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Full Length Research Paper

Rethinking centrifugal issues in intra-luleha relations in Edo state, Nigeria, from the pre-colonial times up to 2000

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Socio-economic and political factors of unity or disunity have influenced human existence since the dawn of history. Communities around the world have developed socio-cultural, economic and political elements of inter-group relations that have bonded them together and distinguished them from other groups while at the same time guaranteeing their group survival and distinctive identity. This article interrogates those societal arrangements that served as bonding elements among luleha community, a micro-state among the Edoid-speaking group of Nigeria. Using socio-cultural elements such as market rotations, shared festivals and ancestral figures, the article maintains that luleha people developed common kinship ties because they found them expedient as centrifugal forces that would bind them to a common root and regulate their relationship with one another.

Key words: Nigeria, Edo, socio-economic, socio-cultural, market.

INTRODUCTION

Luleha people occupy the north-western part of Edo North in Edo State, in the South-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Luleha clan is the single largest conglomeration of community in the Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State, in terms of size and population. (Marshall, 7th June, 1939) It has continued to play a vital role in the socio-political, cultural and economic development of the local government area. Like many other clans and sub-clans in the area, the development of luleha's history was highly motivated and influenced by the phenomenon of market rings, ancestral figures and age-grade celebrations. At the same time, these factors were very important as unifying elements among the various villages or communities that make up lulehaland. (Ogbomo, 1997; Bradbury, 1964) Their stories of migrations and settlements are largely woven around the factors of age grade celebrations, market organizations and chanting of primordial songs during major festivals.

Historically, the foundation of luleha community relates to one Irimo who is believed to have had a Yoruba ancestry. For instance, Ife and Ijebu-Ode sometimes feature in the discourse relating to the origin of Irimo. This contentious issue is discussed in details in the course of this work as it related to the roles played by market rings, ancestral figures and age-grade celebrations as unifying elements among the people of luleha. The work contends

that the three cultural elements have acted as centripetal forces, which help to build bonds of kindred identities among the Erue, Aoma and Okpuje sub-clans that make up the luleha clan. Similarly, the same cultural elements have acted as symbols of unity among communities in the various sub-clans. The way markets are scheduled and organized reflected the seniority positions of each community in the sub-clan as well as each sub-clan within the larger clan. In the same vein, festivals were planned to reflect the position of each community in the whole arrangements in luleha. Each of these elements is discussed in details to x-ray their roles as unifying factors in lulehaland.

The role of market rings in the unification of luleha communities

Market rings were structured to accommodate the role of culture in the scheme of things in the various communities in lulehaland. In this connection, commercial and economic considerations played secondary roles in favour of cultural designs. Although luleha markets were organized according to the demands of each community where the markets were located, as well as the demands of the clan, the arrangement was such that the communi-

ties were encouraged to relate with one another, in appreciation of their kinship ties and ancestral connections. (Osiki, June 1999: 93) In that sense, markets in luleha were not organized at will nor was the timing of market days a matter of impulse or a motivation of economic considerations but also for cultural ties.

A market in the sense of luleha people is a demarcated and designated site where traders and consumers met at an agreed time to exchange products, ranging from farm produce, domestic animals, dried and fresh games, forest products, herbs and other sundry items. (Falola, 2006: 64) In most instances, goods were spread on the ground or raised bamboo platforms designed for that purpose. Besides that arrangement, traders had their different stalls located in different places while hawking was done by women and minors who carried and advertised their goods (Smith, 1971: p. xvi).

An important aspect of the market was that "stalls" or "space" in the market could be inherited from parents or other relatives, even though no physical demarcation was needed to indicate this arrangement. The involvement of local government staff in the administration of market, however, changed this cultural design because market stalls were now allocated on the basis of payment of certain amounts to the government. This development can be traced to the beginning of colonialism in Owanland when the people were subjected and subjugated to the dictate of colonial rules. Although no evidence exist to indicate that the colonial masters in lulehaland instituted any policy to abolish the traditional market structures in the locality, it is safe to argue that the new socio-political system introduced by them affected the traditional structure of market system in the area. For instance, the idea of raising revenue through collection of levies from the people made it imperative for those charged with the responsibility of raising revenue for the colonial government to seek ways of revenue generation and market became a veritable means of actualizing their demands. That was how the supervision of market gradually moved away from the traditional way of doing it to the one controlled by members of the Native Authority designed by the colonial masters as part of the Indirect Rule system.

