



“Inter-Group Relations and Sustenance of Peace in Northern Nigeria”: Igbo and Yoruba Communities in Sokoto Metropolis

Shehu Hashimu

Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto

ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 020617016

Type: Review Article

Submitted: 06/02/2019

Accepted: 09/02/2019

Published: 22/12/2019

***Corresponding Author**

Shehu Hashimu

E-mail: shehuhashimu67@gmail.com

Phone: +2348064441477

ABSTRACT

The historiography of Northern Nigerian cities in contemporary times has reveal contributions and continued impacts of migrant communities (settlers as the case may be) to their developments of host community. No group can be treated in isolation of the other. The fact is that neither possible nor realistic for any community to ignore the imperative of its neighbors. The socio-economic development of any given society depend solely on the existence and relationship with the others, whether friendly or hostile (i.e. in a peaceful or conflict manner). It is against this background that this paper intended to examine the conceptual issue of inter-group relation. In this paper, an attempt was made in Sokoto being the center of learning of the Caliphate why it accommodates mass movement of varying geographical ethnic groups in the city. The good relationship and peaceful co- exist among settlers and host is part of the deep discussion of the paper.

Keywords: Inter-Group Relation;
Sustenance of Peace; Igbo;
Yoruba; Sokoto Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

Northern Nigeria in Perspectives

Varying works have been studied about migrant communities in the Northern Nigeria. However, issue of migration and migrant community is considering the complexity of the Nigerian society giving its multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural nature (Walter, 1968), (Ahmad, 2001). The fact is that country's situation appears to be more difficult than in

recent times when its multi-ethnic threatened the very fabric its existence as manifested in the series of ethnic related violence, religious intolerance and growing emphasis on indigenes-settlers dichotomy (Paper, 2004). Even in the areas where these differences are not amply pronounced, it would be foolhardily to assume that they are not there. This quite clearly applied to many migrant communities in Northern Nigeria notwithstanding the array of cultural similarities and unhindered access to a speedy integration with the hosts (Egbefo, 2015).

Likewise the advent of colonialism and its aftermath in northern Nigeria have altered not only the population composition of most Northern cities but also their historiography. This is partly due to the advent of colonial activities, western education, and colonial economy, infrastructures such as rail way, vehicular trunk road and partly due to an influx of new waves of migrants from the Southern part of the country. These groups of new migrants came primary to render basic services to the colonial economy and were dully encouraged by it (Ahmad Bako, 2004). This not only altered the population of most northern Nigerian cities but equally influenced the writing of their histories in contemporary time.

The Conceptual Issues on Inter-Group Relations

A group relation is vital issues because it implies cooperation between different states, communities, organization and society in particular. This could take the form of trade, diplomatic ties, and management of trade routes, boundaries, water resources as well as wars (Falola, 1989). The concept of inter-group relation has been examine by social psychologists, sociologist and historians as "states of friendship or hospitality, cooperation or competition, dominance or subordination, alliance or enmity, peace or war between two or more groups and their respective members (Lohor, 1998), (Egbefo, 2015). According to Afigbo (1980), explained that intergroup relations presupposes contact and interaction group each of which has an identity, to make some inputs into the

relationship, in short , each of which has some scope and area of autonomous action. Intergroup relation is regarded as social phenomenon which entails contact and interactions between groups, and between people or individual in the society (Afigbo, 1980). The conceptualization of intergroup relation is also observed by Lohor (1998) as interactions which take place between members of different groups and societies who come in contact with one another. An intergroup relation reflects human actions which are also part of the process of existence channeled towards economic, political and social development (Egbefo, 2015), (Lohor, 1998).

Issues of intergroup relation have assumed prominence in the contemporary history of Northern Nigeria state in general. Equally, the contemporary history of Nigeria ever since independence from colonial shackles, are replete with a number of challenges, challenging which bordered on the quest for nation building, mutual co-operation and trust across ethnic divides. The experience in the last couple of years has been most daunting especially in spheres of economic, religious and social relations (Paper, 2001), primordial forces and interests have cropped up such as to threaten the corporate existence to the national unity and many agreed that the need to foster national unity and social integration has become imperative (Nda, 2005). In Northern Nigeria, for

instance, there was what refer to as 'cultural cross fertilization'. In this case religions and linguistic factors were used by the people to harmonious relation. The argument here was that intergroup relations were facilitate by number of elements such as differences in natural endowment relative economic advantages, diplomatic relations, marriages tied and emigration (Odey, 2005).

