



Colonial Impact on Jattu and Auchi Relations 1960-1981

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Abstract

This work focused on impact of British Colonial rule on inter-group relations between Jattu and Auchi communities 1960-1981. British contact with most Nigerian states, kingdoms and empires in the twentieth century had far reaching effect on inter-group relations. However, the extent to which colonial rule impacted on inter-group relations amongst the peoples of Nigeria has not been given its proper place in the existing literature. The paper examines the conquest and imposition of colonial rule on Jattu and Auchi and how these impacted on the social, political and economic relations among the people. It explains how both groups had hitherto enjoyed varied degrees of relations in the pre-colonial period. The paper argues that the emergence of colonial rule and the socio-political and economic policies initiated by the colonial authorities further added new dimensions to the relationship between Jattu and Auchi as both gravitated from cordial to hostile relations. This research adopts chronological and thematic approach in its analysis. Primary and Secondary sources were used and the data obtained from them were critically assessed and evaluated before use.

Keywords: Impact, colonial, jattu, auchi, relations

Introduction

Colonial rule in Nigeria had important implications for inter-group relations. It meant, among other things, that people had to take into account ideals, interests and institutions arising not only from their indigenous experiences and sanctioned by their traditions and usages, but also those introduced and imposed by new rulers. ^[1] According to Egbefo and Osagie, "The actual consequences of colonial rule on the dynamics of inter-group relations in Africa did not capture the imagination of scholars until perhaps, very recently. All along, it would seem that attention was duly focused on the political, social and economic consequences of colonial rule and the significance of these for the emerging nation". ^[2] They argue further that, issues regarding the implications of these changes on the cosmology of these societies on the one hand and the nature and character of human relations among them on the other were either taken for granted or, in fact, deliberately ignored. The problems that emerged from this posture were twofold. Firstly, for a fairly long time, the changes and continuities in inter-ethnic relations which colonial rule eventuated in these societies remained largely misunderstood and unappreciated. Secondly, problems of nation-building as they relate to the National Question in these nations could not be appreciated, articulated and addressed. All of these affected the growth and development of the African continent for quite some time.

However, scholars of culturally plural societies were soon to prove that, for an objective understanding of the contemporary structure and patterns of inter-group relations in heterogeneous societies such as Nigeria, an appraisal of the place of colonial rule in the trajectory of this process is necessarily important ^[3].

Therefore, although an essentially economic and political phenomenon, colonial rule left behind its trail a plethora of developments which had serious implications on the evolution of intergroup relations in Nigeria. It is against this background that this paper attempts a discourse on the process of the establishment of colonial rule in Jattu and Auchi and its impact of this on the peoples' relations. Although not an area for which the colonial administration appeared to have had any particular strategic economic interest, developments in Jattu and Auchi were greatly influenced by policies formulated against the background of broader considerations, with regards to the colony and protectorate of Nigeria. The discourse will therefore situate Jattu-Auchi relations within the mainstream of British colonial rule. It attempts to illuminate in due course, the nexus between colonial administrative and socio-economic policies and the changes in the Jattu-Auchi relations. This is done within the context of colonial prejudices and the resulting social, economic and political changes which helped shape the relations amongst the peoples.

The paper is divided into five parts. The first part is introduction. This is followed by the theoretical framework on which the work derives its analysis. The third discusses the historical evolution of Auchi and Jattu. The fourth highlights the advent of British rule in Jattu and Auchi area, under this other sub title were also discussed among which are establishment of western education and establishment of Nigeria Police Force. The penultimate section is an analysis of colonialism and its implication on Jattu and Auchi relations. The last part is the conclusion. The argument tends to suggest that colonialism helped to fuel the conflict that erupted between them that made them pick up arms against themselves in 1981.

Theoretical Framework

Although, many theories have been propounded by sociologists, psychologists and historians to explain varying dimensions of intergroup relations, such theories include Social Identity Theory, Theory of Common Needs, Theory of Natural Anarchy and Human Relations. However, for the purpose of this work, the theory most relevant to the study is the social identity theory to analyse the relationship of nations as a drive for identified interest or interests based on group membership.

