



THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL CHIEFTAINSHIP IN PEACE BUILDING AND CURBING FARMERS/HERDSMEN CONFLICT IN THE NORTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE

BY

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RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION

We declare that the information given in this work is to the best of our knowledge correct and that we have strictly adhered to the necessary ethics in the conduct of this study. All funds released to us have been judiciously utilized and we do undertake responsibility for the conduct of the study

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the traditional avenue for reconciliatory mediation that truly assuages rancor, it is ironical to note the depth of damages that take place during Farmer/Herdsman conflict such as that of Zango/Kataf, Mango/Bokkos, Tiv/Jukun, Aguleri/Umulera and even Ife/Modakeke. This paper therefore interrogates the decline of the traditional chieftaincy institution unlike that of modern courts in the provision of social order and conflict resolution. It takes a look at the recent violence re-enacted among the farmers/herdsmen in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State. The survey research method was adopted with sample size of 400 respondents. The 400 respondents were administered questionnaire through the accidental and purposive sampling technique across the 38 wards in the Senatorial District. In addition, an in-depth interview was conducted on 100 residents of the area. The findings show a deep leaning towards ethnic national divide that can only be controlled through formal responsibility of our chieftainship, and accountability of same.

KEYWORDS: Chieftainship, State Mediator Agents, Ethnic Conflicts, Peace Building.

Introduction

From the oldest pre-civilization period, and throughout the entire history of civilization, children were raised chiefly among blood relations, irrespective of the different forms of marital relations involved. This environment was the most substantial prerequisite created by man to foster human kindness, compassion, pity, sincerity, mutual love, humanism, desire for mutual assistance, self-sacrifice, and feeling of togetherness involving socially fruitful enterprise. Naturally, there were always numerous exceptions. But primarily, the family (in its different forms) moulds men in the humanistic spirit. Different social systems, especially private ownership, always introduced a destructive element into the family's educative influence. And yet, that element was for a long time insignificant owing to the relatively low economic development of the self.

Substantial changes began together with accelerated progress of intensive economic development with the development of the capitalist formation, and with the society craving for personal wealth. With development of capitalism, people's thinking patterns essentially changed to destroy customs and moral norms. In well-to-do families, materials independence increased with female emancipation.

The chieftaincy institution is one of leadership in the traditional societies which may be attained through heredity or by turn. This kind of political leadership metes out a stewardship to its people through upholding the beliefs, customs, norms, values and maintenance of social order and stability among the membership of the group of people. Although, there is a growing interface between the prosperity and opposition of the chieftaincy institution, it is an expression of the dynamics of culture change. For instance, during the long years of military government in Nigeria, traditional rulers largely had a preserve of their status, except for a major change in 1967-68 when their powers over judicial affairs were significantly reduced. However, with the reintroduction of Democracy in 1999, and the need to establish a more sustaining constitutional framework for peace building, the importance of traditional rulers has come again to the fore. Although, as the traditional ruler ship have evolved and flourished, so has its opposition especially in the Northern Nigeria where the tendency for people to divide into sects has been noted from the 1970s onward with an obvious characteristic of the new groupings to challenge the Oder of Emirs and brotherhood.

Thus, there is an interface between the prosperity and opposition of the institution of chieftaincy ruler-ship, especially as recent concerns about the role of Islam in worldwide political instability calls for a current review of the status and role of traditional rulers and their role in peace making and conflict resolution for their relevance to Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The area of conflict resolution is now largely dependent on the western institutions of little or no input from the traditional institutions. Some of the western institutions used in resolution of conflict are the courts, the military and police, panels of inquiry among others. However, these strategies for resolving dispute or conflicts have been known to have usually recorded short comings especially when the event involves riots and civil disturbances like that of Aba women riot of 1929.