The Metropolis of Sokoto Caliphate and Influx of Migrant Communities

The metropolitan city of Sokoto was believed to be founded by Muhammadu Bello in 1809 as a new military base for the Jihad war, although Sokoto was in existence before 1809 but insignificant, before Bello turned it into the center of planning Jihad wars (Sale, 1983). But the position of Sokoto as the capital of the Caliphate facilitated its development as a leading center of Islamic education in West Africa in the 19th century (Adamu, 2004). The city of Sokoto had certainly received the attention of many migrant communities. This is the fact that Sokoto Caliphate has been a booster to the economics of Hausa land, a promoter of education and cleanser of the society. Above all, it has strengthened the position of Islam as the state religion in the country (Nigeria) and as the dominant culture of the people (Adamu, 2004). Many studies have showed that Sokoto as capital of Caliphate witness mass influx of migration of various ethnic groups that include Wangarawa, Nupawa, Adarawa, Kambarin-Bare-bari, Igbo, Tiv and Yoruba among other (Oparanozie, 1988), (Temple, 1965).

By the middle of the 19th century Sokoto became focus of inter-regional trade in Agricultural products, live-stock and cotton goods supporting urban rural networks conveying into city. However, urbanization in the central Sudan was seen as another social development which had also received a bid boost as a result of the establishment of Sokoto caliphate. Urbanization was already on established feature of life in the territory and in the 19th century there was a tremendous increase in it. Very many new towns were established and numerous villages were enlarging all to serve as centers of new emirate and district administration, and also as centres of commerce. Some towns began as frontiers defense posts of the Sokoto Caliphate and later developed into administrative centre. Large scale of migration was part of the outcome of the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. It is on record that in the 19th century people move en mass in Hausa land either because of military defeats when large cities and big villages were sacked, or on account of people wishing to be near centres of stable Caliphate administration (Adamu, 2004) (Walter S. , 1965).

What should be noted about these waves of migration from Hausa land was that they were not cases of forced migration. In most cases people left on their own because new job opportunities as Government officers, as teachers, as traders, as craftsmen (particularly textile and mental workers), as service people, as musician and entertainers, and as soldier of

fortune become opened up as the Caliphate expended West ward and South ward. While in some instances, other it was stimulated by considerations, such as the desire to escape from the restricting nature of traditional African society, yet others it was induced by the policies of the colonial power (Crowder, 1978). An important statement to be noted about migrations in connection with the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century was both immigration and emigration out of Hausa land was served as powerful agents in the spread of the Hausa culture in the central Sudan. However those who came in and settled in the Hausa towns and villages quickly began to use Hausa Language and dress and were easily assimilated into Hausa society (Muh'd, 2004) (Adamu, 2004).

The Host and Settlers Communities Sustenance of Peace Relations in Sokoto Metropolis

Sokoto People and Igbo Community Relations

History revealed to us that Igbo migration in Sokoto was occasioned by many factors i.e. Search for Job and economic prospect. The opportunity to trade in the North was taken advantage by the Igbo-speaking people in the early 1920s, more especially the conquest of Sokoto Caliphate in 1903 and with the completion railway line to the north. Before the colonial era, Igbo people had been faced with the problem of land Scarcity due to poor nature of their land which made Agricultural activities very difficult. With the opening up of the north by the British, many Igbo people took to long-distance trading, which most of them heading for the north and settling in places like Kano, Sokoto and Katsina (Oparanzie, 1988), (Ahmad Bako, 2004), (Isaac, 1999). One remarkable of this relation was commercial intercourse between the Igbo and the host community of Sokoto started even before the imposition of colonial economy. The earliest commercial transactions between the social groups was based on cattle and horse which were in great needed in Igbo land because of their vital value in rituals rites, and other ceremonies. Hides and skin production in Sokoto played significant role in aiding this relation (Fabian, 2005).