The theory is all about a person or persons' sense of who they are as a result of the group or community or nation they belong to. It was first propounded by Henri Tajfel in 1979 when he observed that the groups to which people belong were very important sources of pride and self-esteem. Tajfel said that groups create a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. [4] The theory emphasizes that we enhance the status of the group to which we belong by discriminating and taking pre-judicial views against an out-group (the group to which we do not belong). Saul McLeod, in explaining the social identity theory, said that we divide the world into "them" and "us" based on a process of social grouping or categorization which is known as in-group (us) and out-group (them) [5].

Social identity theory states that the in-group will always discriminate against the members of the out-group in order to enhance their self-image. Members of an in-group will tend to find the negative aspect of an out-group, thereby enhancing their self-image. This is actually the position group members take when they try to maintain the influence and prestige of their nations above other nations in inter-group affairs. Henri Tajfel proposed that putting people into groups and categories is always based on a normal cognitive process, that is, the tendency of grouping things together. In doing that, there is the possibility of exaggerating in identifying the differences between groups, and similarities of things in the same group. People are often categorized in the same way. The group to which people belong (the in-group) is always seen as different from the group of other people (the out-group) and the members of the same group as being similar than they are actually. It is this social categorization that breeds prejudicial attitudes; that is, "them" and "us" mentality that results to in-group and out-group. For instance, Americans and Nigerians, Europeans and Africans (nations and continents), Moslems and Christians (religion), blacks and whites (race), males and females (gender), poor and rich (social class), etc.

McLeod said that Tajfel held the opinion that three mental processes of evaluating people as "us" (in-group) or "them" (out-group) are obvious [6]. The processes are particularly arranged as social categorisation, objects are categorised for easy understanding and identification. In the same vein, people are categorised as black, white, African, students, Moslem and Christian in order to understand the environment. Social categorisation helps us to work effectively and efficiently. Also, we know ourselves better by knowing what categories we belong to. We can state what behaviour is appropriate by knowing the norms of our groups. This is only possible if we know who and who members of our groups are. That means an individual could belong to more than one group.

In social identification, people adopt the identity of the group which they belong to, and tend to behave like the members of that group. There is always an emotional attachment to one's groups; the self-esteem will be bound with one's membership of his group. The last stage is social comparison which

compares one group with other groups. To maintain the self-esteem of a group, the group must favourably compare with other group. This is the actual cause of prejudice because once two groups identify themselves as rivals; they are bound to engage in a competition to maintain the prestige and self-esteem of the group. Competition and hostility between groups is also the result of competing identities rather than competing for resources only [7].

It is this competition that informs the position of diplomats or actors in the businesses of nations. In Europe, for instance, the categorisation, identification and comparison between diverse social statuses of different groups (nations) created a social conflict when each nation desired to establish its influence and prestige above the rest of the nations of the continent, a development that eventually led to the Thirty Years War from 1618 to 1648. In Nigeria, Nigeria and Biafra War of 1967 to 1970 was the result of the mental configuration of some Nigerians as Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. In the same vein, the recognition of the Jattu and Auchu Clan by other groups in the entire Etsako West Local Government Area as a Clans of Brave and strong men helped to raise the self-esteem of the Jattu and Auchu people hence the tendency to defend their individual prestige as groups.

The usefulness of the theory with regards to Colonial impact on Jattu and Auchu relations is borne out of the fact that the social identity theory of self-esteem has been the driving force in the relations between the Jattu and Auchu communities. Nevertheless, the Social Identity Theory is not a flawless theory, as in fact, no theory is flawless.

Historical Evolution of Auchu and Jattu

Auchu: Auchu is currently the administrative headquarters of Etsako West Local Government Area in Edo State. It is an urban town, situated approximately on latitude 7⁰⁴ Minutes North and longitude 6⁰⁴ Minutes East. It is bounded on the east by River Niger, in the north by Kogi State, in the south by Esan land and in the west by Owan-East. It has an area of 964km² and a population of 197,609 of the 2006 Census. [8]

The Auchu people were said to have migrated from Benin to their present settlement due mainly to the high-handedness of the then incumbent *Oba* of Benin. The cultural linkage of Auchu people with Benin and their regular payment of annual tributes to any incumbent *Oba* of Benin, which came to an end only in the wake of the British colonial era in the administration of Nigeria, testified to this claim [9].