The colonial system bequeathed control of market structure in lulehaland to the succeeding local government administration, as it was in other communities in Nigeria. However, what is important to note is that whether during the pre-colonial times, the colonial period or the period when the control of market was done by the local government authority, traders and buyers operated in perfect harmony and order and transacted their affairs like one big family without fighting and bloodshed in most of the occasions. Indeed, by virtue of the traditional dictates of the people of luleha, fighting was seen as a taboo that should be avoided. By 2000 A.D, however, this norm would seem to have been ignored as many traders and customers lacking in the customs and traditions

guiding market operations acted without due considerations for decorum as especially the way culture would have it. This group constituted what can be described as "stranger elements". The presence of stranger elements could not be completely ruled out because it was part of the evolution and development of the communities in lulehaland in line with the process of urbanization.

The influx of stranger elements in lulehaland pre-dates the attainment of independence by the Nigerian state. For instance, in the second quarter of the twentieth century, especially during the outbreak of the First World War (1914 - 1918), some Yoruba and Igbo traders came to the area for the purpose of trade. Of these two categories of people, the Yoruba appears to have established a longer antiquity of socio-economic and political relationships with the people of luleha.

The contentious issue of the introduction of Obaship from Ife to Benin and other Edoid communities, as well as the role Ile-Ife played in the establishment of the chieftaincy institutions in the area is well known and would not take much time and space in this discussion. In any case, there are indications that Yoruba communities of Idoani, Ogbese, Ukaro, Ifon (Ikhan), Ikpele, Owo and others had been trading with the people of luleha long before the introduction of colonial rule. The routes for this contact were mostly through Uzebba-Ukaro-Ifon footpath, across the Ose River; the Okpuje-Ikpele footpath and Eruere-Idoani footpath. Of these routes, it appears that traffic was heaviest along the Okpuje-Ikpele axis of the routes. In the course of these interactions, sundry goods such as beads, called Ikpele by the people of luleha, textile materials, household wares such as earthen pots, wooden spoons, calabashes, in addition to farm implements, farm produce and domestic animals, were exchanged between the two people.

The two world wars provided an opportunity for increase socio-economic interactions between luleha people and their Yoruba neighbours. In any case, it is safe to argue that several goods of Northern Nigerian origins such as swords and leather materials found their way to luleha through the various Yoruba routes. In the course of this relationship, inter-marriages took place between them.

The Igbo elements probably got to luleha before the colonial period through footpaths via the Agbor-Ishan-Owan geographical locations. The period did not witness any major socio-economic interactions, except in the area of exchanges of foodstuff through the barter system. During the era of legitimate trade in the late nineteenth century, some Igbo traders in present day Delta Igboland, west of the Niger, came to luleha to trade in palm kernels and other forest and agricultural products. However, the outbreak of the two world wars offered the Igbo the opportunity to intensify their socio-economic interactions with the people of luleha. These interactions witnessed a boom after the Nigerian Civil War (1967 - 1970) and by 2000, the Igbo elements had overtaken their Yoruba

counterparts in the area of trade and commercial activities in luleha. The unattractive nature of the footpaths as well as the astronomical commercial relevance of both Ibadan and Lagos during the colonial and post-colonial periods could have accounted for this development. In a nutshell, we can say that the exigencies of the period attracted stranger elements such as Yoruba and Igbo traders to luleha for the purposes of economic and commercial interactions.

Markets in luleha had a number of features. First, they were multi-functional, that is they embraced a whole lot of activities, comprising economic and non-economic; second, they performed socio-political functions in the sense that they served as avenues for socio-political interactions. For instance, the king or chief could use the opportunity of gathering in the market to address the people, most of who were women on latest development in respect of the welfare of the community and the people. In the same vein, rituals and sacrifices were also performed in the market. Besides, some festivals were conducted in the market. A typical case in point was the annual appearance of the chief priest (Ogheren) of Uloko in Aoma market before 1940. The death of Chief Priest Eibo marked the end of this event because of lack of a willing successor. It was said that his eldest son and heir to the chief priesthood, who was a member of the Jehovah Witness refused to be crowned and so the tradition died with Eibo. (Osiki, 25 February, 2003) He was given power by tradition to pin point any item in the market during the observance of the Uloko Festival and such items were forfeited to him by the trader. Refusal to comply was viewed as an affront on the tradition of the people and was subsequently punished in form the violator having to propitiate the "god" through the presentation of certain animals. Markets also served as places where amusement activities involving singers, dancers and drummers were carried out. But unlike the practice in some areas in Yorubaland, such activities were usually limited to festive periods. (Osiki, 1999: 94).

