Eastern Regional conference of the 1950's.

As the NPC/NNA was opposed to states being created from its region of dominance - the Northern region, the UPGA was anxious that the federal parliamentary elections will be rigged, and so boycotted it. The boycott could not however stop the election, which was subsequently won by the NNA. When however supplementary elections were held in the areas where the boycott had been effective, the UPGA won, and became the official opposition in the Federal Parliament, replacing the AG.

This was largely the situation until 1965/66 when conditions worsened following the 1965 Western regional legislative elections, which the UPGA was set to win, but for the large scale voting irregularities witnessed. This saw Akintola's NNDP supported by the NPC, scoring an impressive victory reminiscent of the 1983 NPN "Landslide Victory". This of course sparked protests and riots, which culminated in the military intervention of January 1966.

Following the personnel involved, the nature of executions and the general out-come of the coup, it was seen as an Igbo coup, and the North appeared vindicated that the Igbo were working to dominate the country. Maj. Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi, who as Supreme Commander of the Nigerian Army, assumed leadership of the country following the failure of the coup. He promulgated Decree No. 34 of 1966. This decree annulled the federal structure and substituted a unitary system. Ironsi and his advisers favoured a unitary system of government which they thought would eliminate or at least reduce the problem of regionalism and ethnicity, which as far as they were concerned had proved a stumbling block to national political and economic progress and stability. But, being an Igbo, and given the perception of the coup by the rest of the country, especially the North, coupled with the continuing NNA/NPC "conviction" of an Igbo agenda of national domination, decree no. 34 appeared to be a logical extension of the Igbo

or Eastern region's preference and agitation for a strong central administration which can best be guaranteed by a unitary system of government.

Reactions and agitations against the *coup d'etat* of January 1966 subsequently came to coalesce on opposition to Decree No 34. Following an article written by one H.A. Sani in the *New Nigerian* of April 5, 1966, and entitled "Don't Unify the Civil Service", as Decree 34 sought to; protests erupted among students of Ahmadu Bello University against some of the measures decreed by the National Military Government. Though acting largely under the prompting of some British expatriates connected to the university, the students on May 29, 1966 carried placards demanding the secession of the Northern Region from the rest of Nigeria.<sup>10</sup> Soon the protests spread across the Northern Region igniting terrible massacres, burning, pillaging and raping against the Igbo in such Northern towns as Katsina, Gombe and Kaura Namoda. This culminated in the counter coup of July 29, 1966 which saw the overthrow and death of the Head of the National Military Government; Major. Gen Aguiyi Ironsi. More massacres followed, until it turned to a pogrom against the Igbo. As the Igbo were left defenseless against their assailants, they began to flee to the Eastern Region with gory tales of terrible cruelties they had suffered in the hands of Northern Youths.

It was in the midst of these developments that the Military Governor of the Eastern Region appointed by the Ironsi regime, Col. Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, seeing the eastern regional government as the only one that was prepared to defend the Igbo, began to urge them to return to the region. From then on, the Igbo began to lose faith in the Nigerian project. As subsequent events proved, the Igbo that hitherto had been dogged defenders of national unity with a strong central administration began to agitate for what amounted to a confederal arrangement.

Ever since the civil war, the Igbo have not ceased to pursue a self-determination, even secessionist agenda, while the Hausa/Fulani appears

<sup>10</sup> O. I. Anyabolu, *Nigeria: Past to the Present*. (Enugu: Classic Publishers, 2000) p. 112.



to have reversed itself by insisting on an overtly strong centre as opposed to what is being referred to as "true federalism."

The agitations of the Yoruba for the revalidation of the annulled election was so trenchant that the Nigerian State had no other option than to concede the presidency to the culture group during the 1999 General Elections that ushered in the Fourth Republic. Apart from the fact that the two major dramatis personae Chief M.K.O Abiola and Gen. Sani Abacha died amidst the struggle, the agitations had built up so much acrimony and bad blood that it would have been an egregious folly to hand over power to Chief Abiola or allow General Abacha to continue to wield power. So, despite the fact that power had been conceded to them, the Yoruba did not disband their self-determination agenda. Instead, they refurbished it, and christened it a socio-cultural organization-Oodua People's Congress (OPC).

According to John Okweze Odey, since the annulment of the election of 1992, the Oodua Peoples Congress has been "threatening to pull out of Nigeria and form a sovereign state, known as Oodua Republic to enable them live and survive what they regard as the horrendous oppression and suppression perpetrated by the Hausa Fulani oligarchy."<sup>11</sup> With the OPC on the one hand, the Yoruba continued to agitate for the convocation of a sovereign national conference which as indicated earlier, was to enable the different and disparate nationalities that make up the country come together and disband the oppressive and lopsided and centralized power structures.

The Igbo on their own part had dusted and resurrected the spirit of defunct Biafra under the aegis of the "Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra" (MASSOB), due to their feeling that they have been deliberately edged out of Nigerian national life, giving a lie to the nation's creed of one nation-one destiny. Taking a cue from these groups, the Hausa Fulani also created its own socio-cultural organization-Arewa People Congress or Arewa Consultative Forum. Rather than pursue a self-determination agenda outright, the APC exists more or less as a pressure group that caters for the protection and advancement of Hausa/Fulani and Islamic interests in Nigeria.

<sup>11</sup> J. O. Odey, *Nigeria To Be or Not To Be* (Enugu: Snaap Press, 2006) p. 208.

There are other socio-cultural organizations across the country that have canvassed a self-determination agenda at some point – the Ijaw National Congress (INC), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), etc.

### Variants and Constants of Self-Determination Agitations in Nigeria

From the foregoing, there appear to have emerged two major variants and paradigms in self-determination agitations in Nigeria over the years. A central theme to self-determination disposition among the various groups in the country has always revolved around the prospects or otherwise of a group's capacity to either dominate or benefit disproportionately vis-a-vis other groups from the nation's resources. The variants and constants of this disposition equally revolve around this consideration. In considering the variants and constants, therefore, cognizance need be taken of a group's persistence or otherwise in the agitations in the face of perceived deprivations. This would constitute the constant, while the variable will relate much more to those groups that wave the self-determination flag simply to draw attention to perceived wrongs. In this context, the Igbo situation would appear to more appropriately capture the constant paradigm, while the Yoruba and other groups' agitations reside more within the domain of the variables.

It will be recalled as indicated earlier, that the Hausa Fulani North that in the pre-independent constitutional conferences of the 1950's favoured a loose federation as against the Igbo or Eastern Nigerian penchant for a strong central administration, continued along that line during the immediate post independent crisis period of the 1960s. At a point, it even threatened secession. In fact, its counter coup d'etat of July 1960 was code-named "Araba" *separateness*, since its intent was a



secessionist course with the declaration of a Republic of Northern Nigeria.<sup>12</sup>

But since the Hausa Fulani secured power, and subsequent domination and control of Nigerian resources following the eventual outcome of the crisis referred to above, the North has remained a major advocate of a Federal Nigeria, which is only federal in name, but unitary in every material particular. In the period before the 1950s and early 1960s, the North felt it was not well-positioned to even benefit proportionately with other Nigerian groups, not to talk of dominating such resources. So, a loose federation, self-determination or even secession were desirable options.

The Yoruba on the other hand remained strong advocates and protagonists of a federal Nigeria, though for it, the federation is to be conceived on ethnic and or linguistic basis. This was to counter a perceived Igbo domination of the state, which the unitary system advocated, by the Igbo would have accentuated. When the Igbo threatened secession in the 1960s, the Yoruba felt that its interests would be well served if it followed suit. But when it was realized that the elimination of Igbo competition and rivalry pursuant to the secessionist bid, would leave the Yoruba in a better position to dominate Nigerian resources, since the Yoruba were at an advantage over the backward Hausa-Fulani in social competition, the secessionist bid was quickly abandoned. The Yoruba then decided to join the Hausa-Fulani to build a Federal Nigeria where Igbo Influence will be minimal or nonexistent.

Yoruba calculations however appeared misdirected when with the end of the civil war, the Hausa-Fulani proceeded to build a pseudo federation which, as pointed out earlier, is only federal in name but unitary in reality. Feeling shortchanged, the Yoruba began to agitate for what it calls "true federalism". This became particularly acute following the longish spell of Hausa-Fulani dominated military rule that

<sup>12</sup> S. I. Okoro, "The Evolution, Prognosis and Trajectory of Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: 1945-2003" Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Historical Society of Nigeria. Jos: 1-5 May, 2006, p.15.

culminated in the annulment of a general election believed to have been won by a Yoruba son, M.K.O Abiola. From this period onwards, the agitation began to oscillate between true federalism and self-determination or secession. However, between 1999 and 2007, with a Yoruba, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo at the helm, not much of these talk was heard.

In the case of the Igbo, we appear to observe a consistent and persistent disposition towards what can be seen as representing the best interest of the state. Igbo advocacy for a centralized administration and a unitary system must thus be seen as Igbo penchant for a strong unified country where excellence based on fair competition is ingrained, rather than as a self-serving measure. Even the colonial leaders appeared to have noticed this rather altruistic and patriotic instinct in the Igbo, and the petty jealousy of other groups against her. On this Governor Sir John Macpherson expressed alarm in 1948 in the following words.

I am concerned about the ill-feeling between the Yoruba and the Ibos and I am inclined to think that the (Egbe Omo Oduduwa) society is mainly concerned with resistance to zik and the Ibos rather than with a constructive programme.<sup>13</sup>

One is inclined to assert that it was this ill-feeling against the Igbo borne out of petty jealousy that prompted the pogrom and the subsequent self-determination and secessionist agenda among the Igbo. It is reasonable to further assert that due to the fact that the Igbo felt frustrated by the reluctance of other major groups in cooperating with them to build the Nigeria of their dreams, the Igbo felt inclined, and is still inclined to opt out of the Federation.<sup>14</sup> That the Igbo has consistently pursued a self-determination agenda is informed by her conviction that it cannot achieve its full potentials as a people and a nation except in a Nigeria that is prepared to encourage excellence and fair competition or in a separate state of its own. Doyin Okupe will appear to have been speaking the mind of the Igbo when he declared:

<sup>13</sup> A. Campbell, *Western Primitivism: African Ethnicity* (London: Cassell, 1997) p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> E. Ojukwu, *Abiara Declaration*, 1969.



All that Nigerians demand of the federation and all that they can reasonably demand is not equality of outcomes but equality of opportunity. That is all federation is about, that is what this federation should offer them...<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> D. Okupe, "The New Breed and Political Stability in the Third Republic" Paper Presented at the National Conference on stability of the Third Republic. Lagos: NIIA, 1988, p. 36.

## Self-Determination, Ethno-Regional Organisations and Conflicts in Nigeria Since 1960

Kehinde Olayode

### Introduction

The proliferation of ethno-regional based organisations has resulted in the escalation of ethno-regional conflicts in many of Nigeria's urban communities since independence. This problem seriously hampers efforts at national integration, as it applies to the building of a nation-state out of the disparate ethnic, geographic, social, economic and religious elements in the country. The basic issue is the right of 'people' to determine its own destiny. However, the legal interpretation of self-determination and the place of the individual versus the group in human rights discourses remain items of serious contention. It is against this background that four major ethno-regional organisations are examined in this study. These organisations are the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF); Egbe Afenifere; Ohanaeze-Ndigbo, and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). While these groups operate between the primary units of society and ruling collective institutions, on the other hand, they emphasise the collective identity of specific groups, and are willing to use confrontation to achieve their objectives.

Following the inauguration of Nigeria's Fourth Republic on 29th May 1999, the normally liberal environment provided by democracy for the exercise of freedom and personal rights engendered an unprecedented wave of ethnic activism and political tensions across the country. The proliferation of ethnic militias and the intensification of ethno-



regional nationalism, demanding a re-negotiation of the federalist foundations of the Nigerian state have resulted in the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts in many of Nigerian's urban communities. Foundational issues, which had hitherto been classified as 'non-negotiable' in the constitution-making process of the late 1980s, appeared to have been re-invented in recent times. These issues constitute the core of the 'national question', which had remained lingering and unresolved since independence.

Although ethno-nationalism is a phenomenon that dates back to Biblical times, it is a plague of the post-World War II era. Some of the most explosive flashpoints in the world are the products of the disputes between groups in multi-ethnic and culturally heterogeneous countries, such as Afghanistan, Belgium, Canada, Nigeria, Russia, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Sudan, and Rwanda to name a few. Ethno-political cleavages have produced a surge of serious conflict since 1945. According to *The Minorities at Risk Project*, over three hundred ethno-political minority groups facing discrimination have been involved in serious, often violent struggles between 1945 and 1997, and the trend has steadily accelerated since the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> For example, in 1994, all but five of the twenty-three wars fought were based on communal rivalries and ethnic challenges to states.<sup>2</sup> About three-quarters of the world's refugees, estimated at nearly twenty-seven million people were in flight from, or were displaced by these ethnic conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

African leaders have long been concerned with the potential for fragmentation along ethnic lines. With rare exceptions, sub-Saharan states like states in most parts of the world are conglomerations of groups, thrown together by the vagaries of colonial boundaries. Thus, 'states' preceded 'nations'. In essence, 'Nigeria' came into being long before a substantial number of its residents felt themselves to be

<sup>1</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethno-political Conflicts* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*.

'Nigerians'. They felt themselves far more likely to be Igbo, Tiv, Hausa/Fulani or Yoruba peoples than citizens of the Nigerian nation.

Many early African leaders pressed for unity in the face of division. While Senegal's Leopold Senghor advocated federation and rallied against "micro-nationalism", Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah pressed for political unification of the newly-independent African states. Although, the fear of destabilisation based on ethnicity did not result in a 'United States of Africa', it did result in creation of the Organization of African Unity, and a pledge to maintain the inherited *status quo*. The OAU - now transformed into the African Union (AU) - has from its inception, taken strong stands against revising borders or dividing states, in order to accommodate 'sub-national' claims. Among its principles are preservation of unity within inherited frontiers, unreserved condemnation of plotting against sister states, and respect for sovereign equality.

From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that ethno-nationalism is a phenomenon, which is linked to forms of affiliation and identification built around ties of real or putative kinship. To the extent that conflict within and between ethnically disunited and divided states becomes a major axis on which twenty-first century world politics revolves, the power of and independence of the state can be expected to decline exponentially in a new era of global anarchy or lawlessness.<sup>4</sup>

This study attempts to answer the following questions: Should each 'people' or 'nation' enjoy a right to sovereign independence? What economic and political rights can 'people' claim? How can they achieve self-determination within the context of an existing 'state'? Is ethno-nationalism compatible with the legal framework of a nation state? Should each 'people' or 'nation' enjoy a right to sovereign independence? Can a multi-ethnic or multi-national state survive in the face of conflicting group claims for power?

### Theoretical Considerations

One broad category of national groups is ethno-nationalist groups whose members share a common nationality, language, cultural

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Random House, 1995).



tradition, and kinship ties. They view themselves as members of their nationality first and of their state only secondarily — a definition that follows the interpretation of Francis who maintains that “cultural affinities manifest in shared linguistic, religious, racial, or other markers ... and enable one community to distinguish itself from others.”<sup>5</sup> An ethnic group is regarded generally as a social collectivity, whose members not only share such objective characteristics as language, core-territory, ancestral myths, culture, religion and/or political organization, but also have some subjective consciousness or perception of common descent or identity.<sup>6</sup>

Okwudiba Nnoli elaborates on the meaning of ethno-nationalism as “a phenomenon associated with contact between cultural-linguistic communal groups, characterized by cultural prejudice and social discrimination.”<sup>7</sup> Underlying these characteristics are the feelings of pride in the in-group, and the exclusiveness of its members. Ethno-nationalism is therefore defined in this study as people’s loyalty to and identification with particular ethnic nationality groups within a nation state.

At the heart of ethno-nationalism lies the issue of ‘self-determination’. What economic and political rights can ‘people’ claim? How can they achieve self-determination within the context of an existing ‘state’? The basic issue is the right of a ‘people’ to determine its own destiny. However, what constitutes a ‘people’ is still a subject of scholarly arguments, which are not the focus of this study.

The principle of self-determination is prominently embodied in Article I of the Charter of the United Nations. Earlier it had been explicitly embraced by US President Woodrow Wilson, by Lenin and others, and became the guiding principle for the reconstruction of Europe following World War I. The principle was incorporated into the 1941 Atlantic Charter and the Dumbarton Oaks proposals which

<sup>5</sup> Emerich Francis, *Interethnic Relations* (New York: Elsevier, 1976) p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Rotimi Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria* (Spectrum Books, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Okwudiba Nnoli, “Ethnicity” in Joel Krieger, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) p.34.

evolved into the United Nations Charter. Essentially, the right to self-determination is the right of a people to determine its own destiny. In particular, the principle allows a people to choose its own political status and to determine its own form of economic, cultural and social development. Exercise of this right can result in a variety of different outcomes ranging from political independence to full integration within a state. The importance lies in the right of choice, so that the outcome of a people’s choice should not affect the existence of the right to make a choice. In practice, however, the possible outcome of an exercise of self-determination will often determine the attitude of governments towards the actual claim by a people or nation. Thus, while claims to cultural autonomy may be more readily recognized by states, claims to independence are more likely to be rejected by them. Nevertheless, the right to self-determination is recognized in international law as a right of process (not of outcome) belonging to peoples and not to states or governments.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 committed the idea of the right for self-determination to the body of international protocol. In essence, all people reserve the right to seek self-determination to address a lack of proper representation or oppression from any given government. There is tension between the concept of self-determination and that of territorial integrity. The prevailing force of the principle of territorial integrity was exemplified by the adherence to the principle of ‘*uti possidetis*’ during the decolonization process (that is, the retaining of colonial borders in the birth of independent nations). This conflict has been resolved in practice by defining the notion of “people” entitled to self-determination as persons living in a particular geographic area within a nation-state rather than persons sharing a common culture or language. Hence, self-determination as it is understood in the early 21st century does not generally promote the political aspirations of oppressed ethnic minorities.

The right to self-determination has become one of the most complex issues for U.S. foreign policymakers and the international community at large. Confusion over the issue stems not so much from whether there exists a right to self-determination, which is included in



many international human rights documents, but from the failure of those documents to define exactly who is entitled to claim this right — a group, a people, or a nation — and what exactly the right confers. In recent years, many groups that constitute minorities in their states have invoked the “right to self-determination” in their demands for autonomy — or, in some cases, secession — and have resorted to violence to pursue their aims. These groups typically justify their demand for self-determination as a way to end years of repression and human rights violations by the majority ethnic group or the central government. The absence of a precise definition of what the right to self-determination entails has left the international community, and the states concerned, without guiding principles with which to respond. Future efforts to make the right to self-determination genuinely universal must rest on answering the crucial question, “Who are the peoples” to whom it is meant to apply, and so moving beyond the traditional focus on the process of decolonisation, and including within its scope a substantive recognition of indigenous, oppressed and minority peoples.

Given the perceived risk of constant fragmentation, states have approached self-determination cautiously. The threat of fragmentation due to self-determination can be regarded as very dangerous to other communities in a country, especially if the groups striving for self-determination live in an area with the majority of a country's wealth. On the other hand, supporters of self-determination argue that if the wealth is coming from the land they live in, the local inhabitants deserve the wealth not the country as a whole. This is an important dimension of the self-determination arguments in Nigeria as well as many other countries.

Article 1, inserted into the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in large part was as a result of pressure from Third World countries. Donnelly summarized the political effect of the covenant thus:

In practice, then, the internationally recognized right to self-determination, despite its seeming breadth, has been treated as an

extremely narrow right. States' fear of secession and governments' fear of revolution have combined to restrict the right to self-determination to little more than the right to sovereignty for those states (and colonies) that currently exist. Given that the right to self-determination emerged as part of the struggle against Western imperialism, this is not surprising.<sup>8</sup>

What would be the likely results, when groups within existing independent states claim the ‘right to self-determination’? They would experience sharp opposition, indeed probably forcible repression, from their governments. Feeling their sovereignty under threat, governments treat claims to self-determination (which sometimes in reality may be requests for a fairer share of political and economic opportunities), as demands for secession. The weak basis for national unity in multi-ethnic societies encourages leaders to turn to coercion rather than to compromise. They could point to the ‘once-and-for all-time’ independence: disaffected communities must work within the confines of their own political systems, not creating a sovereign new one. A clear example comes from the African Charter on Human and People's Rights which stresses the duty of individuals ‘to preserve and strengthen the national independence and the territorial integrity of their country.’<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, in dealing with ethno-nationalism and group rights, one is focusing on one of the most emotional issues in both contemporary Africa and international human rights debates. The legal interpretation of self-determination and the place of the individual versus the group in human rights discourses remain items of serious contention. Ethnic groups seeking to empower themselves collide with the desire of states to maintain centralized control. Thus, pluralism, far from being viewed as an essential building block and a safeguard for competitive democracy, is perceived as a weapon of potential destruction.

<sup>8</sup> Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Benedek, ‘The African Charter and Commission on Human and People's Rights: How to make it more effective’, *Netherlands' Quarterly of Human Rights*, 3, 1993 (2: 25-36).



### Ethno-Regional Organisations and Conflicts in Nigeria

Four ethno-regional organisations in Nigeria are examined in this study. These organisations are the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP); Egbe Afenifere (Society of the lovers of good things); Ohanaeze-Ndigbo (Igbo Citizens Assembly) and, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF). These groups epitomise the conflicts inherent when sub-national groups seek greater political and economic clouts and use the language of human rights and the democratisation struggle as 'basis of their campaigns.'<sup>10</sup> While these groups operate between the primary units of society and ruling collective institutions, on the other hand, they emphasise the collective identity of specific groups, and are willing to use confrontation to achieve their objectives, on the other. They started obscurely as 'socio-cultural' organisations within groups that felt marginalised, and have become political pressure groups. Their strategies for empowerment and struggle evolved in politically and socially repressive settings.

#### *Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)*

The Ogoni people are an indigenous group that have been known to occupy their present location for about five hundred years.<sup>11</sup> The people, estimated at over half a million in number live in an area of about 100,000 square kilometres, making the area one of the most densely populated in Africa.<sup>12</sup> The town of Bori serves as the headquarters of the Ogoni people while Eleme, Tai, Giokona, Babbe, Ken-Khana, and Nyo-Khana are the six kingdoms constituting the group. The Ogonis speak four related languages with Khana and Gokana serving as the two major ones. There are also dialects peculiar

<sup>10</sup> K. Olayode, *Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Olorode, Toyé, Wumi Raji and Ogunye, Jiti (ed.). (1998) *Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Crises of the Nigerian State* (Lagos: CDHR).

<sup>12</sup> K. Olayode, *The Hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Implications for Nigerian Foreign Policy*, Unpublished M.I.R. Thesis, Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1997.

to each major tongue. Irrespective of these differences, the people are united in their peculiar environmental reality.<sup>13</sup>

The Ogoni struggle arose from their strategic location in the Nigerian state. Though, Nigeria as a whole has received billions of dollars from oil, most of it seems to have disappeared into the national economy and private hands without perceptible benefits to most Nigerians, and particularly to the areas of origin. With the exception of investment in capital-intensive wells, pipelines and refineries, few petrol-dollars have flowed back to the Ogoni area.<sup>14</sup> Few Ogonis have benefit from jobs, development, or amenities in the oil industry. Instead, they suffer serious environmental degradation that has polluted fishing streams and fresh water sources, poisoned land through spills and blow-outs, and created an atmosphere fouled by decades of flaring natural gas.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Ogoni struggle was against 'political marginalisation, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation.'<sup>16</sup> The struggle was about 'the emancipation of the people, the re-establishment of the rights of a community as small as Ogoni, and by implication, this stretches to other similar minority groups throughout the country.'<sup>17</sup>

In claiming the right to a greater financial share, Ogoni leaders challenged the fundamental principles of centralised government. Control of revenue is the basis of political power in Nigeria. And, speaking in terms of rights for 'a people', they unconsciously echo demands by earlier African nationalists for maintaining political borders. Not to be taken by surprise, on May 5, 1993 the Babangida administration promulgated the Treason and Treasonable Offences

<sup>13</sup> Austin, James, a chieftain of MOSOP: Interview at Abuja, Nigeria, 5th February 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Austin, James, a chieftain of MOSOP: Interview at Abuja, Nigeria, 5th February 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Toyé Olorode, Wumi Raji and Jite Ogunye, ed., *Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Crises of the Nigerian State* (Lagos: CDHR, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> K. Olayode, *The Hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Implications for Nigerian Foreign Policy*, Unpublished M.I.R. Thesis, Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> K. Olayode, *Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2004.



Decree, under which the death penalty could be imposed for advocacy of 'ethnic autonomy'.

The Ogoni struggle clearly illustrates the interplay of politics, economics, and ethnicity. Political and socio-economic changes do not necessarily directly diminish ethnic awareness and identity; they may in fact provoke it. As Crawford Young (1983) observed:

Cultural collectives are not simply disembodied primordial givens, but contingent patterns of solidarity whose activation depends on the organisation and mobilisation of consciousness on the one hand, and the intrusion of the political process in the form of perceived domination, competitions, threats or advantages, on the other.<sup>18</sup>

In 1990, MOSOP drafted the 'Ogoni Bill of Rights', which called for 'internal autonomy' for the Ogonis within the Nigerian federation as a solution to their marginalisation. As contained in the Bill of Rights, the Ogonis demanded political control of Ogoni affairs; the right to control and the use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development; the right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation, and; to have adequate and direct representation as of right in all Nigerian Institutions.<sup>19</sup> While making the demands for 'self-determination', the Ogonis equally re-affirmed 'their wish to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.'<sup>20</sup> The Bill also authorised MOSOP to make representation, for as long as the injustices against Ogoni continue, to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the African Commission on Human Rights and other international bodies which have a role to play in protecting the rights of a minority group.

The Ogoni struggle and the organisation of MOSOP were pressed most vigorously by Ken Saro-Wiwa. Through his writings, Saro-Wiwa skilfully drew international attention to the plight of Ogoni people. He argued that the Nigerian federal system under the military had become essentially unitary, with oil resources transferred from the Niger Delta

<sup>18</sup> Young Crawford, 'The Temple of Ethnicity', *World Politics* 35, 4, 1983.

<sup>19</sup> MOSOP, "Ogoni Bill of Rights" Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1990.

<sup>20</sup> MOSOP, "Ogoni Bill of Rights" Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1990.

area to selected favoured locations. Articulating the demands for political autonomy for the Ogonis, Ken Saro-Wiwa, declared:

The extinction of the ethnic groups in this area appears to have become policy. The present structure of Nigeria spells the death-knell of the Ogoni and other Delta minorities and their environment. Solving none of our traditional problems, it merely intensifies the murderous struggle for power at the centre by the majority ethnic groups. What we require is a loose federation or a confederation of egalitarian ethnic interdependence. The federating ethnic groups should hold a National Conference to resolve the basis of their union and install an interim government in which the military will have no role.<sup>21</sup>

Ken Saro-Wiwa effectively presented the Ogoni case to international human rights groups. It received sympathetic hearing and interest from the Holland-based Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO), and the International Federation for the Rights of Ethnic, Linguistic, Religious and Other Minorities, based in New York. In the summer of 1993, MOSOP members attended the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and the Geneva meetings of Committee on Racial Discrimination (CERD). The United Nations' sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities also received the petition of the Ogoni people against the Nigerian military regime. In all these international fora, Ogoni materials were widely circulated, and the Nigerian government and Shell Petroleum Development Company were called upon to respond.<sup>22</sup>

By taking the Ogoni case to International NGOs and the United Nations, MOSOP achieved a high level of recognition, which had a negative impact on the Nigerian government. Predictably, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders were harassed and detained several times by agencies of the federal government between 1993 and 1994. However, it was General Sani Abacha who subsequently arraigned Saro-

<sup>21</sup> Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster* (Port Harcourt: Saros, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> Toyé Olorode, Wumi Raji and Jite Ogunye, ed., *Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Crises of the Nigerian State* (Lagos: CDHR, 1998).



Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders before the Civil Disturbance Tribunal in February 1995, having implicated them in a murder charge preferred against them by the state. They were eventually convicted and sentenced to death by hanging. The sentence was hastily confirmed by the armed forces ruling council and disregarding international calls for clemency, and despite personal appeals from Nelson Mandela, the Ogoni leaders were hanged on November 10, 1995 during the Commonwealth Conference in Auckland.

In spite of the brutal suppression of the Ogoni struggle by the force of military government, the activism of Ken Saro-Wiwa has had a profound impact on ethno-regional struggles and environmental campaign in Nigeria. The establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) is indirectly one of the legacies of the Ogoni struggle. The Commission was established to oversee the disbursement of funds and execution of projects in the oil producing areas. Also, as a result of the struggle, the government increased the revenue allocation of the oil-producing area from one to three percent. In addition, the establishment of National Human Rights Commission, following the visit of the UN verification team after the execution of the Ogoni activists, the new environmental consciousness in the Nigeria polity, the re-awakening of the oil industries to environmental protection and community development, and the global focus on Nigeria were among the legacies of the Ogoni struggle.

Most enduring is the continuous struggles of the people of the Niger-Delta region, particularly the youth. Drawing inspiration largely from the Ogoni struggle, there have been proliferations of ethno-regional organisations and violent struggles in the area. Rampart youths have been kidnapping expatriate workers of the notable oil companies operating in the area, using them as bargains to win concessions from the companies and the government.

Apart from the Niger Delta region, ethno-regional groups also played prominent role in the politics of the South-Western Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba, right through independence struggle to the contemporary period.

### Egbe Afenifere: The Pan-Yoruba Socio-Cultural Organisation

Yoruba nationalism, as a distinct project, emerged from the larger Nigerian nationalism in the struggle for independence. In Nigeria, like other African countries, ethnic and religious groups were very formidable in the resistance struggles against imperialism.

Political opposition to colonialism was organised under the banner of several types of association that were ostensibly non-political. They provided available opportunities for the free expression of attitudes, critical of colonial rule. One group consisted of professional and business associations, such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers, which provided leadership for political groups; the Nigerian Law Associations, which brought together lawyers, many of who had been educated in Britain; and the Nigerian Produce Traders Association.

Yoruba nationalism arose from the intense Yoruba/Igbo rivalries between 1940 and 1947 when the leadership of the Yorubas in the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), was directly challenged by the emergence of Nnamdi Azikwe, who became the symbol of Igbo achievement and emancipation. These rivalries precipitated a crisis within the ranks of NYM that eventually led to its collapse, losing all its Igbo membership. Before its collapse, NYM had championed the struggle against colonialism at the initial stage. Though, the most important political activities of that period were initially confined almost exclusively to Lagos and led mainly by the Yoruba intelligentsia, the leaders were national in their outlook. These leaders manifested their national orientation and commitment by their responses to such issues as the land tenure system; Africanisation of the civil service; separation of the judiciary from the executive; introduction of direct taxation and other national issues.

As a result of the collapse of NYM, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and other prominent Yoruba members of the NYM were disillusioned and concluded that the realities on ground did not support their original idea of a 'pan- Nigerian nationalism.'<sup>23</sup> This development, to some extent

<sup>23</sup> S. O. Arifalo, *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A Study in Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism* (Akure: Stebak Books, 2001).



would later influence Awolowo's ideas on federalism. Also, it was this development that led to the formation of an organisation that would weld together the Yoruba speaking people as the first practical step to the building of a lasting national unity. The organisation was formed in London in 1945 and was known as 'Egbe Omo Oduduwa'.

The fundamentals of Yoruba nationalism were based on a liberal democratic state governed by a competent, widely-respected leadership; founded on social justice, equity, equality, enlightenment and freedom.<sup>24</sup> The goal was true federalism reflected in regional autonomy and a total devolution of power from the centre to the region. These also form the core values of Egbe Afenifere, the reincarnation of Egbe Omo Oduduwa.

Expounding his thesis on federalism in 1946, Chief Obafemi Awolowo argued that:

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh, or French. The word "Nigerians" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.<sup>25</sup>

For Awolowo, the differences among the varying ethnic groups in languages, social organisation, religion and educational advancement slowed down progress in certain sections and thereby caused frustration among more ambitious groups. He argues that each of the constituent units of Nigeria was 'a nation by itself with many tribes and clans', and they should be allowed to solve their problems, according to their peculiar traditions and ideals.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the basis of Yoruba nationalism like the Ogoni struggle is rooted in 'self-determination' within the Nigerian state.

The aims and the objectives of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa were to unite the various groups in Yorubaland, and to create and foster the idea

<sup>24</sup> S. O. Arifalo, *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa*.

<sup>25</sup> *West Africa Pilot* March 2nd, 1946.

<sup>26</sup> Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947).

of a single nationalism in Yorubaland. This was clearly spelt out in the constitution of the society thus:

The Egbe, as a cultural organisation would study the political problems of Yorubaland, combat the disintegrating forces of tribalism, stamp out discrimination within the group and against minorities, and generally infuse the idea of a single nationality throughout the region.<sup>27</sup>

When the colonial officers could no longer treat the nationalist movements and the demands for self-determination by Nigerians with hubris, constitutions that sought to balance the cultural diversity of the people were promulgated and elections were held under them. The constitutional development was partly a response to growing ethnic consciousness, which was fastly determining political groupings. It was in this context that Egbe Omo Oduduwa formed the Action Group (AG), the political party that maintained a firm hold over the Western region from the early 1950s until its proscription by the military government in 1966. Thus, Egbe Omo Oduduwa became the platform for the propagation of the ideology of the party and also a vital link between the party and the traditional rulers. For the ordinary people in the rural areas of Yorubaland whose political and cultural interest were almost inseparable, there was no clear distinction between Egbe Omo Oduduwa and Egbe Afenifere, the Yoruba name for Action Group. Thus, Egbe Afenifere became the political platform on which Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a socio-cultural group advanced the interests of the Yoruba people within the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The revival of Yoruba nationalism in the 1990s was anchored on opposition to decades of military autocracy, and the Northern oligarchy's claim to power, and the struggle for the realisation of the presidential mandate of MKO Abiola in the June 12, 1993 presidential election. It was for the realisation of these objectives that the Egbe Afenifere was revived on the basis of the original structures of the

<sup>27</sup> S. O. Arifalo, *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A Study in Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism* (Akure: Stebak Books, 2001), pp. 68-130.



defunct Egbe Omo Oduduwa. It was largely made up of political associates of the late Obafemi Awolowo and other Nigerians who believed in his political ideals. The group had organised under the umbrella of 'Owo Meeting' before the adoption of the name 'Egbe Afenifere' in January 1993

The core values of Afenifere are firmly rooted in the political philosophy of Obafemi Awolowo. Afenifere was largely instrumental in rallying together all the progressive groups in Nigeria during the democratisation struggle. For example, the group was responsible for the formation of the People Solidarity Party (PSP) that was not registered alongside others by the Babangida regime. Afenifere also played crucial role in the coalition that was formed by pro-democracy movements to resist military dictatorship. As a group, Afenifere became the rallying point for the Yoruba at a crucial time in the history of the nation. For a people known for their frontline role in the struggles for freedom, justice and good governance right from the colonial era, Afenifere was a ready platform in the struggle for the actualisation of the annulled 1993 presidential election. It was not surprising therefore that under the leadership of Afenifere, the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), a coalition of pro-democracy groups became a formidable force against prolonged military rule.<sup>28</sup>

In the transition programme of General Abdusalam Abubakar, Egbe Afenifere together with other sixteen progressive unions established the Alliance for Democracy (AD), thus following the footsteps of Egbe Omo Oduduwa. The Alliance for Democracy subsequently became the political platform on which Afenifere propagated and protected the interest of the Yoruba. For the Afenifere, only a pan-Yoruba political party could offer the legitimate platform to canvass for the core values they stood for, particularly, true federalism and national restructuring.

A parallel organisation that operated in a similar way to Afenifere is Ohanaeze-Ndigbo, which was established to champion the cause of

<sup>28</sup> NADECO was a formidable opposition force to military dictatorship between 1993 and 1998, so much that a former Chief of General Staff under military dictatorship dubbed the group 'Agbako' — meaning a 'terror'!

Igbo nationalism. However, while the Yoruba nationalism has been most enduring, the rabid Igbo nationalism had been softened by force of defeat in the Biafran war, coupled with their mercantile and non-sedentary tendencies. The Igbo nationalism as expressed through the Ohanaeze-Ndigbo is the focus of discussion in the next section

### Ohanaeze-Ndigbo (Igbo Citizens Assembly)

The Igbo 'question' in Nigerian politics remains one of the lingering and unresolved political issues since the end of the civil war. The Igbo predicated their demands on their perceived marginalisation in the nation's power calculation by the successive governments after the war. According to their persistent argument, they have no visible presence in the power hierarchy of the federal bureaucracy, in the armed forces, and in the commerce and industry sector. They also contend that they are deliberately being screened out from positions of political power. This is apart from what they view as the 'deliberate refusal of successive governments to develop and renovate the infrastructural facilities in the South East zone, which over the years remain the woes of Ndigbo.'<sup>29</sup>

The Igbo seem to have a valid case in their claim for marginalisation. Successive military governments appeared not to have forgotten the 'experiences' of the civil war. Rather than implementing the post-war slogan of 'reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction, which promised integration, equality and brotherhood for the returning 'Biafrans', they implemented a hidden agenda that suppressed a level-playing ground. The Igbo would not be entrusted with sensitive and strategic positions, either in the military or the government bureaucracy.<sup>30</sup> Through deliberate and covert government policies like the quota system and ethnic balancing within the federation, Igbo

<sup>29</sup> Since the end of the civil war to date, only one officer of Igbo origin was appointed as Chief of Staff while the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani have held this position for the armed forces many times. Similarly, no Igbo officer has been appointed as defence minister. While the Yoruba has produced three Nigerian leaders and the Hausa/Fulani six leaders, there has not been any Igbo Head of State after the war.

<sup>30</sup> Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, elder statesman and a chieftain of Ohanaeze: Interview at Lagos, Nigeria; 23rd October 2002.



republicanism has been repressed. Individuals, who would have normally been promoted within the military, the ministries, and the universities through self-effort and merit, have been systematically passed over. These failures and hindrances have given rise to a collective feeling of 'abandonment, betrayal and frustration; which inevitably led to the revival of Igbo nationalism, championed by the Ohanaeze-Ndigbo.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to the establishment of Ohanaeze, the Igbo had remained completely disorganised and disillusioned, following the loss of the 'Biafran project.'<sup>32</sup> The birth of Ohanaeze in 1976 was therefore conceived to fill the vacuum created by the defunct Igbo State Union before the outbreak of the civil war. Ohanaeze was therefore, created to provide a 'rallying forum for Ndigbo in Nigeria and Diaspora in their collective struggle for 'self-determination' within the Nigerian state.'<sup>33</sup> Literally, 'Ohanaeze' means 'community, the people and their leaders'. It is an appealing nomenclature that captures the essence of governance in Igbo land. The leader (Eze) is a mere messenger, delegated by the people (Oha) to do their bidding, as his potentials would allow, but the central authority remains with the gathering of the people (assembly). In essence, Ohanaeze symbolises 'leadership directed by the people'. Ohanaeze was expected to serve as a focal point of reference, direction and to provide a collective leadership in matters affecting the interest, solidarity and general welfare of Ndigbo in the context of Nigeria state. It was also to 'promote, develop and advance Igbo language and culture, and to inspire confidence and pride in Ndigbo, and encourage their achievement orientation in various aspects of life'.<sup>34</sup> As a non-partisan, non-sectarian organisation, Ohanaeze committed itself 'to the principles of freedom, equality, justice, free enterprise and the struggle to preserve the Igbo corporate existence that is free from rancour and submissive to the will of God.'