"Auchu" is a contracting of the name, which was given to the town founded by Uchi; the correct version of which is "Evho-Uchi", which means, "the settlement of Uchi". The name "Uchi", itself is a transformation of the Benin name "Usi" as is evidenced in Odjugo's report. [10] He elaborated further that "Usi" in Benin means fame, which is a name associated in the normal cause of native life with nobility that is, the wealthy class. This buttresses the claim that Uchi himself was a prince in Benin. This probably accounted for his refusal to surrender the skin of a Leopard killed by a member of his household to the *Oba* which was among the reason for his migration from Benin to a place where he could assert fully, his independence and princely influence.

Uchi had a family of five children. The family and his chore relations migrated from Benin some 400 years ago. Their movement from Benin was in two waves and at different points in time. This first group, which was led by Uchi, migrated from "Udo", their former home-base in Benin, which today is in Ovia Local Government Area, while the second wave migrated from Igun in Benin. Opinion is

however divided on whether or not Uchi had his five children at Benin before his migration, or after he arrived at Auchi. The generally accepted contention, however, is that he travelled down from Udo into the present location of Auchi, in company of his five children. The second view which is less popular among Auchi elders is that he had his five children at Auchi [11].

It is pertinent to point out here, too, that there was no consensus of opinion as to who were the true sons of Uchi. The prevalent view among the people of Auchi is that Uchi's children were: Utsogu, Akpekpe, Albotse, Igbhie and Iyekhei. The other version, which is less popular among the people of Auchi is that Uchi's children were: Utsogu, Etsee, Ogaga, Aidokhai, and Akpekpe. It would appear; however, that Aidokhai, Etsee and Ogaga were the sons of Utsogu the eldest son of Uchi. Auchi town comprises five villages, which were named after Uchi's children. The five villages constitute Auchi clan as it is known [12].

Jattu: On the part of the Jattu, it was held that the people also migrated from Benin. Their fore-father gave birth to "Uzerue", "Ekperi", "Ikpeshi", "Avianwu", "Ogosivie", and "Weppa". Uzerue married Azama and to them were born eight sons of which Ikpe (Jattu) was the eldest [13].

The Uzairue (Uzairue) people migrated from Benin kingdom. This migration was the result of the *Oba's* acrimony, as a result of the refusal to submit the skin of Leopard killed by an Uzairue man to the *Oba* of Benin according to the custom as at then. This consequently brought about the wrath of the *Oba* against the children of Uzerue and Azama, which made him to fled Benin with his children and other relations, for the fear of war against him from the *Oba* [14]. Omo-Ananigie supported this view.

They sojourned together towards the North-West part of the present day Edo State, until they arrived at the place, "Okutegba". Ikpe who led the children of Uzerue (now pronounced Uzairue) settled with his seven brothers at "Okutegba", in the present day Ikpe or Jattu, Uzairue. The name Ikpe was changed to Jattu on the arrival of the European [15]. Till date, there is still a place called Ikpe in Benin, some four or five kilometres from Benin along the Benin-Abraka Road. It was this place they are believed to have migrated from to their present day location in Jattu called "Utukwegba" meaning "where we gathered" [16].

After three months rumour came that the Benin warrior, "Adenomo" was not going to leave them in peace, that he was still after them. They, therefore, decided to disperse instead of living together so that when "Adenomo" arrives he would not be able to destroy them all since they (the children of Uzerue who left Benin) are not residing in one location. So they all scattered each son and family to isolation. However, they did not migrate too far from each other. This accounts for the cluster of villages in the area, separated from each other with about a kilometre or two. Some settling was close to rivers or by the farms. For instance, there is a village in the area called "Imeke" meaning Eke's farm.