As a unifying factor, markets in luleha were linked together in sequence of operations. This meant that most markets belonged to the same ring. The working was such that the communities, which lived in contiguous parts of a region, had their periodic market on different days of the week to avoid clashes and make for maximum participation, while at the same time unifying the people. By giving allowances for the operation of this system whereby traders could trade in most days of the week in different markets, forebears of luleha who started this practice anticipated the continuous unity of the various communities. For instance, Eruere Market (Ekin Eruere) was held at every five days, followed by Aoma Market (Ekin Aoma) and then Okpuje Market (Ekin Okpuje). These represented the three sub-clans in luleha, (that is Eruere, Aoma and Okpuje, as earlier indicated). In addition to this arrangement, each village had its own market which was organized in such a way

that it did not clash with any main market in the clan, an acceptance of the superiority of clannish arrangements and cultural ties among the people. Examples of such markets included Ekin Ukhuede at Uzebba, Avbiosi Market (Ekin Avbiosi), Ekin Oise at Eruere and Ekin Ikpeyan in Okpuje sub-clan. All these markets were formed into rings or cycles to guarantee maximum commercial and cultural benefit for the people.

The formation of market rings provided each community or village with easy and regular access to goods and services, which the people needed. (Falola, 2006: 64) Hopkins commended this unique African device that ensured that each market met at a specified interval for keeping the costs of collection and distribution of goods to a minimum level. (Hopkins, 1973: 56) Female members of the community were predominantly involved in market organization as local trade was taken as a convenient adjunct to household and farming activities as well as a supplement to domestic occupation, an arrangement that benefited greatly from periodic and rotational organization of market.

By operating a rotational or market ring system, the people of luleha were able to relate with one another socio-culturally as well as in the area of commercial and economic relationships. It also provided avenues for cultural interactions and by extension helped to unify the people. No community was at liberty to fix markets in such a way as to clash or conflict with markets elsewhere in the clan. Besides, the arrangement favoured traveling traders who had to move from one sub-clan to another, displaying their wares. In the course of this development, many traders got married to their wives or husbands through contacts with people outside their immediate communities. In this sense, we can say that the operations of market rings encouraged socio-cultural and economic integration in lulehaland. This role was not limited to market operations. Ancestral figures connected directly or indirectly to socio-economic activities also served the same purpose of unifiers.

Ancestral figures as unifying factors

Ancestral figures represented another medium of integration among luleha people by serving as unifying or rallying grounds for the people to interact. Interestingly, each of the sub-groups had an ancestral figure that united the various communities within it. At a larger level, a common ancestor, known as Irimo, a legendary figure earlier mentioned, united the luleha clan.

Although luleha is part of the larger Edoid-speaking group, which has probably occupied its present site for upward of three thousand years, (Ryder, 1980: 109; Harunah, 2003: 33-37) the people have a common ancestral belief that distinguished them from other Edoid-speaking groups and which served as a unifying factor among them. This ancestral figure, called Irimo, is

believed to have migrated from Ile-Ife via Benin or directly from Ife before settling down in lulehaland after a brief sojourn in Uokha, (Marshall, 1937: 4) a community believed to be the first and earliest settlement in Ivbiosakon area of present day Owan East in Edo North. It should be added that majority of Ivbiosakon communities and inhabitants claim descent from Benin. However, it appears that luleha is the only clan that claims descent from Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba's socio-cultural, technological and political civilization. Marshall's position that Irimo was a follower of one Akpwewuma, a possible founder of Uokha community, could not be corroborated, as oral evidence collected from the three sub-clans of luleha did not indicate that Irimo was a follower of any personality so named. (Oren, 28 November, 2003) Rather, available evidence indicates that Irimo traced his friend from Benin to Uokha. It is safe to conclude that Irimo sojourned in Uokha with his friend who might have been Akpwewuma. Akpwewuma is believed to be a Bini.