<sup>31</sup> This was the unsuccessful attempt at secession, which resulted into civil war between 1967 and 1970.

<sup>32</sup> Mrs Nkechi, Chukwurah, Lagos, Nigeria, 15th October 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Ohanaeze Constitution.

<sup>34</sup> Ohanaeze Constitution.

The Igbo question in Nigerian politics is basically centred on the enthronement of social justice, equity, mutual participation and integration. From a wider viewpoint, the Igbo question is an 'integral part' of the unresolved 'national question', which continues to bother the Nigerian state, the basis of its corporate existence, allocation of resources, the minority question and equitable arrangement of power sharing.<sup>35</sup>

Although established as a 'socio-cultural' organisation, Ohanaeze-Ndigbo has been using 'cultural renaissance' for creating political awareness, grass roots mobilisation, and to draw attention of governments to the 'alleged injustices' against Ndigbo by successive governments since independence. For example, Ohanaeze presented a petition before the Oputa Panel on human rights violations. The representation of Igbo by Ohanaeze legitimised the organisation as the authentic voice of the Ndigbo. The presentation before the panel re-awakened the Igbo to the degraded state of their psyche, and created an intense desire to re-discover themselves.

Ohanaeze's petition was hinged on the thesis that the North, working in concert with some other parts of the country had embarked on a 'deliberate programme to marginalise and exterminate the Igbo.'<sup>36</sup> Ohanaeze defines marginalisation as: 'a purposeful denial of rights of some members of a given unit by some other members of the group who control the power of allocation of resources.'<sup>37</sup> Continuing, Ohanaeze listed those rights being violated as: 'the right to life, right to means of livelihood, right to human dignity, right to freedom of movement, right to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria and other rights enshrined in the constitution.'

The remedies Ohanaeze sought include financial compensation for the bereaved and dismissed Biafran officers; compensation for the

<sup>35</sup> K. Olayode, *Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Emmanuel Onwubiko, 'Igbo Losses Counted at Oputa Panel' (*The Guardian*, Lagos, 26th July, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Onwubiko, 'Igbo Losses Counted at Oputa Panel' (*The Guardian*, Lagos, 26th July, 2001).



scorched earth policy during the war and reversals of economic marginalisation and restitutions where possible. Apart from demanding a 'national apology' from 'Nigeria' for the injuries inflicted against Igbo people, Ohanaeze also sought an assurance of 'Ozomena' - a national vow that Ndigbo will never be an object of victimisation in Nigeria again.

While making suggestions on how to move the nation forward, the group asserted that the constitution must address more explicitly and unequivocally the foundation question of the character of the Nigerian state. It therefore demanded a sovereign national conference of all the ethnic groups as the proper and effective forum for resolving the national question. The agenda of the proposed conference as put forward by Ohanaeze was summarised thus:

To discuss and agree on the control by each zone of the mineral resources located in its territory, the entrenchment of the religious neutrality of the state on a clearer and more secure basis, the restructuring of the Nigerian polity, based on true federalism and; along the six geo-political zones as the appropriate units while retaining the existing states as units of government within the zones, the re-organisation of the security forces, an equitable formula for the sharing of common revenue, and separate constitutions for the centre and the zones.<sup>38</sup>

It is clearly reflected that the demands of Ohanaeze were similar to the 'Ogoni's Bill of Rights' as articulated by MOSOP and the Afenifere's persistent clamour for 'self-determination' along the path of true federalism. Also, like the Ogoni and Afenifere, Ohanaeze equally affirmed its commitment to 'the corporate and indivisible existence of Nigeria as a nation'.

Unlike the Afenifere, Ohanaeze does not have a political structure to propagate and realise its trumpeted political vision for the Ndigbo. Also, it does not have charter or moral position that empowers it to sanction its members that are putting personal and party interests over and above collective aspiration of the Ndigbo. In other words,

<sup>38</sup> Ben Nwabueze, "Ohanaeze Message to Ndigbo on the occasion of Igbo Day", 29th September, 2001.

Ohanaeze is far from realising its goal of becoming a socio-political force in Igbo land. It is yet a voluntary cultural organisation without any power of chastisement or enforcement. It can only make moral propositions to the individual politicians, which they are at liberty to accept or reject.

More importantly is the stern republicanism that mirror the fundamental character and complexion of Igbo politics, which is apparently whittling away the capacity and strong central voice represented by Ohanaeze. The Igbo are individually minded people with 'measured loyalty' to central leadership structures. The Igbo though may have 'Ezes' (kings), believe that 'If you are a king, you are a king in your own family.'<sup>39</sup> This core trait appears to be the fuel on which multiplicity of independent and often self-contradictory agendas are fed in Igboland. Igbo politics is not anchored on specific individuals or institutions. It responds to its environment dynamically. Likewise, any strong central leader does not moderate the Igbo political game plan. Rather than pivot on personality cultism as observed in Yoruba politics, Igbo politics oscillates from person to person, perhaps yielding to those influences that could perceptibly move their group forward either immediately or in the future. This fluidity and events-driven character stems from absence of absolute loyalty to a central institution.

Despite its shortcomings, Ohanaeze Ndigbo has made a tremendous impact on politically mobilising the Igbo and articulating a common political objective. They have also made some progress in closing the cracks and loopholes through which crafty Northern politicians, specifically; the Hausa/Fulani divided the Igbo people and exploited their political weakness to assert their hegemony over the entire nation.

### Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF)

The Hausa and Fulani are often grouped together because the Fulani, who conquered the Hausa (first gradually through infiltration over

<sup>39</sup> V. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston) *West Africa Pilot* March 2nd, 1946, 1965.



centuries, then decisively in the Islamic Jihad of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), adopted the Hausa language and culture and intermarried with them to such an extent that the two groups have become difficult to distinguish.<sup>40</sup> This group have two cultural elements that most sharply distinguish them from the Igbo and to a lesser extent, the Yoruba: a deep but diffuse Islamic faith and a tradition of large-scale rule through centralised authoritarian states.

The structure of Emirate power was highly centralised. The Emirs appointed the administrative elites, conferred aristocratic titles, and directly or indirectly controlled all offices down to the village chiefs and ward heads. The scope of his authority was immense, primarily because it was theocratic, resting on a deep religious foundation: the duty of Muslim government is to 'command the good and forbid the evil', according to the law of the Koran.<sup>41</sup> As the 'sole interpreter of divine legislation' as manifested in the scriptural writings, the Emirs could effectively exercise enormous legislative power as well. Indeed, the scope of his authority and the basis of its legitimacy were reflected in the expression, 'the Emir is the shadow of God.'<sup>42</sup> Tolerance of opposition was antithetical to the autocratic political style of the North. The patterns of clientage and deference to authority, the immense concentration of power in the Emir and the threat of victimisation by him, intended to inhibit any opposition, even from within the ranks of the ruling stratum. Almost absolute power produced an 'almost equally absolute duty of obedience on the part of the mass of the citizens, a duty which was in no way abated by Islam, which enjoins on its members, a seemingly unconditional subservience to the ruler.'<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958).

<sup>41</sup> Victor Low, *Three Nigerian Emirates: A Study in Oral History* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972.

<sup>42</sup> Paden, John. *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

<sup>43</sup> B. J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* London: Frank Cass & Company, 1968.

From the above structure of the Northern society, we can easily understand why there was a fundamental difference between the political aspirations of the leaders of the North and South. In the South, though in some cases traditional chiefs have been co-opted by the ruling class to provide legitimacy and popular acceptance; political leadership largely sprang from the people, that is, from the grassroots. In the North, however, the ruling class made up of the sons and kinsmen of the Emirs took over the political leadership of the people. They expectedly would represent their own class interests, rather than the popular will of the people. While opposition was not tolerated in the North, the South by contrast, had cultural tradition of opposition emanating from the wider dispersion of authority: a certain respect for rights of criticism and opposition, stemming from the limits of centralised authority. Also, in the North, power was used to preserve the position of a traditional dominant class, which incorporated rising commercial and professional elements in a subordinate role. By contrast, in the South, the ruling parties were engines of class formation, inaugurated and controlled by modern professional and business elites, who entrusted the traditional rulers in subordinate positions.

With the emergence of competitive politics, the colonial administration structured elections in the North to favour the aristocratic party against its radical opposition. Colonial officers were instrumental in identifying 'the future responsible political leaders of the North' whom they encouraged to organise politically.<sup>44</sup> This saw the emergence of a new generation of northern aristocrats, educated in British schools and thoroughly versed in colonial administrative bureaucracy.

At a meeting of the Northern educated elites in Kano in December 1948, a 'cultural organisation 'known as 'Jamiyya Mutanen Arewa' (the Northern People's Congress) was formed, apparently influenced by the political activities in the South.<sup>45</sup> The stated objectives of the

<sup>44</sup> James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958).

<sup>45</sup> G. A. Kwanashie, *The Making of the North in Nigeria 1900-1965* (Kaduna: Arewa House, 2002).



organisation, 'to combat the three fatal evils, namely: laziness, corruption and ignorance' clearly showed that its interest went beyond cultural affairs.<sup>46</sup> In 1951, the Congress was converted to a political party with the slogan: One North, One People, Irrespective of Religion, Rank or Tribe'. Unlike the other parties that developed at the period, the Congress's conception of the North was monolithic, both territorially and culturally. It aimed to represent all communities and all social classes within the region. Among other things for example, the party promised to northernise all the region's public services so as to entrust Northerners with the task of governing the region. From the start also, the party promised to ensure freedom of religion and to respect and promote the culture and tradition of all groups except those that were not conducive to what it regarded as 'contemporary idea of progress'. It was through the articulation of these interests and by providing for the aggregation of elite interests across the region in its leadership, that the party built up an active membership that has been described as representing 'a coalition of interests that included hereditary rulers, traditional chiefs, the western educated elites, the merchants, peasants and the malams.'<sup>47</sup>

Unlike Afenifere, MOSOP and Ohanaeze-Ndigbo, which represented definite ethnic groups, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) is a regional political pressure group that emerged as countervailing force to the resurgence of ethno-regional groupings in the South. It was a realignment of forces to revive the idea of 'monolithic North', which was championed by the defunct NPC under the leadership of Ahmadu Bello.

Specifically, the ACF came into existence on Monday, March 8, 2000, following a resolution of a committee of Northern traditional rulers, former heads of state and eminent leaders of the North to fuse together the various northern organisations and interest groups. Against the background of a wave of violent religious and ethnic disturbances being witnessed in the region, especially the Kaduna crises, the

<sup>46</sup> NPC, *Constitution and Rules* (Zaria: Gaskiya Press, 1963).

<sup>47</sup> K. Olayode, *Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2004.

prevailing situation was tense and desperate, threatening the survival of the unity of the North. But, of more concern was the absence of any cohesive leadership or articulate plan of action for the entire region while government seemed helpless to address the situation.<sup>1</sup> At the meeting, there was a consensus on the need for a forum where the 'traditional rulers, technocrats and holders of executive power can meet and agree on what need to be done to achieve a redefinition of Arewa and a process of accommodation and inclusion that involve all the people of the North'. Thus, the Emirs resolved to spearhead a process of restoring the legendary unity of Arewa involving all the people of the region. The Chairman of the meeting, the Sultan of Sokoto, implored all the previous organisations that had been championing Northern interests to dissolve and be subsumed under a new initiative to be known as 'Arewa Consultative Forum'. Among the organisations that formed the ACF were the Turaki Committee of former President Shehu Shagari, the Northern Elders Forum, and the Unity and Development Forum.

The ACF was established with the sole objective of 'identifying and protecting northern interests within the context of one Nigeria.'<sup>48</sup> It specifically focuses on the age-long goal of defending and maintaining the oneness of Arewa people, 'irrespective of ethnic and religious differences since the people of the North are heirs to common culture and tradition and have been so, together with many other groups in the West Africa sub-region, long before the establishment of British colonialism.'<sup>49</sup>

According to its constitution, the aims and objective of the Forum shall be: To foster and strengthen the foundation of Northern unity in the context of one Nigeria; to set up machinery for regular dialogue to ensure that issues likely to cause breach of the peace are settled amicably and promptly; co-ordinate efforts to build bridges, confidence, and strengthen relationships among all the people of the North and of Nigeria as a whole, and establish linkages and contacts with political and

<sup>48</sup> ACF Constitution, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> ACF Constitution, 2001.



community leadership in order to harmonize approaches towards finding solutions to peculiar problems facing the North and the country as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

The ACF, like the Afenifere, MOSOP, and Ohanaeze, believes in the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation, but disapproves of the clamouring for 'national restructuring, resource control, rotational presidency and federalism', the issues that form the basis of ethno-regional nationalism in the South. According to its secretary-general, the 'existing constitutional framework and institutional arrangements are sufficient to redress any grievances in the polity'. Apart from ACF, other Northern institutions and opinion leaders are clearly opposed to any form of political restructuring of the country or a Sovereign National Conference. This opposition may probably be due to the fear of losing out its structural dominance, which has been the basis of political hegemony since independence.

Ironically, the ACF that championed the candidature of a Southerner for the presidency in 1999 has been most vocal in its accusation of 'marginalisation' against the president since his inauguration. Thus, the ACF decided to champion the 'perceived northern agenda' in the 2003 general election - snatching power back to the North and installing a president that respects and guarantees the interests of the North, Mohammed Buhari, who was generally perceived as the ACF candidate in the presidential election contested and lost to the incumbent president, Olusegun Obasanjo.

While the marginalisation cry of the North may seem bogus within the larger context of national spread of political appointments and resource allocation, it has been the rallying point of the ACF in its opposition to the re-election of the incumbent president.

### **Ethno-Regional Organisations and Conflicts in Democratic Nigeria**

The restoration of democracy raised high hopes among many Nigerians for a speedy and peaceful restoration of the issues of the national

question. However, the capability of the new democratic government to address these issues was largely constrained by its institutional weakness, which was a fall out of decades of military dictatorships. For example, the party-structures and the legislatures that were non-existent during military rule emerged too weak and inexperienced to respond to the challenges of post-transitional conflicts. Also, the police and the judiciary had been greatly enfeebled and subjected to government manipulation during the military era, thereby lacking the public credibility and popular confidence to arbitrate on conflictual issues.

In addition, the inadequacy of the constitution to address the national question, define the nature and sphere of political authority and power, provide for the autonomy of the constituent units of the federation, and guarantee the rights of citizens in the context of a larger democratic framework precipitates numerous conflicts and crises at the socio-economic, religious and political levels. For instance, the process that culminated in the 1999 constitution, which ushered in the current democratic order ignored the 'foundational issues' that have bedevilled Nigeria's ability to enthrone a truly accountable, transparent, and democratic order. The draft that was approved after some 'amendments' by the military council, therefore, failed to satisfy peoples' expectations.

Consequently, with such expectations not being met, the people resorted to venting their disappointment with violence. It has been estimated that between 1999 and 2002, over fifty ethno-religious conflicts were recorded in Nigeria in which more than twenty-five thousand lives were lost and property worth billions of Naira destroyed.<sup>51</sup> A chronicle of some of the recent conflicts portrayed danger for Nigeria's nascent democracy. Some of the most notable of these conflicts were: the Yoruba/ Fulani conflict at Sagamu, 1999; the Hausa/Fulani retaliatory strike against the Yoruba at Kano, October/November, 1999; the destruction of Odi, Balyesa State by the Army in retaliation for the murder of twelve policemen by local militias, November, 1991; the Kaduna ethno-religious conflict, 2001; the

<sup>50</sup> ACF Constitution, 2001.

<sup>51</sup> *The Guardian*, October 22nd, 2001.



Jos ethnic crisis, 2001; the Tiv-Jukun conflict, 2001, and; the 'Miss World' riots in Kaduna and Abuja, November/December, 2002.<sup>52</sup>

In the oil-producing region of the south-south, resource control and environmental conflicts waged by ethnic militias of the Niger Delta have become an endemic stigma on the oil-rich region and Nigeria in general. These conflicts are efforts at seeking redress after long years of marginalisation and environmental degradation under succeeding military regimes. Some of the interest and pressure groups opposing the government in the oil-producing areas have now metamorphosed into ethnic militias, who liberally engage in sabotaging oil pipelines, piracy, abduction of expatriate oil company workers, and also militarily prepared to engage federal troops in bloody confrontations. Among these groups are: the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA); the Bakassi Boys; the Niger/Delta Volunteers Force; the Movement for the Survival of the Itshekiri Ethnic Nationality; the Mass Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOBA); the Chicoco Movement, and of recent; the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND).

The religious factor has emerged as a primary cause of some of these conflicts following the 'politicisation' of the 'Sharia question', and the adoption of the Sharia law by some of the core Northern states as the basis of civil and criminal law in these parts of the country. This has generated tension, particularly in some states with substantial number of Christians like Kaduna, Niger, and Kano.

The concern of most Nigerians with the escalation of ethno-religious crises is its impact on democratic consolidation. As Nigerian's contemporary history has shown, periods of great socio-political instability are usually climaxed by the overthrow of the civilian government and the assumption of power by the military. Beside the threat of the military, the growing domestic instability and turmoil seriously negates the ideals of democracy. Hence, democratic consolidation in a context of heightened inter-ethnic rivalry, division and distrust seems quite unlikely.

## Conclusion

The organisations examined in this chapter differ in many respects from the conventional human rights NGOs. They became involved in political struggles, sought major restructuring; focus on collective grievances; and were highly selective in their use of human rights language. The basis of their struggle is 'self-determination' within a national entity. They often utilised traditional symbols and cultural solidarity for grass roots mobilisation. Their sense of unity to a large extent was defined by resentment against exploitation by 'outsiders' – even though these 'outsiders' were citizens of the same country. For instance, the Ogoni and Igbo nationalism were motivated by deep-seated feelings of economic injustice and political marginalisation. Almost the same logic drives the Afenifere's resolve to roll out a political party. Perhaps, more than the Igbo, the Yoruba feel a sense of political marginalisation in the deliberate frustration of their past attempts to capture federal power, the most recent being the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election.

Thus, the struggle for power sharing was reduced to a struggle for hegemony among the three major ethnic groups, namely the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo. Of the three major contending groups, the Hausa/Fulani became the dominant group. The over three decades of military dictatorship have resulted in an increasing hegemony of the Hausa/Fulani faction to the near-exclusion of the other two contenders for power. The Yoruba and Igbo have been complaining bitterly about their exclusion from power, and marginalisation in the allocation of resources. The southern minority groups as typified by the Ogoni struggle also believe that they deserve to have a substantial control of oil revenue, which are extracted from their communities instead of the 'tokens' they receive in form of revenue allocation from the federal account. It is against this background that the phenomenon of ethno-regional organisations should be understood.

The background to the emergence of ethno-regional organisations was the utilisation of ethnic solidarity by the governing elites across the various regions as means of bargaining for political power and gaining

<sup>52</sup> *Vanguard*, September 16th, 2001.



economic concessions from the centre. However, while the elite factor is a major impetus for ethnic mobilisation, it is important to emphasise that ordinary people also participate actively out of a feeling that they will benefit from the expressions of ethnic mobilisation, which they usually perceive as the best way to advance their interest. Numerous scholars have discussed ethnicity as 'bargaining tool' in the struggle for economic accumulation and political power.<sup>53</sup> This view agrees with the position canvassed by Glickman that ethnicity in Africa is largely instrumental as opposed to primordial. This has been demonstrated in the Nigerian experience under discussion. Further studies have also shown that there is a greater likelihood for an increase in ethnic conflicts in the immediate wake of political liberalisation. Indeed, as argued by Ndegwa that, 'in some African countries, democratic openings have intensified ethnic competition.'<sup>54</sup> The spectre of ethnic violence in Nigeria in the post-transition period, particularly in the Niger Delta region and some parts of the North equally supports this assertion.

By encouraging a clientelist attitude towards the state, whose resources are perceived as a 'pie' from which each group must try to carve out as large slice as possible, and by hampering any efforts at co-operative nation-building, the emergence of a wider cohesive national identity, which is essential for the implementation of developmental strategies has been stymied.

Conceptually, where there are scarce resources, there is bound to be competition. This is clearly evident from the nature of conflicts besieging the African continent. In the Nigerian experience, the struggle for access to economic resources, predominantly, proceeds from oil revenue have intensified the competition for 'capturing state power'. This often results in conflicts of significant proportion.

<sup>53</sup> Osaghea Eghosa, *Ethnicity and its Management in Africa: The Democratisation Link* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1994).

<sup>54</sup> S. Ndegwa, "Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of two transition moments in Kenyan Politics" *American Political Science Review* 3, 1977.

## Reflections on the Ijo Struggle for Self-Determination in Nigeria

Youpele Banigo

### Introduction

In many ways the story of the Ijo<sup>1</sup> people can be described as a history of self-determination; a struggle of a people to survive in the face of both natural and man-made challenges. First, the Niger Delta environment, at its beginnings, some seven thousand years ago, posed a challenging territory, when the Ijo people, the earliest occupants, arrived there to exploit its unfriendly environment.<sup>2</sup> The fact that today, the Ijo people still constitute the largest single group in the region demonstrates the resilience and determination of the people to weather the storm of the hostile environment. Second, from the 15th century, the Europeans arrived in the region, and threatened the strategic middlemen role of the Niger Delta people in the legitimate trade era. The Ijo people, who formed a vital link between the African producers in the interior and the European buyers on the coast, 'within reach of the gunboat', came under severe military attacks.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ijo, Ijaw and Izon mean the same people under study and are interchangeable.

<sup>2</sup> N. Nzewunwa, *The Niger Delta: its Prehistoric Economy and Culture* (Oxford: BAR International Series 75, 1980); Alagoa, E. J., Anozie, F., and N. Nzewunwa, eds., *The Early History of Niger Delta Niger Delta* (Hamburg: Hulmut Buske Verlag, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Ayandele, 1980, "External Relations with Europeans; Explorers, Missionaries and Traders, in O. Ikimi (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980) p. 368.



Conscious of their sovereignty and determined to safeguard their long-cherished freedoms, the Ijo people carried out a bitter and long struggle with the British Empire until 1895 when Nembe, the brave city-state,<sup>4</sup> the last standing Ijo state became liquidated.<sup>5</sup>

The Nigerian state, built on the erstwhile principalities, is a contraction of British frontier capitalism.<sup>6</sup> The colonial economy was metropolis driven,<sup>7</sup> a situation that subsequently triggered-off a nationwide anti-colonial movement, that presupposed that Britain was a 'common foe', and the driving away of this foe would lead to an independent nation, based on equity, justice and peace.<sup>8</sup> This was hardly achieved. The retreating exploitative colonial structure, desirous of maintaining a toehold on the post-colonial economy, bequeathed a system that attempted to preserve a continuity of the colonial order. The custodians of the new order were the emerging political elites, almost exclusively drawn from the three largest ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) who seemed to be more committed in responding to external determinants than orchestrating populist agenda for true nation-building.

Thus the expected dividends of self-rule suddenly became a mirage, instigating, amongst the minorities, including the Ijo people, a fresh search or struggle for a new Nigeria that would guarantee their continued survival.

This paper attempts to critically examine the long struggle of the Ijo people in the Niger Delta, historically locating its origins and its causes. The paper posits that self-determination and democracy are complementary, and concludes that the durability of our 'nascent' democracy depends on the readiness of the state to ensure that every

<sup>4</sup> E. J. Alagoa, *The Brave City-State: A History of Nembe-Brass in the Niger Delta* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> Y. Banigo, *The State, Trans-national Corporation and Indigenous Peoples: The case of the Ijo-speaking Peoples*, an unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 2006, pp. 70-80.

<sup>6</sup> O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> T. Falola, ed., *Britain and Nigeria: Exploitation and Development* (London: Zed, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> G. I. Obuoforibo, "Regional Government" in Alagoa, (ed) *Land and People of Bayelsa state: Central Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Publication, 1999, 229-233.

group, irrespective of its size, should have a comfortable space in the polity.

### Ijo Struggle for Self-determination in Nigeria

Self-determination has always been a provocative issue in most plural societies where the State always contends with primal identities in order to enforce a high level of political modernisation.<sup>9</sup> The drive of the state to eradicate core traditional identities-language, culture, religion-and replace them by a single collective identity, mostly political, is perhaps one of the causes of self-determination by marginal groups in the state.

The incident of self-determination in the State is a clear indication that some group(s) strongly feel they are surcharged by the actions of the state on issues that directly affect them. Thus such people therefore equate self-determination to 'freedom', 'liberty', 'equity', 'emancipation' and the 'pursuit of happiness', and accept it as a fundamental right to reposition their stakes. On the other hand, those who are opposed to self-determination, either because they are the operators of the state or they appear to be benefiting from *status quo*, qualify it as 'separatism', 'secession' 'political independence', and argue that the drive for self-determination by marginal group can threaten global stability and peace.<sup>10</sup>

These two opposing views can be harmonized, as the study by Halperin *et.al* have demonstrated<sup>11</sup>. The study made a distinction between 'external' and 'internal' self-determination. While the former is the clamour of a people to determine its future international status and liberate itself from 'alien' rule, which may lead to the break-up of the state, the latter suggests that self-determination is the entitlement of a people to choose its political allegiance, to influence the political order

<sup>9</sup> A. Lijhart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) pp.10-15; S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing World* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 32-35.

<sup>10</sup> D. Clark and A. Williamson, eds., *Self-determination: International Perspectives* (NY: St. Martins Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> M. S. D. Halperin, *Self-determination in the New World Order*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992.



under which it lives, and preserve its ethnic, historical, and cultural identity.

As Mullerson rightly points out,

The main trend in the development of the principle of self-determination is that it is becoming employed more and more in support of an entitlement to democracy than as an encouragement to fragment of the political map of the world.<sup>12</sup>

International humanitarian law endorses self-determination as an instrument which minority or marginal groups can invoke when their rights are infringed upon, by the state under which they exist, and obliges the state to ensure that minorities' rights (religion, language, sex, environment, land) are adequately protected for, by law.

Amongst other major human rights documents only the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (adopted June 27, 1981, came into force October 21, 1986) contains any reference to self-determination. Article 20(1) sets forth the right to self-determination:

All peoples shall have right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen.

Infringement on the rights of minorities is regarded as a violation of international law, and victims are entitled to seek redress against their own governments.

There is therefore, a link between self-determination and democracy, and when this link is strengthened it can serve the greater interest of the state and at the same time, free self-determination from separatists. In other words, it is the denial of self-determination by the state, not its pursuit by marginal groups that leads to conflicts. And the denial of self-determination is essentially incompatible with true democracy. Only if peoples' rights to self-determination is respected, can a democratic society flourish, and only within a truly democratic

<sup>12</sup> R. Mullerson, *International Law, Rights and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 72.

framework, in which all other human rights are given due recognition, will the rights to self-determination be free from the separatists.<sup>13</sup>

The Nigerian State in its present form is structurally and institutionally imbalanced in favour of the major ethnic groups. Richard's 1945 constitution, which introduced a regional policy in the country effectively spilt up and sandwiched the Ijo people between the Eastern and Western regions. As a result the Ijo people became a minority group in the two regions. The sovereignty they had enjoyed before the colonial era was completely taken away from them as the larger ethnic groups denied them sufficient political space in the regions.

Writing on the regionalisation policy as a tool for the internal colonialism and underdevelopment of the Ijo people, Atei Okorobia said:

If there was any single policy which was so effectively used to internally colonize and under-develop the erstwhile virile and progressive city-states of the Eastern Delta, it was the regionalisation policy that brought them under the social, political and economic domination of the larger, aggressive and self-conscious Igbo ethnic nationality. A number of political, economic and social policies and programmes were initiated and executed by the Eastern Regional Government, and these had had more negative than positive impact on the land and people of Eastern Delta.<sup>14</sup>

Modern Ijo nationalism also sprouted at this time, markedly different from the agenda of the Ijo Rivers People's League (1930), and the Ijo Tribe Union (1943). From 1944 when the Rivers Division People's League and the Rivers State Congress was inaugurated the campaign for self-determination graduated from self-identity to a separate Ijo state. State creation became important to the minorities because it gave them self-identity and space in the polity. To be denied a state was to send a

<sup>13</sup> R. Stavenhagen; "Self-Determination: Rights or Demon? In Donald Clark and Aber Williamson (ed) *Self-Determination ...*, pp.1-11.

<sup>14</sup> A. M. Okorobia, *History of the Underdevelopment of the Eastern Niger Delta AD 1500-1993* PhD Dissertation University of Port Harcourt, 1999, p. 224.



people to eternal damnation without remedy.<sup>15</sup> The plight of the Ijo people under the Eastern regional government worsened and this compelled the Ijo leaders to reach an understanding with the Action Group (AG), a major opposition party in the East to give support for the creation of Rivers State. The Ijo/Yoruba compromise instigated a mass movement of NCNC faithful to the opposition, AG in the Federal Elections of 1954. Chief N. G. Yellowe contested and won as the AG candidate for the Degema Division, using as his key election issue, the creation of Rivers State. The NCNC's loss in the Degema Division to AG triggered off more antagonism from Enugu, as some developmental benefits were withdrawn from the Ijo area.

Ijo leaders pressed on and formed the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference (RCPC) in July 4, 1956 to strengthen their emancipation from the tyranny of their neighbours. A year later RCPC received invitation from the Colonial Office to present its case in the 1957 constitutional conference in London. RCPC's demand for a separate state was rejected and the Conference referred the matter to a special commission headed by Sir Henry Willink. The Commission also rejected the demand for a separate Ijo state. Instead of creating an Ijo state as articulated by their leaders, London only recommended a development agency to address the peculiar problems of the Niger Delta area and opposed the idea of an Ijo state. The British thinking was that the agency would resolve the environmental and geographical problem of the area and thus mitigate the agitation of the people in the area.<sup>16</sup>

The failure of the London Conference to recommend an Ijo state, and the inability of the AG to press for and achieve the demand for an Ijaw state, combined with the ever-increasing weight of oppressive measures from the regional government provoked the Ijo leaders to take

<sup>15</sup> A. M. Okorobia, "History of the Underdevelopment of the Eastern Niger Delta AD 1500-1993," PhD Dissertation University of Port Harcourt, 1999, p. 226.

<sup>16</sup> H. Willinks, *Nigeria: Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1985.

more pragmatic measure to achieve a separate state.<sup>17</sup> RCPC was discarded for its non-partisan status and more radical moves were initiated. A new political party, the Niger Delta Congress (NDC), was inaugurated to field candidates for the 1959 general elections. The NDC's manifesto is perhaps the most significant statement the Ijo people made since the Akassa War (1895). A careful study of the manifesto will show that the people had reached the final constitutional stage for their struggle for self-determination. If this effort failed, violence was inevitable. Excerpts of the manifesto of the NDC party read:

The NCNC is strenuously fighting to retain the Niger Delta as part of the Eastern Region so that the growing wealth of the Special Area in Mineral Oils, port facilities and agricultural resources will be manipulated to benefit the starving millions of its supporters in the interior at the expense of the natives of the Niger Delta whence comes the wealth.

The Niger Delta should be exorcized from the Eastern and Western Regions and be constituted into a unit of the Nigerian Federation with simple governmental mechanisms seated in the territory to foster economic, political and social programmes.

The Niger Delta Congress is now warning all church members in the Niger Delta, as well as all native singers, native players and dancers, members of native clubs of all kinds, that any single vote which they may cast for the NCNC or the Action Group in constituencies in the Niger Delta is a mandate for these enemy parties to neglect and abolish the languages of the Niger Delta tribes. The only approved way of expressing your resentment against these atrocious plans of the NCNC and the Action Group is to vote for the Niger Delta Congress now and for all time.

<sup>17</sup> E. D. W. Opuogulaya, *The History of the Creation of Rivers State (Port Harcourt 1973)*; H. J. R. Dappa-Biriye, *Minority Politics in Pre- and Post-Independence Nigeria*. Port-Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press, 1995).



Away! Away! Away! with the NCNC. Away with the Action Group. Vote for the Niger Delta Congress. Vote for the Fish in a triangular net or trap.

The NDC formed an alliance with the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), the largest political party in the country with an understanding that the relationship would mutually benefit both peoples and address the age-long neglect of the area. The 1959 elections was a disaster for the Ijo people; only one candidate won on NDC platform.

Meanwhile the younger generation was observing with absolute consternation the lack of commitment of the Nigerian State and the leadership of the region to address their lot. The Ijo struggle for self-determination through a constitutional process seemed to be getting to its wits end in the region.

Isaac Boro (1938-1968), perhaps the most visible expression of the young generation described the NDC as a failure and set the agenda for a violent struggle for self-determination. His thoughts, as captured here, reflected the general level of apprehension and disillusionment among the younger generation.

In the 1959 elections, political consciousness emerged, initiated by the formation of Chief Biriy'e's Niger Delta Congress with fish as its political symbol. This symbol raised more enthusiasm than ever and people felt they were morally bound to participate in the activities of the soil and that would bring the Ijaws in line with other tribes which they agreed had their own parties.

The only success of the Niger Delta Congress was that it was able to send Milford Okilo from Brass Division (Yenagoa Province) to the Federal House...Some of the electioneering promises made by our Niger Delta Congress leaders were that the board appointments would be given to the prominent members of the area at the federal level and that state would be created, promises which the party chiefs could not fulfill for themselves.

Year after year we are clenched in tyrannical chains and led through a dark alley of perpetual political and social deprivation. Strangers in

our country! Inevitably, therefore, the day would come for us to fight for our long denied right to self-determination.<sup>18</sup>

The frustration snowballed into discontent and Isaac Boro led a gang of 150 warriors to pullout the Ijo people from Nigeria under a new state called, The Niger Delta Republic. The 'rebellion' lasted only 12 days before it was violently crushed by the Nigerian state and the leaders tried for treasonable felony. Isaac Boro and two others- Samuel Owunaro and Dick Nottingham secured the extreme penalty-death.

The wartime government of General Yakubu Gowon granted amnesty to the trio, and on 27th May 1966 created Rivers State as one of the twelve states in the country. But some scholars believe the amnesty and creation of Rivers State are 'part of Gowon's civil war plan to humiliate and weaken Odumegwu Ojukwu's Biafran Republic.'<sup>19</sup> The creation of Rivers State, though brought a sigh of relief and self-fulfilment to the people; it never addressed the problems that have always faced the Ijo people.

### Kaiaama Declaration and its Aftermath

Thirty-three years after the ill-fated Boro's Niger Delta Republic, history almost repeated itself when Ijo youths reinvented the spirit of Boro in his hometown, Kaiama. The tough-speaking youths converged there and deliberated on the 'continuous survival of the indigenous people of the Ijaw ethnic nationality of the Niger Delta within the Nigerian State', and after an entire day of deliberations the participants adopted a resolution known as the "Kaiaama Declaration". The Declaration, *inter alia* narrates the history and distinct cultural identity of the Ijo-speaking peoples, recounts the conquest of the Ijo sovereign nations by the British colonialists, recapitulates the terrible conspiratorial pattern of oppression and exploitation foisted on them by the Nigerian state and trans-national corporations (TNCs) and claims

<sup>18</sup> Isaac Boro, *The Twelve-day Revolution* edited by Tony Tebekaemi (Benin City, 1982) pp. 68-71.

<sup>19</sup> A. M. Okorobia, "History of the Underdevelopment of the Eastern Niger Delta AD 1500-1993," PhD Dissertation University of Port Harcourt, 1999, p. 234.



their entitlement to be protected by international law as indigenous peoples.

The youths resolved to ignore all obnoxious laws governing oil operations in the Niger Delta and warned all TNCs exploiting oil and gas in the area to repudiate their agreements with the federal government, and initiate a new and equitable relationship, based on informed mutual consent, with the oil-bearing communities or quit. To ensure effective implementation of the declaration, the youths formed the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) and mandated the council to dismantle the internal colonialism in the region. Thus, the IYC announced a programme of action and mobilized the people to a mass action against the continued environmental plunder by the oil companies in the area.<sup>20</sup>

Ijo leaders say that the Kaiama Declaration was an honest invitation of the Ijo youths to the Federal Government and the multinational corporations in the region for a comprehensive problem-solving dialogue. The demands of the Ijo people as contained in the Kaiama Declaration are basically resource control, environmental remediation, fiscal federalism, and internal autonomy through convocation of a national conference where every group irrespective of size would have equal opportunity to say its terms of conditions under which they intend to exist in Nigeria.<sup>21</sup> The declaration reaffirmed the commitment of the Ijo people to 'remain within Nigeria but to demand and work for self-government and resource control for the Ijaw people. The conference approved that the best way for Nigeria is a federation of ethnic nationalities. The federation should be run on the basis of equality and social justice.'

As J. B. Fumudor and F. J. Williams, Ijo leaders of the Ijaw National Congress (INC) said, in press statement, in the wake of the declaration,

The Kaiama Declaration, taken in its toasty, is nothing more than a mere request for dialogue by the youths. Except for the ultimatum, there is nothing really new in the Declaration, which we, as the

<sup>20</sup> I. Okonta and D. Orono, *Where the Vulture Feast* (Lagos: ERA, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> ICHR-Ijaw Council for Human Rights, *The Kaiama Declaration*. Port Harcourt, 1998.

elders of the Ijaw nation and the umbrella body for protecting Ijaw interests, have not articulated before in the press and public discourses. There are many instances in public discourses in which many prominent Nigerians have called for the dismantling of the country yet the 5000 Ijaw youths, who gathered at Kaiama, did say expressly in the Declaration that they were not seeking any succession.<sup>22</sup>

The demands for resource control, internal autonomy, and fiscal federalism are genuine demands citizens of Nigeria are entitled to make of their government. Professor Jide Osuntokun is one individual who thinks resource control is in tune with the constitution of Nigeria,

I am in total support of resource control because I am convinced this is in tune with true federalism. My state does not have crude oil so my views are not based on any hidden selfish agenda. I just believe that history is on the side of those advocating for resource control. When cocoa, groundnuts and palm oil, hides and skins, rubber, timber and cotton were our primary produce we had no problem in accepting revenue allocation based on derivation principle. Of course, I agree that God and not man put crude oil in the Delta, but the Niger Delta people need to be compensated for the damage done to the environment. Let other Nigerians in different states bring into the distributable pool the produce of their sweat instead of everybody waiting of the unearned income from oil.<sup>23</sup>

But the Federal Government responded differently, labelling the protests of the people as seditious and treasonable, and violently suppressed the protest. A human rights group reported that the Federal Government sent two warships with over 15,000 military personnel 'into the Ijaw areas' of the Niger Delta following the Kaiama Declaration.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> ICHR-Ijaw Council for Human Rights, *The Kaiama Declaration*. Port Harcourt, 1998, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> J. Osuntokun, *Democracy and the Nigeria Populace: What Dividends*, (Ibadan: The House, 2002) pp. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> *Human Rights Watch* 1999, p. 6.