Although the children of Uzerue were believed to be eight (8) in numbers yet at present, there are some villages included in the area referred to as Uzairue today whose inhabitants are not descendants of Uzerue-Azama ancestry, but have been included for administrative convenience by the administrators in the British era [17].

The controversy is on the issue of the eldest son. Some believed that Imeke is the eldest while others say that Ikpe is the eldest son. Isah posited that Ikpe is the eldest, owing to the

fact that the kingship of Uzairue is in the hand of the Ikpe (Jattu) people [18]. Omo-Ananigie supported this claim when he said, "Jattu-Ikpe is incontrovertibly proved to be the capital, and chief city of Etsako..." Consequently, Ikpe which is the present day Jattu town is the seat of Ogiyeni of Uzairue.

Advent of British Rule in Jattu and Auchi Area

In 1861, Nigeria formally came under British rule with the cession of Lagos. She did not take over direct administration over the territory until 1900, when the Charter of the Royal Niger Company (R.N.C.) was revoked, owing to financial constraints and the dearth for adequate personnel, to carry out direct administration of the country. Sir, Frederick Lord Lugard, the Governor General, introduced Indirect Rule in Nigeria. In Etsako where Jattu and Auchi are situated, like in all other parts of Nigeria, the Chieftaincy institution was retained and the British ruled the country through the chiefs or traditional rulers. To make for a more effective administration customary courts were set up for adjudication in Etsako as well as other parts of the country, where regular courts were non-existent. The courts were presided over by the local chiefs, unlike the Northern parts of Nigeria, where the Sharia judicial system was already in vogue. Appeals from the Customary Courts lay to the District Officer (D.O) who represented the British interest in the district. The resident, who was based at Benin, was the president of the Court of Appeal. Parts of Afenmai area were ruled from Idah until 1914, when the administrative headquarters of the division was moved to Ubiaja and to Fugar in 1919 and to Auchi in 1920. The customary court was moved from Idah to Fugar in 1919, by 1920, it was moved from Fugar to Auchi as a central point in (Kukuruku) Afenmai division. The division was divided into three districts: Etsako, Ivbiosako and Akoko-Edo. According to Arunah, Auchi in Etsako district was the headquarters of the three districts in the division. The Assistant District Officers (A.D.Os) in the districts were responsible to the D.O who was based at Auchi the divisional headquarters [19].

Etsako District was further divided into thirteen clans, for ease of administration. The clans were

1. Auchi
2. Uzairue
3. Okpella
4. Avhianwu
5. The 3 Ibies
6. South-Ibie
7. Ayuele
8. Weppa-Wanno
9. Anwain
10. South Uneme
11. Ekperi
12. Jagbe
13. Okpekpe

Thirteen clan heads were appointed as the head of the traditional rulers in each of the 13 clans, a District Head (D.H) was appointed as head of the clan heads and that of Auchi District went to D.H. Momoh, the Otaru of Auchi in 1920. The District comprised Auchi, South Ibie, Avianwu, Uzairue and Ikpeshi/Egbigele clans. The other Districts and their headquarters were: Iddo at Okugbe, Aviele at Agbede, and Weppa at Anegbette [20]. To facilitate the enforcement of the decisions of the customary court and to maintain peace

and order, a native police system was established, they were called Dongari.

Establishment of Western Education

The demand for skilled clerks to serve in the courts and offices led to the establishment of Western Education Institutions. Towards this end, the Government school, Auchi was founded in 1922. That was after Isesele of Jagbe's abortive effort to set up a private school in the town at the instance of Chief Ikharo Ikelebe between 1911 and 1923^[21]. Children in Etsako took to both Western and Eastern Education, and acculturation side by side. Taxes were levied by the Native Authority Council, which also collected tenement rates and licenses. Proceeds realised were paid to the local treasury. A part of the revenue was retained for administrative costs, while the rest went for construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, schools and the provision of minimal infrastructure.

