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**Migrant Groups and Inter-Group Relations in Tiv Society of
Central Nigeria: Pre to Post Colonial Era**

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Abstract

Societies and groups in Africa were mutually inter-dependent and coexisted as a whole in the pre-colonial era. This is contrary to Eurocentric views which regarded African societies as “tribes” which were isolated and antagonistic to each other in their co-existence. This paper shows that societies in Africa had series of network of relationship that bonded them to together. This existing pre-colonial network became the foundation upon which European imperialism by the 20th century wielded these Africans together into a common nationhood. This paper adopts the methodology of using oral traditions as well as archival sources in looking at the experience of the Tiv people and her neighbours, Jukun, Hausa and Alago of central Nigeria in their intergroup relationship from the colonial period to the post-colonial era.

Introduction

In the middle Benue valley or the geo-political area that is today known as central Nigeria was inhabited by several ethnic groups such as the Tiv, Jukun, Igbira, Alago and Idoma who had for age long, co-existed in a network of intergroup relations.

Trade and diplomacy formed the basic cornerstone of the inter-group relations between these ethnic groups from the pre-colonial era to the colonial period. The fact is that, no society is all-sufficient in what that society produces and thus, the inevitable need for inter-group relations. This paper explores the dynamics of inter-group relations overtime looking how certain variables, mostly trade, played in their relationship. The fact of inter-group relations does not annul the existence of conflict. Conflict is a normal process of any given relationship that exists in world history. The Tiv people of central Nigeria and their neighbours are not an exception to this rule.

Conceptual Issues

The concept of inter-groups relations implies that there is usually the existence of more than one or two group and usually what happens or follows is that there is exchange of relationship which may be political, social or economic. The concept implies a mutual world of inter-dependency in which no groups or single individual is all sufficient and all knowing. The concept of inter groups relations implies that no groups or individual is an Island and because of individual specific, limitation and short coming there is always an exchange of relationship in order to complement the shortfalls in our relationship. In economic towns, where there is economic specialization in the production of goods and services, there is also need for exchange of good and service thereby creating a world of inters dependency and mutual relationship. Either as an individual group or society, it is impossible to produce everything a society or individual needs and thus the need for inter-relationship.

The concept of inter-group relationship does not imply the absence of conflict or hostility. As a matter of fact, conflict and hostility are the integral part of a relationship. But the presence of hostility and conflict does not mark out the absence of diplomacy and negotiation in handling such differences and hostilities, Ayangaor (2002) pointed out the:

In the pre colonial days most of these ethnic groups were in fact autonomous communities or even independents politics. These ethnic groups related to each other on the basis of international relations marked by diplomacy war and economic and defence part.

The point is that war and diplomacy are important aspects, features and characteristic of relationship either at the individual level, group or social level. But it is important to examine the several arguments as to why conflict, hostility and even violence most at times characterizes inter-group relations. This discussion is important very crucial in the understanding of the impulses that have sharpen relationship positively or negatively between migrants and Tiv population. To scholars such as Robert Andrey (2002), social conflicts are a natural part of man's life

and existence. The study by Audrey was based on the territorial observation of animal behavior in their natural habitat. He observed that animals poses a pervasive instinct and naturally are predators. He further argued that there is the tendency for each animal, fish bird or insect to fight of intruders that come within what it considered the boundary of its own portion or territory. In other words, the natural instinct for self-preservation and the preservation of resources within the geographical conferment or each animal results to conflict. The theory pre-supposes that there is an inherent tendency by man to dominate his fellow man and hence conflict and wars. He agreed that natural instinct either to preserve or to dominate the other follow being explains the root cause of social conflict and antagonism. The short fall and limitation in the two theoretical approaches is the fact that both theories reduce man to a predator. It also negates the rational and logical instinct and intelligence of man to construct meaningful dialogue and relationship. The experiences of history shows that man made use of his rational capacities to workout way of peaceful coexisting with other human being within a particular territory regardless of conflict between the Tiv and Jukun for instance, the two ethnic groups has continued to co-exist in the Benue valley.