A disturbing phenomenon that emerged at this period was the alleged involvement of the oil multinationals in the crisis. Some experts who have been observing the trend argue that the relationship between the Nigerian state and the oil companies in Nigeria is a seamless conspiratorial union or the former has been privatized by the latter to serve its interest.<sup>25</sup> TNCs exploiting for oil and gas in the Niger Delta appear to corroborate that suggestion. Amongst other operators, the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) has been singled out as most culpable. Foremost African political economist, Claude Ake had accused Shell of procurement and provision of armoury and other logistics for the Nigerian security system to abuse the fundamental human rights of the local people.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Eric Nickson, a former executive officer of Shell International confirmed that Shell had indeed purchased arms on behalf of the Nigerian police because 'the Nigerian police do not have sufficient funds to equip themselves'. Mr. Emaka Achebe, ex-external relations manager, SPDC also said Shell bought firearms for the Nigerian police that guards its facilities, and 'this is a common practice for private companies.'<sup>27</sup>

Thus it is this combined amalgamation of forces (state power and corporate capital) that visited the unarmed country folks in the aftermath of the Kaiama Declaration. *The Guardian* succinctly captures this in its editorial:

Since the Kaiama Declaration of December 11, last year [1998], the entire region has been under siege. In the immediate aftermath of the declaration, armed detachment raided various communities. Innocent people were killed; many were injured including the aged and infants. Soldiers and police have brutalized people in the Niger Delta in the name of peace keeping. In spite of loud protests, the government has never investigated these charges. Do the people of Bayelsa State not deserve the protection of the Federal

<sup>25</sup> L. Owughah, 2000, "Political Economy of Resistance in the Niger Delta" in *The Emperor has no cloths: Report of the Conference on the peoples of the Niger Delta and the 1999 Constitution* (ERA: Benin, 2001); J. N. Nna, *Oil and National Question in Nigeria*, PhD Dissertation: University of Port Harcourt, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> A.M News, Thursday, January 13, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> TELL, 26/2/1996.

Government...? Clearly, the situation in Bayelsa State does not warrant this extreme measure.<sup>28</sup>

The highhandedness of the Federal Government in dealing with the matter led to the withdrawal of the real leaders of the declaration, and the vacuum being filled by a gang of militants, setting the stage for violence, kidnapping, and unrest.

By way of classifying these conflicts in the Niger Delta, Reychler has highlighted the conflicts as:

... within communities or between communities; within or between ethnic groups; between communities and oil companies; between traditional leadership and the youths; between local government and the traditional leadership; youths and the area boys and professional criminals. Violence has been used by the government, by politicians at different levels, oil companies, youths, area boys and criminals.

A survey of some of the major national print media on the Ijo territory is alarming as it is scaring, as a sample here will show: 'Federal Government sends troops to Bayelsa State'<sup>29</sup>, 'Obansajo Orders Warships to Bayelsa State'<sup>30</sup>, 'Ijaw Rebels threatens fire and brimstone in the Niger Delta'<sup>31</sup>, 'Oil spill destroys local economy'<sup>32</sup>, 'Ijaws agree to ceasefire'<sup>33</sup>, 'Ijaw youths urge UN intervention'<sup>34</sup>, 'Ijaw youths invade oil flow station, two expatriates feared dead,<sup>35</sup> 'The Niger Delta: War by all means, Ijaw youths threaten'<sup>36</sup>, 'The final assaults on the Ijaws'<sup>37</sup>, 'Niger Delta Crises: Five foreign workers taken hostage'<sup>38</sup>, 'Odi now wiped out from the surface of the earth'<sup>39</sup>, 'Asari Daukubo linked to

<sup>28</sup> *The Guardian* 22/11/1999 p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> *The Guardian* November 25, 1998.

<sup>30</sup> *The Vanguard* June 3, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> *ThisDay* September 5, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> *ThisDay* October 5, 1999.

<sup>33</sup> *The Vanguard* June 4, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> *The Guardian* June, 20, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> *The Guardian* February 8, 1998.

<sup>36</sup> *Tell* November 9, 1998.

<sup>37</sup> *NewsWatch* February 5, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> *Inside* November 2, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> *The Guardian* November 6, 1999.



Osama bin Ladin<sup>40</sup>, 'Rebel leader Dukobo threatens to blow-off all oil installations in the Delta'<sup>41</sup>, 'War in the Delta imminent'<sup>42</sup>, 'We'll secede if...Ijaw leader warns'<sup>43</sup>, 'Crisis in Nigeria's delta affect world oil price'<sup>44</sup>, 'The US Congress approves military support in Nigeria's oil rich region'<sup>45</sup>, 'The Niger Delta: On a keg of gun-powder.'<sup>46</sup>

### Efforts of Federal Government to solve the Ijaw Question

The first of policy in the region is the constitution of The Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1960. This Board was imposed on the people when they demanded for a separate state to manage their affairs and resources.

The Willinks Commission reported that:

... we cannot recommend political arrangements which would unite in one political unit the whole body of Ijaws; we do however consider that their belief that their problems are not understood could be largely met without the creation of separate state, which we rejected.<sup>47</sup>

In its seven years of existence, however the NDDDB achieved nothing before it faded away following the military coup in 1966 and the outbreak of the civil war in 1967. After the civil war the Government did not show interest in addressing the developmental needs of the region. Rather, it decided to use the substantial revenue accruing from oil in the region to fund a massive rehabilitation and reconstruction program in other areas of the country. Even with the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973 and the subsequent oil windfall, there was no deliberate

<sup>40</sup> *The Telegraph* March 3, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> *The Guardian* 3, January 2 2005.

<sup>42</sup> *ThisDay* January 5, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> *Vanguard* March 12, 1999.

<sup>44</sup> *The Economist* of London December 4, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> *Vanguard*, April, 2 2001.

<sup>46</sup> *Tell* April 7, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> H. Willinks, *Nigeria: Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1958, pp. 94-95.

attempt to use part of the oil wealth to address the issues of poverty and developmental needs of the region.

In 1973 the Federal Government discovered that NDDDB had failed. The government therefore set up a Presidential Task Force (popularly known as the 1.5% Committee) in 1980 and 1.5% of the Federal Account was allocated to the Committee to tackle the developmental problems of the region.

But according to Ibaba:

The Committee membership was constituted by the Federal Government, which acted as if the oil producing communities cannot think for themselves. Individuals, many of whom were completely ignorant of the problems of the people were hand picked. The criterion for selecting members of the Committee was largely defined by political patronage. Accordingly, a yawning gap emerged between the aspirations of the people and the interest of the Committee members.<sup>48</sup>

Although the committee existed until 1992, it was very ineffective and there was no valuable effect to show for the funding from the Federation Account.

In 1993 the Nigerian State set up the Oil Mineral Producing Commission (OMPADEC) to decisively deal with the problems of the area. The Commission was a huge failure. Between 1992 and 1999 when it finally collapsed OMPADEC bequeathed numerous abandoned or unfinished projects and huge debts. There is no reliable information on the total amount the Commission received from the Federation Account but what is clear is that OMPADEC suffered from lack of focus, inadequate and irregular funding, official profligacy, corruption, excessive political interference, lack of transparency and accountability and high overhead expenditure. OMPADEC was long abandoned before it died naturally.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> I. S. Ibaba, *Understanding the Niger Delta Crisis* (Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications, 2001) p. 110.

<sup>49</sup> I. S. Ibaba, *Understanding the Niger Delta Crisis* (Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications, 2001) p. 110.



On December 21, 2000 the present administration replaced OMPADEC with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with a vision 'to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta Region' and a mission 'to facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful.'

The United Nations Development Programme has summed up the defects of all these 'civilizing' interventionist strategies:

The greatest flaw in these strategies is their 'top-down' approach. The Federal authorities have taken all the initiatives. The State and Local Governments were reduced to mere implementing authorities. Needless to add that involvement of the supposed beneficiaries both in the conception and the implementation of the programme were conspicuously negligible.

The UNDP's 'top-down' theory underscores our assertion that the Nigerian state has considered the entire people of the Niger Delta as incapable of determining what is good for them, and has therefore acted as a paternalist in determining how to 'develop' the people and region of the area. As we have seen, the various programmes have all failed because the people concerned have not been comprehensively involved in the entire process.

### Conclusion

The clamour in Nigeria's South/South geopolitical zone to restructure Nigeria along democratic fiscal federation is a legitimate demand in a country where the distribution system of government has always been the prerogative of the particular person and his ethnic group in power. That is the only democratic way the southern minorities, not just in the Niger Delta but everywhere, can correct the huge irregularities in the nation's body politic and save our commonwealth from the anti-democratic forces, besieging the nation from the oil-rich creeks. The guarantee the federal system envisioned, at independence, for its multifaceted constituents (the guarantee of security, self-fulfilment and a

secured political space in the polity) had all vanished from the time the Nigerian state kicked-off. The executors of the nation's federal system have continued to deny the minorities the right to pursue happiness, participating in the management of power, building consensus and sharing in the dividends of our commonwealth. Since 1960 the country has been driven by a narrow and selfish leadership which, as earlier observed, always secures leadership position through clientelist patterns of politics with support often mobilized through an ethnic basis. Consequently, public policies and actions are religiously pursued to reflect the whims of the ethnic group in power. At various times the highest office in the land has been rotated amongst the three largest ethnic groups in the country, and where the three largest groups cannot reach a compromise on how to share the nation's resources, largely located in the southern minorities, a national threat becomes imminent. The civil war is a case.

In the entire history of Nigeria the southern minorities have made the greatest sacrifice to ensure the sustainability of the Nigerian commonwealth. When imperial Britain conquered the various principalities to create the Nigerian enterprise from the 19th century the military onslaught began from southern tip. The southern minorities located at the nation's coastline formed the bulwark against the biggest military might of the day. From the great empire of the Benin people to the Ijo brave city-state of Nembe down to the peaceful principality of the Efik people the southern minorities first received the shock and full weight of *Pax Britannica*.

From the 1930s when the struggle for independence gathered a national momentum, the southern minorities produced some of the most vocal nationalists in the nation's history. Earnest Sisei Ikoli, first editor of the *Daily Times* created the background for the earliest anti-colonial consciousness in Nigeria and Anthony Enahoro, the first Nigerian to propose a motion in parliament to constitutionally shut down British imperial enterprise in Nigeria. These people believed (Pa Enahoro still believes) that Britain was a common adversary and it was in the common interest of every Nigerian to close ranks to chase out the common enemy, in order to achieve a sound egalitarian society where everyone would enjoy the same rights and privileges as citizens,



irrespective of the strength or size of one's ethnicity. However, at independence the struggle of all Nigerians became, in the cliché of Nnamdi Azikiwe, a 'self-government won on a platter of gold'<sup>50</sup>, a euphemism for a transfer of power from the British colonial masters to a new gang of local overlords, all drawn from the majority ethnic groups, who now took over the state machinery and all its benefits. In the opinion of Crowder,<sup>51</sup> 'Dr. Azikiwe chose the title 'the Father of the Nation', Alhaji Belewa became the Prime Minister and Chief Awolowo provided the loyal opposition'. The power equation has since rotated amongst their descendents. The rest, especially the southern minorities are serfs, prisoners, to be exploited, to be discarded. To maintain their toe-hold on the state's apparatus, the new local overlords, the ruling elites, have continued to preserve (and in some cases exacerbated) the colonial arrangement the British colonists instituted in the country. For instance, the laws governing oil exploration and exploitation, which were actually created by the British for their benefits, have continued to be applied forty-seven years after Nigeria gained independence. These laws, including the revenue sharing process, remain the clearest evidence of the subjugation and colonialism of the southern minorities, a region that account for 93% of the federal government expenditures, 95% of exports receipts, and 96% of foreign exchange earnings in the last thirty years.

<sup>50</sup> I. Nzimiro, *Nigerian Civil War* (Enugu: Front Line Publishing, 1982) p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978).

## Internal Domination, Group Mobilization and Agitation: The Tiv Experience in Northern Nigeria, 1960-1966

Saawua G. Nyityo

### Introduction

The implication of Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) domination of the Northern political climate in the mid-1950s and early 1960s has been examined copiously by Nigerian historians, political scientists, sociologists, and Africanist scholars. Engaging as this subject may appear, these numerous scholars have not attempted to bring their analytical searchlight on the subject of intergroup relations within the former geo-political configuration known as the middle Belt. General emphasis on the subject of NPC hegemony has concentrated on the questions of power relations centred around the elusive dogma of "one north one destiny". In some instances such analysis has been skewed largely in the context of the way and manner in which NPC politicians and bureaucrats were able to appropriate both the resources as well as the machinery of state to their selfish advantage and to the detriment of the masses otherwise known and called *talakawas* of Northern Nigeria. Again one reads of the degree of exploitation of such typically non-Muslim societies of northern Nigeria such as the Tiv, the Jukun, the Biron, the Idoma, the Angas and a host of other middle Belt societies of the Benue Valley as well as those on the Jos-plateau. Hardly does one read about the way and manner in which NPC hegemonic policies impacted on inter-group relations in Northern Nigeria. This paper



therefore examines the way and manner by which NPC politics was played out particularly in the Benue valley area. It examines the response of the lower Benue societies particularly the Tiv. It pays attention to the implications of such responses on inter-group relations on the peoples so affected. In order to appreciate the Tiv response to the NPC machinations, let us begin with an examination of the very basis of NPC hegemonic tendencies.

### Colonial Roots of Domination of the Tivs in Northern Nigeria

The policy of exclusion and domination adopted by the then NPC controlled Northern Regional government can be traced back to some historical antecedents relating to the colonial amalgamation and domination of Nigeria by the British. It must be emphasized that British colonial attitudes, policies and actions accounted in part, for this development. It is pertinent to note that colonial officials who served in Northern Nigeria since 1900 demonstrated by their attitudes and utterances an undisguised prejudice in favour of the Islamic society to the detriment of the so-called 'pagan' groups. These biases and prejudices were reflected not only in official pronouncements but also in countless number of government actions.

Right from inception, administrative officials tended to create some kind of differentiation in the status of Chiefs and Emirs in Northern Nigeria. The four categories of Chiefs were: first class, second class, third class and fourth class of Chiefs<sup>1</sup>.

The rank of first class chief was reserved for the Sultan of Sokoto, the Shehu of Borno, the Emirs of Kano, Gwandu and Katsina while the rank of second class chief was meant for the lesser Emirs centred in Bauchi, Katagum, Hadejija and Lapai as well as emirs in the midst of 'pagan' communities like those of Argungu, Kiama and Bussa. The rank of third class chief was reserved for Fulani district heads and some chiefs of the Middle Belt areas. Fourth-class chiefs were generally regarded by

<sup>1</sup> P. Chunum Logams, *The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study of Political Identity 1949-1967* Vol. 1, Ph.D Thesis Keel University U.K., 1985, pp. 96-141.

the administration as being inferior in status even though they enjoyed some measure of executive authority in their jurisdiction.

Rather than assuage Tiv grievances, the creation of the Northern House of Chiefs in 1946 compounded it as no chief was nominated to the house from Tivland by the administration<sup>2</sup>. To the average Tiv man, it appeared as if the government policies were designed to keep Tiv people in a depressed and subservient position and thwart all efforts to improve their socio-economic and political condition<sup>3</sup>. After all, Lady Lugard's remark that "we seem to be in the presence of one of the fundamental facts of history, that there are races which are born to conquer and others to persist under conquest"<sup>4</sup> was an accurate observation of the state of affairs in Northern Nigeria.

Colonial officials found the hierarchically structured Muslim emirates far more amenable to control than they did the tribal and acephalous societies of 'pagan' Middle-Belt areas to which the Tiv, the Idoma and The Jukun belonged. The Islamic society, it would be remembered, had a widespread common language (Hausa), a developed tax system, Islamic law and large scale administration that maintained law and order in the society thereby making it easier for the British to control. Thus, the British tended to give the Islamic society preferential treatment and prestige to the detriment of the non-Islamic peoples. The 'Holy North', as the Islamic society was referred to among top British colonial officers, used to describe the Hausa-Fulani emirates, as well as the Islamic society of Borno, treated as a more advanced civilization than the so-called pagan areas in the North<sup>5</sup>. The result was that in the period of British administration of the North, far more authority was devolved to the emirs and other Islamic rulers than was the case with so-called pagan chiefs. The background to these prejudices could be traced to Lord Lugard who was quoted as saying that:

<sup>2</sup> Terumun Mkena, Educationist, Oral Interview 1999, Age 60+.

<sup>3</sup> Terumun Mkena, Educationist, Oral Interview 1999, Age 60+.

<sup>4</sup> M. Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (London, 1962) p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> M. Perham, *Native Administration*, p. 149.



the future of the virile race of this protectorate (North) lies largely in the regeneration of the Fulani. Their ceremonial, their coloured skins, their mode of life and habits of thought appeal more to the native population than the prosaic businesslike habits of the Anglo-Saxon can ever do... nor have we the means at present to administer so vast a country. This then is the policy to which, in my view, the administration of Northern Nigeria should be given effect viz; to regenerate this capable race and mould them to the ideas of justice and mercy, so that in future generations, if not this, they become worthy instruments of rule."<sup>6</sup>

Taking a queue from Lugard, subsequent colonial officials who rose to the top of the service in the administrative hierarchy regarded the Muslim parts of the North as more civilised and cultured than the so called pagan areas like the Tiv.<sup>7</sup> In most cases senior officers were posted to the Muslim North, while junior officers were posted to Tivland and other so called pagan areas of the North.<sup>8</sup>

As rightly argued by P.C. Logams, British process of social and political incorporation adversely affected the non-Islamic groups like the Tiv in the sense that political advantages were tilted towards the Islamic society of the North in the period between 1900 and 1945. This was a direct consequence of British success at territorially incorporating the Islamic and non-Islamic groups into one political entity by military conquest and varying political measures that were adopted.<sup>9</sup>

Other reasons for the British prejudice for the Islamic society as opposed to the Tiv and other non-Muslim elements could be seen from the standpoint of the long traditions of indigenous political administration that existed in the Islamic society and which facilitated the adoption of the British policy of Indirect rule. Mathew Hassan Kukah has made the point sufficiently clear that "... in Hausa society the lines of power are clearly delineated... The Title/Office (*sarauta*) is at the

heart of authority and power, but all owe their legitimacy and existence to the emir. Those born to rule are at liberty to co-opt others of lower status into the orbit of the ruling class, and after this has been done, the new entrants achieve acquired status (*Shigege*)."<sup>10</sup> The dividing line between the ruling classes and the ruled (*Talakawa*) is sharp and is best summed up in the Hausa proverb: *Zuriyar Sarki ba talakawa bane*<sup>11</sup>. Thus the ruling classes were supposed to engage in the contest for power to the exclusion of those of non-royal births like the Tiv<sup>12</sup>. If the colonial state had managed to suppress the Tiv especially during the heyday of colonial rule such suppression could not long endure in the post war years (1945) to the period of independence.

Apart from the long traditions of indigenous political administration, the Islamic society was economically vibrant, given the fact that it produced one major product, groundnut, for the international market. The significance of groundnut to the political economy of Northern Nigeria was not in doubt.<sup>13</sup> Suffice it to state that by 1910, groundnut constituted a substantial portion of the world's vegetable oil production.<sup>14</sup> This was at a time when about two-thirds of the world's fat market was used in margarine production. The one effect of the economic hardship in England in the 1930s, was that the English working class was forced to increase their consumption of the butter substitute, margarine. It was therefore the needs of the English working class that created the increased demand for the Northern Nigeria groundnut. Liverpool prices for groundnuts increased from below £10 per ton in 1905 to £13 per ton in 1911 and to over £16 per ton in 1913.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> P. C. Logams, *The Middle Belt Movement ...* p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> Mathew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, 1993) p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Translated as: "The descendants of the King can never become commoners".

<sup>13</sup> Mathew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power ...* p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> To understand how the groundnut came to play a significant role in the political economy of Northern Nigeria. See Robert Shenton, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1986) pp. 74-76.

<sup>15</sup> United Kingdom, 1922 cmd 1600, Report of a Committee on Trade and Taxation for British W.A. p. 40 cited in Robert Shenton, 1986, *The Development of Capitalism in Nigeria*, op. cit. p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Lugard, 1902, cited in Margery Perham, 1960, *Lugard: The Years of Authority 1895 - 1945* (London, 1960) pp. 148-149.

<sup>7</sup> R. Heussi, *The British in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1968) p. 149.

<sup>8</sup> John A. Ballard, 1974, "Pagan Administration and Political Development in Northern Nigeria" in *Savanna* Vol. 1 No. 1, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> P. Chunum Longman, 1985, op. cit, pp. 96-100.



Exports from Northern Nigeria increased in turn from an average of 804 tons per annum during the period 1902-6, to an average of 1476 tons per annum from 1907-11, with 2518 tons being exported in 1912 and 19,228 tons in 1913, the first year in which the rail line to Kano was available to move the crop.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it was the utility value of groundnuts to both the economy and people of Britain that made the British colonial authorities in Northern Nigeria to show an unabashed bias for the Islamic society which produced large quantities of the commodity.

The economic relevance of the Islamic society meant that political authority in Northern Nigeria was centred on Sokoto, Kano, Katsina and Borno where the Hausa/Fulani jihadists established centres of political and religious influence. This probably explains why Lord Lugard had his headquarters first in Lokoja, then shifted to Zungeru and finally to Kaduna. Lokoja was abandoned as the capital of Northern Nigeria because it was perceived as being too distant from these centres of influence.

Besides the four centres of trade and politics and other emirates, British knowledge of other parts of Northern Nigeria was meagre until after 1930 when a number of British anthropologists were commissioned by government to undertake studies of the Tiv and other Middle Belt groups or nationalities.<sup>17</sup>

In most cases, British officers permitted the Hausa-Fulani and other Muslims in general to dominate other non-Muslim population in the North. Non-Islamic groups for instance were placed under the direct leadership of Muslims and this leadership was moderated by British Residents, District Officers (DOs) and Assistant District Officers (ADOs).<sup>18</sup> The Fulani in particular were conceived as possessing unique qualities of leadership, which made them a superior class that had once established an empire and driven inferior black races backwards to the impenetrable regions of barbarism of equatorial Africa:

... the Fulani had natural and physical qualities for rulership – the cast of face, even when jet black in colour, being frequently European in form, with the high nose, thin lips and deep set eyes characteristic of the Arab of the Mediterranean coast... The aristocratic thin hand and the slight, somewhat square shoulders of the Arabs of the coast are also frequently noticeable ... this blood no doubt penetrated as far as climatic conditions would allow ... The operation of these types upon the purely negroid races was to drive them southwards into the swamps of the coastal belt in which the higher type could live ... (in the North) their ruling classes were deserving in everyway of the name of cultivated gentlemen. We seem to be in the presence of one of the fundamental facts of history, that there are races which are born to conquer and others to persist under conquest.<sup>19</sup>

Put differently, the political and religious leadership of the Islamic society was seen to be stately in appearance, magnificently dressed and holding itself royally, a perception that moulded the autocratic and overbearing attitudes of the Islamic leadership in the North.

The British attitude with respect to the leadership of the Islamic North contrasted sharply with their attitudes towards the non-Islamic leadership of the groups in the Middle Belt areas including the Tiv. While the indigenous leadership of the Islamic North was treated with some measure of respect, at least in principle, the leadership of the non-Islamic groups in the Middle Belt areas was not so treated. Without doubt, the potentialities of these institutions were considerably underestimated. In the opinion of Lord Lugard, clearly shared by other British officials who had opportunity to work closely with him, the Fulani-Muslims were considered the “educated” classes to be appropriately moulded as ruling classes in the North. In sum, colonial administrators in Northern Nigeria were led to believe that it was absolutely natural that the Tiv and other groups should be led, if not dominated by groups in the Islamic society.

<sup>16</sup> NAK, SNP9/1147/1914.

<sup>17</sup> Based on a general survey on the practice of Indirect Rule in the so called pagan parts of Northern Nigeria.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Lady Lugard, 1905, p. 454 cited in: John A. Ballard. Pagan Administration and Political Development in Northern Nigeria” *Savanna* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1974, p. 4.



### Tiv Agitation in Historical Perspective

It is a truism that agitation is often a cause of unrest rather than a symptom of it. One crucial factor that makes people to agitate for their right is usually the degree of oppression or rather exploitation within the given society. In some instances, political agitation is spurred by such 'human problems' as social disruption created by rapid changes. Furthermore, injustices meted out to weaker groups by the dominant groups could cause members of the weaker group to take up arms as a form of resistance.

Although, the Tiv were very much in sympathy with the administrative reorganization of 1934 including the newly created office of the Tor Tiv, the rising tide of nationalism in the country during the immediate post World War II years caused many progressive minded youths in Tivland to re-examine what their position would be, following British withdrawal from the country at independence. Starting from the late 1940s, the official bias for the Islamic groups and societies began to be challenged vigorously by the Tiv and other groups in the Middle Belt areas. These were sporadic efforts that ultimately prepared the way for violent outbursts during the immediate post-colonial period.

Several factors accounted for the increasing militancy of Tiv politics in the early post war period. Most notable among these factors was the increasing deprivations resulting from rapid socio-economic development. These deprivations were noticeable in towns like Makurdi and Gboko where some eight thousand demobilised Tiv ex-soldiers had come to settle.<sup>20</sup> Tiv labourers from the mines in Jos, Plateau State, swelled their ranks. Bill Freund has examined some of the negative consequences of mine work on the health of the Tiv. These repatriated mine workers of Tiv origin and the demobilized soldiers were squeezed by rapid inflation in the prices of basic consumption items and lived in squalid material circumstances along with a mass of floating unemployed youths drifting in from the villages to the urban centres.<sup>21</sup>

The deterioration of socio-economic conditions came on top of existing grievances like attacks on Tiv traditions by the missionaries, internal conflicts over the failure of appointed chiefs, notably the Tor Tiv, to meet people's expectations; increasing police brutality; the activities of the officials of Tiv Native Authority, the increasing accumulation of land and wealth by the chiefs and other members of the local elite and the harassment and repression of Tiv political activists in the 1950's by the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) controlled government in Northern Nigeria.<sup>22</sup>

Other grievances such as widening distributional inequalities, urbanisation, the spread of Western education and rural stagnation all contributed to Tiv disenchantment with the administration. These were some of the factors that spurred the Tiv to join the crusade for the creation of a Middle Belt State.

Tiv people like other ethnic groups in the Middle Belt were generally concerned that the absence of political representation from among the Middle Belt groups and societies would lead to domination and exploitation of the non-Islamic groups and societies. They were further disturbed that political development in Northern Nigeria did not seem to have taken into consideration the fact that the Tiv and indeed other non-Islamic groups had already developed their own socially conscious elite that was poised to capture power at the time of the British departure. Yet, between 1939 and 1950, political representation in the Northern House of Chiefs (initially the Northern Advisory Council) and the Nigerian Legislative Council in Lagos (subsequently replaced by the Federal House of Representatives) were based on the ranking in the political status of Chiefs in the North. Since Chiefs from the Middle Belt groups and societies were still to be appointed to these advisory and deliberative bodies in the period between 1930 and 1940, the political representation from the non-Islamic areas in the North was mainly by British Residents and senior Administrative Officers in the legislative institutions of the North and

<sup>20</sup> Tyu Abeghe, Local Historian, Oral Interview, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Bill Freund, 1981: *Capital and Labour in the Nigerian Tin Mines* Longman, London.

<sup>22</sup> Based on Oral tradition collected from different parts of Tiv land between 1999-2000.



Nigeria. These legislative bodies were based in Kaduna and Lagos respectively. Until 1950, the Aku of Wukari was the sole representative of the non-Islamic groups in the Northern House of Chiefs (NHC). It was not until as late as 1952 that other non-Islamic chiefs namely, the Tor Tiv, His Highness Makir Dzakpe, and the Ochidoma, Ogiri Oko Chief of the Idoma, were appointed. All these were ranked as Second Class Chiefs<sup>23</sup> The chiefs of Batla, Birom, Kagoro who were Christians were recognised between 1945 and 1950 but remained unranked in the socio-political status. As rightly argued by Logams, it was this subordinated position coupled with other grievances that propelled the people of the Middle Belt to mobilize.<sup>24</sup> Since political representation was seen largely as a means of distributing government facilities, the lack of representation by some groups created political tensions between the Islamic group and the non-Islamic groups and societies in the Middle Belt.

Thus, in the period between 1950 and 1965, the census statistics for the North suggests that many non-Muslims became Christians rather than accept Islam. It was therefore not surprising that in 1956 a motion was presented to the Northern House of Assembly for the creation of a Middle Belt Region.<sup>25</sup> This demand did not come as a surprise to the Government and People of the then Northern Region, but it achieved little.

### The UMBC and Tiv Mobilization

The foundation of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in 1956 was a major factor in the movement for the political mobilization of the Tiv as well as the creation of a Middle Belt Region. Although collectively founded by groups and societies in the Middle Belt, the UMBC ultimately turned into an instrument of widespread campaign

<sup>23</sup> P. C. Logams, "The Middle Belt Movement ..." op.cit, pp. 96-146.

<sup>24</sup> P. C. Logams, "The Middle Belt Movement ..." op.cit, pp. 96-146.

<sup>25</sup> P. C. Logams, "The Middle Belt Movement ..." op.cit, pp. 96-146.

and mobilization of the Tiv. Under the able leadership of J.S. Tarka, a Tiv, the UMBC was widely accepted throughout Tivland.

The emergence of the UMBC was a direct challenge to both the NPC and NCNC as both parties struggled to secure the support of prominent Tiv and other non-Islamic politicians in the Middle Belt. The NPC government responded to UMBC initiative by refusing to give Tiv people any cabinet positions in the government. Moreover, the NPC was determined to resist the idea of Tiv political leadership in the Northern House of Assembly. They chose, rather, to appoint the Idoma, Igala and Jukun to cabinet positions in the Northern Executive Council, to the exclusion of the Tiv. This deliberate policy was intended to spite the Tiv who were more numerous than the Idoma, Igala and Jukun, because of the leadership of J.S. Tarka in the UMBC.

Even the Revised Area Development Committee set up in 1951 by the colonial government did not have any Tiv representation. Apart from the nine colonial officers who served on the Committee there were fourteen natives representing different interests. They included the Sultan of Sokoto, Emir of Kano, Emir of Katsina, Emir of Zaria, Wallin Borno, Shettima Kashim, Dan Iya Hadejia, Atta Gaga (Igala), Emir of Kontagora, Makaman Bida, Maajin Rafin Gwandu, Mallam Yahaya Ilorin, Mallam Muhammadu Ribadu and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.<sup>26</sup> It was these acts of Tiv marginalization either by the colonial authorities, or the NPC controlled government, that made the Tiv to give massive support for the UMBC - a party that stood for the creation of Middle Belt State out of Northern Nigeria.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, members of the UMBC who gained entry into the Northern House of Assembly after the 1956 Regional elections were determined to oppose the NPC leadership and its politics. Led by J.S. Tarka as President, the UMBC caucus in the House maintained an effective opposition front in Northern politics.<sup>28</sup> They were critical of the NPC policy on Middle Belt and constantly re-echoed the socio-economic and political grievances and deprivations of the Middle Belt

<sup>26</sup> NAK, MAKPOF 2780/S.12.

<sup>27</sup> Based on Oral Interview conducted in Tiv and Non-Tiv communities.

<sup>28</sup> Tyu Abeghe, Local Tiv Historian, Oral Interview, 1995.



areas. Tarka's political sagacity and strength of character was indeed an asset to the UMBC.<sup>29</sup>

The UMBC under Tarka leadership succeeded in arousing a sense of general unease directed against Islamic religious and political authorities, particularly that which was imposed from the period of British administration preparatory to the transfer of power in Northern Nigeria.<sup>30</sup>

The UMBC also fought for the inclusion of its members into the National Legislative House in Lagos. Hitherto, election into the Federal House was an exclusive prerogative of Emirs and Chiefs in the NHC of the North.

To further strengthen its position in the crusade to liberate the Tiv and other Middle Belt groups and societies from domination by the NPC, a formal accord was signed between the Action Group and the UMBC on 6 March 1957. Among other things ratified by the accord were the following: Party publicity material was to be produced in the joint name of the Alliance, and the palm tree, popular among both the Yoruba and the Tiv, was adopted as a symbol of the Alliance.

The above developments were disturbing particularly to the NPC leadership in the North. Consequently, they adopted a number of measures aimed at frustrating, if not suppressing the genuine aspirations of the groups and societies in the Middle Belt. Northern opinion was decidedly tilted against the UMBC/AG Alliance, which was seen largely as a menacing instrument in the articulation of the grievances of the Middle Belt people.

### Sporadic Violence

In 1959, Nigeria conducted an election to the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos preparatory to the granting of independence in October 1960. Despite the growing public disenchantment with the

<sup>29</sup> For a better understanding of Tarka's personality and style of leadership See Simon Shango (ed) *Tributes to a Great Leader: J.S. Tarka*, London, 1982.

<sup>30</sup> For a better understanding of Tarka's personality and style of leadership See Simon Shango (ed) *Tributes to a Great Leader: J.S. Tarka*, London, 1982.

local NA administration in Tivland, the NA police managed to maintain peace until March 1960 when there was an outbreak of violence in the neighbouring Division of Wukari and Lafia.<sup>31</sup> This was followed by widespread outbursts of political disobedience in Tiv Division as well. It does not seem that the Tiv, however disillusioned they had become with the injustices of the Tiv NA local administration, should have felt the need to take up arms at a time when Nigerians eagerly awaited the granting of independence by the British. It was the efforts of the Tor Tiv to impose unpopular kindred heads that infuriated his people.<sup>32</sup> Thus in August 1960, two months to the granting of independence, an armed crowd gathered to meet the Tor Tiv to protest against the imposition of an unpopular kindred head. In clans like Mbativ and Mbakor-hotbeds of UMBC, the people protested not so much against unpopular kindred heads as against the serving of court summonses. While in Yandev clan, the excesses of Ol Ako, the clan head resulted into wide scale violence that affected the whole of Tivland.

Mr. Ol Ako was determined to exploit the party political rivalry between the NPC and the UMBC. As a staunch supporter of NPC, he secured the approval and the co-operation of some NA policemen to close up a local market that was largely patronised by the UMBC opposition. Named after Mr. Kumbul Akapi, its founder, the market was established under section thirty-two of the Tiv NA law, No.1954. On 8 August 1960, Mr. Ol Ako, the clan head of Yandev addressed his people in the market - urging them to refrain from rendering open support for the opposition party. He also forbade the shouting of party slogans such as Tarka, Awo. When his order was not obeyed; he sought to enforce it by employing the assistance of Tiv NA police. On 25 August 1960, a complete riot squad of Tiv NA police armed with batons and shields, was sent to enforce the order to close the market.

However, the police contingent was overwhelmed by an angry mob armed with poisoned bows and arrows. Three policemen were

<sup>31</sup> See for example Remi Anifowose, 1982, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria, The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*, NOK Publishers, New York.

<sup>32</sup> Remi Anifowose, 1982, *Ibid*, pp. 123-124.



wounded in the process. Subsequent attempts to arrest some of the mob leaders were warded off through mob action. This initial advantage by the rioters seemed to have encouraged open defiance against constituted authority in Tivland.

For about one week there was a total breakdown of law and order not only in Yandev clan but in Tivland as a whole. The target of the rioters was those in authority in Tiv Division. Collectively they were regarded as the potent symbol of Tiv people's unfair treatment at the hands of the NPC Regional Government. The rioters burned down houses belonging to NPC functionaries including those of their supporters - leading ultimately to a total breakdown of effective administration in Tivland. The extent of damage to property was assessed by the Fletcher Commission which was able to establish that about 30,000 houses were burnt and the estimated cost was put at ₦1,011,954.<sup>33</sup> Many people were rendered homeless. A large number of Tiv persons were internally dispossessed and had to move away from their farmlands to the urban centres. Despite the heavy casualties and costs of the 1960 riots to the Tiv; the Northern Regional Government went ahead to impose a high incidence of tax on Tiv adult males. The Northern Regional Premier directed that "the sum of ₦1,011,954 shall be apportioned amongst, and payable by, every adult male tax payer resident in the area in the financial year 1961/62."<sup>34</sup>

This unjust, arbitrary and oppressive taxation imposed by the Regional Government created grounds for the outbreak of the 1964 riots in Tivland. To begin with, the 1960 riots were indeed an embarrassment to the Northern Regional Government. After several weeks of lawlessness which threatened the basic functions of government; the government issued orders banning political demonstrations and processions in Tiv Division.

But the ban was not heeded. This compelled the Government to deploy a large number of policemen to keep the peace in Tivland. Some half hearted attempts were made to address specific Tiv grievances. Tor Tiv's consultation with the Regional premier yielded initial gains for the

<sup>33</sup> UMBC Memorandum to the Committee Investigating Tiv Affairs.

<sup>34</sup> Fletcher Report on Riot Damage, Kaduna 1961.

rioters. The government dissolved Tiv NA and its powers were vested in the Senior Divisional Officers to carry on with the task of NA administration.<sup>35</sup> The dissolution of Tiv NA Council and the dismissal of Mr. Atim Ateze, the Administrative Secretary was largely seen as a victory for the Tiv. However, these actions by a government desperate to save its face could not stop the wave of violence in Tivland. Other changes initiated by the government included reforms in the administration of law and justice in the Native Courts. The setting up of an all-party Advisory Council to help the sole Native Authority restore peace and order in Tivland. Attempts were also made to reconcile previously discredited clan and kindred heads with their subjects.<sup>36</sup>

This good intention on the part of government, fell short of the need to provide adequate safeguards against tyranny. Native courts were generally oppressive. The Presidency of each of the Grade D Courts was held by the clan head himself. Thus a combination of both the executive and judicial powers in the clan head negated the principle of rule of law which emphasises that the judiciary be separated from the executive. The court presidents were thus able to apply their power of criminal jurisdiction arbitrarily as an instrument of political coercion to the detriment of the opposition.