Green (1947) noted that the colonial government deployed the military as usual in response to quelling the Aba women riot to the embarrassment of the whole world. In the post colonial Nigeria the case has degenerated entirely. The response to civil disorder in Nigeria has been quite disturbing following the enormity in the recurrence of violence confrontations which is accompanied loss of lives, desecration and destruction of properties. Moreover, when a commission of enquiry as a matter of state apparatus is instituted to chat a way for the resolution of a particular crisis, it usually sit for very long time with an attendant high cost. In addition, when the report is eventually produced, it may be swept under the carpet or distorted. It goes to disabuse one's mind that the bases of most of the crisis are ethnic or religious. Thus, the mechanism of checks and balances as a formal institution traditionally thought to regulate the activities of leaders among a population has remained rather weak (Beattie, 1967).

Although, the level of the check and balances and accountability differ widely from place to place, the feature in Nigeria is obviously not comparable with those of many African countries. For instance, the checks and balances among the Ashanti of Ghana, the Lesotho, the Tswana of Botswana, and the Uganda were better constitutionally defined with council of elders, religious leaders, and administrative staff of the chiefs keeping the modern leaders accountable (Coplan, 1997). Thus, it is an aberration that the inadequate positioning of traditional leaders in conflict resolution is what leads to the deadly conflicts as that of mile 12 in Kosofe local Government Area of Lagos State between Hausas and Yorubas. It was with a lot of bloodshed and wonton destruction of life and properties occurring in 2012 barely a decade away from an earlier carnage in the same area. The lack of formal institution for checks and balances in Nigeria chieftainship is in-spite of the minimum standard already existing in the administrative structure of the Ashanti of Ghana, where lineage, villages are allowed to manage their own affairs including settling of disputes through arbitration by elders (Busia, 1968). Other notable ethnic and religious crisis of contemporary interest in Nigeria include those of the Zango and Kataf 1980; mango and Bokkos feud in Plateau State, 1992 and 1995, Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State 1995 and 1999, Ife and Modakeke 2000, Armbandit, rape and kidnapping, farmers/herdsmen conflict among others cutting across the country.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the extent to which the traditional chieftaincy institutions has been explored for the resolution of farmers/herdsmen conflict in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State.
2. To determine the acceptability of decisions made by the traditional and modern institutions respectively in past disputes in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State.
3. To determine the challenges those are faced by the chieftaincy institution in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Research questions

1. To what extent has the traditional chieftaincy institutions been explored for the resolution of farmers/herdsmen conflict in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State?
2. To what extent the acceptability of decisions made by the traditional and modern institutions respectively in past disputes in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State?
3. Are there challenges faced by the chieftaincy institution in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Literature review

Perrot and Fauvelle Aymar (2003) observed that a recent review of the situation in other countries of the West Africa has found that there has been resurgence on the prestige of chiefs in the neighboring countries. This is interesting to learn in spite of the ideological reasons given for the elimination of their authorities such as being backward looking and subservient to the colonialist. This negative aspect of the features of the chiefs was so that, Miller (1968) noted that Tanzania passed a law that relieved the traditional rulers of their authority. Even the Convention People's Party in Ghana which was the contemporary of the National Convention of Nigeria citizens in Nigeria wrestled authority of chiefs in Ghana (Brempong, 2001).

However, it is appreciable that resurgence in the chieftaincy authority is likely, as it is a function of the enduring ethnic identity. Thus, it is little wonder that the size and population of Nigeria at the beginning of the colonial era and even during the military regimes has an influence on the prominence of chieftainship.

As it happens, that contingencies of history were already reframing academic interest in traditional rulers and institutions. In the early 1950s of Nigeria, the native authorities were developed as agencies of democratic local government to be integrated into a parliamentary system of government (Yahaya, 1980). This system was designed to meet the aspirations of emerging regional elites and the new political parties they were joining. In the process, the authority of traditional rulers was seriously undermined. The wonder literature on traditional rulers and their institutions reflected the same set of political processes where post-war analyses of chieftaincy structures were initially dominated by the now largely discredited mid-century modernization paradigm. Premised on positivist and evolutionary assumptions, these earlier studies of the nation-state project predicted the imminent demise of chieftaincy structures in African politics.