Social Darwinism is another theoretical perspective that attempts to explain why there are conflicts in the relationship. The theory, based on the Darwin theory of the survival of the fittest postulates that in the process of natural selection, the strongest of the strongest survive end the fittest of the fittest survived. The race for the acquisition of material wealth is seen as the game of survival in which only the strongest of the strongest dominates or survives. Social Darwinism when applied to the economic context means that commercial war and rivalry are only the product of social altruism places emphasis on man's predatory instinct in dominating his fellowman. This theoretical approach ignores other role that the rational mind can play in exchange of peaceful coexistence and relationship.

Despite the limitation of these theories, it is important to point out that commercial wars, invarlies and cutthroat competition are the manifestation and products of social activism and social Darwinism. Toyor (2002) on his discussion about the nature and character of capitalism argued that capitalism represents a state of unbridled competition, grabism, philistinism man eating predator and selfishness. These attributes of capitalism without doubt are the manifestation of social Darwinism. In the attempt to postulate the root cause of social crisis, Coser(2002) observed that a combination of factors that are social economic are the root cause of inter-group conflict and relationship.

Social conflict maybe defined as a struggle over values or claims to status power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the Conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to

neutralize, injury or eliminate their rivals. Such conflict may take place between individuals, between collectives, or between individual and collectives inter group and well as intra-group conflicts are primordial features of social life.

The emphasis here is that inter-group conflicts are the product of struggle over scarce resources or resources control or the struggle or the allocation of values and status. In other words, political competition and resources control is the root cause of inter group conflict.

Pre-colonial era: Intergroup Relations

Right from the pre-colonial period, inter-group relationship between the Tiv and Jukun who were basically in the Benue valley was characterized by hostility and as well as mutual dependency. Social conflict between the Tiv and the Jukun pivoted around the control of the scarce resources called land. The control of land, which both groups needed for the production of agricultural resources, formed the basis for the understanding of the Tiv-Jukun conflict. But despite the conflict over land, both groups entered into mutual relationship in the areas of economic and political ties. For instance, Tseror (1992) pointed out that despite the conflict between the Tiv and Jukun, at evening, a Tiv man could still cross over to the Jukun side in order to take a Calabash of Burukutu (Local brewed beer). The Jukun brewery industry greatly depended upon the supply of millet which was produced by the Tiv. This aspect of economic specialization fostered economic ties between the Tiv and Jukuns. The report from the national archival at Kaduna indicated that the Jukun political concept of Drum Chiefs (Tor Agbande) was important into Tar Tiv in order to cement political relationship between the two groups. Despite the occasional wars over the control of land resources, the Tiv and Jukun exchanged economic and political relationship. The two groups were mutually interwoven through the exchange of economic relationship and cultural ties. The ethnic groups coexisted side by side with each other for over a hundred years before the arrival European by the middle of the 19th C.

During the pre-colonial period, the Tiv people also entered into relationship with the Hausa. Relationship between these two groups was often characterized by hostility and as well as mutual relationship. The Hausa who so much depend upon the Tiv raided the Tiv population for slaves. The Tiv on the other hand resisted the Hausa aggression and enslavement but still depended on the Hausa for the procurement of items such as Horses, Spices, beads and swords. Despite the hostile nature of relationship that was characterized by war, the Tiv and Hausa mutually depended on each other and co-existed with each other in the Benue valley. It is important to note that the Jukuns, sometimes entered into major military and defence pact with the Tiv in warding, off the military aggression of the expanding Sokoto caliphate. The

defence pact between Tiv and Jukun provided the security bulwark that successfully checked the expansion of Islam in the Benue valley. Tiv-Jukun relationship promoted the mutual interest of both groups in truncating the expansion of Islam in the Benue valley.

The Colonial Era: Intergroup Relations

The colonial period opened up with the activities of European commercial firms on the river Benue and river Katsina. Trade relations between these competition firms was characterized by hostility, rivalry and cut throat competition. These commercial wars and wrangling on the river worked to the great advantage of the indigenous population. Indigenous groups such as the Tiv, Jukun and Hausa exploitation these rivalries by controlling the price mechanism of the trade. From the lessons learnt from commercial rivalry and cutthroat, Sir, Tolbman Gloldie bought over all the competition firms and amalgamated them into the United African Company. The emergence of the United African Company which was later christened the Royal Niger Company marked the age of British monopoly of trade in the Benue Valley.

Relationship between the Royal Niger Company and the indigenous population was often at times hostile and aggressive. A good example was the Abinsi crisis of 1906 in which the Jukun allied with their traditional allies the Tiv in the destruction of the Royal Niger stores at Abinsi. The attack on the commercial nerve center of the British in the Benue valley marked the formed beginning and expansion of British pacification and conquest of Tivland.