### The 1964 Tiv Riots

By 1963, there were indications of rising tension among the various conflicting groups in Tivland. In 1964, there was an outbreak of violence leading to the destruction of lives and property. The immediate cause of the 1964 riots arose from the attempt by the government to force the Tiv to pay a riot damage fine of ₦5.10 per head.<sup>37</sup> The said amount was to be paid in addition to the general annual tax of ₦4.50. Thus, in that year, a tax payer was expected to pay ₦9.60. This amount was to be paid within three weeks in default of which he would be sent to prison for six months. The imposition of this arbitrary taxation

<sup>35</sup> Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria*, p. 125.

<sup>36</sup> Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria*, p. 125.

<sup>37</sup> Government White Paper for the Rehabilitation of Tiv N.A. p. 6.



caused so much frustration and resentment among Tiv people. A good number of people felt that this riot damage fine was not only vindictive but oppressive. Matters came to a head on 12 February 1964 with the killing of Gbargbar Apinega, the clan head of Mbalagh, and three other persons the same day. The killing of Gbargbar in his compound developed into full scale violence between NPC and UMBC supporters.<sup>38</sup> In order to bring the situation under control, a detachment of the Nigeria police was quickly drafted to the riot scene. On their way, however, an armed gang ambushed them. In the ensuing incident, six Nigeria policemen were reported killed and several seriously wounded, others were reported missing.

As in the 1960 riots, the violence quickly spread to other parts of the division. Before the disturbances could be contained, they had spread to most clans in Tivland including Buruku, Udei, Ugba, Sevav and Zaki-Biam.

Those targeted for attack by the rioters were persons in authority, the clan and kindred heads, tax collectors, court presidents and police. In several areas, policemen were ambushed and killed or wounded.

On whole, a total of twelve policemen were officially confirmed dead. Several others were reported missing. Unofficial estimates put the number of people killed at between 2,000 and 4,000 with several hundreds wounded. It was the heavy presence of soldiers, not police, that ultimately led to the restoration of peace in Tivland.

### Conclusion

From the above explanation, it is pertinent to conclude that the policies of the NPC controlled Northern Regional Government constituted the fertile ground on which the seed of Tiv solidarity was expressed in the form of group agitation and group mobilization. This was followed by violent outbursts in 1960 and subsequently in 1964. The approach to a large extent explains the manner in which marginalized groups pressed to the wall, are left with no other option than take their destiny in their own hands.

After six years or so of persistent violence in Tivland, Tiv sons and daughters, like their counterparts in other parts of the federation welcomed the military intervention in politics in 1966. Indeed some western development experts were even suggesting that military regimes were quite capable of leading the modernization process in Third World states.

Although this perspective was later repudiated, the military adopted a more expansive strategy of military governance which affected Tiv political realignments from 1967-1975. Tiv sons were appointed to prominent position in the administration. These appointments facilitated Tiv society's participation in the process of national class formation. Consequently a good number of Tiv sons participated as workers, state or company employees at various levels. Such employees or officials got themselves involved in all kinds of activities that recurred to give shape to the evolving class structure.

Integration also promoted the emergence of communal power brokers who constructed broad pan-ethnic ideologies in order to emphasize Tiv solidarity vis-à-vis other ethnic groups. Ancestral linkages were drawn upon to mobilize segments of the population against competitors and intruders such as the Igbo and Hausa. The persistence of these communally based associations today, notably, *Mzough u Tiv*, (Meeting of the Tiv) and Tiv Youth Organization (TYO) amid rapid structural transformation demonstrates how crucial indigenous structures are to Tiv society now trapped into the novel confines of the modern state.



UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

SECTION F  
CONFLICTS AND INTERGROUP  
RELATIONS IN NIGERIA



**Pluralism and Dialogue in the Middle Belt: A  
Phenomenologico-Existential Analysis of the  
Benue-Taraba-Nasarawa Pogrom**

Alloy S. Ihuah

**Introduction**

One of the most complex features of the Nigerian nation is its ethnic composition. Like every other African nation, Nigeria labours under triple cultural heritage: Euro-Christian tradition, Arabico-islamic culture and the indigenous Nigerian thought system. These polarities have made a contribution to the development of human capital, though the aggressive attitudes of Islam and Christianity in particular have collapsed the capacity of the ethnic nationalities to overcome exclusion and strengthen inclusion. In the north, it is either the Muslims against the Christians or Hausa/Fulani against the Siyawa. In the Middle-Belt, the settler-indigene dichotomy has torn the once peaceful green zone of Nigeria into shreds. The southeast, the south-south and the southwest are similarly guilty of the same sectarian acrimony. Given the impact of modernization, the growth of democratic culture, the new range of economic, social and political horizons of Nigerians, the only hope of genuine peace and harmonious inter-group relations lies in the acceptance of some forms of accommodation of each other and some compromise engendered by a seeking together with responsibility, lucidity and tact.

Pluralism, is a process of integration in which different ethnic groups with their geographically conditioned values retain certain



autonomy even as they become parts of the totality of the Nigerian project. This process of integration becomes more meaningful if and only if it takes cognizance of the religio-cultural milieu of the people. What the Nigerian social system needs is an interactive relationship that enhances the entire human person and the whole society.

If ever there is a legacy bequeathed to the Nigerian nation by its "Leaders", it is that of distrust, with its population polarized on ethnic and religious divide. Today, the reality is that ethnic and/or political groups in Nigeria are fighting one another. In the Middle Belt for instance, the ethnic nationalities have moved in the animal fashion of Ardreys theory of territorial imperative, to defend its title to space and food, prestige and identity. Experts have argued that, unlike the past, present day conflicts result from a well orchestrated structural injustice and the preponderant ignorance of patrimonial and prebendal exercise of state power. Such, it has been argued, accounts for the many flash points in the region: in Taraba state where the Tiv-Jukun, the Jukun-Kuteb, the Jukun-Hausa, the Jukun-Fulani, Jukun-Mumuye and the Mumuye-Fulani are fighting one another. In Plateau state, we have the Hausa against the Ankwai, Hausa/Fulani against Taroh and the Hausa against the Birom, while in Nasarawa state we have Alago against the Tiv, the Fulani against the Alago among others.

This chapter focuses on the variegated population of the Middle Belt and argues that the Plural character of the region with its attendant distrust and conflicts could be welded together and made to co-exist for sustainable development through dialogue. The paper argues on this score that pluralism is a process of integration in which different ethnic groups with their geographically conditioned values retain certain autonomy even as they become part of the totality of the Development agenda of Middle Belt region.

### The Tiv Story: The Myths, The Realities

Land, traditional rulership, political authority and differences, as well as fears of domination and marginalization have served as 'architectonics' of communal conflicts in the Middle Belt region. It is argued here that, such factors are fanned more by the neo-culture of hatred and rage. Both

the Jukun in Taraba State, and the Alago and Kamberi in Nasarawa state join issues against the Tiv using the settler theory. The Jukun who developed this theory and sold it to other groups are wont to argue further that they own the land in Taraba (Wukari to be particular), gave portions of the land to desperate Tiv immigrant farmers when they first arrived "as settlers". Thus, any claim to indigeneship and hence ownership of land is said to be expansionist attitude.

A second perspective borders on traditional rulership and political authority. The argued position of the Jukun of Taraba state, for instance, is that limitation should be placed on what the "true" born will act from what a "slave" will act in the achievement of the vision of the State. "The Jukun" says Best *et al* "viewed with suspicion the ambitious orientation of the Tiv expressed by their desire to lead Wukari politically on the one hand (by daring to be interested in the chairmanship of the Local Government Council especially) and to get involved in its traditional affairs on the other."<sup>1</sup> In what appears to be the direct translation of the biblical phrase of "giving to God what belongs to God and to Caesar what belongs to Caesar", the Jukun are wont to argue that Taraba state is for Jukun no less than Benue state and Nasarawa are for the Tiv and Alago/Kamberi respectively. Politically and spiritually, the Jukun claim that "Wakari is the headquarters of the Jukun, and the land therein belong to them and they will fight with the last ounce of their blood to protect this possession".

Perhaps, the most potent cause of conflict in this region is fear of domination and marginalization. The intimidating numerical superiority of the Tiv, in addition to their industry of the use of land, and intellectual and professional ability stand tall above their neighbour. Avav and Myegba agree that by 1820, the Tiv in the present Wukari were a major linguistic group in the Muri Emirate.<sup>2</sup> The 1926, 1946 and

<sup>1</sup> S. G. Best, A. E. Idyorough and Z. B. Shehu, 1999, "Communal Conflicts and the Possibilities of Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Tiv-Jukun Conflict in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State" in O. Otite and I. O. Albert, eds., *Community Conflicts in Nigeria Management, Resolution and Transformation*, Lagos Spectrum Books, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> T. Avav and M. Mygba, 1992, *The Dream To Conquer: Story of Jukun-Tiv Conflict*, (Makurdi, Onaiye Press, 1992).



1952 census of the Middle Belt attest to this fact, with the Tiv making 100% of the Tiv Division, 49.2% of Lafia Division (present day Nasarawa) and 38.8% of Wukari Division (present day Taraba state). The intimidating credentials of the Tiv, rather than being converted for the advancement of the cause of human capital, have become a resented characteristic in the manner of a proverbial leper who must be avoided.

Thus, the fear of political domination by the Tiv, according to the Jukun, manifested in 1958 when Hon. Charles Tangué Gaza, a Tiv, defeated Usman Sangari, the Jukun candidate to represent Wukari Federation in the Federal House of Representatives. Suspicion and hatred, and the fears of the Jukun of political domination by the Tiv came to a deadening height with the appointment of Hon. Simon Iortyer Musa (a Tiv) as Council chairman of Wukari Local Government Council by the Barde administration in 1982. Again, in 1987, Jukun fears of political domination were formed when the Tiv allied with the Hausa to defeat the Jukun at the Local Government Council election. It became clear to the Jukun that under a democratic set-up, elections in Wukari was a non-win-game for them without the tacit support of the Tiv. As Ter-Rumun Avav avers, "In order to avert this political predicament, the Jukun initiated moves to destabilize the Tiv population in the area. The Tiv were attacked by the Jukun prior to all subsequent elections. In 1990, they were attacked and they fled and so could not participate in the LGA elections. Again in 1991, a more vicious attack was launched against the Tiv in all part of Wukari LGA to pave the way for Jukun victory at the polls."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Tiv neighbours in Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba have continually short-changed them, whether it is farm land location and/or equipment of schools and other social amenities, traditional rulership, political participation or employment etc, the Tiv were discriminated against.

The Tiv perspective of the conflict in the Middle Belt differs measurably. They debunk the settler theory as blackmail, a distortion and an attempt to rewrite history in the age of enlightenment. They lavish demographic records to support their claim to indigeneship in the

<sup>3</sup> T. Avav, "The Tiv and Their Neighbours" in P. T. Ahire, ed., *The Tiv in Contemporary Nigeria*, Zaria, Tiv Studies Project, 1993.

areas in crisis. Wukari, they say, was a corrupted form of a Tiv word called *waka*, the name of the first Tiv man who founded settlement. It soon became for the Tiv a centre of ritual and traditional religious practice called *Aseta*. Then, the Jukun were still at a location of the ancient Kwararafa kingdom, some eighty-three kilometres north of *waka* present day Wukari. This suggestion further posits that both the white man and the Jukun met the Tiv at wukar on the invitation of the Tiv. It was sheer colonial hatred for the Tiv, and their inability to associate themselves with the Tiv traditional religious practice of *Aseta* that instigated the change of the name *waka* to *wukari*. The Tiv position is that, the Jukun are ingrates who have turned the hospitality and accommodating posture of the Tiv to a wholesome claim of Wukari to the exclusion of the Tiv.

Similarly, historical records in Nasarawa state place the Tiv in the area as one of the early arrivals. Ter-Rumun Avav chronicles this fact thus, "As early as C 1760-1787, the Tiv were fighting for Azegya Adi, King of Alago Kingdom in Keana. From then onwards, the Tiv became a significant factor in Keana's politics of survival... The Ihyarev (of Tiv clan) allied with the Alago to defeat the Hausa who fled Tungun kasa to Audu, Kanje and Baure". The Tiv then argue that it is lunatic for anyone or group to claim indigeneship of these areas to the exclusion of the Tiv.

It thus follows that, denial of political authority and participation, appointment and recognition of traditional rulership, and equitable distribution of social amenities is a deliberate attempt to provoke the Tiv. The absence or inadequacy of social amenities according to the Tiv is responsible for fanning the embers of disunity and conflict between them and their neighbours who as it were are accused of discrimination and, or marginalization.

The facts on ground are that the Tiv in Nasarawa are constantly subjected to all sorts of deliberate discriminations and deprivations in the areas of land use, education, political representation and employment in public service of the state and at local government levels. This is

<sup>4</sup> T. Avav, "The Tiv and Their Neighbours" in P. T. Ahire, ed., *The Tiv in Contemporary Nigeria*, Zaria, Tiv Studies Project, 1993, p. 38.



aside from the fact that they have had their traditional institutions (which flourished until the 1970s) phased out. Today none of the Tiv traditional institutions which were previously recognized by the Lafia Native Authority are in existence, not withstanding their numerical strength in the state. Similarly, the Tiv are disenfranchised through the process of registration of voters and the Tiv language which is widely spoken in the state has no pride of place in the state radio station programmes.

It must be noted here that the theories paraded by the Jukun are half truths informed on ignorance of historical facts and or deliberate attempt to rewrite history and so engineer violence. The Nobel Address of Alexander Solzhenitsyn speaks in this line thus: *let us not forget that violence does not exist by itself and cannot do so, it is necessarily interwoven with lies. Violence finds its only refuge in falsehood, falsehood its own support in violence. Any man who has once acclaimed violence as his method must inexorably choose falsehood as his principle.* The assault on the Tiv and other ethnic minorities in Nasarawa and Taraba by the Alago/Kamberi and Jukun respectively is supported by falsehood and the erroneous argument that the Tiv in these states are settlers. Buried in this falsehood and error is evidence of active Tiv presence in these states indicating settlement going back to centuries.

Historical records have it, for example, that modern Wukari, the Jukun headquarters, was founded in the 1840s long after the Tiv had settled in the area as a major ethnic nationality. The Jukun have a long history of conquest and are said to have formed the Kwararafa empire of old fame, though its active presence in the Middle Belt is non-existence. It makes more meaning to posit that the small Jukun population in the Middle Belt were no more than a pretentious band of fishermen who must have migrated to their present position in Wukari in present day Taraba state after the fall of the Kwararafa empire. This proposition, according to Myegba is grounded on the premise that there is nothing in Wukari that bears resemblance to that empire. This is aside from the fact that tribes like the Kuteb and the Chamba have openly asserted their identity by denying any lineage in Kwararafa.<sup>5</sup>

More than anything, the Jukun pride and inordinate posture of a superior as against the inferior Tiv settlers is the creation of the British colonial racists. Richmond Palmer, the then Lt. Governor of Northern Nigeria who had a pathological hatred for the Tiv redefined the Hamatic myth, popularized and sold the Jukun variant of this myth to the colonial administration. He argued that the Jukun were part of the ruling dynasty of the Nubian civilization of Meroe that migrated westwards after the collapse of Meroe, spreading in their path elements of their civilization including knowledge of the ancient Egyptian gods of Amon, Isis and Osiris. Founded on lies and falsehood, though it became a justified reason to use the colonial structure to promote the minority Jukun as a caste of "civilizing hamites" and a nobility to be empowered over and above the other "non-civilized" nationalities. Such is why some parts of the Tiv speaking districts of Gaambe-Tiev, Gambe-Ya, Turan, Ucha, Mbaterem, Toruv and Ugondo were bought under the control of Wukari Division and organized along the lines of Jukun "laws and custom."

Studies have since shown that this myth is a distortion of African history and those who subscribe to it were not only fraudulent, but mischief-makers whose sole interest was to divide and rule in the service of the colonial racist enterprise. As Dr. Zacharys Anger Gundu was to comment much later, "If Palmer was a more open minded and responsible person, he would have discovered that his 'noble civilizing caste' were no more than a pretentious band of fishermen who had little or no capacity in discharging the role he had so mischievously programmed for them."<sup>6</sup> This explains why the Tiv who knew the Jukun as such, resisted their neglect and forceful conscription into the Jukun sphere of influence to date.

To argue as the Jukun always do, that "they settled in Wukari since the 13th century, four centuries before the Tiv came in search of rich farm lands" is to falsify history, to rewrite "history according to Jukun". History books have it that by the time the imperialist voyages came to

<sup>6</sup> Z. A. Gundu, *The Nasarawa and Taraba Crisis: Between the Truth and Falsehood* Unpublished position Paper by Tiv community in Lagos, 2001, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> M. Myegba, *Wukari Crisis 1990-1993* (2000, Forthcoming) p. 5.



the lower Middle Belt, the Jukun had settled in the Northern Bank of the Benue River. Avav and Myegba recall that:

Ziken Angyu Tsokwa who became king in 1820 at Use was the last king to rule on the northern bank of the Benue River during the rule of Yakubu Bauchi (1805-43). He (Ziken Angyu Tsokwa) crossed the Benue at Chinkai to Akwana. The Jukun were believed to cross the Benue at two places: in the upper and lower Benue regions.<sup>7</sup>

Historical facts indicate that the Jukun group that crossed at Chinkai later moved to found modern Wukari in the 1840s long after the Tiv had settled in the area. When, therefore, the Jukun seek strenuously to convince anyone who cares to listen that they pre-existed the Tiv in the Wukari region having settled in the area since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, one begins to suspect their intention. Historical records have it that the Jukun attacked Kano in 1600 and 1671. Were they attacking Kano from Wukari which was founded in 1840 by the Abakwariga? Or was the Kano attack carried out by a splinter group of the Kwararafa family? If the first answer suffices, then one wonders why the long history of the Jukun in the area still puts them at both political and numerical disadvantage, and who since then had to wait for the colonial racists to impose them on the dominant group in the area. If on the other hand, the second suggestion holds sway, it diminishes the Jukun claim and pride in war sophistry. In any case both cannot be true, and indeed, neither is true. Certainly, the Jukun were not in the Middle Belt by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and no group was. A reservoir of historical records abound to show when and how the Tiv and their neighbours, including the Jukun settled in their present locations. Avav and Myegba chronicle some authoritative sources in this regard thus:

The Tiv were already settled on the southern bank of the Benue river. By 1920 the Tiv in Wukari were a major linguistic group in the Muri Emirate. This explains why in 1901 the Tiv in Wukari and Katsina-Ala Districts, along with the Jukun and other linguistic groups, were transferred from the lower Benue Province to the

newly created Muri Province with headquarters at Muri... Meek (1931) in his book *A Sudanese Kingdom*, established the fact that modern Wukari was founded in 1840s long after Tiv had settled in the area. The list of Jukun kings who ruled from Wukari shows that the reign of the Aku Uka started in 1855 with Ziken Angyu Tsokwa (1855-1961). The present king Kuvyo Shekarau Angyu Massaibi II who was enthroned in 1976 is the 13th Aku to rule at Wukari.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the theory which seeks to sustain the thesis that the Jukun settlement in the lower Middle Belt predates the Tiv is fundamentally fallacious if not mischievous. Richmond Palmer's Jukun variant of the Hamatic myth which portrayed the tiv in the eye of the world as standing stripped of any intellectual or artistic ability, and of any ability at all, which would allow them, now, or in the future to be masters of their lives and community is today proved to be racist in conception and practice. It may be understood at best as founded on the theories of de Gobineau, and adaptations of the Darwinian evolution which were echoed in all western nations, culminating finally in the ideology of Nazi Germany. Even though originators of this dubious thesis have since abandoned it, it has stubbornly refused to give way in the mindset of the Jukun, it was, and still is, and would be well-nigh impossible to point to an individual and recognize in him a Hamite according to racial linguistic and cultural characteristics to fit the image that has been presented to us for so long. Such an individual does not exist, and even if he does, the Jukun do not fit the description. For how can we reconcile their Hamatic duty of the 'higher' races consigned to them to civilize the 'lower' ones but who have suddenly lost the leadership of these 'lower' ethnic groups including those (Tiv) that were forcefully placed under them by the British colonial racists.

The Jukun (may have been) great warriors though, they were and still are bad administrators. In the words of Myegba, "they ran a vary tight and close traditional administration that excludes any other

<sup>7</sup> T. Avav and M. Mygba, 1992, *The Dream To Conquer: Story of Jukun-Tiv Conflict*, (Makurdi, Onaiye Press, 1992) p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> T. Avav and M. Mygba, 1992, *The Dream To Conquer: Story of Jukun-Tiv Conflict*, (Makurdi, Onaiye Press, 1992) p. 3.



tradition.<sup>9</sup> They want to assimilate without getting the people involved, preferring to rule perpetually. As a western author once put it, the Jukun are "a handful of people, all that is left of a mighty race originating in Arabia which settled in the Lake Chad district and overran almost the entire northern territory, including Zaria and Kano in their days" (in the C 1600). They have since remained degenerate and a spent force in 1700.<sup>10</sup>

In Nasarawa too, evidence abound in colonial demographic records indicative of the fact that the Tiv were over 50% of what was then known as Lafia Division. In 1902, when Lord Lugard occupied Lafia, he had sufficient tact to involve the Tiv in the administration of the Division. Ature Gbaji was appointed as Chief over Audu, Agon Gbew over Agwatashi, Ugber Igbul over Assaikyo and Mon Begha over Obi. Denied adequate representation on account of their scattered pattern of settlement and absence of a centralized system of governance, the Tiv have continued to be active in the politics of the Lafia Native Authorities in the general areas as allowed by the limits imposed on them. By 1978, the Tiv who had fought hard to earn their political asset got 15 Tiv people as elected councilors in the councils of Lafia, Awe and Shendam. In the second republic, Athanasius Ityo, a Tiv, was elected to represent Awe Federal Constituency on the platform of the NPP. Another Tiv man Hon. Orshiqua was returned under NPN in 1983 to represent the same Federal constituency.

Present day resurgence of hatred is at best a recoil to the evil days of colonial misadventure in the lower Middle Belt. It smacks the resurgence of the moribund empire and feudal structure, reminiscent of a society in which rationality and humanity has been taken over by inhumanity and irrationality. On arrival in the Middle Belt in 1854, W.B. Bakie was to be told by the Alago, Jukun Igbira and Idoma, that the Tiv are "fierce, warlike and aggressive people", all in an effort to maintain their middleman monopoly. As it were, Bakie soon discovered that the prejudices against the Tiv by this group were borne out of greed, jealousy land inferiority complex. As Ter-Rumun Avav reports

"when Bakie and his team traded directly with the Tiv, they discovered that the people (Tiv) were suspicious of strangers, not because they hated them, but because the Fulani continued to raid them for slaves and therefore they became very cautious about receiving strangers. Their direct dealings with the Tiv made them to describe the Tiv as a *very intelligent, frank, friendly and hospitable people.*"<sup>11</sup>

The point to be made here is that, all Tiv neighbours share one quality, that is pathology of hatred borne out of fear of domination, greed and jealousy. Whether it is the Alago or Kamperi of Nasarawa, the Angas or Kwalla of Plateau, the Jukun or Fulani of Taraba, or the Idoma or Etulo (utur) in Benue State, they are either afraid or jealous of the independence and dynamism of the Tiv, the qualities of magnanimity and good neighbourliness they immensely benefited. It must be made clear that the present pathology of hatred designed by the Jukun and sold to the Kwararafa lineage is instrumental in the present day organized mass armed attack on the Tiv nation. The structures of thought upon which this project is constructed and sold are not only a distortion of reality, but a dubious attempt to subvert the foundations of the Nigerian nation. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution provides generously for the protection of all citizens including their right to settle and pursue legitimate living in any parts of the country. Thus, the fact that the citizens are daily haunted and maimed in some parts of the country on account of the fallacy of not being indigenous to some states of the federation must be rejected. To the extent that no group in either Nasarawa, Plateau or Taraba was "created" and "planted" where they are today, there is a limit to which one can claim a patch of land in these states at the exclusion of the Tiv in the name of history.

Every single group in these areas 'came' from somewhere, and historical records favour the Tiv as the earliest arrivals in these areas. Former Deputy Senate President, 1999-2003, Senator Haruna Abubakar of Lafia South Senatorial District, a strong supporter of the settler theory against the Tiv is not only a great beneficiary of the abundant natural resource in Tiv land, he cannot trace his roots in the District

<sup>9</sup> M. Myegba, *Wukari Crisis 1990-1993* (2000, Forthcoming) p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> M. Myegba, *Wukari Crisis 1990-1993* (2000, Forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup> T. Avav, "The Tiv and Their Neighbours" in P. T. Ahire, ed., *The Tiv in Contemporary Nigeria*, Zaria, Tiv Studies Project, 1993, p. 35.



beyond 1945. the former Deputy Governor of Taraba State (1999-2003) Alhaji Saleh Usman Danboyi, who hails from Ibi, is not only schooled in politics by the Tiv, he was moulded by the Tiv-Hausa political alliance in the area. This is aside from the fact that he is an indigene of Kano whose sojourn in Taraba is little less than 40 years. The Governor of Plateau state Chief Joshua Dariye did not only school in the Tiv city of Makurdi, he also made his management career at Benue Cement Company Plc., Gboko. If these states can concede these positions to them without minding their roots, it speaks volumes of the Tiv travails here when there is evidence of their settlement in these states going back to centuries.

#### **Kwararafacism, Obasanjo and the Tiv Massacre**

Like the British colonial lords, President Olusegun Obasanjo by the above quip has acted a script long instigated in 1918 by J.M. Fremantle whose policy of non-interference in the Jukun sphere sought a rebirth of the Kwararafa Empire. It is no wonder then that when in the wake of the mass attack and killings of the Tiv stock everywhere and in every town and village in Nigeria, the entire security outfit and network in Nigeria watched helplessly as the hapless Tiv women and children, husbands and father were killed and harassed, and dispossessed out of the "Jukun sphere". It was a celebration of Jukun victory, a resurgence of the Kwararafa Empire, supervised by the Nigerian security agents, even as the 1999 constitution grants every citizen the rights to settle and pursue legitimate business in any parts of Nigeria.

But this 'great' empire, history books tell us, fell apart, and so great was its fall that no engineer of political and social hatred can weave its broken parts together. As Professor Iorwuese Hagher puts it, "the present attempts at resuscitation are merely a kwararafascian that shall die and leave a record of unsurpassed odium in modern society". The act of "robbing Peter to pay Paul" in the manner of President Obasanjo's demonic agenda, supported by the Jukun irredentists and the Kwararafa lineage in Nasarawa State has inflicted greater horrors against the Tiv all over Nigeria. This, as it were was meant to water the killing fields of Nasarawa Taraba and Benue with more gallons of blood so as to

spiritually energize the dead Kwararafa Empire, to rise and engage in further conquest! Although once powerful, the Kwararafa empire submitted to the more superior power of the Fulani onslaught. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the defeated and deflected Jukun found their way to the Middle Belt to meet the Tiv who had long settled in the area, they were forced by a situation of circumstance to learn the art of fishing to survive the bitter lessons of unlimited ambition.

However, the advent of the British imperialist administration introduced a policy of divide and rule, and anti-Tiv policy through the obdurate Lord Lugard, and carved out the Tiv and shared them out to be ruled by the Wukari, Ogoja and Lafia chiefdoms. Such show of arrogance and ignorance was intended to subject the Tiv in Wukari and Lafia chiefdoms under the Jukun feudal structure and to resuscitate the dead Kwararafa Empire.

In practice, however, the attempts by the British to resuscitate the dead Kwararafa Empire died with its initiators, and in a disappointing tune, one of the protégée Captain Gordon says, "there is little chance of the Jukun kingdom being a much use in the administration of the Tiv... it might be possible if the 'Sarkin Wukari' were supported by force to persuade the Tiv to obey him, but it could be a long work and would have many setbacks".<sup>12</sup> Indeed attempts to subject the Tiv under Jukun control suffered a catastrophic setback, and it became clear that the Jukun cannot be groomed to assume the sole of ruling over a more dynamic and progressive group like the Tiv. Having lost hope in the theory of *The Dream to Conquer* other tribes for the Jukun, the British agents submitted through Freemantle and Col. Foulkes that the Jukun were "a degenerate, decadent and dying race" through which effort at the revival of the dead Kwararafa kingdom amounts to pumping a punctured tyre.

It must be restated that the arrival of the British in the Middle Belt messed up the symbiotic relationship in the area, pitching the Jukun Minority against the more dynamic and progressive Tiv, Kuteb and

<sup>12</sup> T. Makar, *The History of Political Change Among the Tiv in the 19th and 20th Century* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Press, 1994) p. 4.



Chamba majority groups. The resultant effect being that, there has gradually developed an Kwararafascism, accompanying with it the fury of hate and rage, which culminated in the 2001 government sponsored *Operation Thunder*, a planned and executed act of war against the innocent armless civilians that elected it to power, so as to resurrect the dead Kwararafa Empire. This pathology of hatred with a designer's accuracy is what has come down as state terrorism, organized massacre of the Tiv ethnic nationality in Nasarawa and Taraba states. Most significantly, this stage of war and state violence against the Tiv people is the stage in Nigeria, when rationality and humanity is taken over by inhumanity and irrationality. Professor Hagher (p. 10) recalls the words of Vaclav Havel, the President of Czech Republic in the most descriptive manner of the situation:

I have noticed that all haters accuse their neighbours, and through them the whole world of being evil. The motive force behind the wrath is the feeling that these evil people and the evil world are denying them what is naturally theirs... haters project their own anger onto others here too, they are like spoiled children. They don't see that they must sometimes show themselves worthy of something and that if they don't automatically have everything they think they should this is not because somebody is being nasty to them.<sup>13</sup>

It is this error of judgment that one can situate the conflicts in the Middle Belt region. When therefore the Obasanjo-Atiku ticket was confirmed on the Nigerian society as the touch bearers of democracy, a plan was perfected to put to practice Freemantle's theory of *The Dream to Conquer*. Rather than tell the truth and administer justice, these apostles of *Kwararafa resurgence* found refuge in likes and became abusive and violent. In Tiv, and with the Tiv, "it requires greater courage to negotiate with him (Tiv) than to open fire on him."<sup>14</sup> But this is not to be for the Jukun in Taraba state, and the Alago and Kamberi in Nasarawa state, for whom violence is nourished by hate and arrogance

which are in great supply. These groups alongside Idoma, Geoemai, Igala and Igbara are all deceived into believing that they are Jukun, who must fight to reawaken their Kwararafa empire. Jibrin Amfani *et al* acknowledges this fact thus, "it was for the reasons of the Tiv expansionist policy, which threatened the Jukuns that Jukun supporters consisting of Col. Foulkes and Boyd led by J.M. Freemantle, decided to adopt a policy that would preserve Jukun. They, therefore, initiated the resuscitation of the Jukun Empire in which it was possible for the whole of Jukun speaking areas and the other ethnic groups to be included."<sup>15</sup> Mr. W.P Hewby, the C.M.G. Resident of Borno Province reports this customary character of the colonialists in express details how the indigenous peoples of the Middle Belt were forcefully displaced to make way for Jukun occupation. In his *Notes on the Tiv Tribe*, Hewby reports that, in 1895 and 1896, the Royal Niger Company forces attacked Kachella of the family of Takun chiefs who established himself in the *Tiv Bush west of Takun* at the present site of Kashimbilla. He was killed and the settlement destroyed. On this site has emerged Kashimbilla, a Jukun settlement in *Tiv Country*. Similarly, the Royal Niger Company forces attacked the Chamba of Jibu in 1885, 1888 and 1891. They burnt the settlement to ashes which was later inhabited by the Jukun. Jibu was founded in 1840 by the Chamba. Wuro in Gassol District of Bali L.G.A. which was under the Fulani hegemony was similarly destroyed by the Royal Niger Company in 1899 for occupation by groups with affinity to the Jukun.<sup>16</sup>

The Method of achieving this dream in the 21<sup>st</sup> century remains the same: the use of state power and governmental structures. In both Nassarawa and Taraba, the Tiv were killed and maimed, women and children. Like the massacre in May of 1999, of several villagers in Odi community in Bayelsa state, the same administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, in the year 2001, without lawful authority ordered the deployment of military troops to Tiv towns and villages in Nasarawa, Benue and Taraba states to kill and destroy lives and properties. This act runs contrary to section 217(2)(c) of the 1999 constitution which

<sup>13</sup> I. Hagher, "The Tiv Ethnic Cleansing Agenda, From Lord Lugard to President Obasanjo" [www.Ayatutu.org](http://www.Ayatutu.org), 2001.

<sup>14</sup> O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1977) p. 177.

<sup>15</sup> *Vanguard* 20.10.2005.

<sup>16</sup> M. Myegba, *Wukari Crisis 1990-1993* (2000, Forthcoming).



requires firstly for some conditions to be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly for the use of the military in that regard. It is clear from the president utterances and action or inaction that he intended to preserve the "governing Jukun caste" in resuscitation of the Kwararafa empire.

To Dan Anacha, a Tiv settlement and the biggest Yam market in Taraba state, the Tiv escaping from burnt houses were hunted and killed by the Jukun militia while the government security agents in the area watched and laughed. The town itself has been renamed Kwararafa, confirming the spirit behind the ethnic war: the resuscitation of Kwararafa Empire. Similar armed raids were carried out in other Tiv towns like Ibi, Dooshima, Tornenger, Yamini, Gazor, Gissiri, Tevga and Ikyegh among others, with little or no government intervention.

In Nassarawa state, similar unwholesome killings were carried out in Assaiky, Lafia, Awe, Agwatashi, Doma and many other towns where innocent Tiv civilians were killed. This situation instigated killings and large scale destruction of property with the resultant problem of refugees which had numbered well over 1,000,000 in well over 10 camps in Benue State.

In Benue state itself, the Nigerian Army in a reprisal attack invaded the Benue towns of Gbeji Chembe, Ife, Jootar, Vaase, Zaki-Biam, Kyado, Tse-Adoo, Anyim, etc, where unbelievable destructions and havoc were recorded. Had the international media not brought the holocaust to world attention, the Federal Government would have cleverly covered this up with denials, deliberate lies, misinformation and stereotyping of Tiv as "soldier killers" trying to wage war against the nation and therefore deserving no pity and attention. Even then, the President and the Chief of Army Staff issued frantic blanket denials of responsibility. President Olusegun Obasanjo justified this pogrom thus, "I approved of the action of the army to douse tension in the barracks". He added sarcastically though that "it serves them (Tiv) right, you cannot kill soldiers and go scout free, the Tiv massacre should serve as a lesson to anybody or community contemplating similar actions against government officials". But the same leadership stood idly, watching helplessly, how hapless, armless and innocent civilians were hunted,

killed and or dispossessed of their belongings by these same government security officials.

Government inaction in responding positively in the protection of the fundamental rights of Tiv on the one hand, and its swift reaction in "punishing" the Tiv for daring to challenge the agents of Kwararafascism on the other is understandably in the spirit of the resuscitation of Kwararafa empire which the leadership of the Obasanjo's administration harboured as its cherished agenda.

In Taraba state, the Tiv have been similarly annihilated by the army-backed Jukun militia since 1990 to date code named operation *Parsween* (claim back your land), all in the spirit of the Kwararafa *risorgimento*. The Kuteb case was before the Oputa Panel. Perhaps the advice of Confucius to men of letters and opinion moulders in his days may serve some useful purpose for today's Nigerian leaders. Says he:

Be reasonably conscious of your utterances and behaviour as society looks up to you for guidance and direction, lest, society follow your footsteps and accept abnormality for normalcy, because society believe you can't be wrong in your ways.

It may serve a useful purpose to remind society's representatives and people who command the respect of others to play it safe. Most, if not all the problems we have on our hands are traceable to irresponsible utterances of some of our leaders. The elites and opinion moulders in this region are most guilty of this diseased condition of the mind. The unguarded comments of Chief D. D. Dodo, a former member of the National Constituent and Secretary of defunct Kwararafa state movement that *the Tiv and the Jukun will fight even in heaven least indicate a culture of peaceful coexistence*. A Catholic Knight and apologist of the church though, Chief D. D. Dodo jettisoned all indices of catholic religious faith and practice to advance narrow tribal chores to the utter contradiction of Christian moral teachings. Rage, hatred and tribalism, are for him business as usual in heaven. General T. Y. Danjuma's comments are no less embarrassing as they are instigating. Asked to account for his role in the unending crisis in the Middle Belt, he regurgitated the prejudices of his kinsmen (the Jukun) thus:



You probably know that my own mother was married to a Tiv man... the root cause of the problem is land. The Tiv people used to be migrating farmers. When I was a child, Tiv people would come and set up their farms in Jukun land ... after two or three years when the land become less arable, the Tiv would move to the next site. But over the recent years with the advent of fertilizers, the Tiv became permanent settlers and the result of this is that the Jukun discovered that they are becoming a minority in their own land. The other problem is that wherever a Tiv man settles, that settlement becomes a Tivland ... we have cases of Tiv settlers refusing to pay tax to the local authority and they would prefer to pay tax to where they came from - Benue State ... just when people are about to harvest their yams and guinea corn and beans then the fighting will start. People are driven away by armed robbers really masquerading as inter-tribal fighters. These have been confirmed by the Police of the Tiv people masquerading as Jukun people attacking people and stealing or attacking farms or market, scattering everybody in order to steal lorry loads of yams ...

Needless to say that the army General is an untutored ignoramus in the history of his own very people. It is, however, curious to understand that even in the area of security and peace studies which the General would have displayed excellent intelligence, he is still roundly lacking in every material detail; for how can one explain the open show of hatred to a tribe wherein the General's mother was first and foremost initiated in every function of motherland, which qualifies the retired General benefited from while growing up, and is still benefiting as the current chancellor of the Benue State University, in which the General was honoured with an Honorary Doctorate degree of law. But more embarrassing is the public display of lies and untruth for sale in an attempt to rewrite confirmed historical records, which were chronicled by apologists of Kwararafa empire.