Whatever may have been the circumstance of Irimo's sojourn in Uokha, one point on which the people of luleha are unanimous about their history is the claim of descent from a legend called Irimo. (Ogedengbe, 1992) Although both oral and written sources in the area agree that Irimo was an Ife priest, (Akalakini, 10 February, 1999; Ogunbiyi, 10 February, 1999; Enahoro, 1965: 47) Harunah did not agree that luleha was founded by a non-Edoid speaking figure. (Harunah, 2003: 33-37) His argument is based on socio-cultural and political institutions, which favour the possibility of an Edo creation of lulehaland and that the personality of Irimo could not have emerged from outside the Edoid enclave. Why Irimo should first go to Benin before coming to lulehaland is an issue begging for historical clarification. The reason is that geographically, luleha appears to lie between Benin and Ife, on the Akure axis of Ife-Benin road. Whether geographical obstacles during the time of migration did not favour this conclusion is what this present effort cannot easily answer.

The position of Obayemi is instructive on this matter of origin. According to him:

"The overwhelming commitment to the theory of origins from Benin, which has now become standard in a region in which Benin City has enjoyed political and cultural supremacy has effectively obscured the identification of what, properly speaking, should have given us an insight into the states of the region. So spontaneous have been the narration of the stories which say that founding ancestors came from Benin that they have accepted with little questioning and eminent scholars have been led into taking them as fact or into using them as working hypothesis....The farthest we can go is to say that especially during the past six or more

centuries, there were Benin cultural influences like kingship emblems, or the other politics, but emphatically these do not establish folk movements from Benin as the only cause of the first men settling in the area of Urhobo, Isoko, Ivbiosakon, Etsako (sic), Ishan, etc. (Obayemi, 1977: 241)"

Nevertheless, our interest in this direction is to establish how the ancestral figure of Irimo was employed as a centrifugal force among the communities in lulehaland.

Irimo is believed to have had three sons that made up the three sub-clan of luleha, namely, Eruere, Aoma and Okpuje, in order of seniority and based on customs and traditions. However, Ogbomo's work that employed a theory of "totemism" in the explanation of the formation of communities in luleha tends to have challenged this belief and arrangement. (Ogbomo, 1997: 40) The development has altered the seniority status of Eruere vis-à-vis clan arrangement in the luleha. Using animal totemic observances as well as social organizations, Ogbomo argued that Irimo, who was of the leopard totem, founded luleha around c. 1632 - 1664 and left Benin during the Eweka dynasty. (Ogbomo, 1997: 40) Eweka, like other Benin kings, is associated with the leopard totem. He stressed that given the totemic distribution whereby Okpuje has the boa totem while Eruere has the beads totem, in addition to their father's leopard totem, it would appear that Irimo and Otoi, his wife, have produced Aoma, while Okpuje seems to have been from a second wife of the boa clan and that Eruere is from a third of the bead clan. (Ogbomo, 1997: 40-41)

An interesting aspect of this position is that the seniority position of Eruere has been challenged and exposed to scrutiny, on the ground that unless unusual circumstances associated with soil or trade intervene, it is natural that an old village would be larger than is the case of Eruere, when its neighbours contain almost a dozen communities. Based on this thinking, Ogbomo, therefore, suggested that Okpuje and Eruere were founded much later than Aoma. (Ogbomo, 1997: 40-41) Evidence at our disposal is too scanty to accept or reject Ogbomo's claim, based on totemic explanation. The writer does not have enough expertise as at now to employ the totemic analysis in the presentation and interpretation of luleha history. In any case, it is believed that Otoi lived and died in Oah, a sub-unit of Okpuje. If this is true, it would mean that both Otoi and Okpuje are related. It is hoped that further research will help to shed light on the matter.

In all, whatever might have been the situation, Irimo occupied a significant position in the unity of luleha people, especially with respect to traditions of origin, migration and settlement. It also determined, to a very large extent, the traditions, customs and norms of luleha people with respect to seniority issues, chieftaincy matters and other related practices such as market arrangement and observances of festival rules.