Iseichi (1976) pointed out that commercial relationship between Igbo traders and the Tiv was never cordial during the colonial period. In the emerging town of Southern Tivland such as Adipko and Vandeikya, Igbo traders were not welcomed by the Tiv. But the Tiv accepted Hausa traders in their markets. The refusal by the Tiv to accept the Igbo commercial class in their markets was based on the fact that Igbo traders ignored farming as an occupation and depend solely in trading. Hausa migrants to some extent embraced farming as an occupation. The Tiv population detested the idea of taking to trade as the sole occupation and relegating farming to the background. The Tiv, owing to cultural values and practices preferred the occupation of farming to that of trading. Iseichi observed that relationship between Igbo trader and the Tiv population was often hostile and aggressive. Despite this hostility, Tiv population had to depend on their Igbo neighbours for the supply of imported manufactured hard wares. Archival records are full of report that relationship between migrants and the Tiv people was often characterized by conflict and antagonism. In some of the markets treated along the line of the railway e.g Moi Igbo conflict occasionally broke out between the Tiv and the migrant settlers. National Archive Kaduna reports (1935) indicate that:

The 5th of October, was market day and a party of Tiv from Gandu, 5 miles south of Makurdi, joined with a party from Turan, 6 miles south of Akena with the intention of giving a dance at Moi Igbo market. On approaching Moi Igbo station about 1 pm, they began to sing and dance and because excited ... a mild affray then took place, the Tiv hurling stones from the truck and throwing lines at Dickson... The station master send for the Sarkin Hausawa, who eventually arrived with four Tiv senior and Sarkin Igbo...the Tiv senior, Sarkin Hausawa and Sarkin Igbo seeing this party so excited, though I am assured they had not drunk any intoxicating liquor decided to disband the market at once.

For most Tiv people, the market place is not entirely on economic or commercial center. The market also serves the purposes for the socialization and interaction of people that may not be necessary economic. For the migrant groups who were basically traders, seen a Tiv group that came out to party generated enough tension and fear as to the real motive of the party. But it is important to note, both groups, Tiv and the migrant settlers established administrative and diplomatic structures that could effectively resolve conflict and ensure peace. The archival report indicates that offices such as the Sarkin Hausawa and Sarkin Igbo were created to deal with such crisis and to handle disputed the council of Tiv elders in each emerging colonial town regulated peace and justice in order to secure for a peaceful - co-existence.

There were conflict between migrant groups and their Tiv neighbours that were anchored on the device to control and appropriate land along the railway tracks. According to a report from the National Archives Kaduna (1935):

At Moi Igbo station, there was the preserve of Hausa and Igbo migrant workers. There was also the apartment of Sarkin hausawa and Sarkin Igbo. From time to time hostility broke out as a result of ownership and controlling of land as well as default in the payment of services.

The decision of the colonial office to settle migrant workers in some land allotted to their attracted the wrath and the hostility of the Tiv population who came to regard such piece of land as belonging to the Tiv. Offer at times violent crisis brocket between the Tiv and migrant workers of the colonial service who make serious incursion into lands assured to be under the ownership of the Tiv. Default in the payment of service and the attempt to use law enforcement officers to recover such cases, migrants also were by the Tiv population. In some payment resulted into crisis. For instance, there was the case of an Igbo migrant worker who refused paying the services of a Tiv woman who supplied him firewood and other food stuffs. In any

affray that ensured violence broke out between migrant worker and Tiv population who viewed such an act as an affront on their culture and reputation.

The introduction of commercial sex prostitution by migrant worker into Tivland was a major colonial development that generated services conflict between the Tiv and migrant groups. The monetization of the marriage institution in Tivland had far adverse effects on the development of commercial sex-prostitution. Money becomes the new symbol of wealth a standard of exchange and the medium of payment of goods and services. For the Tiv women who mostly lacked money in order to live and survive in the emerging modern economy, prostitution becomes the most lucrative. Writing on this subject, Lamana (1997) commented that:

Then in personal relationship which is culture of town life is idea for prostitution. During the Second World War, many Tiv people were recruited to fight in Burma and other war theaters. Many of such people never come back leaving behind wives as widows. Such widows wanted to make a living but lacking any for male education or any means of dependency resorted to prostitution.