Unknown to General T. Y. Danjuma, the so called Jukun land was founded in the 1840 long after the Tiv had settled in the Wukari area, then known to them as WAKA. The *Ugondo Udema*, a Tiv Stock in Donga Local government area in Taraba State were the first settled humans in the area. The Chamba who cohabit with the Tiv in this area do not contest this historical fact. Intelligence report by Mr. K. Dewar,

1935-37 p. 53 in par read "... the Tiv arrived at about the same time as the Chamba in the Donga region; and that the *Ugondo* were actually the first to take possession of the territory which part of their descendants now occupy in Donga District."<sup>17</sup> To argue as the General does, that the Tiv are migrating farmers who have not only suddenly become permanent settlers in "Jukun land", but have degenerated to common criminals masquerading as Jukun people attacking and stealing for survival, is Schizophrenic to say the least. It speaks volumes of such a person, before and now. When those who know choose not to say of what is as it is, and of what is not, as it is not, but rather say of what is, as it is not and of what is not, as is, then those with answers decline to offer them. When the high and the low ride in the same caravan of deceit, then the ordinary masses become confused and the stage is set for crisis.

For T. Y. Danjuma, the Tiv-Jukun conflict is anchored on indigeneship and ownership of land. But this again opens up the General's poverty of intellect. Rightly understood, the General and his Jukun kinsmen are suffering from a complex of poor collective imaging in want of a greater Kwararafa risorgimento. Such is perhaps which spirit that drives the General's fury of hate and rage, to instigate the government against its citizens via the misuse of his office. The duo of Olusegun Obasanjo and Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma who in 1976 engineered the Tiv-Jukun culture of rage and hatred through irregular balkanisation of Tivland in the name of state creation are today at the helm of the criminal structure in Nigeria, and are still convinced and determined as ever, to bring to practical reality Freemantle's *Dream to Conquer* the Tiv and other ethnic groups in the Middle Belt, to subject them to the judgment of the Jukun "governing caste" through the use of the Nigerian Army.

It thus appears though that the Nigerian leadership under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and its security agents are most uncharitable to ordinary citizens. Their arrogant posture on matters of national security, and their ignorance on commonsensical but important issues of national unity is most criminal to say the least. It is perhaps most

<sup>17</sup> SNP/17/5/244781.



reasonable to conclude as most nationalists have done, that our "leaders" have learnt nothing, and forgotten everything. Perhaps too, one finds every reason to believe that the utterances of our leaders day by day, action by action prove that, not only are they criminal ignoramuses, they should honourably relieve common criminals and take their rightful spaces at Kirikiri, Bama and Makurdi prisons. Leader of Alliance For Democracy (AD) in the Federal House of Representative, Hon Oladapo Olaitan confirmed this reasonable conclusion when he says, President Olusegun Obasanjo "should return to prison where he rightly belongs."<sup>18</sup> Hon. Olaitan then, was contributing on the floor of the house when the impeachment motion was being debated. The motion in question was carried by the majority in what came to be referred to as the seventeen sins of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Gani Fawehinmi (SAN) most ably and authoritatively asserts, the President adulates ignorance and arrogance, "he is insensitive to people's complaints, arrogant and he wears a disposition of know all and he knows nothing. When you take Obasanjo's regime in every respect, one, by one, there is nowhere he has scored above 20 percent. Nowhere."<sup>19</sup> One respect which readily comes to mind is his pathological hatred for the people of the Middle Belt and Christendom all in an effort to assuage Kwararafacist elements in the North. He rages against Rev. Yakubu Pam, Plateau State CAN Chairman who had sought to know why President Obasanjo did not think it fit to invite leaders of CAN to Abuja when 46 Christians were killed in a church in Yelwa:

Mr. Chairman of CAN you are talking absolute nonsense, and don't provoke me. When I did invite people to Abuja in April, do you think I invited them for a picnic? CAN my foot! As a Christian, what did Christianity teach you? Revenge? You are an idiot, a total idiot. And I have no apologies for that.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *The Comet* 30.08.2002:3.

<sup>19</sup> *The Comet* 30.08.2002:1.

<sup>20</sup> *Saturday Punch*, May 22, 2004.

It should be noted that, the Jukun like the Tiv, Kutcb, Chamba, and Alago, Kamberi in Taraba and Nasarawa states respectively have a land they can variously claim as indigenous to them all. It is however fallacious to proceed therefrom to conclude that spheres in the Middle Belt were created based on ethnic boundaries. The idea of a tribe as an isolated and closed group is certainly a myth in this region wherein there is interlocking and overlapping of diverse ethnic groups which roll over others like the waves of a sea. Any attempt, now or in the future to carve out spheres of authority or domination for the Jukun or any other ethnic group over and above the other ethnic communities in the Middle Belt region will rather lead to further spilling of blood. For those who still have faith in the resurrection of the dead Kwararafa empire, the wise submission of Col, Foulkes, one of the grandfathers of Kwararafacism will suffice, that *there is no use making any further attempt to bolster the Jukun up or keep the Dream to Conquer alive with artificial respiration*, the Kwararafa empire is dead, buried and cannot be resurrected.

### A Civilization of Peace and Tolerance

Our informed history teaches society that "man abandoned to himself cannot truly be man". This in itself approximates the conclusion that nothing can be better for anyone of us individually, unless it is better for us all together. Denial of the right of indigeneship and ownership and use of land, and traditional rulership and policies against the Tiv majority in either Nasarawa or Taraba is not and cannot achieve peace for either the Alago and Kamberi in Nasarawa state or the Jukun minority in Taraba. That which is dear to us all can only be protected if there is full respect and recognition of human dignity and basic rights of all the ethnic nationalities in the Middle Belt.

Our responsibility for others is the measure of our humanity. We are thus enjoined to judge our own well being by the needs of others, by uniting ourselves with them to a higher truth. The apostles of Kwararafa Risorgimento may be playing out the script of some agent provocateur, or they may be truly acting out their nature. Whichever way their direction may be, they are unfortunately undoing the Nigerian system,



and when the entire system is undone, they, like their assumed enemies, will be losers. As it is, they are travelling on a rather dangerous road from which they need to be rescued. The choice words of F.W. Deklerk, South African Transitional President are here informative:

You cannot ensure a safe and secure future by a denial of the right of a permanent and irremovable majority of the population. Then which is dear to you can only be protected if there is a full recognition of human dignity and basic rights of all.

The Tiv, the Jukun, and the Alago/Kamberi are essential to each other and need not be divisive. They need to cultivate a spirit of tolerance, a philosophy of compromise, which need neither relinquish principles nor suffocate initiative; and which need neither be opportunistic nor irresponsible. They need not force, confrontation and divisiveness, which will play less a role provided a sufficiently large number of people at appropriate levels are prepared to resolve divisive issues while giving them the roots of their unity.

Refusal to subject differences to reasoned debates and possible amicable resolution smacks of barbarism, and undermines rational standards of judgment, and corrupts the inherited intuitive wisdom and bewilderment in which clarity about the larger aims of life is denied and the self-confidence of the people destroyed. The culture of rage and hatred, killings and mass destruction of properties via the use of state power as it were against the Tiv and Kuteb by the army backed Jukun militia promotes nobody any good except the irrational and inhuman mindset of the perpetrators and their sponsors. In the long run however, it destroys that which is dear to us all, i.e. a civilization of peace and self-development.

Since the battles of the barracks are ultimately routed in the conflicts of Minds, let us be ever prepared (while an issue remain unresolved, even after we have exhausted our last argument) to begin again, if necessary, an informed, frank and civilized discussion, and eschew the dialogue of the deaf. The implied suggestion here is that effective communication and an open meaningful relationship are governed by the art of listening to others and sharing the richness of the other's tradition. Human nature as it were is essentially not in isolation,

we can never encounter only ourselves in the world, and any conception of our own environment that perceives only ourselves and our disposition is necessarily flawed from the point of view of essential human nature.

The need of the moment is a civilization of peace and tolerance, a unity of the global commons: Tiv, Jukun, Alago, Idoma, Igbira, Kamberi/Kuteb, Kwalia, Chamba, Hausa and Fulani among other ethnic nationalities in the Middle Belt. Perhaps the crusade for peace and peaceful co-existence, and inter-ethnic accommodation mounted by Governor Abdulahi Adamu of Nasarawa state is the gateway to our envisioned civilization of peace and tolerance. "We all need each other", he says, "and we must accommodate one another to be able to maintain the needed peace and solidarity without which it is impossible to achieve development and progress in a multi-ethnic state like ours. Hatred of neighbours will be the beginning of our downfall as a state ... there is no viable alternative in tolerance and good neighbourliness. We must seek to be our neighbours' keeper. This is a precondition for our progress as a state."<sup>21</sup>

This is an invitation to search (from within our resources as stakeholders in conflict situations) the motive and the principles that would constitute the social foundations of the new society in the making. Such a society presupposes a certain range of understanding and expectation, as well as the necessary intellectual infrastructure so that people of different outlooks may communicate and collaborate in building a society in which the human dimension is protected and enhanced. This principle resolves controversial issues, unites and harmonies people much faster and truly than daggers, bombs and bullets. Humanity in acting out its freedom must also acknowledge the accompanying burden of responsibility to others as well.

<sup>21</sup>A Adamu, "Let's Sheath Our Swords". Being the Text of Radio and Television Broadcast on the Ethnic Violence in the State, Lafia, July 2, 2001, p. 10.



## Conclusion

One's reflection on human behaviour in our times in the lower Middle Belt has revealed certain constraints of political truths. These truths found expression as endorsed by the global commons in such documents as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In our nation the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 replicates the provisions of the African charter on Human and people's rights which *inter alia* guarantees individual rights and prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and linguistic affiliations. While these provisions command obedience from all citizens, ethnic cleavages which as it were should wear the garb of specific norms, and limit its efficacy to those who subscribe to it, are rather made to take precedence over and above universal norms i.e. constitutional provisions. Such an application of speciality norms as if they were universal norms is responsible for mass ethnic conflicts in Middle Belt.

As argued in its detailed roots, such conflicts are essentially founded on rage and hatred of other ethnic groups, and sustained by lies, arrogance and state power. But as has been argued, hatred is a formation of irrationality and inhumanity, whose end result destroys and annihilates humanity. The ethnic cleansing agenda long initiated by Lugard, which has found perfect implementation in the Obasanjo administration, very readily comes in mind as an example.

Our argued conclusion is that rage, hatred and killings, burning, rape and looting will neither ensure a safe and secure future for our children and future generations, nor will it protect that which is dear to the living. Neither will the many communal conflicts, in Nasarawa or Taraba with its attendant loss of lives, destruction of farms and sometimes dislodgement of the indigenous populations, nor the wholesale use of state power will prevent the indigenous population from returning to their proper spheres, perhaps more determined than ever to fight on.

Hence our submission is that "it is useless to preserve a governing cast unless it has something to govern". Obviously, peace in the Middle Belt does not depend on intimidation, blackmail and coercive force of state power. The way forward can only be found in a civilization of

peace and tolerance, not in a climate of violence and mutual suspicion, and the pursuit of narrow self-interest. We must refuse to sacrifice the culture of peace and unity on the altar of the gods of intolerance and ethnic aggrandizement. More violence will not resolve problems. It will only lead to a vicious cycle of vengeance and more violence, whose end no one can predict. Community leaders in Benuue, Plateau and Taraba states should assert authoritatively, as governor Abdulahi Adamu of Nasarawa State, that "all the tribes in the state are bound together with the accord of common destiny. No tribe can be uprooted from here. The Kanuris cannot. The Fulanis cannot. The Eggons cannot. And the Tivs cannot. The sooner we all realize this, the better for all of us. We are all indigenes of this state, not settlers."<sup>22</sup> This open-minded assertion of our diversity, although limiting, is not and should not be the boundary line of our aspirations but a launching pad from which the indigenous population in the lower Middle Belt have access to an expanding and indefinite world of possibilities and varying horizons.

A civilization of peace and tolerance in the Middle Belt entails an attitude of acceptance of each of the ethnic nationalities though, rooted in the truth, not as a formula of agreement to be eventually reached, but as a centre of unity that is always accessible but never fully appropriated. This for us means an active commitment to cooperate for the sake of the truth that extends beyond individual to collective perceptions. Baring the ethnically, politically and religiously diversified character of the Middle Belt, there still exist within and among these plurality of cultures, a relationship and the consequent demand to share a unity as members of the same political community. This form of unity is neither imposed from outside nor dictated from 'above', but is sourced from 'within'.

This suggests a philosophy of human integration, which implies both a genuine self-acceptance and an acceptance of others. What defines people is neither their ethnic grouping nor religious or cultural affiliation, but that as human beings they are sharers in the human family from which they receive their individuality. The ethnic

<sup>22</sup> A Adamu, "Let's Sheath Our Swords". Being the Text of Radio and Television Broadcast on the Ethnic Violence in the State, Lafia, July 2, 2001, p.10.



nationalities in the Middle Belt must be alive to the possibilities of their own being by accepting and integrating their being into the finality that they are as human beings. This is the only gateway to the humanity of others and a truly human existence. Rage, hatred and killing of Tiv, Jukun, Alago, Kamberi, Kuteb, and Chamba *inter se*, and the lack of respect for life is inauthentic human existence that leads humanity to total destruction. Overzealous ambition, lust for power, selfishness, voluptuousness, pride, anger and revenge are passions that should not instigate the agenda of any leadership and any people for that matter. Dialogue should be allowed to prevail over the language of arms.

21

## The Aftermath of Ilorin Talaka Parapo, 1960-1967

S. Y. Omoiya

### Introduction

The attainment of independence by Nigeria on 1 October 1960 meant different things to different people, groups and segments in the country. To the people of Ilorin, it was the period of socio-political restructuring of the polity, which was dictated by two major events. The first of these events was the power struggle between the indigenous ruling institutions that represented the interest of the colonial administration and a radical group in Ilorin, called the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* (the United Front of the Poor People), which was in alliance with the nationalists party in the South West, the Action Group. The second event was the early phase of the reign of *Emir* Sulu Karnani Gambari (1959-1992). The acrimony that accompanied the choice of the *Emir* and the personality of the new *Emir* himself, created another scene, which fully registered a new phase of intergroup relations.

On the issue of power struggle between the indigenous ruling class, and the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* ITP, it was within this period that the total suppression of the insurgent group was realized. The support granted the new *Emir*, Sulu Karnani Gambari, by the forces that allied against the radical group of ITP gave him the unlimited powers to deal with the local situation. This in turn, made him an absolute ruler who later attempted to eliminate some of the original internal forces that assisted him. This situation on its own created a new phase of inter-personal



relations amongst the allying forces on the one hand, and inter-group relations within and outside Ilorin Community, on the other. Despite the fact that the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) regained the control of the Council of Ilorin Native Authority in the elections of 1959, the party was still not comfortable with the presence and operations of the Ilorin Talaka Parapo. The party was determined to wipe out all forms of opposition to the NPC in Ilorin Emirate and in the province as a whole.

A number of strategies were mapped out by the new *Emir* and his allies to achieve the set goal. The first among these strategies was to effectively use the authority, at both local and regional levels, to intimidate, coerce and use other forms of force to bring the opposition group to submission<sup>1</sup>. The other schemes included to incarcerate the opposition by incriminating its members and summarily sentencing them to terms of imprisonment, and to persuade those that could be persuaded to withdraw from active participation in the activities of the *Talaka Parapo*, even after Nigerian independence<sup>2</sup>. Also members of the ITP were to be forced to migrate from the Community, if they remained unyielding to drop the hard line position on the course of liberation reforms of Ilorin community<sup>3</sup>. To achieve these goals NPC and its allies were fully prepared. It ensured that the candidate chosen to fill the vacant stool of *Emir* in 1959 had western education and was bold enough to undertake the assignment of reclaiming Ilorin from the opposition groups.

Because of the fact that Sulu Karnani Gambari, the chosen *Emir* for Ilorin in 1959 was among those humiliated NPC candidates at the 1956/57 council election to the Native Authority, he needed no education to be able to handle the NPC agenda to terminate the local oppositions. The new *Emir*, an experienced court registrar, was also seen by the NPC, to have good advantage to regain Ilorin back to the

fold of the party and the Northern Region<sup>4</sup>. The 1961 general elections were indeed crucial to the interest of the NPC because Ilorin was considered very important to the interest of the caliphate on the basis of religion and historical existence as an Emirate.

Between 1960 and 1961 when the general elections were held in Nigeria, the new *Emir* in Ilorin had successfully accomplished the scheme against opposition to NPC. Almost all the leaders of the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* who were not ready to change position by returning to the NPC fold, were in one way or the other incriminated. Each of them were accused of different criminal trumped-up offences, charged to Sharia or the *Emir's* Court and without going through the normal court proceedings, sentenced to various terms of imprisonment<sup>5</sup>. Prominent among the leaders of the opposition that suffered being sentenced to prison were Alhaji Sulyman Mainto, the Chairman of the Ilorin Talaka Parapo, Alhaji Adebimpe Oniyeye, Alhaji Delodun Alanamu and Chief J. S. Olawoyin from Offa<sup>6</sup>.

Even though the activities of the opposition group in Ilorin Emirate had reduced and a number of its leaders were operating from the background, it was not to say that they were totally out of existence. For instance, by the time of 1961 Regional elections, the ITP/AG group was still able to secure the only seat of Ilorin South Constituency at the polls.<sup>7</sup> This situation explains the extent to which force and intimidation could go to change the peoples' will.

Judged by the manner the opposition in Ilorin were treated, the determination of the ruling elite in Ilorin and the NPC to exterminate all forms of opposition, was somehow achieved. The outright manner of brutality adopted by the executors of the persecution scheme also illustrates the extreme dimension power contest could go. This situation, naturally, dictated the subsequent relations between individuals and groups of people within Ilorin community.

<sup>4</sup> AbdulFatai Bello, *Politics of Protest: A Study of Ilorin Talaka Parapo (ITP) 1954-1966* M. A. Project, University of Ilorin 1986, pp. 125-148.

<sup>5</sup> AbdulFatai Bello, *Politics of Protest...* pp. 125-148.

<sup>6</sup> AbdulFatai Bello, *Politics of Protest...* pp. 125-148.

<sup>7</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Dauda Aluko an Islami Cleric, Aged 72 years.

<sup>1</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo, a retired N. A. Staff, aged 82 years.

<sup>2</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo, a retired N. A. Staff, aged 82 years.

<sup>3</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo.



### The new phase of Opposition in Ilorin after Talaka Parapo

*Emir Sulu Karnani Gambari's* successful handling of the NPC scheme to silence oppositions in Ilorin actually endeared him to the Northern Regional government and the indigenous elite class, who sponsored him to be the *Emir*. Both the Regional government and his elite friends and associates treated him with respect. For the *Emir's* dedication and loyalty to the NPC, he was selected to represent the Northern House of Chiefs in the Regional administration.<sup>8</sup> On the part of the *Emir*, he was determined to do more things to impress the Regional government that he had fully subjugated oppositions. The *Balogun* and the other Chiefs at this time, were in full alliance with the *Emir*. They both saw the attempts of the opposition to the NPC as against their respective and collective powers, influence and relevance. Hence, they cooperated fully with the *Emir* on all the steps he took against the opposition.

In the course of the *Emir's* suppression of oppositions, he extended his vendetta to individuals and groups that opposed his candidature as the *Emir*. Various punishments ranging from deposition of those who were holding indigenous titles, to transfer of Native Authority staff from the township to the rural areas were adopted.<sup>9</sup> It was after all these that the *Emir* believed he had overcome his personal enemies and those opposed to the NPC government. As a representative of the Regional House of Chiefs in the Regional administration, the *Emir* believed and behaved as the most important individual in Ilorin Emirate.<sup>10</sup> He also saw himself as an absolute ruler whose authority should not be challenged by any individual or group.<sup>11</sup>

It was this concept of the *Emir* as an absolute ruler that actually made him to undermine the interest and influence of his old friends, some of who directly participated in his nomination and confirmation as the *Emir*. The first among these personalities was Alhaji Buhari

Edun.<sup>12</sup> He was the provincial chairman of the NPC<sup>13</sup>, the ruling party in the Northern Region. He became the supervisory councilor for judiciary, after 1959 council elections, when NPC regained the control of the council of Ilorin Native Authority.<sup>14</sup> It was Alhaji Buhari Edun's added position as portfolio councillor that brought him into conflict with *Emir Sulu Karnani Gambari*.<sup>15</sup>

According to the colonial organization of the judicial system, the *Emir* operated a Grade 'A' court.<sup>16</sup> The court was superior court to the other Sharia courts in the Emirate. These other Sharia courts were either graded B or C.<sup>17</sup> It was in the *Emir's* court that most of the judgments that suppressed the oppositions to the NPC and those of the *Emir's* personal enemies were given.<sup>18</sup> The *Emir* actually used the court as an instrument of exercising his absolute power in the Emirate.

Alhaji Buhari Edun, as the NPC Provincial Chairman, and popular among his followers, could certainly not close his eyes to the oppressive judgments emanating from the *Emir's* court, more so when he became the supervisory councilor for judiciary in the Native Authority. He tried to question the basis on which some of the judgments were reached in the *Emir's* court. The *Emir* saw the interference of Alhaji Buhari Edun in some of the cases before his court as unnecessary and calculated insult to his authority.<sup>19</sup> This situation graduated to personality clash that eventually became open to the public. Both personalities naturally attracted followers, who were fully ready to support their respective positions. The supporters saw the supremacy of their respective mentor as their on victory. Therefore the conflict, which began as personal between the two leaders, degenerated to infect the entire Ilorin community.

<sup>12</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Mohammed Ojagboro, a retired Teacher, aged 75 years.

<sup>13</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Mohammed Ojagboro.

<sup>14</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Mohammed Ojagboro.

<sup>15</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Mohammed Ojagboro.

<sup>16</sup> Northern Region Native Authority Law 1954, Government Printer, 1954 pp. 7-15.

<sup>17</sup> Northern Region Native Authority Law 1954, pp. 7-15.

<sup>18</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo.

<sup>19</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo.

<sup>8</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Dauda Aluko an Islamic Cleric, Aged 72 years.

<sup>9</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Dauda Aluko.

<sup>10</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Dauda Aluko.

<sup>11</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Dauda Aluko.



As the differences between the *Emir* and Alhaji Buhari Edun became public, more people filed behind Alhaji Buhari Edun against the *Emir*.<sup>20</sup> This was because many of them believed that the *Emir* had overwielded his power against his real and imagined enemies and therefore stepped on many people's toes. The youths, in particular, were more active and vocal against what they considered the despotic rule of *Emir* Sulu Karnani Gambari. The youths actually organized themselves, as the vanguard of the NPC and the population of Ilorin to check the excessive powers of the *Emir*, particularly his special court session, which he used to pronounce controversial judgments.<sup>21</sup>

The reactions against some of the unpopular judgments of the *Emir's* court were initially not taken seriously by the Regional government. However, as petitions flooded Kaduna from individuals, groups and the party (NPC) on the high handedness of *Emir* Sulu Karnani Gambari, attention was given to it.<sup>22</sup> At different times, the Regional government invited the two groups that had emerged in Ilorin, those for and those against the *Emir*, to Kaduna.<sup>23</sup> The two sides in the dispute prepared arguments to convince the Regional government to support its own position. These efforts actually aggravated the situation rather than resolving the crisis.

As a result of this protracted crisis, the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto in 1963, scheduled a visit to Ilorin, to personally intervene in that situation that had occasioned series of petitions. For instance, in one of the petitions, written against the *Emir*, his dethronement by the Regional government was actually demanded for.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, petitions from the group supporting the *Emir* also demanded for the dissolution of the NPC Provincial Executive.<sup>25</sup> The uncomplimentary contents of the

<sup>20</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo.

<sup>21</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo.

<sup>22</sup> John. N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, (Huduhuda Publishing Company) pp. 258-265.

<sup>23</sup> John. N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, pp. 258-265.

<sup>24</sup> John. N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, pp. 258-265.

<sup>25</sup> John. N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, pp. 258-265.

petitions clearly illustrated that a full-blown crisis had began in Ilorin Province.

On arrival at Ilorin, the Northern Regional Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, in company of his Western Regional Premier, Chief Samuel Akintola was met by the youths of Ilorin who organized a demonstration, by carrying placards with various inscriptions, calling on the Premier to save the people of Ilorin from an *Emir* without a human face, (E gbawa lowo oba Ajaga) *Emir* that placed heavy burden on the people.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the Northern Region Premier was not too happy with what was happening, more so, when he was on the visit to Ilorin with a Premier of another Region. Nonetheless, that impressed on him to take immediate action to avert major crisis in the Province.

Among the measures taken were the reconfirmation of the party's confidence in Alhaji Buhari Edun as the NPC Provincial Chairman, and abolition of the court sessions operated by the *Emir*. However the demand to dethrone the *Emir* was turned down.<sup>27</sup> With these reforms, the crisis in Ilorin *Emirate* was eventually put to rest. Even though the relations between the *Emir* and Alhaji Buhari Edun, the NPC Chairman, never returned to be as cordial as it had been before the crisis, both personalities behaved themselves and instructed their supporters to avoid another range of open confrontation.

With the settlement reached through the intervention of the Premier, the two personalities could no longer afford to openly show their differences. Consequently, both parties continued to prevent open incidents that indicate hostility. While the *Emir* operated within the new scope of his responsibilities and powers, the party chairman fully engaged himself with party affair. They both avoided meeting themselves in public functions.

One significant consequence of this crisis is that the *Emir* of Ilorin, for the first time since the advent of colonial rule in 1900 was directly put under check, as a result of people's protests. Since he could no longer operate a court, the instrument he effectively used to intimidate, oppress and suppress his opponents, he naturally become lame. The

<sup>26</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Orombo.

<sup>27</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd. Ilorin, 1992, pp. 521-525.



Emir was quick to adjust to the reality of his new status and limited powers in the administration of the polity. He adopted the policy of fence mending and rejuvenation of support for his rulership.<sup>28</sup>

For instance, he embarked on a series of organized prayer sessions for peace, stability and progress of Ilorin Community.<sup>29</sup> As an Islamic community, every segment of the community was gradually involved in the prayer sessions. The clerics took advantage of this situation to selectively preach on issues that relaxed the political tension and hostility that were generated by the immediate power struggle, between the ruling elite and the subject class. It was through the Islamic clerics and the organised prayer sessions that the potent political turmoil in Ilorin was brought under control.

### The dominance of the western educated elite

The trend of political mobilization and consciousness that started in the Northern Region of Nigerian in the 1940s, and which brought about the formation of cultural organizations led by the elite in various Provinces did not exclude the peoples of Ilorin. The Ilorin Progressive Union was founded between 1941 and 1943.<sup>30</sup> The objectives of the Union were among other things: promotion of unity and progress of the people of Ilorin and its environ, and encouragement of educational and economic advancement of the people.<sup>31</sup> The founding fathers of the Union included Alhaji Durosinlorun Alabi of Isale Oja, Alhaji Busari Isale-Oja, Alhaji Audu Baki Anifowoshe, S. A. Babatunde Gada and Alhaji Adedeji Onimago Alanamu.<sup>32</sup> These founding members cut across the diverse ethnic groups of Fulani, Hausa and Yoruba in Ilorin.

The personality and reputation of the members of the union earned it respect from all segments of Ilorin community. The traditional ruling institutions, elite, members of Ilorin NA council and even the colonial

administration saw little or no danger in the formation of the union.<sup>33</sup> The popularity of the Union actually accounted for its achievement right from inception. One of such major achievements of the Union was the establishment of the Ilorin Union Elementary School in 1944.<sup>34</sup> At this time, the people of Ilorin had become conscious of the importance of western education to its economic development, social advancement and political balance. Therefore, the indigenous people of Ilorin became actively involved in the establishment of Western oriented formal schools and they encouraged the people to send their wards to school. This was a sharp contrast to the original position taken by most of the indigenous people of Ilorin, who feared that by sending their children to the western oriented schools, they would be opening them up to be converted to Christianity.

By 1946 another community union was formed in Ilorin. This time, it was by the employees of Ilorin Native Authority. The union was called "Ilorin Brotherhood Union."<sup>35</sup> The fact that the new union embraced all categories of workers in Ilorin Native Authority, made it more broad based than the IPU. It was made up of selected individuals who had excelled either in public service, commerce or scholarship.<sup>36</sup> Another important advantage of the new union, was the youthfulness and the educational status of its membership.<sup>37</sup>

As the Ilorin Brotherhood Union became more acceptable to the people of Ilorin, its membership had to be opened beyond the staffers of the Native Authority. Due to pressures from the other cream of Ilorin Community, by the early 1950s the Union was forced to change its name from Ilorin Brotherhood Union to Ilorin Descendants Union (IDU).<sup>38</sup> Notable among the founding members of the Ilorin Descendants Union (IDU) were; Alhaji Saidu Kawu, Alhaji A. A. Jimoh, Issa Shaare, Alabi Aluko, Yusuf Idiario, Alhaji Sidiq Gegele and

<sup>28</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*, pp. 521-525.

<sup>29</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*, pp. 521-525.

<sup>30</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*, pp. 521-525.

<sup>31</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd. Ilorin, 1992 pp. 521-525.

<sup>32</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*.

<sup>33</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*.

<sup>34</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*.

<sup>35</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*.

<sup>36</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey So Far*.

<sup>37</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba FAGba a retired N. A. Staff, aged 78 years.

<sup>38</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey so Far*, pp. 521-525.



M. S. Omo Eko. Others were Alhaji Abubakar Lah, Alhaji Aiyela'agbe and Alhaji M. B. Baker.<sup>39</sup>

With the appreciable increase in the number of Ilorin indigenes that had acquired western education and the natural influence of western ideology by their neighbours in the Southwest, the western elites in Ilorin became more prominent in the local administration of Ilorin Community.

The migration of most of the staff of Ilorin Native Authority seeking employment in various parts of Northern Region naturally opened a new channel of relations between the peoples of Ilorin and those from the other parts of Northern Region.<sup>40</sup> As most of these Ilorin indigenes were either members of Ilorin Progressive Union (IPU) or Ilorin Descendants Union (IDU), the two Unions were eventually forced to merge into one. It was the unification of the two Unions that resulted in the formation of the Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union (IDPU) in 1966 with Alhaji M. Baker as the pioneer president.<sup>41</sup>

The formation of this union by indigenes of Ilorin at this time was indeed not peculiar to the area. It was a notable trend in the whole of the then Northern Region, where the elite saw themselves as vanguard of development and anticipated changes in their environment. The unions thus represented the interest of their peoples at all levels of government and other socio-political developments that affected the interest of the entire community.<sup>42</sup>

The unions also served as the rallying point for the elite to appraise and appreciate the development of their people and their community.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, the placement of more indigenous elite in public service and at different levels of administration, made the elite play the roles of representing the community in the new structure of administration. The traditional political institutions and leadership in Ilorin had little or no

<sup>39</sup> L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey so Far*, pp. 521-525.

<sup>40</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Fagba.

<sup>41</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Fagba.

<sup>42</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Fagba.

<sup>43</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Oba Oronbo.

other option than to consult with the elite on the affairs relating to both local administration and the interest of the area at the Regional level.<sup>44</sup>

It was through the activities and responsibilities of the elite in Ilorin that they became the rallying point for planning, execution and the protection of community interests. They played key roles in the affairs of the community that availed them the opportunities to represent its interests both at the Regional and the National levels of governments. These roles of the elite in the political, social and economic life of Ilorin community, made them to dominate their environment, by providing leadership relevant to the contemporary period. It was among the elite that commissioners and board members were chosen. Thus, they served as consultants for government to plan and site development projects in Ilorin. The frequent reference to the Union on all matters relating to the community certainly required regular meetings of the Union to take decisions on matters that were referred to it by the government and from different levels.

### Representation of Ilorin in the Regional House of Assembly

The powerful influence of *Emirs* and Chiefs in Northern Nigeria continued to dictate events in the Region, even when colonial administration had fully embarked on political reforms to democratize the selection of peoples' representatives. While the Western and Eastern Regions continued to follow the democratic process in selecting their representatives into their respective Regional Houses of Representatives, their *Emirs* and the elite in different parts of Northern Region were responsible for selecting the peoples' representatives. These were done merely by agreement between the indigenous ruling class and the local elite, who were mostly staff of the Native Authority.

In Ilorin Emirate, Alhaji Saadu Alanamu, who was the Chief scribe in Ilorin Native Authority, was Community's Representative in the Regional House of Representatives. He remained Ilorin's representative until 1956 when the Union of poor people in Ilorin, under the name of *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* became a powerful movement to the level of

<sup>44</sup> John N. Parden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, p. 326.



effecting changes in the administrative system of the area. As a result of the insistence of the Union that the process of selecting peoples' Representative in the Regional House of Assembly must change, the colonial administration was left with no option other than to agree that democratic principles should be adopted in Ilorin in electing their representatives.

The position of the elite and the youths eventually became dominant in the political changes of Ilorin Emirate. Two main factors were actually responsible for these developments. The first of this was the experience of the revolutionary group, the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* (ITP), which allied with the Action Group party of the Western Region; the second reason was the required rigour of party activities and campaigns to ensure victory for the party. This situation explains why the choice of candidates to represent Ilorin in the 1963 election, in the Northern House of Assembly, was essentially left to the youths. For instance, Alhaji Muhammed Oniyangi, then a Teacher and a popular mobiliser conceded his interest to contest the election to Lawyer AGF Rasaq.<sup>45</sup> Akanbi Oniyangi was from Aafin area while Lawyer AGF Abdulrasaq was from Okemale.<sup>46</sup> By that concession, Lawyer AGF Rasaq won the election as an unopposed candidate.<sup>47</sup> The popularity of Lawyer AGF AbdulRasaq was expected to confer him an automatic candidate for the ministerial appointment, that was believed would be beneficial to the people of Ilorin.<sup>48</sup>

The influence of Western education could certainly not be over estimated in the choice of candidates from Ilorin. Alhaji Saadu Alanamu, the first candidate to represent Ilorin in the Regional House of Representatives, was considered among others, as one of the most educated persons from Ilorin as at the time. This explains why he was commonly referred to as "Saadu gbogbo iwe" (Saadu the epitome of knowledge).<sup>49</sup> Alhaji Ibrahim Laaro who won on the platform of the

<sup>45</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.

<sup>46</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.

<sup>47</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.

<sup>48</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.

<sup>49</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.

*Ilorin Talaka Parapo* ITP/AG alliance, was also a graduate of Kaduna College, while Lawyer AGF AbdulRasaq, was the first qualified lawyer in the whole of Northern Region.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the concession of the other youths in Ilorin to him to be picked on the NPC party ticket to contest could not be said to be accidental. The quality representation from Ilorin in the council of the Native Authority, the Regional House of Assembly, and the National Assembly illustrated that personal value rather than ethnic considerations were used in choosing candidates. The full integration of culturally diverse community of Ilorin could be said to have been achieved, even in the face of competing political contests.

### Representation of Ilorin in the Federal Government

The strategic importance of Ilorin as a community and an Emirate to the peoples and government of Northern Nigeria could certainly not be over rated. Given the fact that Ilorin is one of the frontier Emirates, and that the historical origin of most of its population has little or nothing to do with most of the linguistic groups in the Northern Region, it naturally attracted the attention of the Regional government to it. Also, the efforts made by the revolutionary group in Ilorin, the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* (ITP), to pull Ilorin out of the Northern Region, and merge it with the Western Region, was the last and important incident that attracted more focus to Ilorin from the Northern Regional government. Everything seemed to be done to pacify, encourage and ensure that Ilorin as a community is retained as a part of the Northern Region. This situation explains why most of the Native Authority staff displaced during the revolutionary period 1956-1958 in Ilorin (when *Talaka Parapo*/AG alliance were in control of both the Council of Ilorin Native Authority and at the same time Representatives of the Province in the Northern House of Assembly) were fully accommodated and given prominent positions both at the Regional and National levels of government.

As an expression of the Northern Regional government's interest in Ilorin and its peoples, when the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in

<sup>50</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.



alliance with the NCNC formed the National government in 1962, a good number of Ilorin indigenes were strategically placed in that government. For instance, Alhaji Saadu Alanamu, who was the Chief Scribe in Ilorin Native Authority and the Representative of Ilorin in the Regional House of Assembly, before he lost to the ITP/AG in the 1956/57 elections, was promptly placed as the Regional recruitment officer. It was after Nigeria's Independence that he was posted to London to serve as an assistant to the Agent General, and within six months that the Agent General retired, he fully assumed the position, as the Agent General.<sup>51</sup>

As the Agent General for Nigeria, he was in charge of all exports from, as well as all imports into, Nigeria.<sup>52</sup> This clearly demonstrated that the positions given to the indigenes of Ilorin, through the recommendations of the Northern Regional government, were such that they were allowed to play key roles in the affairs of independent Nigeria.

Another prominent Ilorin indigene that was appointed into the national government on the recommendation of the Northern Regional government was Alhaji AGF AbdulRasaq. He was the elected candidate of Ilorin in the House of Representatives, and at the same time the National legal officer of the NPC. He was first appointed a Junior Minister for Transport.<sup>53</sup> After 1965 Alhaji AGF AbdulRasaq was appointed as Nigeria's Ambassador to Ivory Coast now Cote d' Ivoire.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from the indigenes of Ilorin that were given political appointments in the National government, others were seconded from Northern Regional government to fill the quota of the Region in the Federal Public Service. Such individuals included Alhaji Yusuf Gobir, who was appointed as a Federal Permanent Secretary.<sup>55</sup> Others who also benefited from the secondments from the Northern Regional

<sup>51</sup> John N. Parden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, op. cit. pp. 325-327.

<sup>52</sup> John N. Parden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*.

<sup>53</sup> John N. Parden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*.

<sup>54</sup> John N. Parden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*.

<sup>55</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Kawu Salau.

administration to the Federal Public Service were Alhaji A. A. Jimoh, S. A. Nagode and Alhaji Garba Gobir.<sup>56</sup>

With the representation of Ilorin at both the Regional and National administrations, opportunities opening to her indigenes became wide and relevant to its human development. Indeed, the encouragement these opportunities gave to the people of Ilorin stimulated further the people's interest in acquiring western education. Consequently before the end of the First Republic in Nigeria, Ilorin indigenes provided a good percentage of the administrative and other categories of staff for the entire Northern Nigeria. For instance, indigenes of Ilorin such as Alh. Alabi Adebayo, Alh. Rasheed Alada and Alh. Muhammed Elelu were in Bauchi, others such as Alh. Ade Yusuf, and Alh. Amuda Alanamu were in Sokoto. Also Dr. Amuda Aluko was initially in Katsina before he was later transferred to Sokoto. Alh. Issa Omöeko was in Kano as a forestry officer and he later rose to become a Permanent Secretary in Kano State, where he retired. Other notable Ilorin indigenes that served in other parts of the old Northern Region were Alhaji Mosadi Orioko who was District Officer in Kazaure and Alh. Amuda Gobir (senior) who served as Chief Adult Education Officer in Katsina.<sup>57</sup>

The spread of Ilorin indigenes as either employees of the Regional government or the respective provincial administration in various parts of the Northern Region provided them wider opportunities in terms of relations and relevance in different parts of the old Northern Region. This on its own provided opportunities for better understanding among the people. Through these individuals in the service of the Regional and Federal governments, other Ilorin indigenes in private engagements such as trading and craftsmanship were encouraged to establish trade relations with the people or even migrate to settle in different parts of Nigeria. The settlement of Ilorin indigenes in various parts of the Northern Region and elsewhere in Nigeria, actually sustained the cordial relations between indigenes of Ilorin and peoples from other parts of the country. A good number of Ilorin indigenes are found in various parts of Nigeria

<sup>56</sup> John N. Parden, *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*, Op. Cit. pp. 325-327.