The Igbo people were commercially oriented and were believed to be the reason why they dominated some major areas in entrepreneurship activities of spare-parts and business centers in metropolitan city of Sokoto could be envisaged (Fabian, 2005), (Ahmad Bako, 2004). The spare parts entrepreneurs of Igbo extraction have maintained good social relations not with the spare parts entrepreneurs from other ethnic groups but with the host community. The Sahara area was popularly known as the centre of Spare part selling point in Sokoto metropolis. The key element that binds this relation was the ability of Igbo people to learn the Hausa language, communicate and transact with it. This no doubt promotes mutual understanding and group co-operation. Economic attraction provide the impetus due its network of contact, thereby establishing commercial centers such as Emir Yahaya road, Bello

way, Rijija, Hajiya Halima estate, Rijija and Aliyu Jodi among others where all being dominated by Igbos' commercial activities which include the sale of wears, shoes, building materials paints, electrical installation, business centers, internet café, stationeries store, bookshops and sales of handset (GSM) accessories and because of the starling qualities of understanding demonstrate among themselves, the Igbo were able to established their settlements in places like Sahara area, Emir Yahaya, Old-Air port, Kwannawa, Bello way, Tamaje area, Damduwa area, Abdullahi Fodio road, Hajiya Halima estate and Nakasare area as well.

Other issues that strengthened and promote this peaceful relationship between Sokoto people and the Igbo settlers' community was in the field of apprenticeship. Sources have indicated that some Sokoto indigenes were trained and graduated by the Igbos entrepreneurs. Among the notable Igbo who contribute in the future of Sokoto indigenes through apprenticeship were Ndibisi, Skidoo, Dom-dom, Baban-Naira, Benbross and Emeka Obi among others (Zizi, 2013).

Sokoto People and Yoruba Community Relation

Yoruba migrant community in northern Nigeria is better understood within the historical context of the respective host communities and indeed the entire history of northern Nigeria as a whole. It is equally important to examine the interaction of resources and opportunities in order to understand the dynamics of Yoruba commerce in northern Nigeria. There are four factors which facilitate Yoruba migration in northern Nigeria: First, according to Islamic tradition, the Yoruba were regarded as brothers and sisters of the Hausa people because the majority of Yoruba migrants were Muslims. These suggest why some Yoruba have been assimilated into Hausa culture or enjoy accommodation. Second, economically, they were hard working in terms of their technical skills, productivity and quality of work delivery. Third, the Yoruba shared myth of origin with the Kanuri. Oral tradition in Borno has it that the "Yoruba and Kanuri were cousins. In normal circumstances migrant communities construct identities that distinguished them from the host community. The identity could be expressed in terms of settlement patterns; social, religious, political and economic institutions (Rasheed, 2015) From the Eades perspective articulates four main types of migration among the Yoruba, which influence the formation of Diaspora communities. These were analysed according to occupational categories. First, there were the unskilled labor migrants of the colonial period, looking for work on the cocoa farms or in larger towns. Second, there were migrant farmers looking for suitable land, especially for planting cocoa. Third, there were long distance migrants, many of them traders. Trading Diaspora was particularly a common commercial orientation in the savanna towns of Yoruba land. Fourth, there was the migration of the younger educated people to the urban centres, especially since the rapid expansion of education in the 1950s (Eades, 1980).

The advent of Yoruba community in Northern Nigeria and in particular Sokoto city was partly because

of the collapsed of the old Oyo and replaced with Ilorin, Ibadan, Ogbomosho and Abeokuta in mid 19th century (Titilayo, 1980). However during the colonial era, there had been handful Yoruba traders and other skill workers who accompanied European after the demised of Sokoto Caliphate serving as clerks, cooks and interpreters. Within a very short period of their coming they were able to conquer large areas in commercial enterprises. The most important commodities brought by the Yoruba traders were mostly Kola nuts, Salt and Bananas which exchanged with livestock, hides and skins, onion and pepper. This is the fact that apart from trade also Yoruba introduced and dominated most of the modern technical and service industries: painting, transport, Bakery, photograph, pool and hotel. They also specialized in profession such as motor and machine repairs, repairs of radio, television, video , refrigerator, air-condition, fan and other electrical works (Usman, 2005). In the context of the 20th century Sokoto was among Northern cities in Nigeria that have equally been important centers of ethnic and cultural contact, as well as ethnic interaction and assimilation (Isaac, 1999) (Usman, 2005). A strong cordial relation has been established between Sokoto people and the Yoruba settler community. This is because the Yoruba were able to learn the Hausa Language and this facilitate assimilation and as result of their long period of settlement and interaction some Yoruba have become Hausanised completely (Usman, 2005). Understanding the language of host is not the only element that bind this relation but apprenticeship. The Yoruba also trained Sokoto indigene the art of technical skills and vocational training in the field of Vehicles repairing (at mechanic village, Sahara area, Zoo lay area, Illela-garage and Zanga-zanga area), printing production, welding and electrical appliances. Among popular Yoruba settlements in the Sokoto city include Kalhu area, Illela-garage, Bello way, Shagon-goro, Tudun-wada, Sokoto Cinema, Marafa-danbaba as well as sabon-gari area.