Establishment of Nigeria Police Force in Etsako

Later, with the complexity of the problem of Maintaining peace and order, the Nigeria Police Force was established and a police post opened at Auchi. It is however, pertinent at this juncture to mention here, that ever since the replacement of age group sentries by the Native Police and later the Nigeria Police Force, cases of violation of peace and order in Auchi have been on the increase^[22]. Cases in point are duels between individuals, fight among groups or villages over plots of lands or boundary adjustment. This is the case of Jattu and Auchi conflict of 1981. There have also been unending reports of cases of theft, and more importantly, armed robbery, which has today engulfed Nigeria as a whole.

Colonialism and its Implication on Jattu and Auchi Relations

The advent of the European in the 20th century in the area is believed to have effect on the relationship between the Jattu and Auchi people. Among other things, the activities of the Europeans in the area necessitated the remote cause of the 1981 conflict between the two neighbouring communities.

The Kukuru Division Headquarters of the area initially was at Idah^[23]. When Nigeria was amalgamated in 1914, and Idah transferred to the north, Ubiaja became the headquarters. In 1919 Etsako was cut off from Ishan and had their separate division known as Kukuru Division with headquarters at Fugar in Avianwu area. In 1920, the divisional headquarters of kukuru was moved to Auchi^[24].

Before moving the headquarters to Auchi sites were prepared in Jattu and Auchi but when the European saw the hill in Jattu they rejected the area and preferred Auchi. When Auchi became the headquarters there was attempt to move it from Auchi to Jattu but it was a failure^[25]. According to Isah, Communal conflict between Jattu and Auchi had been an age long issue. It all started when Otaru Momoh I was made the District Officer. It was a very important office and all the other chiefs were very bitter that Otaru Momoh I was chosen being that Auchi was very small compared to Jattu. The Jattu people refused to recognise Auchi but the British enforced it on them. Later the office was made rotational and other chiefs then had access to the office^[26].

The reason for sitting the headquarters at Auchi was that Auchi had since Nupe hegemony, began to take roots as headquarters of the division. The Nupe made Auchi their administrative seat, even though Idah was their recognised headquarters^[27]. Secondly, it is believed that the decision was

influenced by HOD Harding's Intelligence Report on Kukuru country in August 1914.^[28] According to the report, "If there is to be any divisional headquarters within Kukuru hills, it should be at Auchi, because of the centralised nature of location"^[29].

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to mention that the advent of the Europeans and their activities in the area helped to sow a seed of discord among these once peaceful neighbouring communities. As Prince GAZ Momoh had said, the Jattu and Auchi relationship with the colonial administrator which led to the siting of Kukuru division headquarters at Auchi instead of Jattu had a way of scouring the relationship of these communities, which necessitated the conflict between them.^[30]

Conclusion

The point, therefore, is that although colonialism undoubtedly provided a new platform that deepened contacts and interactions between Jattu and Auchi, it also created conditions that increasingly made intergroup relations essentially antagonistic. As we have been able to show so far, this feature of interaction became even more prominent during the terminal phase of colonial rule in Nigeria. Indeed, the political elite of regionalism and the dynamics of majority/majority politics pushed ethnic groups further apart. This reinforces the theoretical concept that, although colonialism as a factor of contact drew people together into a single social system, it also divided them into new dynamically related groupings.

Given that Jattu and Auchi were only marginally significant to the strategic economic considerations of the British and never being a serious raw material producing area from the perspective of the colonialists, it remained one of the most neglected and underdeveloped parts of colonial Nigeria. This neglect, which was the logical consequence of the inherent contradictions of the colonial political economy, was further compounded by the forced integration of society into the new socio-economic order. It was this official discrimination against these peoples that placed them in a considerably greater underprivileged position in the competition for distribution of wealth, status and power. This, in turn, reinforced the people's ethnic particularity, especially as they related to the other, more privileged groups in the scramble for scarce resources within the colonial economy. Even after independence, not only has the basis of Jattu and Auchi relations changed, but indeed the structure, nature and character of these relations has fundamentally altered with very serious implications for the integral reality of the polity and its citizens. This accounted for the conflict between them in 1981.

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