Moreover, analyses in the context of third world decolonization, the Cold War, and global capitalism, got modernization theorist to emphasize the erosion of chieftaincy power in the post-colonial African state. These dominant post-war social science perspectives drew heavily from Max Weber's notion that power is legitimate only when the political community expresses voluntary consent. However, this erroneous conceptualization is based on the assumption that rational human behavior is best mediated by the agencies of the modern state and civil society.

Arguably, indigenous African state structures were widely held to be dysfunctional in this post war political context as modernization theorists contend that their marginalization is an essential precondition for the sociopolitical and economic development of African States (Vaughan, 2000). However, the modernization paradigm of international economic development received a battering from the neo-Marxist dependency theorists in the 1970s and

1980s. Even the dependency paradigm was noted by Vaughan (2000) as a radical alternative to modernization theory but was equally short-sighted as it was preoccupied with the advance of global capitalism, the marginality of third world economies, and the role of comprador classes in the economies of new states leaving out the critical role that indigenous structures, most notably the traditional institutions might play in the transformation of African states.

Nevertheless, it is evident with Whitaker (1970) and Yahaya (1980) and others, as used in their case studies that these traditional structures remained resilient and in many respects competitive with the modern state. Thus, when analysts turned to interrogate the legitimacy of failing African states in the 1980s and 1990s, most of them continued to employ notions of governance and civil society that were based on western models and paid little attention to the possible relevance of the traditional political institutions.

Nevertheless, the on-going political significance of traditional structures does attract the attention of some political scientists working in Nigeria. For example, Miles (1987) picked up on earlier studies and argued that Hausa chieftains in both Nigeria and Niger had been co-opted by the nation-state and owed their survival and continuing legitimacy to this source rather than to traditional royalties. Thus, there was a duality in government that was only to serve the initiative of the colonial government.

However, Sklar (1993:2003) noted in particular a concept of mixed government which described the dualism and symbiotic relationship between traditional and state-derived institutions that characterizes government. It argues that the durability of traditional authority in Africa cannot be explained away as a relic of colonial rule. Instead, it emphasizes the role of local initiative as African agency in the construction of colonial institutions, and largely responsible for the adaptation of traditional authorities to modern systems of government and the legitimacy they continue to enjoy among ordinary people.

The traditional authority was mediatory in the virtual conflict between the government and the people. It is along this line for instance, that Nwoye (2011) noted that 'Chieftaincy titles among the Igbo constitute a form of reward or social control designed to support acceptable norms and values by rewarding those who have upheld them. Such titles or rewards make the recipients advisers to the political leadership of the village'.

Research methods

The research design adopted in this study was the survey. This method is necessary to enable a full coverage of the issues and ideas around the study. Though representation of the population is of germane consideration, much more is the intent to explore all the categories of issues in the conflict, even to their less popular ones since the study is focused on the role and the usability of the Traditional Chieftainship and not judgmental. This was so, for it was a research on such issue as may be considered security risk. Thus, the accidental and purposive sampling methods were adopted in the research. However, the sampling frame for the study was adapted along the existing 5 Local Government Area. In this Local Government Area, the population of study is 665,393 (2006 National Population Census), and from this population a sample size of 400 was targeted with 80 samples from each of the 5 Local Government Areas. This ensured that every willing eye witness who was ready to participate and were given a chance, until the number of participant in a ward is completed. The administration of the questionnaires was carried out by 10 research assistants. In the bid to get inventory of all the varying and diverse opinion on the conflicting situation, the research assistants were trained and they employ other convenient means of safe and reliable data collection including employing translation assistants where respondents cannot write and