<sup>57</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Alabi Salau. A retired N A Staff, Aged 65 years.



today, either as public servants or Islamic clerics.<sup>58</sup> The spread of Ilorin indigenes in various parts of Nigeria has actually promoted understanding and deep relations between the peoples of Ilorin and these other groups. In some cases, such relations result in intermarriages, and consequently establishment of permanent relations.

A general appraisal of events that stimulated peoples' changing relations in Ilorin between 1960 and 1967 when the First Republic was terminated and military administration became established in Nigeria can best be traced to the previous historical incidents that continued to generate actions and reactions in the community. For instance, it was within this period that the NPC was able to regain its total control of Ilorin. This was done by prosecuting and persecuting members of *Ilorin Talaka Parapo*. The leaders of the Union were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

The full support granted *Emir* Sulu Karnani Gambari of Ilorin by both the Regional and National government to carry out the persecution of opposition in Ilorin, naturally gave the *Emir* the feelings of an absolute ruler. This in turn, made the *Emir* to undermine individual and group influence in the administration of the *Emirate*. The conflict between the *Emir* and the Chairman of NPC in Ilorin Province, Alhaji Buhari Edun, who was his friend, confirms the dangers inherent in absolute powers exercised by an individual.

### Conclusion

The consequences of the protracted crisis arising from the personality clash among the local leaders of the NPC and the *Emir* forced the regional government to modify the powers of the *Emir* in Ilorin. The abolition of the *Emir's* Court and granting of more powers to the *Emirate* council opened a new ground of relations. The fence mending exercise embarked upon by the *Emir*, to redress and correct some of his actions actually sustained the unity and understanding among different groups of people in Ilorin. Since the changes witnessed in Ilorin after Nigerian independence were dominated by the activities of the new

*Emir*, these clearly marked the beginning of the new phase of relations and development in Ilorin *Emirate*.

The incursion of the military into the Nigerian political life by the coup of 15th January 1966 and the subsequent counter coup of 1967 created a new climate of inter group relations. This time, Ilorin as a former provincial headquarters transited to a new state capital carved for the former Kabba and Ilorin provinces by the military administration. The choice of the West Central State, which was later modified as Kwara State, is a true reflection of the geographical location of Ilorin and Kabba provinces but for political expediencies, the tactical change of the name, must have been influenced by the historical relations between the two provinces with the Northern Regional government.

As Ilorin had to contend with the reality of the climate of relations, especially in attracting benefits out of the newly created Kwara State, issues of its local struggles and differences had to be immediately subsumed to benefit from the greater advantages of state creation.

Indeed, first era of the military administration in Nigeria, posed a new challenge to the people of Ilorin and its traditional administration. The fact that the first Military Governor, then Major D. L. Bamigboye, was from an area that was directly under Ilorin Traditional administration meant a lot to the people and the traditional ruling institutions. Therefore, basis for close relations within all the segments of Ilorin became obligatory.

<sup>58</sup> Oral evidence obtained from Alh. Alabi Salau.



## Bassa and Egbura Relations in the 21st Century

Mayaki M. Mejida

### Introduction

The Bassa and Egbura of present day Nasarawa State are predominantly found in Toto Local Government Area in the North Central region of Nigeria. From all available evidence, both oral and written, there is no conclusive empirical proof as to which group first settled in the area of our study. Historically, the Bassa, Egbura and the Gbagyi existed independently, although the Gbagyi appear, from available records, to be the last group among these three to arrive in the area<sup>1</sup>. The Bassa had their separate Kingdom of Ikereku and the Egbura the kingdom of Opanda. However, no clear demarcation between the two Kingdoms existed.<sup>2</sup>

From the early records<sup>3</sup>, it seems that the Kingdoms of Ikereku and Opanda existed side by side until they were both conquered by Makama Dogo and were both brought under the tutelage of Nasarawa. That was the situation when colonial administration was introduced into the area.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Niagwan Commission of Enquiry 1974 p.14, Ogomudia Panel p.7 para10, Samci p.11 para13(c).

<sup>2</sup> Samci Samuel Commission of Enquiry on Toto and Umaisha Communal Conflict, 1987, p.11 para13(c).

<sup>3</sup> Ogomudia panel...p.7 para10(b).

The British broke the area into districts under Nasarawa Native Authority. Divisional officers were sent to look after the provinces.

### Pre-Colonial Bassa and Egbura Relations

Most of the peoples of Northern Nigeria in pre-colonial times entered into various relationships with their neighbors at different levels. Although these relationships cannot be romanticized, they were not as antagonistic as portrayed in colonial historiography. The Bassa and the Egbura had coexisted peacefully for at least two centuries before the arrival of the British colonialists.

There were relationships that were underpinned by cultural cross-fertilization in which inter-ethnic, religious and linguistic elements served as veritable bridges between different households. There was cooperative labor among the different ethnic groups. This was aimed at mutual assistance to speed up each other's farm work. It is pertinent to note that cooperative labour was an occasion for the young men to demonstrate their competence as future husbands, while the lazy ones are usually ridiculed. Again cooperative labour was a means of enhancing output. Thus, it was employed to overcome the weakness of individuals who could not produce surplus food. More importantly cooperative labour had a political undertone because it brought the people together irrespective of ethnic group, gender or clan affiliation. This again prepared the people for defense against external aggressors. From the above cooperative labour was advantageous because it provided an avenue for mobilizing the entire ethnic groups in a given village community for socio-economic and political activities<sup>4</sup>. Secondly, there was trade at the village market that involved both barter and money exchanges, the means of exchange was cowry shells. The headship of these market squares, especially in Ugya was and still is rotational among the Bassa and the Egbura. Moreover, clearing the market site and keeping the market clean a day before the market is held is done on rotational basis by the entire ethnic groups that constituted

<sup>4</sup> See the works of explorers such as W.B. Baikie, T.J. Hutchinson. Samuel Crowder, and Laird and Oldfield.



the village community<sup>5</sup>. Thirdly there was external trade with other outside villages and from outside the village community such as those at Shege in the south on the main road to Lokoja, and at Gidan Danga in the north of the Galadima District, Toto, Umaisha and at Ugya trade routes.<sup>6</sup> This again served as base for inter-ethnic harmonious relationship. Relationships were again strengthened through joint community rituals at the village groove aimed at propitiation of the earth goddess, the fount of good harvest. These had been the nature of relationship between the Bassa and the Egbura before the depleting activities of the Hausa, and before the British incursion (and her divide and rule policy) became the order of the day, thereby initiating the stitch of inter-ethnic acrimony especially among the Bassa and the Egbura as it would be evident in our next discourse.

### Historical Origin of Bassa-Egbura Conflict

Usman Dan Fodio's jihad of 1804/1805 laid the foundation for the Northern Nigeria emirates. By the creation of Nasarawa Emirate, the Hausa through conquest and by effecting particular patterns of social and political process of incorporation into the Islamic society rather than the creation of an entirely new society, brought the Bassa, Egbura, Gbagyi and a host of other ethnic groups into the dominant Islamic society of the North. Again, the British, through conquest, incorporated the area into the Nigerian project, and (with her characteristic divide and rule policy and pro-Hausa/Fulani and Muslim stance) placed all ethnic groups under the Hausa/Fulani tutelage, thereby achieving what the Fulani and Islamic armies of Dan Fodio could not achieve in about a century.

In the case of administrative mappings, peoples and societies defined as rebellious or that "lacked civilization" were carved out and placed under greater scrutiny or merged with those that had more centralized political systems. Thus the Bassa were in general seen as ungovernable and at the lower rungs of civilization which informed the

<sup>5</sup> For details see M. M. Maiyaki, *British Colonial Rule and its Impact on the Bassa people of Nasarawa Local Government Area of Plateau State: 1900-1960*, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Oral interview with the present Ugya market overseer Mr. Musa Jere, 2006.

specific administrative mechanisms deployed by the British in Bassaland<sup>7</sup>. This became a price the Bassa had to pay for their incessant resistance. While it is safe to say that the amana system -relationship between the emirates and non-Muslim communities in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria recorded some measures of success in certain areas of Northern Nigeria such as Bornu and Sokoto areas, the same could not be said about the area of our study. Through the indirect rule policy, the amana relations between Dar al-Islam (Islamic abode) and Dar al-harb (Non-Islamic abode)<sup>8</sup> were transformed towards categories of suspicion, antagonism and competition in the area of our study. In the amana relationship, the obligations of the Caliphate towards the al-kuffar ahl-amana include what Ibraheem Suleiman observed as the following:

1. The Muslims shall maintain their religious and social autonomy while preserving their distinct characteristics.
2. Their lives, property and honour shall be guaranteed to live in peace with the Muslims.
3. There shall be no interference with their places of worship and those things that may provoke the sensitivities of the Muslim if not demonstrated publicly.
4. They shall be required by the state to adhere to their religion<sup>9</sup>.

Nengel and Longkat have demonstrated the mutual respect that existed between Muslims and non-Muslims among the Jos Plateau tribes;<sup>10</sup> this however cannot be said of the Bassa people who continue to resist both the Fulani and British new over lordship.

<sup>7</sup> NAK: SNP10/2/516P/1914: Nasarawa Province Assessment Report on Nasarawa Province, Galadima District by Mr. H. Gadman.

<sup>8</sup> A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, 1972, *Gazettes of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria: The Central Kingdoms (Nasarawa, Nupe, Ilorin Provinces) Vol. IV*.

<sup>9</sup> Abdullahi M. Ashafa, 2005, "British Colonial Rule and the Transformation of Inter-Group Relations", in A.M. Yakubu et al, 2005, *Northern Nigeria: A century of Transformation 1903-2003*, p. 425, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Ibrahim Suleiman, *A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio* (London: Maussell Publishing Ltd, 1986) p. 57.



In the context of British perceptions of the Fulani as a ruling class which developed as early as in 1902, Lugard suggested that he believed the future of the Fulani as "the virile race" lay in their regeneration. He therefore advocated that the administration of Northern Nigeria should give effect to "the capable race" and mould them to ideas of justice and mercy, so that in future generations, not this, they would become worthy instrument of rule. Furthermore, in 1905, Lady Lugard suggested that besides ruling over a civilized society, the Fulani political and religious leadership had natural and physical qualities for rulership:

The cast of face, even when jet black in color, being frequently European in form, with the high nose, thin lips and deep set eyes, the aristocratic thin hand and the slight but somewhat square shoulder are frequently noticeable; the ruling class in the North are deserving in every way of cultivated gentlemen; we seem to be in the presence of the fundamental facts of history, that there are races which are born to conquer and others to persist in conquest.<sup>11</sup>

This policy came to polarize the non-Muslim against their Muslim counterparts in Northern Nigeria. Out of expediency, the British appropriated the political and economic as well as the socio-economic structures of the Caliphate to serve the colonial interest. The reaction of traditional elites to British rule in the new dispensation in any emirate of Northern Nigeria depended to some extent on the prevailing local politics and vested interests of which group was resisting the invasion, the Bassa in our case, and which was collaborating the Egbura. To the British, the preservation of the emirs in the area of our study as in other places is akin to the preservation of Islam and the legacy of the jihad. The British "made Muslim rulers" in our area of study therefore superintended over the Bassa people. Through the establishment of the District Head system the Emir of Nasarawa was made to rule the

<sup>11</sup> J.G. Nengel, "Inter-Group Relations in the Pre-Colonial Polities of Kauru and Pengana Highlands, Central Nigeria" PhD thesis (University of Jos, 1989) chapter 5 and J. G. Longkat (1994): "The Economy of Political Relations of the People of the South-Western Foothills of the Jos Plateau Region to C1900 AD". M.A. Dissertation (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1994) pp. 285-289.

"wicked- kaferi archers"<sup>12</sup> (Bassa) through various chains of administrative hierarchy. These appointees as made clear by Lugard himself owed their positions to the colonial government. Any of such appointees according to Lugard, "must himself understand that he has no right to his place and power unless he renders proper service to the (colonial) state."<sup>13</sup> Thus the dirty jobs of colonial rule as in tax collection, forced labor and the maintenance of law and order and the repressive and suppressive Jakadu (emissaries) became active in our area of study.

It is against this background of the sharp divisions of society in the British created North into rulers and the ruled that the historical circumstances in the political development of the Northern Nigeria inter-ethnic cleavages, especially in the area of our study, should be understood and to which we now turn to for close examination.

Colonial rule began in earnest in the area of our study with the appointment of Major A. Burdon in 1900 as the first Resident for the Nasarawa Province. Lord Lugard, the architect of colonial rule in Nigeria, advocated for and implemented the policy of Indirect Rule in Nigeria. This system favoured and in fact protected the Muslim Emirates of Northern Nigeria. In his 1919 report "On the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates", Lugard enunciated his policy for the governance of the North. He wrote thus:

A great part of the North, on the other hand, had come under the influence of Islam, and the Hausa states and Bornu had an elaborate administrative machinery, though it had become corrupt and degraded ... The system of Native administration in the separate Government of Nigeria had been based on a recognition of the authority of the Native chiefs. The policy of the Government was that these chiefs should govern their people, not as independent but as dependent Rulers ...<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Margery Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (Oxford University Press, 1937) p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> T.J. Hutchinson, *Narrative of the Niger, Tshadda and Benue Exploration* (London Frank Cass, 1861).

<sup>14</sup> Margery Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, p. 50.



This system is clearly only adapted in its fullest application to communities under the centralized rule of a Paramount Chief, with some administrative machinery at his disposal, and finds its best exposition in the Muslim communities of the North. British colonial rule, therefore, had an obvious pro-Muslim stance. Lugard never hid his dislike for the non-Muslim communities of the North. He wrote for instance that "There remained however, in the North a vast population of pagans in a similar stage of savagery to those in the South".<sup>15</sup>

When the British established their authority over the North, they found large scale and hierarchically structured Muslim emirates that have been created by the Dan Fodio revolution to be more convenient for the administration of the vastly conquered territories of the North than they did in the tribal and the so called acephalous societies of the North, particularly those of the Central Nigeria area. Furthermore, the British, after conquest of the Islamic societies in 1903, established a conscious rapport with the emirs, but took them a long time to pacify the non-Islamic groups in the Central Nigeria area. This conscious rapport was particularly so because the Islamic areas in the North, had certain socio-economic and political advantages over almost all of the non-Islamic groups. The advantages were rooted in the history of unequal development of groups in the region. From contact with Islamic and other North African influence, for example, the Emirates had developed a government tax system, Islamic Law and large scale administration that maintained law and order in their society. Besides they had a single language that was tied to an identifiable Islamic culture. An additional advantage for commerce, industry and social intercourse was that this language went beyond the boundaries of the Islamic society in the North. As a result, the British tended to give to leadership and people in the Islamic society preferential treatment and prestige.<sup>16</sup> The "Holy North" as the Islamic society was referred to among top British colonial officers, to describe the Hausa-Fulani

<sup>15</sup> Lord Lugard, Report on the Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> Lord Lugard, Report on the Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria, 1919.

Emirates as well as the Islamic society of Borno, was seen to be and treated as more advanced in civilization than the Central Nigeria area and other non-Islamic areas in the North. Consequently, the period of British administration in the North, witnessed more authority in the hands of the Fulani emirs and other Islamic rulers than was the case with those who were not Muslims, such as the so-called pagan chiefs<sup>17</sup>.

Clearly, therefore, British processes of social and political incorporation affected the importance of non-Islamic groups such as the Bassa, in the sense that political advantages were tilted towards the Islamic society in terms of the leadership of the societies in the area in the particular period between 1903 and 1945. This situation more than anything else, was the direct result of British success at territorially incorporating the Islamic and non-Islamic groups into one political entity by military conquest and the varying political measures that were used. One of such measures that were used, for example, was the British political effort with the policy of indirect rule to incorporate Central Nigeria groups into the structure of power and authority of the Islamic society. Little or no effort was made by the British administration to fashion out an entirely new political concept of the North with a new political culture within which British civilization might be infused to shape the patterns of socio-economic and political development. The Bassa, non-Islamic group was simply placed under the direct leadership of Muslim emirate system of Nasarawa and this leadership was moderated by British Resident, J.C. Sciortino, the then Resident of Nasarawa Province in 1919. District Officer, Umoru Makama Dogo, and Assistant District Officers were appointed. This leadership was Hausa-Fulani and those who readily accepted Islam (the Egbura, in this case). Again this involved the ultimate title to land, the right to appoint Emirs and other officers of the state, the right to legislation and taxation. As a non-Islamic group, the Bassa potentialities were obviously

<sup>17</sup> Abdullahi M. Ashafa, "British Colonial Rule and the Transformation of Inter-Group Relations", in A.M. Yakubu *et al*, *Northern Nigeria: A century of Transformation 1903-2003*, 2005, p. 425.



undermined, so much so that they were not considered to merit any serious attention in the eyes of the British.

Adjunct to this development which brought to form the shape and nature of Northern rulership was the institutionalization of the status of prestige of the emirs and Muslim chiefs to contrast with those who were non-Muslims in the North. In this direction therefore, Lugard created political differentiation status, both real and imagined, ranking the emirs and chiefs in the North into four categories. The rank of first class was reserved for the Shehu of Borno, the Sultan of Sokoto, and the emirs of Kano, Gwandu and Katsina. "Lesser emirs" centered in Bauchi, Katagum, Hadeja and Lapai as well as Emirs in the midst of non-Muslim communities like those of Argungu, Bussa, Nasarawa and Keffi were ranked second class. The rank of third class and fourth class chiefs were reserved for the Fulani district heads and some "recognized" chiefs among the non-Islamic communities who have been identified. This was considered of least importance, even when it was the case that they had great executive authority.<sup>18</sup>

To complement the social and political status of this leadership in the Islamic society, large salaries by African standards — especially in comparison to the practice in the territories that were more directly ruled — were paid to the emirs in the British administration of the North. The emir of Nasarawa then, Umoru Makama Dogo, was paid three hundred and sixty pounds per annum. While the District Heads of Toto, Usuman and Umaisha, Ahmadu were paid one hundred and twenty eight pounds each.<sup>19</sup> It is striking to note that most of these District and village Heads knew they had no legitimacy over their new areas of jurisdiction. In fact, because of their unacceptability to the people, these "newly created and imposed rulers" experienced difficulty in touring their areas of jurisdiction. This fact is contained in a letter from Mr. Morgan, Assistant Divisional Officer in Nasarawa Province dated 4<sup>th</sup> August 1931, to the Resident Benue Province Makurdi. It reads

<sup>18</sup> Abdullahi M. Ashafa, "British Colonial Rule and the Transformation of Inter-Group Relations", in A.M. Yakubu et al, *Northern Nigeria: A century of Transformation 1903-2003*, 2005, p. 425.

<sup>19</sup> Lugard, J. F, 1970, *Political Memoranda 1913-1918*, pp.19-20.

as follows: "The District Heads of Umaisha and Toto experience some difficulty in carrying out their census and latter were afraid to tour their Districts."<sup>20</sup> Again as part of injustices meted out to the Bassa people, the District Heads of Toto and Umaisha made a deliberate attempt to exclude the Bassa members in the court procedures contrary to the established order of the court warrant. This gradual down grading of the Bassa role in the court procedures was a matter of serious concern not only to the Bassa, but also to British officials. This is another area in which the age long conflict between the Bassa and Egbura could be traced. The British made provision for Bassa participation in the local judicial process. But the Egbura imposed district head of Umaisha, Ahmadu, thwarted this. The British Assistant District Officer, in his Assessment Report on Umaisha District, Nasarawa Emirate—Nasarawa Province, 1918, bitterly noted that

The Native court was constituted in April 1917. It is regrettable that the District Head has made little attempt to establish his Court along the lines of the Warrant. The Bassa village heads are entitled to sit in this court on cases in which Bassa are concerned. There is also a permanent Bassa member. It was found that the district head had deliberately ignored the Bassa members of whose assistance he had in no case availed himself. The Native Court had further been made the instrument of various malpractice.<sup>21</sup>

Lugard also discovered that for his indirect rule to succeed, the trappings of an Islamic state needed to be maintained. In his negotiations with the leaders of the defunct Caliphate, Lugard assured them that their religion and customs would not be interfered with and all the structures would remain except that effective power was now effectively in the hands of the British. True to its character, the feudal ruling class agreed to participate with the British in the oppression and exploitation of the

<sup>20</sup> M.M. Maiyaki, *British Colonial Rule and Its Impact on the Bassa People of Nasarawa Local Government Area of Plateau State 1900-1960*. M.A Dissertation, University of Jos, 1991, p. 47. Details of all salaries paid to the British Native Administration Officials as of 1945 are found here.

<sup>21</sup> NAK, MAK PROF: AR/INT/N/6, Para4: Nasarawa Emirate Reported Unrest in 1913-1933.



people in return for a guarantee of their positions and privileges. Herein laid the root of the Bassa (a non-Islamic community and now predominantly Christians) and Egbura (mostly Muslims), present socio-economic and political distrust and conflicts as against the pre-jihad era of love and peaceful co-existence.

### Colonial Distortion of Bassa History

At this stage it is of utmost importance to rebut the unresearched conclusion of J.C. Sciortino, the Resident of Nasarawa Province earlier mentioned. He was of the impression that the Bassa were subjects of the Egbura. According to him:

From Nasarawa, Imoru Makama Dogo by a series of successful forays conquered the Igbira and their subject Bassas broke up their kingdom and destroyed the town of Panda.<sup>22</sup>

Our excursion into history in the preceding pages makes a long rebuttal unnecessary. References to earlier documents written by explorers who saw the events of the nineteenth century unfold before their very eyes showed that the Bassa had their own Kingdom, their own subjects from whom tributes were extracted, and if they could pirate on, and pillage the merchants of Panda (including boats bearing the goods of the King of Panda) and also if they could raid and destroy towns and villages in Panda, and above all, if they could employ a mercenary army, one may then ask, where is their (Bassa) servitude to Panda? All the characteristics of the Bassa Kingdom point to the obvious conclusion that the Bassa were an independent people.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, the Egbura today hold unto Sciortino's statement, like unto life, none has tried to go beyond Sciortino's error. Sciortino's bastardization and misrepresentation of Bassa history was deliberately aimed at creating "dominant tribes" through which "lesser tribes" could be ruled.

<sup>22</sup> NAK, File: AR/ASS/N/18/P18: Assessment Report on Umaisha District, Nasarawa Emirate- Nasarawa Province, 1918.

<sup>23</sup> J.C. Sciortino: *Gazeteer of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria* Vol III, 1919, p. 17.

### Colonial Arbitrary Imposition of the Egbura on the Bassa

Colonial rule began, as pointed out earlier, in earnest in the area we now called Nasarawa Emirate with the appointment of Major A. Burden in 1900, as the Resident for the Nasarawa Province. Lord Lugard, the architect of colonial rule, advocated for and implemented the policy of Indirect Rule in Nigeria. This system of governance favored and in fact protected the Muslim Emirates of Northern Nigeria. This policy was noted earlier in this work.

In the new dispensation that arose as a consequence of colonial rule in this area, the Muslim Fulani Emirate of Nasarawa became the only power recognized by the British, after all there are still stronghold of resistance against the Fulani especially by the Bassa of the present day Umaisha District. In this new order of things, the Egbura became favored not only for their non-resistance to the Fulani and British rule but for two other reasons:

1. The Egbura accepted the religion of the "ruling class": Islam. The Fulani rulers in Nasarawa, from then on shared all the British gave them with the Egbura, even if unequally.
2. Makama Dogo married an Egbura princess named Waji. This later became the mother of Muhammadu, the second emir of Nasarawa. The significance of this marriage is that the Egbura now had a dynastic tie with the new Fulani rulers.<sup>24</sup>

Conversely, the Bassa had three main disadvantages in this new political order.

1. Firstly the Bassa continued their resistance against the Fulani even after the destruction of their capital. Those who were fed up with the war of resistance, crossed the Benue River and successfully conquered and occupied the western part of the Igala Kingdom after six months of warfare.<sup>25</sup> The Fulani in

<sup>24</sup> For details see the works of W.B. Baikie *Narrative of An Exploring Voyage ...* p.252, T.J. Hutchinson, *Narrative of the Niger, Tshadda and Benue Exploration*, p. 72 and Samuel Crowther, *Journal of An Expedition Up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers in 1854*.

<sup>25</sup> Laird, M. and Oldfield, R.A.K. 1971, *Narrative of Expedition into the Interior of Africa 1832-1834*, p. 254.



Nasarawa could not therefore boast of having conquered the Bassa completely though they had destroyed some of their settlements. On the other hand, since the Egbura had submitted, the Fulani could boast of having conquered the Egbura. This is why the Emirs then were called "Sarikin Kwotto."<sup>26</sup>

2. Secondly, the Bassa refused to accept the religion of the ruling Fulani class: Islam. This automatically gave them a "pagan" status and in a pro-Islamic set up of the British Indirect Rule, a "Pagan" status, meant a subject status.
3. Having been into the new ruling class, through the reasons aforementioned, the Egbura became part of the British implementation of Indirect Rule. Being ordered by the British to set up a local machinery of administration, the Fulani rulers of Nasarawa started appointing Egbura as their representatives (Jakadu).

The artificial imposition of the Egbura district heads-emissaries- over areas which were dominantly Bassa is again proved by a case in which the district head did not even know his district since it was Bassa territory. We read of this in the Assistant District Officer's report of July 1915 on Ogba-Pati District. Mr. M. Morgan the District Officer reported that:

The District Head accompanied me during the assessment and I found that his knowledge of the country and of the positions of the villages was confined to the outskirts of Ogba-Pati. The area of the District is so small that there is no excuse for the District Head not being personally acquainted with every village.<sup>27</sup>

British arbitrary rule therefore accentuated the growth of the seeds of discord between the Bassa and Egbura. We have seen that through their blind attachment to indirect rule, they paid no attention to the fact that the Bassa and Egbura were and are actually two different peoples who should be governed as separate units.

<sup>26</sup> Temple, O (1919): Notes on the Tribes of Northern Provinces of Nigeria, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> J.C. Sciortino, Gazetteer of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, 1919, Vol III p. 17.

### Post-Colonial Bassa-Egbura Conflict

One of the most significant developments in the recent political history of Nigeria is the intensification of the agitation of ethnic minorities nationwide. A particular case that deserves serious attention is that of the Bassa and Egbura of Toto LGA of Nasarawa State. In their agitation to address the wrongs done to them (Bassa) by the jihad revolution and the colonial distortion of their socio-political potentialities in the post-colonial Nigerian State, they resorted to open clashes between them and their closest neighbors, the Egbura.

Toto is one of the thirteen Local Government Areas that make up Nasarawa State of Nigeria. The State itself was carved out of Plateau State on October 1st, 1996. It falls within the geographical area referred to as the Central Nigeria area. Toto LGA is multi-ethnic with its major groups being the Bassa, Egbura, Gbagyi and Gade. Toto therefore contradicts the observation that "most rural areas are ethnically homogenous and passive."<sup>28</sup> The Bassa and the Egbura are the two major protagonists in the Toto conflicts.

As noted earlier on, there is a long history behind the Bassa-Egbura conflict of today. This however came to full limelight in 1983 when the traditional peace enjoyed in the area was shattered by the violence that accompanied the appointment of the paramount ruler of Umaisha Chiefdom for the Egbura of the area by the then civilian administration of Chief Solomom Daushep Lar without doing same for the Bassa people who have been in the forefront of the same demand. To add salt to injury, the administration again went ahead and created Chiefdom in Toto, though the administration gave the impression that the Stool of the Chiefdom is rotational among the three major ethnic groups, i.e. the Bassa, Egbura and Gbagyi. However, the Egbura have up to date, tenaciously hold onto this Stool exclusively. These actions sparked off crisis as the Egbura go about taunting and jeering the Bassa. The conflict in Toto therefore confirmed the thesis of Osaghae that "rural ethnicity is centered on 'traditional' objects of competition, mainly land, cultural

<sup>28</sup> NAK, File: AR/ASS/N/12/P2.



practices and so on."<sup>29</sup> It should be noted, however, that the manipulation of ethnic sentiments that accompanied the democratization process both in the Second Republic (1979-1983) and in the aborted Third Republic (1992-1993) and Fourth Republic (1999) tended to have worsened the relationship between the ethnic groups in the area. Just like all over the country, democracy seems to have reopened the wounds inflicted by the pre-colonial (in our case the jihad revolution era) process of incorporation and the process of consolidation of colonial rule. The Egbura warm relationship with the Fulani as noted earlier, earn them (the Egbura) special political favor under the Indirect Rule system imposed by British colonialism. The Nasarawa Emirate controlled by the Fulani was the main administrative structure on which the colonial government depended in the area. The Egbura who, were very close to the Fulani benefited from this arrangement. They were appointed as representatives of the Emir in Bassa villages and as tax assessors and collectors even in villages headed by the Bassa. As noted earlier and also confirmed by Alli, "In the Middle Belt region of the country, an area plagued mostly by religious crises; ethnicity usually works with religion to provide a basis for differentiation and exclusion."<sup>30</sup> This ethno-religious and economic biases was resisted by the Bassa. The reaction of the Bassa to their oppression and suppression is at the root of the Bassa-Egbura seemingly untractable conflicts.

Besides, there are other factors that are anathema to peace in the post-colonial Toto area. These are psychological, socio-cultural, numerical and political factors. Psychologically, the different groups perceive and rate one another negatively. The Egbura believe that the Bassa and their close neighbour, the Gbagyi are both culturally inferior to them. The Egbura, as noted by Best "do not respect Bassa women and they make disdainful references to some of their practices. They see the Bassa as uneducated, traditional worshipers, etc. As such they believe

<sup>29</sup> E. Osaghae, "Towards a Fuller Understanding of Ethnicity in Africa: Bringing Rural Ethnicity Back", p. 241, in E. Osaghae, ed., *Between State and Civil Society in Africa* (Dakar: Codersia, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> E. Osaghae, "Towards a Fuller Understanding of Ethnicity in Africa..."

that the Bassa should accept and respect Egbura leadership in the Toto Local Government traditional system."<sup>31</sup> The Bassa, and more recently the Gbagyi, reject this racial prejudice and the claims of the Egbura with varying degrees of vehemence.

Socio-culturally, the Bassa and the Egbura despite their centuries of co-existence have not integrated by way of marriage. The Egbura believe that the Bassa women indulge in some "unhealthy" cultural practices, just as the Bassa women consider Egbura blood "impure" and "evil". They believe that to marry an Egbura is to bring "evil blood" into the family.

It would seem that apart from mutual cultural contempt the Bassa and the Egbura have for each other, both groups seek to maintain racial purity. Whereas, the Egbura marry Gbagyi girls they frown at Gbagyi men marrying Egbura girls. Again, this is driven by Egbura perception of the Gbagyi as inferior to them.

Numerically, the existing records and documents suggest so far that the largest ethnic group in Toto LGA is the Bassa, followed by the Gbagyi, then the Egbura. The 1963 census permitted ethnic category as a variable. It put the Bassa population under the Nasarawa Native Authority at 40,106, while that of the Egbura was put at 12,130. There is little possibility that the Egbura would have bridged this gap between 1963 and 2003.<sup>32</sup> The 1986 Taxpayers in Toto and Umaisha Districts by Ethnic Group put the Bassa, Gbagyi and Egbura taxpayers as 5,573, 1,586 and 575 respectively.<sup>33</sup> This work is mindful of the fact that tax figures can be misleading especially against the background that tax evasion is common. Yet existing records and documents suggest so far that the Bassa are the largest ethnic group in Toto LGA, followed by the Gbagyi, then the Egbura. This numerical terror often heighten tension in the area as the Bassa and Gbagyi often forge political alliances

<sup>31</sup> W. O. Alli, "Religious Crises in a Pluralistic State", in R. D. Abubakar, ed., *Studies in Religious Understanding in Nigeria* (Nigeria Association for the Study of Religion, 1993).

<sup>32</sup> Best Shedrach G. 2004, *Protracted Communal Conflict and Conflict Management: The Bassa- Egbura conflict in Toto Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria*. Ibadan: John Archers, Academic Associates Peace Works, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> M. M. Maiyaki, *British Colonial Rule*, pp. 5-6.



against the Egbura and other ethnic groups, especially the Gade which, put together does not match the Bassa-Gbagyi camp.

Politically, the electoral victory of the Bassa in the 1979 elections, and subsequent ones after the creation of Toto Local Government, particularly the successive election of Mr. Wabare Paul (late) in 1996 and Mr. Samson Daudu in 1997 were bad indicators to the relations between the groups. This election of two Bassa men successively created a discomfort on two fronts. The first is the realization that the Bassa numerical superiority could be used as a weapon of political domination of other ethnic groups; worse still is when there emerge a political alliance between the Bassa and Gbagyi. The second is, because of their contempt for the Bassa; the Egbura did not anticipate that a Bassa could rise to the position of Chairman in Toto LGA, let alone twice and successively too. These perceptions of political mistrust and contempt increased the political dimension of the conflict, based on competition and struggle for control over the institutions and resources of government. Thus from 1994 to 1998 the terror that was let loose in the area led to total displacement of over one hundred people of the Bassa ethnic group. The crisis came to its apex with the gruesome and brutal murder of Mrs. Maimuna Joyce Katai, the then Commissioner for Women Affairs in May 2003 by the Egbura militia in Toto.

### Conclusion

The Bassa-Egbura conflict is a classic case of ethnic conflict that is informed and fuelled by decades of political oppression of one ethnic group by another. This clearly dates back to the colonial era. Again this study shows that the State Government, particularly Plateau State Government of the Second Republic escalated the crisis by creating two Chiefdoms out of the old Nasarawa Emirate for the Egbura while neglecting the cries of the Bassa for their own Chiefdom. This singular act has complicated the problem and made the resolution of the crisis an uphill task. This case demonstrates how political partisanship, which informed the decision of the Solomon Lar government of Plateau State of the Second Republic, can destroy communal peace; create enmity among groups who hitherto have coexisted relatively harmoniously.

## Colonialism and Intra-Community Conflict in Enugu: Itumbauzo and Ugbawka Examples

D.O. Chuckwu

### Introduction

British colonial rule in Africa may have produced two classes of effect on the society where it operated. On the one hand, it pretended to be an agent of modernisation for the society. Here such facilities as road networks, railway, telephone service, electricity, modern currency and harbour were introduced to oil commercial activities. On the other hand, colonialism tended to pitch brother against brother through divide-and-rule diplomatic manouvres. In this study, attempt is made to examine how British colonial rule employed divide-and-rule diplomacy to cause some African communities to pitch tent against one another. Case studies are taken in Ugbawka (a local community widely known for rice production, and is located south of Enugu, the capital of Enugu State) and Itumbauzo (a supposed one community that now finds itself split between Abia and Akwa Ibom States) of Nigeria. Over the years, these communities have found themselves in unending conflicts that have sometimes resulted in the loss of lives and property. The study argues that rather than think peace, opportunists and elites in these communities have tended to capitalize on the situation to line their pockets.

The history of the Itumbauzo community is diverse and complex. All documentary evidence about the origin of the people point to the



fact that the people might have originated together with the Ibibio people of the present Niger Delta of Nigeria. Though opinions are divided among scholars of Itumbauzo history, all seem to have agreed that the founding of the community was at about the 16th century A.D., and that the clan was established by a certain element called Akpan Iboyo. From here, other settlements might have emerged.<sup>1</sup> The 16th century, we may note, was a period of migrations and the peak of the slave trade in parts of Africa. These developments might have encouraged inter-ethnic and inter-community conflicts among groups.<sup>2</sup> The founding of the Itumbauzo clan and other communities in the area might have followed this course. Since the founding of the clan, the people had been known to have enjoyed relative peace and harmony among themselves until the introduction of colonial rule with its divide-and-rule tactics.

Similarly, opinions are divided on the origin of Ugbawka. What is, however, important is that about the 16th century, the area that now quarters Ugbawka was not left out uninhabited. According to a certain source, the area might have originally been occupied by a group called the Ukwoka.<sup>3</sup> The contention about the Ukwoka might be true in view of the fact that another legend posits that Ugbawka might have been founded by Ezike Uba, the son of Nvuode of Achalla, a town near Awka in Anambra State. In the days when hunting and gathering constituted the mainstay of man's economic activities, it is widely believed that Ezike Uba left his original home, Achalla, on a hunting expedition. One writer, though not a professional historian, is quoted to have contended that when Ezike Uba arrived the area (Ugbawka):

He met the people of Ukwoka, the original inhabitants of the area. He was chased out by the people but he went back to Achalla in Awka and came back to Ugbawka with a multitude of other hunters

who helped him in chasing the Ukwoka's out of the area, before he finally settled at Amadogbu in Uhuona.

Another account posits that Ugbawka was the product of the Agbushi legend.<sup>4</sup> Agbushi, she stated, became so powerful a warrior that he would with time, organise a warfare to decimate the Ukwoka who at the time had dominated the Obinagu quarters of Ugbawka.<sup>5</sup>

The evidence about the Ugbawka may be attested to through some historical monuments that still dot the landscape of the town. They include Eke Ukwoka and Afor Ukwoka – two local market centres each of which still operates on weekly basis, according to the Igbo four market days.<sup>6</sup> These markets are said to be located in the Isigwe village of Obinagu quarters. Also, characteristic of Ugbawka history is the appellation "Achala Nvuode" – apparently in deference and in memory of Nvuode, the father of putative Ezike Uba, believed to be the founder of modern-day Ugbawka. Thus, the town's full names are normally Ugbawka Achala Nvuode.

### The Itumbauzo Conflict

As noted in the foregoing paragraph, the people of Itumbauzo had known peace for quite a good number of years and had equally enjoyed the able leadership of Akpan Iboyo. The question is: What might have been responsible for the conflict which did not only divide the once- united people under Iboyo but also sowed the seed of discord, thereby making husbands turn against their wife, brother against his brother, and so forth? The answer is not far-fetched.

First, the conflict is said to have started in 1934 when the Bende Divisional Authority proposed to build a customary court for the Itumbauzo clan. Agitation as to where the court would be sited was to generate bad blood among the people. While, for instance, the lower Itumbauzo comprising Ogu Itu, Ananamong, Nchana Ebo, Nkpu,

<sup>1</sup> E.A. Udo, *Who are the Ibibio?* (Onitsha: Africana Fep Publishers Ltd), p. 234; See also Reuben K. Udo, "Environments and Peoples of Nigeria" in Obaro Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1980), pp. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Dan O. Chukwu, *An Introduction to Nigerian Political History* (Enugu: Rhema Publications, 2002) 2nd edn.