Other major ancestral figures that contributed to the building of centrifugal forces in luleha clan included Otoi, the mother figure of luleha people and possibly wife of Irimo and Obazua, deified, worshipped and revered among Aoma sub-clan. The spirit of Otoi was remembered through the celebration of Okosan, a non-annual feast organized in her honour. The place of the celebration was in Oah in Okpuje sub-clan, believed to be the last place of abode of Otoi when she agreed to live with her last son, Okpuje. Located in Oah, Okosan was a symbol of unity among the communities in lulehaland. The occasion for the celebration helped to renew brotherly affection. Chief B.O.I. Eguaoje who shed light on the ancestral figure of Otoi remarked that the entire people of luleha community used to sacrifice a cow to the spirit of "their mother during the celebration of Okosan." (Eguaoje, November 24, 2003) Available evidence indicates that the ancestral figure of Otoi is rather vague as far as the socio-cultural aspect of luleha people was concerned, at least by 2000. Except for the simple fact that the name is mentioned occasionally in the circle of chiefs and priests, not much was known about Otoi. It is also surprising that the Okosan celebration could not produce a system of succession of priestesses to survive it and how such priestesses would be selected, appointed or nominated and whether or not it should rotate among luleha people or be limited to the Okpuje sub-clan. The irregular celebration of Okosan festival has not done much to preserve the memory of the ancestral figure of Otoi and thus the gap in the historiographical knowledge about the figure in lulehaland.

The ancestral figure of Obazua is well entrenched in the historiography of Aoma people because of the festival that is organized annually in his honour. Obazua is believed to be a Benin noble and hunter who accompanied Irimo on his way to Iviosakon land. Contrary to Omo-Amu's claim, there is no evidence to suggest that Obazua, in whose honour the festival of Obazu is celebrated, was the founder of luleha. (Omo-Amu, 1963: 32; Omo-Amu, 1968: 12) Marshall admitted that Obazua accompanied Ughuan, the legend believed to have founded the Ora Clan, from Benin and met Irimo at Uokha. (Marshall, 1937: 2) Obazua was a great hunter and warrior. Tradition has it that when Ughuan departed Ora for Benin to succeed to the throne of his father after founding the Ora Clan, Obazua was left behind in lulehaland, probably when Irimo was still alive. Obazua had no survival children, but was fond of Aoma, one of the sons of Irimo. He decided to stay with him during his old age. In one of Obazua's hunting expeditions, he stumbled on a group of chimpanzees, which seemed to be celebrating a festival. (Ogedengbe, 1992: 20) This tradition is related to the one told about the origin of the acrobatic culture among the Esan (Ishan) people, an Edoid neighbour of Owan people. Tradition indicates that Obazua could understand the signs and speeches made by animals (it is a belief among luleha people that great

hunters possess extraordinary ability to understand the signs, speeches and language made by animals).

After carefully watching the animals before they departed the scene, Obazua carefully packed the instruments they left behind and returned home with them. He taught other hunters and those able-bodied men who had performed the festival of manhood in Aoma the songs and other details about the celebration as well as how to play the instruments, believed to have been made from buffalo horns. The historiographical point to make now is that the event could have been a convenient way and method of explaining the hunting exploit of Obazua and his ability to hunt successfully numerous buffalos. This article does not intend to discuss the instrument used in the celebration of the Obazu Festival because of the taboo associated with it. Suffice to say that the festival has remained a sacred institution and tradition among the adherents.

Not long before his death, Obazua instructed Aoma to immortalize his (Obazua's) name by all means, possibly by commemorating the festival he introduced and taught the people. Shortly after his death, the people of Aoma instituted the Obazu Festival in remembrance of Obazua who was very dear to them. It is instructive to note that the festival is restricted to only communities in Aomaland but males from the other communities in luleha and the neighbouring lands could come around to watch the festival. A clue from this festival may shed light on the possibility of different mothers among the three sub-clans of luleha.

Up until today, the festival of Obazu is celebrated by all the villages in Aoma to commemorate the ancestral figure of Aoma. Thus, through this means, the people of Uzebba, Avbiosi and Ogbagun (comprising Ivbiughuru, Ukhuse-Oke, Ukhuse-Osi and Ohia) see themselves as belonging to the same family tie by virtue of their celebration of Obazu Festival. The centrifugal force was further cemented by the fact that no member of the aforementioned communities was free to perpetuate evil against another member of the Obazu-celebrating-communities, either through diabolical means or causing harm or injury to it during the period of the celebration of Obazu Festival. It should be emphasized that during the period of the celebration of Obazu Festival, which tradition maintains initially lasted for three months, later nine days and today seven days. Mature males from the various communities in Aoma paid visits in form of ritual celebration and procession to one another.