speak only their native language. Thus, the structured interview session for one respondent lasted for between 30 minutes to 1hr, and the 100 samples in each ward lasted for 2 to 4 days. There were 3 categories of questions in the interview sessions (i.e) pre-interview or oral question, demographic questions, and thematic questions. The pre-interview question is oral (i.e) did you witness the 2012, January Yala/Herdsmen conflict? This determines either or not the individual would be a respondent. The demographic questions are included in the structured questionnaires (i.e) what is your age bracket, sex, marital status, and education. Finally, the thematic questions were on the efficiency of the kinds of intervention that were meted on the conflicts in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State. These measures were used to asking the respondents (1) to identify the cause of conflict in the area, (2) to identify the mode of resolution of conflict in the area, (3) to indicate the level of obedience given to the decision of the traditional chieftains as against that of modern institution, and finally, the competence of the chieftaincy personality is measured by their level of relevance to the society. The qualitative perspective of the study was undertaken through the in-depth interview of a total of 9 respondents that were evenly drawn from the 3 dominant ethnic groups in the area (i.e) Yala, Boki/Fulani and evenly distributed among the 3 major troubled spots (i.e) Yala, Bekwarra and Ikom.

Data analysis

Research question one

The result of the survey research sample of 396 out of the four hundred (400) that was administered to respondent, while the remaining 4 questionnaire constituting 1% was nullified on grounds of abandonment by respondent or for illegible responses. 78% of the respondents were able to affirm the presence of acceptable chiefs in their various communities. The conflicting communities were the indigene of the areas and the Fulani herdsmen.

On the cause of the conflict 76% of the respondents are of view that the crises broke out when one farmer shot and killed two herdsmen cattle eating and destroying his crops in the farm. On seeing his dead cattles, the Fulani rushed to their camp and mobilized his kinsmen who traced the farmer to his farm and trashed him to coma. On seeing the village man in a state of coma, the villagers moved in for a reprisal attack which resulted to a conflict that led to the destruction of both parties' properties worth millions of naira.

68% of the respondents were of the opinion that all attempts by the police, army and anti riot squad could not succeed in quelling the riot. It was through the effort of the community chief and elder and the Fulani Saraki that was able to curb the riot.

The result of the thematic oral interview that, the chieftainship council is well equipped with the norms and culture of their people enough to broker a lasting peace and successful conflict resolution.

The implication is that, the community chief is in better position to resolve any conflict that ensues in their area than the police, the army or the panel of enquiry. This goes on to affirm green report which pointed that the use of the military to quell the Aba women riot in 1929 brought heavy embarrassment and curse to the whole world.

Research question two

On the issue of whether or not there is any possible alternative avenue that could be employed to quell conflict that can age out the chieftainship council, 72% of the respondents are of the view that from their eye witnesses, the attempt by the police, the army and the anti riot squad was unable to control or curb the conflict, but that it was through the effort of the chiefs and Fulani Saraki that the riot was put under control. On setting up panel of inquiry,

68% of responses from the thematic interview conducted are of the view that the result of the panel will be too late to broker any peace or it may probably be swept under the carpet.

Research question three

On the challenges faced by the traditional chiefs in carrying their duty effectively, 89% of the survey samples are of the view that the potential of the chieftains is not adequately instituted nor backed up with legal framework sufficient to punish offenders.

The result of the thematic oral interview as pointed by 82% state that, the state agent including the police are often seen as being partial, and prejudicial and break down of law and order could not be seen as an offence while, on the other hand the various chieftains share in the sentiments of their youth and only put a critical posture so as not to be found culpable by the state.

Conclusion

There is a long standing mutual suspicion and disaffection among the Fulanis and their host communities in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State. This was happening because the indigenes find themselves interacting with people within divergent economic and political landscape set by the Nigerian nation. This situation is pivotally aggravated by the insensitivity of the Fulani herders who allow their cattle to wantonly destroy the indigenous farmers' crops. Although the people identify more with their traditional rulers, the inadequacy of the authority and responsibility displaces the traditional rulers against their attempt at any diplomatic intervention in ethnic conflict create disaffection.

Recommendation

1. It is imperative to have house of chiefs or conference of chiefs in itself alone under the paradigm government.
2. The house of chiefs should be vested with oversight authority and responsibility on both inter and intra ethnic and cultural matters, and accountability rendered to the state.
3. The council of chiefs should be given a legal backing or constitutional backing to enable them sufficiently punish defaulters. This would not only help in preempting, tracking ethnic conflict, it would also help in peace building processes.

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