<sup>3</sup> Anayo Enechukwu, *History of Nkanu* (Enugu: Kauthof Publishers, 1993) p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Anayo Enechukwu, *History of Nkanu*, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Legend has it that Agbushi, the son of Iwana, was the founder of Amauzam village.

<sup>6</sup> Informant Nwankwo Igwe [now deceased] spoke to this researcher in 1986.

<sup>7</sup> Nwafor Anyi [86+] in an interview with this researcher on July 31, 2001, at Amauzam Ugbawka.



Ikporom and Ebo campaigned that the court be sited at Ikporom, the people of Okopedi, Ntalakwu and Ubibia supported the opinion of the Assistant Divisional Officer (ADO) for Bende Division, Mr. H.H. Marshal, that the court should be sited at Okopedi.<sup>8</sup>

Okopedi, we may note, is believed to be the ancestral home of the Itumbauzo people and the seat of their traditional authority.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Ikporom is viewed by many as most central for all the communities that compose the Itumbauzo clan. Despite this spirited agitation by the majority of the people, the Bende Divisional Authority went ahead and sited the court at Okopedi.

The choice of Okopedi by the Bende Divisional Authority, no doubt, was said to have angered the rest of the community. Mr. C.J. Mayne, then District Officer for Bende Division, had, amidst the sea of animosity and disagreement over the court site, recommended that the whole Itumbauzo clan be transferred to the Ikot-Ekpen Division<sup>10</sup> for a harmonious political association. It has been argued that Mayne may have made the suggestion after a careful study of the people's cultural affinity with the Ibibio-Annang axis and history. This, in its own, contributed in compounding the problems of the already disgruntled minds in the clan. Indeed, the lower Itumbauzo was said to have capitalised on this opportunity to join Ikot-Ekpen Division for, in their reasoning, the upper Itumbauzo had sold out and to that extent marginalised them by uniting with the British colonialists to deny Ikporom a court site. One commentator was blunt enough to articulate that the rift was an aftermath of political competition – a case of who should get the whiteman's attention more than the other. The losers in the contest – the lower Itumbauzo – then felt that the upper Itumbauzo had made a stronger political point.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Brown: Intelligence Report on the Transfer of Itumbauzo to Ikot Ekpen Division, 1952, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas J. Brown: Intelligence Report, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-Community Relations: A case study of Itumbauzo Boundary Conflict, 1934-2000". M.A Thesis in History, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Ekerete Udo (65+) in an interview at Ikot Ekpen, 20th August, 2004.

Events, as the foregoing account has shown, must have taught the Itumbauzo people that the whiteman was not, after all, a dependable ally. Many of them believed that the colonialists had united with the lower Itumbauzo local comprados to scuttle the much-needed court which they had wished and hoped should have been sited at Ikporom. As a result, the people embarked on civil disobedience against the colonialists. Some sections of the community were known to have embarked on a traditional scientific method of invoking soldier ants and swarms of bees to deal with the whitemen in their midst.<sup>12</sup>

Another issue of contention was that the peace-loving people of Itumbauzo who became victims of British divide-and-rule system would probably not have wished to leave Bende Division for any other place. But unfortunately, these people were forced against their wish to leave Bende Division for Ikot-Ekpen. Similarly, another source of the conflict among the Itumbauzo came in the 1950s when the Bende Divisional Authority proposed to build a clan school at Ebo, a community in the lower Itumbauzo clan.<sup>13</sup> In reaction to this proposal, the villages in the upper Itumbauzo, in a protest, refused to co-operate in the building and sustenance of the school project. They vowed not to have anything to do with the project. Instead the people resorted to the use of the court at Okopedi for their own school activities. To worsen the situation, the Bende Divisional Authority was to recognise the school at the court to the displeasure of other Itumbauzo communities.<sup>14</sup>

The struggle over the clan school site was said to have coincided with the Bende Administration's mobilisation of the clan to construct a local road to link the clan with Bende. On their part, the lower Itumbauzo had refused to assist in the road project initiated by the Bende local administration. This development, said a source, created a deep-rooted state of animosity which equally led to social and political upheavals in the clan. However, the division among the people forced

<sup>12</sup> Douglas J. Brown: Intelligence Report, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. See also Dan O. Chukwu, "Politics, Conflict and underdevelopment of a region: The impact of the Anambra political crisis considered". A paper presented at the 51st Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria at the University of Jos, Nigeria, 1-5 May, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas J. Brown: Intelligence Report.



the clan council to share the work of the road construction to enable each section of the clan to construct its own area.<sup>15</sup> But could this have been the better alternative? Probably the answer to the question could have been a resort to uniting the two brothers, rather than asking each section to construct its own area.

The proposal (in 1957) to build a postal agency in the Itumbaizo clan added another dimension to the rift among the people. The lower Itumbaizo wanted the postal agency to be built at Ikot-Ekpena, while the upper Itumbaizo favoured the location of the agency in Okopedi.<sup>16</sup> The result of this was the building of mutual suspicion among the people.

Comparatively, the events of 1950-1952 – the building of a clan school, proposals for a dispensary, a postal agency, etc-coincided with the coming of the local government system in the Ikot-Ekpena Division<sup>17</sup>. It is alleged that the detractors of the Itumbaizo cashed in on the prevailing situation among the people to persuade some of them to join the Ikot-Ekpena Division since they allegedly had suffered some measure of marginalisation at the hands of the British colonialists and their own African brothers in Bende. It was at this point that the agitation to join Ikot-Ekpe was at its peak. Thus, based on the allegation of marginalisation, mistrust and acrimony, the reality of joining Ikot-Ekpena Division (from Bende) was to be realised sooner than later.

Furthermore, the issue of the Nigerian Civil conflict of 1967 – 1970 is known to have helped to escalate the conflicts among the Itumbaizo people. This is considered to be so, because during the civil strife in which the Itumbaizo people participated, their clan was devastated to the extent that after the war, some communities and individuals in the area decided to change their names to attract social political as well as economic benefits from the South-eastern State government.<sup>18</sup> Among the Itumbaizo of Bende (now in Abia State) who by history are

<sup>15</sup> Douglas J. Brown: Intelligence Report.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas J. Brown: Intelligence Report.

<sup>17</sup> M.J.C. Echeruo, "A matter of Identity". *Ahajioku Lecture* (Owerri: Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, 1979), pp. 16-24; Paul Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War Social and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland* (Enugu: Mikon Press, 1988) p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-community Relations ..." p. 47.

heterogeneous, partly Igbo and partly Ibibio Igbo, customs such as wrestling and naming patterns are known to have survived, while Ibibio customs (for economic benefits) have since the end of the civil war have continued to take precedence over and above Igbo customs.<sup>19</sup> Also, to be noted is that most of those who spearheaded the moves for a merger with the Ibibio, Efik and Annang in the old southeastern state (now Akwa Ibom and Cross River States) still bear such Igbo names as Chima, Mba and Okorie.<sup>20</sup>

Until the outbreak of the civil war in 1967, the Easterners had acted together in a resolve for mutual survival, irrespective of their ethnic groupings. But the events of 1967 that snowballed into 1970 helped to amplify ethnic and linguistic divides amongst them, especially between the majority groups (the Igbo) and the minority groups<sup>21</sup> This was further demonstrated when the then Federal Military Government split the monolith Eastern Region into the East Central, South-eastern and Rivers States in 1967. The second of these three states (the South-eastern State with capital at Calabar) was apparently created to protect the Ibibio, Efik, Ogoja, Annang and other minorities in the East Region against alleged Igbo domination.<sup>22</sup>

### The Ugbawka Conflicts

In contrast, the conflict in Ugbawka takes its root in stratification and stigmatisation which tend to divide the population into two mutually antagonistic social classes. These classes are the *Amadu*<sup>23</sup> or freeborn and

<sup>19</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-community Relations ..." p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> The fear about possible Igbo domination in the Eastern Region, indeed, dates to a period before the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War. It was for this reason that the Willink Commission of 1959 on the fear of the minorities in Eastern Nigeria was set up.

<sup>21</sup> K. Post and M. Vickers, *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria, 1960-1966* (London: Heinemann, 1973) p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> See Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria; the Tiv and Yoruba Experience* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1982) p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> The word *Amadu* is of Nkanu dialect, and is used to refer to what other sections of the Igbo refer to as *Amadi* (freeborn).



the *Obu*<sup>24</sup> or "slaveborn" – Obia or Strangers. The practice of slavery and slave trade, no doubt, is of antiquity.

As stated earlier, the conflict that has, over the years, tended to envelope Ugbawka is traceable to the social divide between the *Amadi* and *Obu*. The former group are said to be the original inhabitants of the area who, with time, were to embark on the recruitment of the latter for social and economic activities.

Besides, it was to augment the shortfall in the labour supply that the *Amadi* communities in Nkanu engaged the services of the *Obu* to work on the fertile land and to do other economic activities for them. It has been speculated that in the process, some of the *Amadi* communities overshot the required number of slave-labourers.<sup>25</sup> Ugbawka, this researcher understands during a field trip, was among the communities that over-recruited slave labourers, hence the continuing attempts by the ex-slaves to over-power their former lords (the *Amadi*).<sup>26</sup> This contention may however be an exaggeration as it may not be substantiated that the number of slaves outnumbered the number of freeborn in Ugbawka. For instance it has been estimated that by 1920 there were 44 freeborn families as against 12 of the slave kindred families in the eight villages of Ugbawka.<sup>27</sup>

Afigbo contends that the Aro, widely known for their knack for the economic exchange in this area (especially the slave trade) contributed significantly in the movement of slaves from Agbaja (Udi area) to the Nkanu axis where they were most needed on the land.<sup>28</sup> Thus, by the middle of 19th century when a good number of slaves

could not be shipped abroad due to the Abolition Act and European Industrial Revolution, Nkanuland and indeed Ugbawka provided a dumping ground for the slaves.<sup>29</sup>

As has been the case with the Itumbauzo crisis, Ugbawka conflict has, over the years, been tailored in phases. However, the difference between the two study areas has been located in the fact that while the people of Itumbauzo trace their origin to a common father, the people of Ugbawka have not been so fortunate to have a common origin. In fact, it has been argued that part of the causes of the tensions and conflicts in the latter community could be traced to the unending cases of dichotomy between the *Amadi* and *Obia* (*Obu*) groups. The latter group has since the pre-colonial periods made several attempts to cast off the encumbrances imposed on them by the former group (the *Amadi*).

One way attempts at 'freeborn' are said to have been made in time past was through land seizure by the *Obia*. In the early 1920s, for instance, the Ugbawka clan reportedly witnessed a near total breakdown of law and order following an attempt by the *Amadi* group to pre-empt their land from the *Obia* group.<sup>30</sup> In the traditional society, it may be recalled, the *Amadi* landowner was expected to lease his land to a slave on agreed terms, which included two-day work for the master, out of the four-day week.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the *Obia* (slave) was not expected to dispose of any piece of land leased him by the *Amadi*. But by the turn of the 20th century, the *Obia* were alleged to have begun to break this law by appropriating the land granted them by their masters and in most cases they sold such land. However, by the 1920s, as earlier pointed out, this practice came to a head when the *Amadi* tried to recover their land rights. On the part of the *Obia*, they rose armed to the teeth to maintain their hold on the land. The result was internecine

<sup>24</sup> *Obu* here is freely used to refer to slaveborn. Here, too, it refers to *Obia* or strangers.

<sup>25</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> Chief Ede Nwoko (75+) in an interview with the author, Uhuona Ugbawka, July 21, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> NAE: Onprof. 8/1/3569, Intelligence Report on the Amuri – Ugbawka village Group, Udi Division, 1933, by S.P.L. Beaumont. Also, Milgov 13/1/15, 1926.

<sup>28</sup> Adiele E. Afigbo, 1977, "The Pangs of Social Adjustment: Emancipation Among the Nkanu Igbo, the First Phase 1907 – 1924", Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria at the University of Benin, 27th–31st March, 1977, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 89./

<sup>31</sup> Adiele E. Afigbo, 1977, "The Pangs of Social Adjustment: Emancipation Among the Nkanu Igbo, the First Phase 1907-1924", Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria at the University of Benin, 27th – 31st March, 1977, p. 5.



warfare, arson and looting of economic property. One commentator has contended that once the conflicts (of the 1920s) had got underway, the *Amadi* in Amauzam (a village highly rated to have recruited large population of the slaves in Ugbawka) expelled the *Obia* population that had resided there to Isigwe (which at the time was largely comprised of a large expanse of farmlands owned by the Amauzam)

Also, at the root of the Ugbawka conflict during the colonial period were attempts by the *Obia* to dabble into some traditional functions exclusively meant for the *Amadi*. Some of these functions included the killing of horses at funerals, title taking ceremonies as well as the dancing of *Igede* music. It is said that in the traditional Nkanu community, it was an abomination for a slave or his descendants to dance to the tune of *Igede* music. It was thus, an attempt, by the *Obia*, to dance to this music that severally provoked the anger of the *Amadi* group in parts of Nkanu during the colonial period. This is how Carolyn A. Brown describes the *Amadi-Obia* relationship in relation to traditional practice.

Slaves had to give masters the first and largest portion of any animal sacrifice. Even if they could afford to pay the membership fees they could not join the highest ranks of title societies to which most influential men in the village belonged. They could not dance the prestigious Ubo dance, or beat the Egede (*Igede*) drum at funerals. For all slaves, and particularly for those who acquired wealth from trade or wage labour, these prohibitions were especially intolerable because they prevented them from being validated as men of wealth within their community. These restriction were slavery.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the above, it is also said that in Ugbawka, the other cause of the lingering crisis is the attempt by the *Obia* to seize the traditional priesthood of the *Ani Obinagu* shrine and assume traditional leadership of the town. It has also been said that during and after the colonial periods this penchant of the *Obia* for assuming the priesthood of the shrine severally generated tension and crisis. In 1924, it is said, an

<sup>32</sup> Carolyn A. Brown, "Testing the Boundaries of Marginality: Twentieth Century Slavery and Emancipation Struggle in Nkanu", *Journal of African History*, 37, 1996, p. 60.

attempt by the *Obia* in Isigwe at absolute freedom – freedom to assume priesthood of *Ani Obinagu* further generated another round of crisis. The *Obia* had claimed that they did not understand that the payment of twelve shillings, which they had previously made to their masters [landlords] for the use of land was to be annual. Having suddenly understood that it was to be an annual obligation, they repudiated and thus refused to abide by it, complaining that that Amauzam (the *Amadi* village) were the oppressors.<sup>33</sup> As a follow-up, on 4th June, 1924, the Isigwe *Obia* launched an attack on Amauzam. In the ensuing melee, says one source, one person of Isigwe origin was killed, while several others sustained injuries.<sup>34</sup>

The obvious question could be: In this unfolding series of melodrama, what were the reactions or positions of the colonial authorities? In response to the unfolding drama, on the 20th December, 1922, the Resident in charge of Onitsha Province dispatched a detachment of 50-man colonial police to quell the crisis and through that way restore peace in the area. Led by Mr. J.G. Lawton, the escort was given some specific instruction which included:

- [i] that government has interest in the decline of slavery, or the rights or claims of any person or persons to hold any other person or persons in bondage or dispose of them or of their children as though they were not, in fact, free persons;
- [ii] that government cannot countenance anything in the nature of the wholesale eviction of slaves from land which they are occupying, cultivating for their use;
- [iii] that government is prepared to recognise the land right of the freeborn sections of these communities and to sanction the payment of any equitable rent to the former by the ex-slaves

<sup>33</sup> Adiele E. Afigbo, 1977, "The Pangs of Social Adjustment: Emancipation Among the Nkanu Igbo, the First Phase 1907-1924." Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria at the University of Benin, 27th-31st March, 1977, pp. 23-25.

<sup>34</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 95.



for land occupied and cultivated by them for their own use and benefits; and

[iv] there is no objection to this rent taking in the form of service, instead of payment in money or kind, if the person paying the money so desires.<sup>35</sup>

It was also reported that besides the tour of the 50-man police escorts (which no doubt made some arrests of some culprits), the Lt. Governor of Nigeria at the time, Col. H.C. Moorehouse, visited parts of Nkanu, including Ugbawka, the troubled area, to see things for himself. His general impression about the performance of the escort was that its operation was not yet successful.<sup>36</sup>

Although, the 1940s and the early 1950s might have witnessed what may be described as a period of conciliation and amity in the life of Ugbawka, this situation could not last long enough as 1958 saw a resurgence of the communal clash. In that crisis, many lives were lost, while household and economic property were wantonly destroyed. An eye-witness told this author that many families of the *Amadi* stock living in the Isigwe village were forced to flee to Amauzam for the safety of their lives.<sup>37</sup>

The 1976 Local Government Reform in Nigeria might have meant well for Nigeria and Nigerians. For instance, the exercise resulted in the creation of Nkanu Local Government Council out of the old Nkanu Division. In addition, the reform exercise was followed by a Chieftaincy Edit in the old Anambra State. Dated 10th November, 1976, the Edict had intended to give legal backing to the process of selection and recognition of traditional rulers in Anambra State. By extension, the new law wanted every community to nominate a candidate for recognition for the post of a traditional ruler of such a town. For the

<sup>35</sup> Adiele E. Afigbo, 1977, "The Pangs of Social Adjustment: Emancipation Among the Nkanu Igbo, the First Phase 1907-1924", Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria at the University of Benin, 27th - 31st March, 1977, pp. 15-16.

<sup>36</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Johnson Edemba (86) in an interview at Amauzam village, Ugbawka, on 20/1/08.

nomination process to be valid, the Edict stated, it must be in accordance with the culture and tradition of the people.<sup>38</sup>

It was in an attempt to nominate a candidate for the position of the town's traditional ruler that the old communal crisis was revived. In the process, the town was further polarised along the *Amadi* and *Obia* cleavages. In the Amafor quarters, Chief Ede Nwonovo, a member of the defunct Ugbawka Native Court, was selected for the position, while in the Amauzam village (predominantly populated by the *Amadi*) it was easy to select Emmanuel Nwankwo Agu, a career soldier in the Nigerian Army and Major in the Biafran Army, as a candidate.

At the other extreme, selecting a candidate from the Isigwe village turned out to be a difficult process. The obvious reasons for this difficulty had to do with the heterogeneous nature of the village which was comprised of the *Obia* and *Amadi* groups. It is said that as a result of this, many contestants from the two groups emerged to campaign for the position. They included a former local councillor, Chief Aaron Ede, a retired civil servant, Ogbo Mba and one Emmanuel Nwodochikiri. However, when the chips were down Nwodochikiri was said to have withdrawn from the race to pave the way for Chief Aaron Ede (both of whom were said to belong to *Obia* group).<sup>39</sup>

The campaign for the selection of a traditional ruler for Ugbawka was said to have continued with a general assembly of the whole town at Afor Market Square in the first half of 1977. Ostensibly, the assembly was convened to ratify the candidature of one out of the many contestants for the position. At the end of the day, the assembly reportedly ended on a deadlock. The result of this deadlock was the setting up of panels and committees on Ugbawka chieftaincy tussle by the Anambra State Government. Prominent amongst these panels was that headed by His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. J.N. Dimoji, the Methodist Bishop of Enugu Diocese.

<sup>38</sup> Supplement to Anambra State of Nigeria Gazette No. 31, vol. 1, dated 25 November 1976.

<sup>39</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 110.



After months of sittings, the Dimoji Panel upheld the candidature of Emmanuel Nwankwo Agu of Amauzam, and accordingly recommended same to Government for adoption and recognition in line with the provisions of the Chieftaincy Edict of 1976. It is said that Agu's candidature was upheld on two grounds: [i] his status as the descendant of the indigenous group; [ii] his claim to the lineage of the late Aguolu Mba Nwagu, the first and only warrant chief of Ugbawka who died in 1932.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, on 1st March, 1978, the then Anambra State Government officially handed over to the new traditional ruler a certificate of recognition to assume duty as the Igwe of Ugbawka.

Did the recognition of Agu as the Igwe Na-ezoro Oha II of Ugbawka abet communal problem in the town? Studies have shown that with the selection of Agu, the town further polarised into some associations and groups. These associations included the Odenigbo Welfare Association (for the *Obia*). Rising as a counterforce to the Odenigbo Association and in support of the new Igwe was another association, the Ikenja Group (for the *Amadi*).

In 1990, Ugbawka gained autonomous community status following the administrative reform undertaken by the then Anambra State Government to re-invigorate the chieftaincy institution in the State. The new chieftaincy reform regime was aimed to decentralize local administration to enable maximum rural participation in community affairs. As a result of this development, Ugbawka was split into autonomous communities namely: Amauzam, Isigwe, Ovu-orie, Amafor, Akpa and Ime-ama. Published in the supplement to the Anambra State Gazette No. 27, volume 16, dated 4th July, 1991, the provisions of the Edict stipulated that every autonomous community was expected to have a traditional ruler. Undoubtedly, the search for traditional rulers for these communities has further thrown the town into more cleavages and crises, especially in those communities where there are both *Amadi* and *Obia* groups. In a rather bewildering manner, each group has attempted to shortchange the other in an attempt to produce the community's traditional ruler. And this way, these autonomous

<sup>40</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997) p. 111.

communities have continued to experience an unending acrimonious crisis.

### The Impact of Ugbawka and Itumbauzo Conflicts

The social, economic and political effects of the Itumbauzo and Ugbawka crises are many and varied. For one thing, the conflict has affected cultural practices in the area. For instance, during the local festivals like *Ekpe*, *Obo*, *Uba*, etc, villagers used to exchange visits among themselves.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, other villages in the lower Itumbauzo used to pay homage to the ancestral home of the eponymous father and founder of the Itumbauzo people – Akpan Iboyo, at Mbukwa.<sup>42</sup> But since the beginning of the rift, these practices have ceased.

The crisis which was renewed in 1970 took different dimensions. Many lives and property were lost. It created a refugee situation whereby the villagers, especially the people in the lower Itumbauzo sought refuge in the neighbouring villages.<sup>43</sup> Houses were razed and farmlands set ablaze. As a result of the fact that law and order was broken down on the eve of the conflict, the attention of the Federal and State Governments was drawn to Itumbauzo. Both sent a detachment of the mobile police to maintain law and order, and possibly arrest the situation. As is always the case with the Nigerian police, the coming of the police force to quell the crisis was said to have fuelled the crises in another form. This was because the police engaged in arbitrary arrests of innocent citizens, raping of women, even before the eyes of their children and forcing their husbands into exile. Besides, extortion of money became the order of the day. In fact, illegalities were said to be legalised in Itumbauzo by the Nigerian police. Itumbauzo has thus become a no-man's land and since has been described as a land of serpents and scorpion.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, the continued revival of the crises in Ugbawka has not only led to the loss of lives but also loss of valuable property. In the

<sup>41</sup> K. O. Udo, *Who are the Ibibio?* p. 154.

<sup>42</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-community Relations ..." p. 67.

<sup>43</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-community Relations ..." pp. 67-70.

<sup>44</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-community Relations ..."



1980s and 1990s, many cases of strangulation of persons and outright murder of persons of the *Amadi* stock were recorded in the town.<sup>45</sup>

The crisis has also generated a feeling of marginalisation and total neglect among the people of Itumbauzo in Bende Division. Indeed, sometimes, they feel cheated by the Abia State Government. This has several times led to the clamour by the people for an autonomous community status and more political wards in the area. The agitation for more political wards is borne out of the fact that local governments come with developments at the grassroots. The people believe that the more the wards, the more the number of councillors that represent them, as well as the more dividends that would be accruable to the community. However, the use of the local government as a vehicle for rural development has been proved to disappoint the people of Itumbauzo, as any other community in Nigeria. Field research has recorded that local governments have failed to serve the purpose of bringing development to the grassroots in Nigeria. This is because in Nigeria, the gains of politics have tended to prove more to be characterised by the barter for economic and social benefits. Thus, our source maintains that the Itumbauzo people, though adequately represented in the local government councils have remained grossly undeveloped going by the policy of representation.<sup>46</sup> For example, at the inception of local government administration in Bende Division, the local government administrators refused to provide social amenities which the local council system is noted for. This situation has continued till date. It would, therefore, be safe to say that as a result of the conflicts which sowed the seed of discord among the Itumbauzo clan, the people have, over the years, produced executive criminals in all manner, and at all levels of representation. They are self-centered individuals who sacrifice the development of Itumbauzo for their personal aggrandisements. These are the people who in the words of Walter Rodney, are the political "armed bandits."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Sam Mba, *A History of Ugbawka From Pre-colonial Times to the Present* (Enugu: Reynold Publishers, 1997), pp. 112-113.

<sup>46</sup> Stella N. Uka, "Inter-community Relations ..."

<sup>47</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

In a similar vein, the need to reduce political, tension cum communal in parts of Igboland has in the past led to the creation of autonomous communities. In Ugbawka, in particular, the town was considerably split into six autonomous communities and a number of political wards. However, investigation has shown that rather than being a source of grassroots political development the scramble among the elite for the traditional rulership positions in these communities has thrown them and the people into anarchic positions.



## Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-Group Relations: A Re-Assessment

Paul Ilesanmi Akanmidu

### Introduction

Many scholars have expended ink on the inter-group relations among the diverse groups in Nigeria with different historical and cultural backgrounds. In spite of the seemingly independent nature of these multi-ethnic groups, no group could claim to be isolated without any direct or indirect relationship with the others. To this end, different variables have been used to analyze the complexity of the inter-group relations in Nigeria. While some studies have explored the origin of dynasties, economic or commercial activities, others have used warfare as relative bases for inter-group relations among the various groups.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, while some groups have attracted scholars' attentions, others seem to have been treated with neglect and sheer abandonment. For instance, while scholars have given in-depth analyses of the inter-group relations among the mega groups in Nigeria, such as the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, the same could not be said of the minority groups, to which the groups in this study belong.

In this study therefore, attention is focused on the *Owe*, *Bunu* and *Ijumu*, all within the *Okun* constituency of *Kogi* State. *Owe*, *Bunu* and

*Ijumu* are independent *Okun* communities, contiguously situated to one another. They share similar culture, dialect and historical background. They constitute a significant part of the *Okun-Yoruba* in the present day *Kogi* State in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> These groups shared the same local government (i.e. *Oyi* Local Government) when they were in *Kwara* State but are today in different Local Governments in the same state, due primarily to state creation and concomitant boundary adjustments in Nigeria. *Owe* (*Kabba*) is situated at the Southern fringe and *Bunu* constitutes the Northern part of *Kabba/Bunu* Local Government; while *Ijumu* constitutes *Ijumu* Local Government and shares borders with *Owe* at the South-West, all in *Kogi* State. We do not have evidence as to suggest when each of these groups got to their various locations but it is clear that by 1800, each has occupied its present geographical location.<sup>3</sup>

The thrust of the paper is to critically subject the intricacies of the inter-group relations among the group to a detailed historical study with the aim of reconstructing the historical misconceptions, which had hitherto strained their relationships. Few existing studies available on these groups have argued that *Owe* was a "collaborator, betrayer and traitor."<sup>4</sup> During the invasion of *Bunu* and *Ijumu* by some external forces, especially the *Nupe*, among others, *Owe* conspired to ensnare and unleash untold hardships upon them to its political advantage. In this regard, this paper reassesses their socio-cultural, political and economic activities in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era with the aim at bringing the reality of their history into limelight.

<sup>1</sup> J.F.A. Ajayi, and E. J. Alagoa, "Nigeria before 1800 Aspects of Economic Developments and Inter-group Relations" in O. Ikime, ed. 1980, *Groundwork of Nigeria History*, Heinemann Educational Books, 1980) pp. 224-235; E. Isichei, *History of West Africa since 1800* (Macmillan, 1977) p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> A. Obayemi, "The Sokoto Jihad and the 'O-kun' Yoruba: A Review," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. 9 No. 2. 1978, pp. 61-87; O. Akinwumi, "The Northern-Yoruba and the struggle for identity" in Toyin Falola, ed., *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2000); O' Hear, 2006, "The History of the Okun Yoruba; Research Directions" in T. Falola and A. Genova, eds., *Yoruba Identity and Power Politics* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press 2006).

<sup>3</sup> E. Krapt-Askari, "The Social Organization of the *Owe*" *African Notes*, Institute of African Studies, Ibadan, Vol. II No3, pp. 9-12.

<sup>4</sup> Obayemi, A., *The Sokoto Jihad*, p. 61.



### Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-group Relation in the Pre-Colonial Era

There is evidence to show that Owe, Bunu and Ijumu people had cordial inter-group relations in the pre-colonial era. The pre-colonial era of these groups could be divided into two viz: (a) The Pre-Nupe Imperial and (b) Nupe Imperial Era.

#### *The Pre-Nupe Era*

The Pre-Nupe imperial era connotes the earliest times all through the period up to the 1830s, when the pressure and influence of the external forces became evident in the confluence.<sup>5</sup> There has been the notion that there had not been contact among these groups prior to colonial rule. The record of a District Officer (D.O) in charge of Kabba Division strengthened this argument. He writes, inter alia, "... no one group accepted connection with any other."<sup>6</sup> Two reasons have, however, been adduced for such a monumental historical distortion. In the first instance, the ignorance of the colonialists of the past history of the people and secondly, the politically independent nature of the groups during the pre-colonial period could have been responsible for such a misconception.

To start with, there is evidence of long standing economic, socio-cultural and religious contacts among the groups.<sup>7</sup> Agriculture has long been the major occupation of the people. Food crops had been cultivated for consumption before the introduction of cash crops like coffee, cocoa. There were cross-economic exchanges in the form of trade among the groups. Exchange of goods like palm kernel, ceremonial clothes such as: "Aso Opo" (clothes for burial ceremonies), "aponupoyin" (clothes for the Ololus, "Senior Chiefs" burial ceremonies.) others include: "Ifale", "Ebe" and "aso egun".<sup>8</sup> All these

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 61-70.

<sup>6</sup> See, S. A. Kajotoni, "The Institution of Formal Taxation in Kabba", B. A. Long Essay, History Department, Ibadan, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> M. O. Okotoni, "Bunu-Ijumu-Kabba Relations in the Twentieth Century," B.A. Long Essay, History Department, Ibadan, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Oral History by Chief Ikusemoro, Olle, February 2, 1984.

clothes were obtained from Olle in Bunu. Other articles of exchange among the groups included pepper, yams and earthenware.<sup>9</sup> Apart from exchange of goods, there were market spots that were situated in each of the communities, periodically visited by traders in order to sell and buy products; these days range between 5 to 8 days. Example of these markets includes: *Odogi* in *Owe*, *Iyara* and *Ohon* markets in *Ijumu* and *Aiyede* market in *Bunu*.<sup>10</sup>

Socio-cultural links include intermarriage, cultural borrowing, communal road constructions; migration etc. Socio-cultural activities like the *Iworo* came to *Owe* (Kabba) from *Bunu*.<sup>11</sup> Another major linkage among the groups is "Ofosi" cult, which is today practised among the three groups. "Ofosi" cult was said to have started with a medicine man, at Ofere near Olle in Bunu, who used his palm tree belt (Igba) to climb a smoke, and never to be seen.<sup>12</sup> However, one tradition traced its origin to Nupeland, probably around River Niger.<sup>13</sup>

The didactic history of the "Ofosi" cult is preserved till date with this epigram:

*A mugba gewo*

*Okiti lolle*

*Eran funfun loya*<sup>14</sup>

"One who climbs smoke with belt

An ant - hill at olle

White beast in the Niger".

Membership of this cult from *Owe*, *Bunu* and *Ijumu* see themselves as one.<sup>15</sup>

"Ebora" cult was another link among the groups. It is a deity worshipped by the *Owe* and *Aiyere* in *Ijumu*. This has brought a strong

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Personal Interview with Chief Aduge, 75years, No 13 Kajola Kabba, 19/06/2004.

<sup>11</sup> Oral tradition by Chief Kusemoro at No 25 Olle, 2/2/84.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Oral History by Chief Aiyedogbo, at Olle 1980.

<sup>14</sup> The epigram is extracted from the folklore common to all the groups in the study apparently indicating the probable origin of Ofos Cult.

<sup>15</sup> Oral History by Chief Iluromi, M. K., Kabba 3/10/83.



peculiar relationship between the *Owe* and *Aiyere* and in a stronger term, they claim a common historical origin.<sup>16</sup> The explanation offered for the worship of the same Ebor deity varies. For instance, there is a tradition that argues that *Aiyere* borrowed the worship of Ebor deity from *Owe*;<sup>17</sup> while some people argue that both the founders of *Owe* and *Aiyere* came from Ile-Ife, each with his own Ebor deity called "Oyewu".<sup>18</sup>

Inter-marriage is one of the major factors of inter-group relations among the groups.<sup>19</sup> Oral evidence gives credence to the fact that there were "mixed blood" among the groups before 1800, which was facilitated by intermarriages.<sup>20</sup> Because of similarities in culture and custom, it was not difficult to contract marriage outside each immediate geographical boundary.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, land use facilitated inter-group relations among the people under consideration. There were cases of cross-geographical acquisition of land among the groups before the colonial era.<sup>22</sup> Indisputably, farmers need land for their agricultural projects. The land needed might not readily be available within a particular locality. In such cases, farmers migrated to neighboring villages for acquisition of land. Usually, since land is communally owned, a token known as "isakole" (tenement) is paid to the community that owns such land.<sup>23</sup> However, the token varies from one community to the other. It could be yams, palm wine or other farm products as required or agreed upon by the community, usually payable by cash or kind per annum.

Transportation also played a significant role in the inter-group relations among the people.<sup>24</sup> Socio-economic and cultural relations

<sup>16</sup> Akinjogbin (ed.) 1966, ODU Vol.3, No1 Krapf-Askari, E. Brass Objects from the *Owe Yoruba*, Kabba Province, Northern Nigeria.

<sup>17</sup> Oral History by Mr. Olumide Ajibade, Kabba, 1988.

<sup>18</sup> Oral History by Chief Omotade Olagunju, *Aiyere*, 1989

<sup>19</sup> N. A. K. Kabba District Loko Prof 24/10 A amendment of Boundaries

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Oral History by Chief Ehinmiro, Oju Oloruntaiye, Kabba, 1990

<sup>22</sup> Oral History by Chief Batholomew Bayeri, *Bunu*, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> S. O. Faghagba, "The Evolution of Kabba Settlement", An Unpublished Long Essay, Department of Geography ABU Zaria, 1970.

were further improved by fair amount of road networks, built since the pre-colonial times.<sup>25</sup> Road constructions were communally executed among the various communities for easy accessibility. This was to further receive a boost at the appearance of the Europeans.

### *The Nupe Era*

The histories of these groups took another dimension from the 1830s during which the Nupe forces invaded the communities in Okunland to bring them under its sphere of influence.<sup>26</sup> As it has been noted, the inter-group relations among the groups in this study dated back to time immemorial. There had not been evidence of hitches in their relationships. However, the disturbers of the peace were the "Ibon" identified as Nupe invaders whose historical origin lies elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> For comprehensive analysis, a brief historical antecedent of Nupe kingdom would be required. It would be recalled that from the opening decade of the nineteenth century, as the Sokoto jihad assumed its crescendo and had almost conquered all the northern states, she was also in the quest of expanding its jurisdiction beyond the frontier southwards. The jihad overlapped with the unresolved succession disputes in Nupeland following the reign of the Etsu Mu'azu and the succession of Zugarmar.<sup>28</sup> There was tough political crisis between Jimada and Majia who were two serious rivals to the Estuship. Neither of the two factions possessed superior power to suppress the other. This led to the division of the kingdom into two, each was led by either of the two.<sup>29</sup> However,

<sup>25</sup> Road Construction among the groups, See: NAI CSO 26 12941/Vol III Annual Report Kabba Province, 1925; NAK LOKOPtof 284/1926 Kabba Province Annual Report, 1926.

<sup>26</sup> Dupigny, G. M., *Gazetter of Nupe Province*, London: Waterlow and Sons, 9 - 10; Elphinstone, K. V., 1921, *Gazetter of Ilorin Province*. p. 103; Mason, M., 1970, *The Jihad in the South: An Outline of the Nineteenth Century, Nupe Hegemony in North-Eastern Yorubaland and Afenimai*, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 193-208.

<sup>27</sup> Obayeni, A., *The Sokoto Jihad*.

<sup>28</sup> M. Mason, *The Nupe Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century: A Political History* (Ph.D Thesis, University of Birmingham, centre for West African Studies, 1969), pp. 53-55.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



the presence of Mallam Dendo who had received the full support of the Sokoto caliphate ultimately reserved a balance of power until his hegemony became fairly consolidated amidst petty squabbles.<sup>30</sup>

The death of Dendo in 1833 was to elicit another serious succession disputes among his children and the descendants of the rival Nupe princes. The series of civil wars and other related problems were terminated by the military settlement of 1856-7, when the successful mediation by Gwandu led to a durable and regularized system of succession by Dendo's descendants.<sup>31</sup> With this development, the political crisis in Nupe seemed considerably resolved and Bida appeared to remain the fixed seat of the new political order, which controlled most, but not all, of Nupeland.<sup>32</sup> With the relative peace attained coupled with the unified structure, the new kingdom sought for expansion by exploiting the surrounding peoples in its drive for economic prosperity and local military supremacy. The chronology of the reign of Usman Zaki (1857-9), Massaba (1859-73) Umaru Masigi (1873-82), Maliki (1882-94) and Abubakar (1894-7) was a history of one powerful and sophisticated kingdom which though not absolutely free from dotted internal squabbles but stood as the prime mover or a dictator of events concerning the surrounding people in which our major area of concentration is a part.<sup>33</sup>

The invasion of the Okun-Yorubaland took a dramatic turn. In the first instance, the need to sustain its hegemony by putting under control the Nupe princes who might want to challenge her rulership contributed largely to the invasion of our area of concentration. Secondly, the segmentary nature of these communities coupled with the lack of a centralized administration deprived them of a virile united force against their common enemies.<sup>34</sup> For instance, when Usman Zaki

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> A. Obayemi, *The Sokoto Jihad*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> For details of the Political history of the Nupe kingdom, see *inter alia* the work of: Mason, M., *The Nupe Kingdoms in the Nineteenth century* Op cit.; Obayemi, A., *The Sokoto Jihad*.

<sup>34</sup> J. Ige, "The Okun Yoruba factor in the Royal Niger Company Conquest of Bida (1885-1897)". *Ilorin Journal of History*. Vol 1, No. 1., 2003.