The fundamental root cause of prostitution could say to be poverty but the monetization of the economy which involved the commercialization of everything within the economy. The readiness and willingness to sale everything including sex is an important aspect and manifestation of a capitalist society.

After the Nigerian Civil War, the Igbo commercial class returned to Tivland and other parts of Nigeria in order to control economic and commerce power through the establishment of small scale business enterprises. The Igbo commercial class having lost into the political struggle to attain the dream of Biafara then resorted to the exchange of trade as a means of welding commercial and economic power. This in virtually every part of the country, Igbo commercial class extended the tentacles and the network system of their commercial enterprise to cover the entire nation. The aftermath of the civil War and the lessons derived from that war marked the genesis of the Igbo domination of the commercial and trading aspects of the nation's economy.

The commercial wars that the Igbo commercial class carried out in Tivland as from the post civil war period can only be understood in the context of the analysis that has been made above. These wars were a combination of the rising of ethnicity and the increasing competition for the resource control of the Nigerian state. To the Igbo commercial class, trade and commerce was another extension of the Nigerian war or the struggle to control the resources base of the nation.

The warlike attitude and posture by the Igbo commercial class to dominate the economy of Tivland has been the root cause of the frequent outburst of hostility

and crisis between the Tiv and Igbos. The Igbo – Tiv riots in Gboko can best be understood in the context of the politics and the struggle to control scarce resources. According to Eze Indi'Ibo, Makurdi in an oral interview (2002):

The civil war of 1967 spurred up Igbo enterprise because of the struggle for survival. Commercial enterprise becomes a game of survival of the fittest. The conflict between the Igbo and Tiv in Gboko is based on the fact that your natural enemy is the one with whom you compete with for the control of scarce resources.

The Gboko riots of the 1990s between the Tiv and Igbo, the Makurdi riots of 2001 between the Tiv and Jukun and the Gboko crisis of 2001 between the Tiv and Hausa were major manifestation of the politics of ethnicity and resources control. These wars were fought by the political and economic class in Tivland, Tiv, Igbo and Hausa, whose goal and objective was to achieve the control and the domination of the economy politics of Tivland. The political and economic class, whose conflicting interest resulted into war, resorted to the mobilization and the use of ethnicity and religion in the achievement of their selfish economic and political interest. In other words, the riots in Tivland were fought by the antagonistic class relations in Tivland in order to gain ascendancy over the other class. These riots have nothing to do with the relationship of the various ethnic groups in Tivland themselves. Often at time, it is the politicization of ethnicity by the political and economic class that results to war and crisis.

Another important aspect of inter-group relationship in Tivland has been the exchange of cultural values and development. For instance, Hausa language is a major of lingua franc in Tivland that is widely spoken all over Tivland even in the remotest villages. The name of several objects in Tivland today derives their origin from the contribution of the Hausa. For instance, the Tiv name for the rail line and train is drive from the Hausa word known as Dogo and Girigi. These are obviously Hausa terms. Also, there is a mass spread and usage of Hausa cultural costume and wears in Tivland. The caftan and the Agbada are among the popular costume in Tivland. The caftans and the Agbada are among the popular costumes in Tivland today introduced into the area by Hausa migrant. The name of important towns and settlements in Tivland today are derived from the Hausa and Jukun. The name Makurdi is of Hausa origin. The same is also for a Town like Katsina-Ala. Settlement area in Makurdi town such as Wurukum and Wadata are of Jukun origin. The name for the town of Abinsi is of Jukun origin. In recent time, Islam is fast becoming the growing religion in Tivland next to the spread of Christianity. These and many others more are the major cultural contribution of migrants to the development of Tivland.

Conclusion

No society in world history existed as an Island. In several ways, the Tiv and her neighbours exchanged different levels of relationship at the levels of trade and diplomacy. European intervention as from the 20th century further widened the scope of the existing relationship that dates back to the pre-colonial era. As earlier on stated, this provided the framework for the fusing together of the diverse ethnic elements into a common nation-state called Nigeria. The fact is that, the bonds of trade that holds the difference ethnic groups together are stronger than whatever sentiment to divide these ethnic groups. Nations in Africa were not just the accidental product of the fusion of European imperialism but such networks had always existed through inter-group relations as far back as the beginning of history in Central Nigeria.

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