The existence of the Yoruba in northern Nigeria has implications for national development. Yoruba lived with other ethnic groups and exhibited the capacity for ethnic tolerance and religious pluralism in northern Nigeria. The migrants pursued and secured economic livelihoods that contributed to the development of the host and home communities. The entrepreneurial drives of the Yoruba merchants enabled them to recruit labour from their kinship network for the expansion of their commercial base but such strategy often prevents capital accumulation on a large scale. Kinship network of extended family was a major strategy in the provision of employment, training and capital that ensured the preponderance of Yoruba commerce in northern Nigeria. Some integrated with the host communities. Integration involved both the Yoruba immigrants and the host communities achieving a degree of convergence. The integration of second-generation Yoruba migrants was largely conditioned by how their parents identified and traced their background. These has been exhibited in costume and the spoken patterns of the Yoruba in Diaspora who felt at ease communicating in Hausa, Nupe and Kanuri or mixed the languages together with Yoruba. The central question is not whether the second generation assimilated into Hausa society, but into what

segment of that society it assimilated. Many of the descendants of early migrants have integrated into the Hausa society and became members of the political, intellectual, military and commercial elites. Others used their integration into Hausa to benefit from scholarships; employment and promotion opportunities but despised their Yoruba ancestry. Those who maintained their Yoruba identity in Diaspora often ended up as 'marginal citizens' without the right to lay claim to the community where they were born and grew up or their home origin where they were less known. Among the last group, however, were those who contested elections and won as representatives of the communities where they lived, particularly, at the local government levels (Rasheed, 2015).

Yoruba and Igbo Relation in the Sokoto City

The two settler communities have enjoyed long lasting relation among themselves. They lived peacefully without course for alarm. The Igbo are more traders unlike it counterpart Yoruba who specialized in technician and service industries. There was no available record on the conflict arose from them in city. They provide enabling environment transformed peace loving society at midst of host. However both Igbo and Yoruba lived in the same residence thereby forming a forum of community development in most area they live.

CONCLUSION

Toward Achieving Greater Unity

It is beyond doubt Sokoto remained the most peaceful state in Northern Nigeria considering over the decade there are occurrences of communal conflicts, ethno-religious violence and political upheaval that manifest in various forms and are accompanied by ferociousness and destructiveness especially recurrent crisis that engulfed Bauchi, Taraba, Kano, Maduguri, Jos and Kaduna mayhem (Rotimi, 1996). Since the end of the Civil war in 1970s peace started to evolved and rains not only in the capital city of Sokoto but through Northern Nigerian cities. The last conflicts that the city of Sokoto experience and engulfed the entire metropolis very destructive was during the coronation of the 18th Sultan of Sokoto Caliphate Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki in 1988. That was the period that the city experience sober-sided destruction of life and properties worth million of naira. Since then both the settlers and Sokoto people remained in peace and harmony without confronting one another, and even when the conflict broke out in 2005 to 2007 were intra-religious conflicts between Shiite movement and Sunni groups and it does not seriously affected any settler communities unless those settlers are among either group (i.e Sunni or Shiite) (Shehu, 2015).

For any society to progressively integrated socially and economically there must be the application of element of peace and unity as a whole. These elements are very crucial and of great concern not only to individual but to everyone in the community at large.