(1857-59) decided to revamp the shattered Nupe economy as a result of the long protracted wars, he recognized the potentials of the Okun-yoruba in terms of slaves and agricultural resources. Moreover, the need became inevitable when he realized that he had to keep himself in the good book of Gwandu by sending regular 'gainsuwa' (gifts) to Gwandu.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, his chance of being successful in the area of our study became more plausible with regard to loose politics and lacks of co-ordination of the Okun Yoruba.<sup>36</sup> He intensified efforts to ensure that Okun Yoruba is brought under his control believing that the area was a reservoir of slaves and craftsmen needed to revamp the deplorable and battered economy of the newly "United Kingdom" with headquarters at Bida.<sup>37</sup>

It would be pertinent to mention here, contrary to the postulation expressed in some quarters, the assertion that Okun Yoruba fell like a park of cards without putting up any resistance against the Nupe invasion was a besmear and sheer historical distortion. There was evidence of stiff resistance here and there.<sup>38</sup> However, the resistances were not strong and co-ordinated enough to match the force of Bida armies, who possessed superior weapons with a relative sophisticated military prowess.<sup>39</sup> The collapse of the Okun forces culminated in the full establishment of Bida imperialism in Okunland as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

For over a period of three decades, Okun-Yorubaland was under the whims and caprices of the Nupe hegemony. *Ogbas* were stationed in all the Okun communities to enhance uninterrupted flow of taxes and slaves.<sup>41</sup> She was the head of a detachment of Nupe soldiers always on

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> P. T. Davies, "Notes on Kabba Division", 1959, National Archives Kaduna (NAK) p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> For details of Okun Resistance against foreign invasions see among others the work of Late Professor A. Obayemi, "The Okun settlement and a crisis", An unpublished work.

<sup>39</sup> A. A. Idrees, "Colonial Conquest and Reaction in the Middle Niger: The British Subjugation of the Nupe, 1897-1900" in A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu, eds., *The History of Central Nigeria*, Vol. 1 (Lagos: CSS, 2002). pp. 639-660.

<sup>40</sup> Z. O. Apata, "Administrative changes and Reorganization in the old Kabba Province of Northern Nigeria, 1897-1939." Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ife, 1985.

<sup>41</sup> R. A. Adeleye, 1977, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804 - 1906* (London: Longman, 1977); A. Olukoju, "The Siege of Oka 1890-94: A study in the Resistance of



the alert to quell any uprising and instilled discipline on any recalcitrant group of people in the process of collecting tributes. She also supervised the prompt payment and collection of tributes from the district to Bida. These tributes were in the forms of cowries, slaves and foodstuff.<sup>42</sup>

One major controversial issue in the context of Africans' resistance against foreign domination that has remained a serious problem to our area of study is the issue of "collaborators". This word has been used widely to express the position of some Africans and African leaders to the imposition of foreign rules and or external incursions. In this context, two families of explanation have been identified. The first is of the opinion that the Africans that co-operated with the external forces were not necessarily collaborators. Obaro Ikime justifies this when he opines:

It is important to appreciate the fact that they did not necessarily see themselves as saboteurs or collaborators... Such groups or individuals were merely seeking to use the British as allies for the promotion of their own interest.<sup>43</sup>

Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage have aggressively supported this opinion. They assert that categorization of such African as saboteurs or collaborators hardly fit the circumstances of eighty years ago.<sup>44</sup>

However, the second family of this proponent views Africans who co-operated with the Europeans as nothing but saboteurs, traitors, quisling and unpatriotic elements that aided external invasions.<sup>45</sup> Agweta and Pallinder who share this view have bitterly dismissed the preceding

---

Nupe Imperialism in North East Yorubaland" in T. Falola, and R. Law, eds., *Warfare and Diplomacy in pre-colonial Nigeria* (African Studies programme, University of Wisconsin, 1992) p. 107.

<sup>42</sup> M. K. Ogidan, "Inter-group relation within Ijumu Communities of Kogi State: 1897 - 1960." A paper presented at the Akodi Afrika Conference on Okun: An African people and their civilization, 27th - 29th 1995 pp. 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977).

<sup>44</sup> R. Oliver and J. D. Fage, "The Futility of Resistance, the success of collaboration" in Collins R. O., (ed.) *Problems in the History of colonial Africa 1860 -1960* (Prentice Hall International, Englewood cliffs, 1970).

<sup>45</sup> A. A. Idrees, *Colonial Conquest and Reaction in the Middle Niger*, p.640.

idea as "unhistorical and unnecessary apologies for those who fell short of patriotic idea."<sup>46</sup>

It is imperative therefore to explore this concept within the framework of this study. When the Okun-Yoruba people were attacked by the Nupe forces, Owe was said to have collaborated. Late Prof. Obayemi remarks: "...it appears that sometime during the phase of Nupe invasion, the Owe settlement of *Okaba* (Kabba) had emerged as collaborators with the Nupe. The Owe chief (Obaro) seems to have been a faithful follower of the Nupe, a role they had played until 1897 when resident Bida agents were forced to make their final withdrawal."<sup>47</sup> This assertion was put in another dimension, "however, the Fulani-Nupe ruling elite succeeded in using the Kabba (Owe) ruling house to achieve its objective in Okun-Yoruba. The Owe settlement of Kabba and especially its chief, (the Obaro) also cooperated with the Nupe-Fulani, who use Kabba as the headquarters for their forces".<sup>48</sup>

As a direct consequence upon the role Obaro and his people played as collaborators and traitors; Owe was said to have been promoted to the status of headquarters of the areas that came under Bida's control in Okun-Yoruba, i.e. *Owe, Bunu, Ijumu* and part of East-Yagba.<sup>49</sup> This position she occupies was further argued to have attracted the influx of immigrants, which populated it over other settlements within the area.<sup>50</sup>

It has remained a serious problem justifying the validity of the above arguments on the basis of the points highlighted as viable and infallible evidence. Contrary to the above, it has been argued that the geographical location of Owe as an entrepot to Okene, Lokoja, Ikare, Ibilo etc. from Ilorin and other Okun- Yoruba settlements before the Nupe invasion had attracted a high proportion of immigrants.<sup>51</sup> This

---

<sup>46</sup> A. Pallinder, "Nigeria and the British" *Journal of African History* Vol. 19, No.3, 1978, pp. 468-69.

<sup>47</sup> A. Obayemi, *The Sokoto Jihad* Op. cit p. 75; A. O'Hear, *The History of the Okun Yoruba*, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> O. Akinwumi "The Northern Yoruba and the struggle for identity in T. Falola, ed., *Nigeria: A Twentieth Century Agenda*." (Carolina, 1992) pp. 620-30.

<sup>49</sup> Oral History by Chief Adebayo Jimoh No. 24 Bunu.

<sup>50</sup> A. Obayemi, *The Sokoto Jihad*.

<sup>51</sup> Personal interview with Chief Joloko Olarewaju 93 years, No. 48, Iya Kabba.



position facilitated trade networks around the area. Thus, *Owe* (Kabba) has almost assumed a commercial emporium of the areas generally referred to as Okun-Yoruba long before the Nupe invasion in the 1830s.<sup>52</sup> It is most probable that its position as the commercial centre naturally attracted the influx of immigrants from different places to Owe (Kabba) for commercial activities.

Secondly, the fact that the Nupe forces dealt a devastating blow on the Okun people is incontestable. A clergy who traveled with Bishops Tugwell and Phillip in 1894 reported that:

At Ayeri (Ayere), a town close to Kabba, the king came to call on us ... and told us "white men" to come and help him. He said that four years ago, on his coming to the throne, the Nupes came and took away 300 of his people. He told us that oppression has been the rule here for forty years; that at first the Nupes only demanded couriers (Carriers? Cowries?), then farm produce, and that now they will have slaves as well. As all their own slaves are gone as tribute, they have to give their own children, and many, after giving their wives and children for tribute, have left the town and not come back. Among others his own brother and cousin; there are hardly any young people in the country, and that their nation is becoming extinct.<sup>53</sup>

The above suggests a large-scale population loss. Obayemi sheds more light on this when he argues that: tribute in human beings paid to Bida could not be met by the number of slaves locally owned or by natural increase". He added that population distribution today is uneven, suggesting that the larger centres, collaborator settlements, that were spared the worst ravages suffered by their neighbour, reflect what would have been the normal pre-nineteenth century demographic pattern.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, many lineages and sub-lineages are remembered but extinct, some of these being "towns" in some senses of the word.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> S. Vendeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger* (London: Methuen and Co., 1898), pp. 189-90 quoting Rev. C. E. Waiting.

<sup>54</sup> See A. O. Hear, *The History of the Okun Yoruba*, pp. 16-17 quoting A. Obayemi, *The Sokoto Jihad*, pp. 82-88.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

The above postulations are laden with problems. It is impossible to discredit Michael Mason's assertion that we do not know the absolute population growth rate before the twentieth century. Moreover, we do not know, "even approximately, how many slaves left the area and never returned," so we cannot come to any conclusion on the seriousness of the long-term effects.<sup>56</sup> Mason goes further to point out, in other areas (he mentions Borgu) "where the factor of invading armies may be assumed to be negligible."<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, C. K. Meek's account has made it clear that many of the slaves (especially, it is likely, the newly enslaved) did return to their homes.<sup>58</sup> The British reports of the slave returnees south of the Niger when the British attacked Nupe from 1897 onward support this argument. In addition, reports of the large scale of Bunu cloth production in the early twentieth century suggest that many of the returnees were weavers.<sup>59</sup> Ade Obayemi himself accepts that escape from the north of the Niger might not have been too difficult for the slaves, even before the British attacks on Nupe.<sup>60</sup>

Thirdly, *Owe* also suffered the same fate as the other groups during the Nupe wars. Many Owe settlements were forced out from their initial area of locations to obscure hideout: hilltops and caves.<sup>61</sup> A good example of these is the Ikowa-Opa settlements (settlements across the Opa River).<sup>62</sup> It has also been emphasized that when Owe (Kabba) was attacked in about 1863, the inhabitants put up a stubborn resistance. The reigning Oba, Obarofun of Kabba, organized his people into sub-

<sup>56</sup> Mason, "Jihad in the South" 208.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> NAK SNP 10393p/1918, Assessment Report Aworo District, C. K. Meek, Assistant District Officer, paragraph 35.

<sup>59</sup> William Balfour Baikie, *Narrative of an exploring voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue in 1854* (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., .. 1966) pp. 260-8.

<sup>60</sup> NAK SNP 10393p/1918, op cit.

<sup>61</sup> The evacuation of Owe settlements to obscure hideouts such as hilltops, and caves was primarily to keep away from Nupe accessibility. For more details, see the work of: Obayemi, A., settlement evolution: The case of the North-East Yoruba. A paper presented at the seminar of the Archaeology Division, dept. of History, Ahmadu Bello University, June 1978 (Mimeo, 14pp); Dada, D. O., Settlement.

<sup>62</sup> Personal interview with Chief Obarise Agbaetan, No. 2. Kakun, 2000.



units in order to counter Bida forces.<sup>63</sup> The Owe went as far as building wall and digging trenches like the other groups to serve as defense mechanism against the Nupe forces. Evidence of such walls can still be seen around the present day Kabba, Obura, Akutupa (Kirri) and Odokoro.<sup>64</sup>

Be that as it may, the independent resistances put up by the Okun-people (Owe inclusive) were suppressed in the face of Nupe superior weaponry and sophisticated tactical military prowess.<sup>65</sup> Owe was then made its administrative headquarters relatively because of its geographical location as well as its economic and demographic advantage.<sup>66</sup> It would appear that Bida Emirate was more concerned about the economic potentials, which it sought to exploit.<sup>67</sup> To achieve this, therefore, she brought all the independent communities that clustered around the Okun territory under a central administration for administrative convenience.<sup>68</sup> From all indications, Obaro of Kabba (Owe) was upgraded to the status of a paramount chief over all the districts and independent communities. Obaro was thus to implement the policies that emanated from Bida.<sup>69</sup> Among his functions was to collect tributes for onward transmission to Bida. The imposition of the Obaro over other chiefs within his jurisdiction elicited some grievances from *Ogidi*, *Gbedde*, *Yagba*, *Akoko* and even among some resented clans within the Owe political structure.<sup>70</sup> This unresolved agitation was to cause a lot of grievances, as we shall explore during the colonial administration.

<sup>63</sup> J. Ige, *The Okun Yoruba factor...* p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> A. Obayemi, *The North-East Yoruba*. pp. 68-691, No. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Dupigny, E. G. M., pp 12 - 15, NAK KABBA DIST, District Note Book, 1897, pp. 59-61

<sup>66</sup> Scholars have not disputed the Administrative headquartership of Owe. However, the controversies bother on the rationales behind its selections. My submission to this version is substantially based on oral evidence, which was known to the aged people among the people in this study.

<sup>67</sup> P. T. David, "Notes on Kabba Division", 1959, p. 4 (NAK).

<sup>68</sup> D. Sumanu, 1976, "The History of the Relationship of the Yoruba speaking people of Kabba Division with the Nupe up to 1920s." Unpublished History, B.A. Project, ABU.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Z. O. Apata, "Administrative changes and Reorganization in the old Kabba Province of Northern Nigeria, 1897-1939." Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ife, 1985.

## Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter- Group Relations in the Colonial Era

By January 13, (1877, the hegemony of Nupe rule in Okunland was brought to an end by the immediate intervention of the Royal Niger Company (RNC).<sup>71</sup> The company presided over the affairs of our area of study until 1900, when the British took over the full administration of the Northern Nigeria.<sup>72</sup> Lord Lugard adopted indirect rule system largely for lack of personnels. One of the institutions put in place to enhance effective indirect rule system was Native Administration Proclamation, which formally and legally recognized various grades of chiefs ranging from the Emir to the village head.<sup>73</sup> Some of these chiefs and Emirs were later to assume the position of Native Authorities with their power and jurisdiction increased greatly,<sup>74</sup> an institution that was to become a breeding ground for tension and strives among the various groups in the country of which our area of study was no exception. Both the officials of the Royal Niger Company and Lugard's administration gave a social recognition to Owe as the status quo was maintained. To enhance the full economic exploration and smooth indirect rule over the newly acquired territories, the British administrators appointed the Obaro of Kabba as the Head of Kabba District, made up of *Owe*, *Bunu*, *Ijumu* and East-*Yagba* in 1918.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, the British administration established a single Native Court in Kabba (*Owe*) in which the Obaro was also to preside.<sup>76</sup> The implication of this arrangement was that the people of Bunu, and Ijumu had to take their cases to Kabba for settlement, a situation that had never been before this time. Furthermore, a Native Treasury was

<sup>71</sup> Margery Perham, *Lugard: The years of Adventure, 1858 -1898* (Collins, 1956) pp. 44-61.

<sup>72</sup> R. A. Adeleye, 1971, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1971).

<sup>73</sup> C. Orr, 1965, *The Making of Northern Nigeria* (London: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>74</sup> O. Ikime, "The Establishment of Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria," *Tarikh*, Vol. 3. No. 3, 1977, pp. 10-12.

<sup>75</sup> Z. O. Apata, "Administrative changes and Reorganization in the old Kabba Province of Northern Nigeria, 1897 -1939" Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ife, 1985.

<sup>76</sup> NAI CSO 26 12941/Vol V, Annual Report, Kabba Province, 1928.



established in Kabba (Owe).<sup>77</sup> It was established to replace the former system where no proper account was kept. Under this system, Tax-money and Court fines were kept in the treasury and systematically administered. The salaries of the Emirs, chiefs and other functionaries were provided from it, while the remaining was used for providing infrastructural facilities in the emirate or province under the supervision of the resident.<sup>78</sup> The collection of taxes was the responsibility of the Obaro throughout Owe, Ijumu and Bunu, while the chief of Isanlu was responsible for Yagbaland.<sup>79</sup> The position of the Obaro as the chief collector of this tax was to further aggravate some bottled resentment among the other groups. This was clearly put:

The introduction of taxation in Kabba division has left a legacy of hatred and disdain among the groups. There was a great deal of bad blood in the relationships. It appears fairly clear that the Yagbas, Bunus and Ijumus are united in their hatred against the Owe.<sup>80</sup>

The resentment and hatred was not unconnected with the role Kabba (Owe) played in the collection of taxes and tributes in the area. For instance, during the Nupe hegemony, tributes were collected and assembled at Kabba for onward transmission to Nupeland.<sup>81</sup> The Ijumu in particular looked at Owe as their traitor, collaborators and the cause of their defeat, which culminated in their tribute payment to Nupe overlords.<sup>82</sup> However, the fear of probable negative reactions of the District Officer (DO) perhaps, bottled the resentment until 1920, when the Obaro's supposedly rigid and overbearing rules became unbearable. The Ijumu community under the auspices of Mr. Paul Ameni, Bello

<sup>77</sup> S. A. Kajotoni, "The Institution of Formal Taxation in Kabba" Unpublished B. A. Project, History Department University of Ibadan, 1977.

<sup>78</sup> S. A. Kajotoni, "The Institution of Formal Taxation in Kabba," Unpublished B. A. Project, History Department University of Ibadan, 1977.

<sup>79</sup> S. A. Kajotoni, "The Institution of Formal Taxation in Kabba," Unpublished B. A. Project, History Department University of Ibadan, 1977.

<sup>80</sup> S. A. Kajotoni, "The Institution of Formal Taxation in Kabba," Unpublished B. A. Project, History Department University of Ibadan, 1977.

<sup>81</sup> Oral History by Mrs. Moronike to Mr. Igbedde, M. O., 1983, during his fieldwork in Iyamoye, June.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

Omole, Jacob Apata, Joseph Balogun and James Otungbola spearheaded the outburst of the grievances and resentments against the Obaro.<sup>83</sup> They demanded for autonomy from Obaro, alleging that they were wrongly brought under the Obaro's control.<sup>84</sup> The colonial officers investigated the case and by 1922 when Kabba District re-organization took place, *Ijumu* and *Igbedde* became autonomous and were called *Igbedde* District.<sup>85</sup> Also, judicial councils were created with "B" grade in Owe (Kabba) and "C" grades in Yagba, Igbedde and Bunu respectively.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the British administration decided to establish an Appeal Court in Owe (Kabba) under the control of Obaro. Captain Bridel (the D.O.) in Kabba affirmed the intension when he writes:

It was formed with the idea that it might lead to the amalgamation of the Owe, Yagba, Gbedde and Bunu clans under the Olu Owe (Obaro).<sup>87</sup>

This was to breed further resentments in the imagination of the other groups, who saw no reason why they should be made subject to the authority of the Obaro. Bridel further remarks:

Had the meetings been held more frequently, friction between the four clans would not have resulted, but the chief members of the court were too old to bear the strain of journeys to Kabba especially in the rainy season.<sup>88</sup>

Even though the idea of establishing an Appeal Court was established, it added more strifes and tensions between the non-Owe groups and the Owes. It should be noted that the re-organization that took place in 1937 had started since 1918. One school of thought argued that the British administration, which had disapproved of the demand of the Ijumu in 1918 eventually yielded to the agitations of non-Owes to be separated from Owe District. This was largely due to the clash of

<sup>83</sup> Ogidan, M. K., *Inter-group Relations within Ijumu Communities*: Op. cit pp. 11-12.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Okotoni, M. K., 1928, *Bunu -Ijumu-Kabba Relations* :Op. cit pp. 32-33.

<sup>87</sup> NAI CSO 26 12941/Vol V, Annual Report, Kabba Province.

<sup>88</sup> NAI CSO 26 Annual Report Kabba Province, 1937.



interest that ensued between the British and the Owe people over the Eborá worship (Owe supreme deity).<sup>89</sup> The British had wanted to go with the Owes to the hill of worship, which was forbidden to strangers. The Obaro bluntly stood with a hostile countenance against the idea. The British effort to retaliate over what they considered a defiant and rebellious attitude of the Obaro probably led to the approval of the autonomy earlier demanded by other component groups. The *Yagba*, *Bunu* and *Igbedde* became independent of Owe (Kabba).<sup>90</sup> The above greatly reduced the influence and size of Kabba District.

### Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-Group Relations in the Post-Colonial era

The grievances among the groups persisted even after the independence. It could be recalled that the restructuring during the colonial era within the area of our study had far-reaching consequence on the inter-group relations of the groups. In the first instance, the Obaro's salary was reduced from £150 to £72.00 *per annum*.<sup>91</sup> The Native Court of which he was president fell from grade "B" to "C" grade,<sup>92</sup> and the non-Owe villages became independent. The Obaro and Owe people were much disgusted with this development, which further aggravated the existing "cold war" among them.

The creation of Local Government in 1968 was another powerful index that put the inter-group relations among these groups to test. The Kwara State Military administration under Colonel D. L. Bamigboye set up a committee for Local Government reforms on 9th October 1968.<sup>93</sup> A Ten-man Advisory committee submitted its report on 11 December 1968.<sup>94</sup> The committee's report favoured the transformation of the

<sup>89</sup> Oral History by Chief Obawaiye Olutade 94 years Egbeda, Kabba, 1982. My personal interviews with Mr. Dada Olatunji 56 years, Aiyeku, 2006 Kabba Corroborated Chief's Obawaiye's account.

<sup>90</sup> NAK Report on Reorganization of Kabba District, 1936.

<sup>91</sup> Okotoni, M. O., *op cit* p. 32.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Kwara State Local Government Creation of 1968.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Native Authority to Local Government Administrative system because of the defectiveness of the former. The exercise was aimed at preventing ambiguities in the structure of the Local governments to be created (i.e. to prevent any unit from being too large or too small than the others). Thus, the five former autonomous Native Authorities in the Division, East and West of Yagba, Bunu, Ijumu and Owe (Kabba) were merged into one administrative unit with its headquarters at Kabba.<sup>95</sup> This development aggravated further resentments among other groups. Despite these resentments, the regrouping exercise continued. For instance, on May 5, 1976, a committee under the chairmanship of Alhaji Kaima, commissioner for Local Government and Community Development was set up.<sup>96</sup> The outcome of the commission's readjustment was dissolution of the eight existing division in Kwara State. Kabba Division was then changed to Oyi Local government.<sup>97</sup> Even though the name seems to be neutral and have no bearing with the existing structure, it was the pleasure of the non-Owe (Kabba) to see that the local government was not named after Kabba. On the other hand, the Owes (Kabba) wanted the name to be retained, she filed a petition, but nothing concrete came out of it.

The subsequent episode under civilian administration witnessed the proliferation of local governments in many parts of the country and Kwara State was no exception.<sup>98</sup> Prior to 1979, there had been twelve Local Governments. However, in 1981, twelve additional local governments were created. The Oyi Local Government was split into two: Bunu-Ijumu-Kabba (BIK) with its headquarters at Kabba and Oyi Local Government with its headquarters at Isanlu, comprising the West and East Yagba.<sup>99</sup> In 1982, eight more local governments were created in the state. Two more local governments were added to the existing two in our area of study. Ijumu Local Government was carved out from Bunu-Ijumu-Kabba Local Government with its headquarters at Iyara.

<sup>95</sup> BIK Local Government File.

<sup>96</sup> Details in Alhaji Kaima Commission's Report of 1976.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Local Government Creation of 1979, Local Government File, Kwara State.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*



Similarly, Aku-Mejo Local Government was created with its headquarters at Odo-Ere.<sup>100</sup>

It would remain to mention that the proliferation of local governments helped to worsen the existing poor relationships among the groups. It helped to create more consciousness for each of the group to keep apart from one another, and solely to protect her newly won "independence." Retrogressively, the military takeover of the 31 December 1983 brought the local governments to the status quo of pre-1979.<sup>101</sup> By January 1984, the military governor of Kwara State, Group Captain Latinwo, announced a return to the former twelve local governments in the state. Once again, the five former Districts came together under the former name Oyi Local Government, with its headquarters in Kabba.<sup>102</sup>

This structure and bottled resentments remained until August 27, 1991 when Gen. Babangida administration created two additional states in Nigeria - Kogi and Akwa-Ibom.<sup>103</sup> Kogi State our main area of study was carved out from Kwara and Benue States.<sup>104</sup> This was followed by boundaries adjustments for local government creations within the "new state". The exercise saw the bifurcation of Oyi Local Government into Kabba/Bunu and Ijumu Local Governments.<sup>105</sup> Thus the longing and aspiration of Ijumu independence from Kabba since 1927 became a *fiat accompli*. One major implication ever since was the policy of the survival of the fittest, which each group explores as a veritable tool of expressing

<sup>100</sup> MIG/s 19/s II/I Local Government.

<sup>101</sup> Television Broadcast of 31/12/1983 by the Military Governor, Group Captain Latinwo.

<sup>102</sup> The Governor's State Broadcast Automatically brought the number Local Governments to the pre-1979 position and the structure maintained.

<sup>103</sup> *The Punch*, 28/08/1991, pp. 1-2; State creation and Boundaries Adjustment Series, Ministry of Information, Lagos, 1991 pp. 6-14.

<sup>104</sup> *The Punch*, op cit pp. 1-2.

<sup>105</sup> Kogi State and Boundaries Delimitation, Ministry of Information.

discontent against the other component groups. This subtle "cold war" has in no small measure succinctly affected the relations of the groups under study up to the recent times.

## Conclusion

The paper has examined the inter-group relations among the Owe, Bunu and Ijumu in the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial eras. It debunks the postulation upheld by some colonial reports that each of these groups had been independent of the others before the colonial rule. Moreover, the rationale behind the overlapping influence of the Nupe kingdom into our area of study was brought into a historical limelight. It equally argues that the easy subjugation of the Okun-Yoruba by the Nupe kingdom was largely predicated upon their possession and mastery of superior weaponry and not because Owe collaborated with the Nupe forces. Similarly, the study reveals pretty clearly that the promotion of Owe to the status of headquarters of the Nupe and the way the status quo was maintained during the colonial era could not have been her dividend as purportedly argued by some scholars as a collaborator with the Nupe forces. This seemingly historical incongruity has not only sensitized or awakened the consciousness of their negative antecedents but also bred animosity in the imagination of each group against the others as the cause of their woes all through the period of our study. This piece has brought into the focus the nitty-gritty of what appears to have remained hidden in the history of the groups. This, it is hoped, will bring respite to the historical biases that have hitherto strained their relationships.



## Index

- Abakiliki, 122  
 Abiola, M.K.O. (Chief), 226  
 Action Group (AG), 217, 218, 219  
 Ade Ajayi, J.F., 15  
 Africa Charter on Human and  
 People's Rights, 291  
 Africa History, 15  
 AG, 65  
 Agitations, 3, 31  
 Agitators, 34  
 AGOMBAS, 260  
 Akwa-Ibom State, 167  
 Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, 18  
 Aminu Kano, 218  
 Angas, 333  
 Anglican Church of the Messiah, 21  
 Anglican Seminary, 21  
 Antagonism, 32  
 Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF),  
 285, 305-310  
 Armed Forces Ruling Council, 41  
 Assimilation, 29  
 ATR, 232  
 Attributes, 75  
 Auchu Polytechnic, 18  
 Awolowo, A. (Chief), 94, 218  
 Ayandele, 3  
 Azikiwe, N. (Dr), 218
- Babagida Administration, 127  
 - Non Performance of, 136-144  
 - Legitimacy Mobilization, 134-136  
 Badamosi Babangida, (Gen) 21, 114  
 Badmington, 17  
 Bakari Edun (Alh), 382  
 Bassa and Egbura Relations, 396-412  
 - Bassa History, Colonial Distortion  
 of, 406  
 Bassa-Egbura Conflicts, Post Colonial,  
 409-412  
 Bayelsa state, 13  
 Bello, A. (Sir), 218, 384, 385
- Benue State, 96  
 Benue-Tababa-Nasarawa Pogrom,  
 353-378  
 Berkeley, University of California, 16  
 Biron, 333  
 Bodija Market, Ibadan, 261  
 Bori Town, 292  
 Boro, I, 323  
 Breton Wood Agreement, 163  
 Buhari, M. (Gen.) 136
- Canada, 93  
 Capitalism, 148  
 Capitalist of Agriculture, 188  
 Challenge, 33  
 Chapel of the Resurrection, 20  
 Christianity, 232  
 Citizenship, 74  
 Civil-Military relations in Nigeria,  
 Crisis of, 127-140  
 Collaboration, 32  
 Colonialism and Intra-Community  
 Conflict in Enugu: Itumbuazo and  
 Colonialism, 152  
 Committee on Racial Discrimination,  
 294  
 Competition, 3, 150  
 Conflict, 8, 30, 73, 76, 235  
 Conflicts in Nigeria, Ethno-Regional  
 Organisations, 292  
 Constitution, functions of, 58  
 Constitution Review Option, 71-73  
 Constitution, the Conceptual  
 Framework of, 57-58  
 Constitutional Democracy, 59  
 Constitutional Development, 55-70  
 Control of Resources, 33  
 Creation of Ebonyi State  
 - Izzi-Ukelle Relations before, 120  
 - Izzi-Ukelle Relations since, 123  
 Crises, 40, 41, 127  
 Cross River State, 113, 167
- Crude Oil, 39
- Daily Service*, 221  
 Deacon, 21  
 Decrees, 40  
 Delta State, 13, 38  
 Dialogue, 8  
 Dialogue and Pluralism in the Middle  
 Belt 353-378  
 Dike, K., 15  
 Discrimination, 92  
 Dog-Palm Oil Trade, 167-181:  
 - Benefits and problems of, 177-180  
 - Origins of, 168  
 - Sources and Significance of oil  
 and dog, 170  
 - Organization of, 175-177
- Economic Change, 188  
 Egbe Afenifere, 285, 297  
 Egbe Omo Oduduwa, 217, 224  
 Egbesu Boys (EBA), 312  
 Egbura on the Bassa, Colonial  
 Arbitrary Imposition of, 407-409  
 Equality, 95  
 Erim O. Erim (Prof), 119  
 Ethnic Politics, Version of Origin,  
 221, 222  
 Ethnisation/Afeniferisation, 227  
 Ethnicity, 4, 6, 7  
 Ethno-Regional Organisations and  
 Conflicts in Democratic Nigeria,  
 310-313  
 Ethno-nationalism, 286  
 Expropriation/Encroachment, 194-  
 197  
 Federal Character Principle, 79  
 Federal Government, 36, 324, 325  
 Federalism, 90  
 Federation of African University  
 Sports, 18  
 Forum, 147  
 Framework, 66
- Gaskiya*, 222, 224  
 Globalization, 6, 32, 143-146  
 - GNPP, 218  
 Government College Ughelli, 14, 19  
 Gwon, Y. (Gen), 113, 323  
 Great Depression, 153  
 Group Mobilization, 333-349  
 Groups, 28, 30, 31
- Harvard, University of, 16  
 Historical Society of Nigeria, 16  
 Historical Stencil, 37, 38  
 Historiocity, 37, 38  
 Hospitality, 4  
 House of Assembly, 43
- Ibadan History Dynasty, 28  
 Ibadan School of History, 1, 17, 25  
 Ibori, J (Chief), 43  
 ICCPR, 290  
 ICESCR, 290  
 Identity Crisis, 71-73  
 - Colonial roots of 73-75  
 Idoma, 96  
 Ifemesia, C.C. (Prof.), 115  
 Igbo, 31, 91  
 Igboland, 114  
 Igboland, West Niger 112-209  
 Ijaw Leadership, 43  
 Ijaw Question, Efforts of the Federal  
 Government, 328-330  
 Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), 324  
 Ilorin Community, 386  
 Ilorin Development Union, 388  
 Ilorin in the Federal Government,  
 Representation of, 391-395  
 Ilorin in the Regional House of  
 Assembly, Representation of, 389-  
 391  
*Ilorin Talaka Parapo*, 8  
 Ilorin Talaka Parapo, the Aftermath,  
 379-395  
 - the new phase of opposition, 383  
 Ikime, O. I, 4, 5, 13, 159



India, 93  
 Indigene, 78  
 Indigene Settlers Question, Overcoming the, 86  
 Indigeneity clause, 79  
 Intergroup Influence and Conflicts in Yoruba Muslim Family, 250-260  
 Intergroup Relations, 25, 55-70, 90-112, 96-110, 113-120, 143-146, 182-209, 231-249, 261-267, 271-284  
 Internal Domination, 333-349  
 Invaders, 42  
 Invasion, 9  
 Islam, 232  
 Islam and the Legal System, 237-243  
 Itsekiri, 40, 41, 42  
 Itsekiri and Urhobo Conflicts, Causes of, 45-48  
 Itumbauzo Conflicts, 415-427  
 Izzi/Ukelle People, 114-119  
 Izzi-Ukelle Experience, 113-126

Jaminiyar Mutanen Arewa, 217  
 Jews, 235  
 John Dun (Col), 41  
 Jos Plateau, 167  
 Jukun Fulani, 354  
 KAIMA Declaration, 34  
 - its Aftermath, 323-328  
 Kwararafacism, Obasanjo and the Tiv Masacre, 364-373  
 Land use, 183  
 Land, disputes, 197-204, 182-209  
 Language game, 38  
 Language, 28, 265, 292  
 Leadership, 17  
 Levies, 77  
 Los Angeles, University of California, 16  
 Lugard, L., 60

*Magnum Opus*, 16  
 Market Women, 261-267

MASSOBA, 312  
 Measures, 87, 88  
 Melford Okilo, 322  
 Middle Best Reform, 8  
 Migrant, 185, 264  
 Minorities, 96  
 Minority Groups, 217  
 Modernisation theory, 234  
 MOSOP, 34, 285, 292-297  
 Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta, 312  
 Multi-Ethnic Society, Problems of Constitutional development, 67-69  
 Muslims, 31  
 Muslim Family, Yoruba, 252-256

NACOMYO, 260  
 NADECO, 300  
 Nation Building, 8  
 National Youth Movement, 297  
 Nationalism, 3  
 Natives, 72  
 NCNC, 217, 218, 219, 221, 320, 321, 322  
 NEPU, 218  
 Newspapers, 7  
 Niger Delta, 13, 14, 31, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 167  
 Niger Delta Congress, (NDC), 321, 322  
 Niger Delta Crises, 37  
 Niger Delta Crises, Obaro's Historicity as Dominant Axis of, 48-51  
 Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), 328, 329, 330  
 Niger Delta Republic, 323  
 Niger Delta Volunteer Service, 34  
 Nigeria, 1, 7, 40, 78, 95, 146, 166, 213, 230, 231-249  
 Nigeria, History of Constitutional Development, 60-63  
 Nigeria, Indigene/Settler Crisis, 81-86  
 Nigerian Cameroon Border, 120

Nigerian History, 16  
 Nigerian Public life, nature of Identity Politics in, 75-77  
 Nigerian State, Crisis of Citizenship in, 77  
 Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), 223  
 Nottingham, D, 323  
 NPC, 65, 218, 219, 333, 380, 383, 384  
 NPN, 219  
 NPN Press, 226  
 NUC, 18  
 NUGA, 18  
 OAU (AU), 287  
 Obligations, 77  
 Ogbogbo, 5  
 Ogoja, 122  
 Ogoni, 292  
 Ogoni Bill of Rights, 294  
 Ohanaeze Ndigbo, 34, 285, 301-305  
 Oja-Oba, 263  
 Okumagba, B. (Chef), 44  
 OMPADEC, 294, 296, 329, 330  
 OPC, 34  
 OPEC, 163  
 Oral Tradition, 2  
 Orkar, G. (Maj), 220  
 Owe, 9  
 Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-Group Relations in the Colonial Era, 443-446  
 Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-Group Relations in the Past Colonial Era, 446-449  
 Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-Group Relations in the Pre-Colonial Era, 432-443  
 Owe, Bunu and Ijumu Inter-Group Relations: A Re-Assessment, "Owners of the land" 78

Pankshin, 30  
 Party Politics, 217  
 PDP, 44

Peace and Tolerance, A Civilization of, 373-376  
 Pogroms, 28  
 Political Control, 213  
 Port-Harcourt, University of, 39  
 Power, 213, 217, 219  
 Power, 96  
 Power/Leadership, 30  
 "Preferential Policies," 79  
 Press, Opposition, 226  
 Print Media, 327  
 Privileges, 71  
 Protests, 43

Question, 27, 33, 35

Relationship, 214  
 Religion, 29, 232, 236  
 Researcher, 16  
 Resources, 96  
 Responsibilities, 17  
 Revolution, 147  
 Rights, 71, 44, 77  
 Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference (RCPC), 320  
 Rivers-Niger Delta Congress, 218  
 Royal Niger Company, 94

Sango Market, 264  
 SCM, 20  
 Scripture, 235  
 Self determination, 7, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31  
 Self Determination: 315  
 - Agitations in the Post Colonial Era 276-280  
 - and Intergroup Relations in Colonial Nigeria, 274  
 - Ethno-Regional Organisations and Conflicts in Nigeria since 1960, 285-314  
 - Reflections on the Ijo Struggle in Nigeria, 315-317  
 - Variables and Constants, 271-281



- Settlements, 183, 185  
 Settler, 77  
 Shari  
   Crisis, 243-249  
   Impact of, 231-249  
 Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), 326  
 Sokoto, University of, 18  
 Solomon Lar (Chief), 409  
 "Son of the Soil," 78  
 South South Zone, 39  
 State Creation, 80-112, 113-126  
 State Proliferation, Political Economy of, 96-110  
 Stoic School of Philosophy, 146  
 Struggle, 214, 217  
 Tamuno, 3  
 Taxes, 77  
*The Historian of the Nation*, 23  
 The Press, 213-230  
 Tiv:  
   - Agitation, Historical Respective, 340-342  
   - Experience, 333-349  
   - Mobilization and the UMBC, 342-344  
   - Riots, 2, 30, 96, 333, 347  
 Tiv Story: Myths and Realities, 354-364  
 Tivland, Violence in, 344  
 Tivs in Northern Nigeria, Colonial Riots of Domination, 334-340  
 TNCs, 323, 326  
 Ugbauka and Itumbauzo Conflicts, the Impacts of, 427-429  
 Karnami Gambari (Emir), 379, 384  
 United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 294  
 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 289  
 University of Ibadan, 14, 19  
 University of Ibadan Sports Council, 18  
 UNO, 27  
 UPN, 218, 219  
 Urhobos, 42  
 Urhobo Progressive Union, 44  
 USA, 93  
 Vicar, 21  
 Warri Crises, 40  
 Warri River, 42  
 Warri South West Local Government, 40  
 WAWA struggle, 30  
 Wealth, 148  
*West Africa Pilot*, 221  
 Western Educated Elite, the dominance of in Ilorin 386-398  
 Willinks Commission, 328  
 World Views, 32  
 World War II, 60  
 Writer, 16  
 Wusa, Ken Saro, 294  
 Yoruba, 2, 31, 91  
 YOUNSON, 260  
 YOUNBAS, 260