As a society to forge peace there must be the art of tolerant and kindness which demands understanding of individual or groups differences in socio-cultural setting. This arts of tolerance and kindness that married both settlers and Sokoto people consider being the state of general agreement and focusing for common good. Moreover, coming togetherness as one, transformed the Sokoto city to a new business front-line. The fact is that apprenticeship provided by Igbo and Yoruba believed the training aided the reduction of restiveness among the teeming youth in the city (Abubakar, 1984). The settler communities contributed not only socio-economy aspect of it, but also in the state politics as some become councilor (for example Okereke an Igbo man who become councilor in Sokoto south local government area in 1999), while some served as commissioners and special advisers in the state. This development could not only be achieved without government efforts in maintaining stable security and sustainable development in the state.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, S. (1984). *The Development of Business Enterprise and its Impact on the people and Society: A case Study of Sokoto Town. B.A. History.* Sokoto: UDUS.
- Adamu, M. (2004). Some Economic and Social Developments in the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th Century. *Bicentenary Seminar Paper.* Abuja: Shehu Musa Yar Adua.
- Afigbo, A. (1980). "Economic Foundations of Colonial Igbo Society". In I.A. Akinjogbin & S.O. Osoba (eds), *Topic on Nigerian Economic and Social History* (pp. 1-18). Ile Ife: University of Ile Ife Press.
- Ahmad Bako. (2004). Igbo Entrepreneurship in Sokoto City 1937-2000,. *Journal of Business And Social Sciences* , 182.
- Ahmad, B. (2001). A Note on the Activities of Igbo Migrants in Kano during the Colonial Era, *DEGEL Journal of FAIS, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto* , 62.
- Crowder, M. (1978). *West Africa Under Colonial Rule.* London: London.
- Eades, J. (1980). *The Yoruba Today.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Egbefo, D. (2015). Aspect of Intergroup Relations in 21st Century Nigeria; Emblem of Ethnicity, Relations Fundamentalism and National Security Crisis 2000-2014. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* , 67-68.
- Fabian, N. (2005). Igbo Spare Parts Entrepreneurs in Metropolitan Kano: A Model for Intergroup Co-operation in Aplura Society 1970-2001 A.D. *Paper Presented At the First National Conference Organized by Department of History* (pp. 1-2). Keffi: Nasaraw State University.
- Falola, T. U. (1989). *History of Nigeria I: Nigeria before 1800 AD.* Lagos: Longman.
- Isaac, O. (1999). "Inter-Regional Migrations, Urban Multi-Culturalism and Mixed Court" System in Colonial Northern Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Economic History* .
- Lohor, S. (1998). The Chadic politics of Jos, Plateau and their neighbours: A study of Intergroup relations among Jos Plateau. In M. & In Sheriff, *Social Psychology.* (pp. 200-214). Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, U.A.
- Muh'd, A. (2004). Some Economic and Social Developments in the Sokoto Caliphate in 19th Century. *A Bicentenary Seminar Paper* (p. 9). Abuja: Shehu Musa Yar Adua Center.
- Nda, I. (2005). *Nigeria, Full Disclosures,.* Abuja: Media Trust Publishers.
- Odey, M. (2005). Land / Boundary Dispute in Benue Valley since 1999: An Aspect of Intergroup Relations in Central Nigeria. A paper being Delivered at the . *National Conference on Intergroup Relation in the 20th Century* (pp. 4-6). Nasarawa: Nasaraw State University Keffi.
- Oparanozie, C. (1988). *The Role of diaspora Community in the Socio-Economic Development of Sokoto Metropolis: A Case study of the Igbo 1970-1979. B.A Project History.* Sokoto: UDUS.
- Paper, W. T. (2001, May). 7 (22).
- Paper, W. T. (2004). Kaduna: Weekly Trust News Paper.
- Rasheed, O. (2015). Approaching the Study of Yoruba Diaspora in Northern Nigeria in the 20th Century. *IFKA Special Research Issue* , 67-89.
- Rotimi, T. (1996). *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Sale, A. (1983). *"Birnin Shehu": The City of Sakkwato, A Social And Economic History.* PhD Thesis. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
- Shehu, H. (2015). *Intra-Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria: An Assessment of "Shi'ah" versus "Sunni" Clash in Sokoto Metropolis from 2005 to 2007.* Sokoto: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Temple, C. (1965). *Notes on Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Province of Nigeria.* Frankcass & Co Ltd.
- Titilayo, O. (1980). *The Evolution of Migrant Community: The Ogbomosho in Sokoto Town Since Independent.* B.A. His Project. Sokoto: UDUS.
- Usman, A. (2005). Inter-ethnic Contact in Nigerian Cities: Some Remarks on Yoruba-Hausa Relation in Gusau during 20th Century. Paper presented at the 1st National Conference Organized by the Department of the 1st National Conference. Keffi: Nasarawa State University.
- Walter, S. (1968). *Nigeria praeger.* New York: New York.
- Walter, S. (1965). *Urbanization and Migration in West Africa.* New york: New york.
- Zizi, A. (2013, December 10th). Entrepreneurship development in the community of Emir Yaha area, Sokoto. (H. Shehu, Interviewer).