The festival was unique in all ramifications. First, unlike many other festivals in Owanland, females and circumcised males were forbidden from watching the festival. Second, no music beside the music of the celebrants or initiates (called "gods" or "spirits" in local circle) was allowed during the period of the festival. Besides, it was forbidden for anybody to weep, even for a deceased, during the period. In addition, violent fights were not allowed during the period as it was seen as a

period of peace and tranquility. The penalty for disobedience ranged from the payment of a goat and a snail, among other items, which must be paid annually, except the goat, which was paid once at the time of the festival during which the offender had first made the confession of violation of sacredness of the rules and norms governing the festival. Details of the celebration of the festival are not allowed to be disclosed to non-initiates and women in particular.

Lesser ancestral figures also served as unifying factors in some of the communities below the level of the sub-clan. For instance, in Uzebba, the Uzebba-khile figure presented a unifying and rallying ground for the people. This legendary figure is believed to be responsible for the survival and liberation of Uzebba people during the various inter-tribal wars and conflicts between luleha and her neighbours, especially Ikhan (Ifon-Yoruba) people. It is believed that Uzebba-khile later transformed into a huge tree, which is sacred to the people of Uzebba. The main trunk was felled by a mighty wind in the 1980s and the Okumangbe of luleha, Timothy Omo-Bare, erected a statue in its place, as a symbol of the legendary exploit of Uzebba-khile. The name literally means "Uzebba will not run away or be moved from its position". No major festival was organized to celebrate the personality of Uzebba-khile, except occasional sacrifices involving bloodless items such as white cloths, native white chalk, roasted groundnuts and maize and so on. In any case, the people of Uzebba often invoked the spirit of Uzebba-khile to express their determination and dedication to the dream of a great Uzebba that could withstand any community in the event of outbreak of hostilities.

In all, ancestral figures played vital roles as centrifugal forces in the evolution of the socio-political and spiritual culture of luleha people. Some figures, such as Irimo and Otoi were accepted at the clan level, with varying degrees of acceptance, while others such as Uzebba-khile occupied a major place in the consciousness of the people of Uzebba.

Festivals as centrifugal forces in lulehaland

luleha people paid special attention to festivals as part of their socio-cultural organization. Several festivals were organized in the communities of luleha at different periods of the year. Our focus will be on the roles played by festivals as elements of unity in the clan.

In Ereure sub-clan, the people celebrated annually the Era-Ereure, which literally means "father of Ereue", to commemorate the ancestral figure of their progenitor. It serves as a rallying point for the people in the area. It also signaled a period of peace and tranquility, as well as prosperity for the people. However, it is instructive to note that while Ereure people had accepted to call the festival a celebration of the exploit of their ancestor, the other two sub-clans did not refer to the festival as such. This could possibly shed light on the position earlier canvassed in

favour of Ogbomo that the three sub-clans might have had different parents.

The Okpuje sub-clan celebrated different festivals, but that of Okpuje-ro was the most prominent by 2000. Like Era-Ereure, the people of Okpuje referred to the Okpuje-ro as a celebration meant to celebrate their ancestor. For this reason, it was celebrated every year and restricted to male members of society. Unlike the Obazu Festival, females were free to watch Okpuje-ro, but were restricted in certain aspects of the festival. They could also dance to the music of the festival and assist the male folk in entertaining visitors to the festivals. It was a sort of tourist attraction to the people and largely helped to unite the various communities of Okpuje.

The people of Aoma had *Obazu* as their festival of unity. As earlier explained, it was celebrated in honour of the legendary Obazua. The festival attracted males from both within and outside luleha clan. Unlike the *Okpuje-ro*, it was celebrated in each community of Aoma but initiates could visit their counterparts in other communities of Aoma during the festival, provided such arrangements did not expose them to females.

At the community levels, festivals were also organized to reflect the unity of the people. For instance, the people of Ikpeyan in Okpuje had their on Okodiyen Festival, which helped to unite the people. Uzebba people occasionally celebrated the Okhirare, to mark the memory of their victory during intra-tribal wars. The irregular nature of the celebration indicated the intrusion of colonialism on the culture of the people. There is every indication that the festival could extinct in the nearest future.

Both Oghare and Iovbode represented the biggest festivals that helped to unite both the male and female members of the luleha clan. Male members of the clan celebrated the Oghare every four years. On the other hand, Iovbode embraced both male and female members of the clan and took place every four years, precisely every leap year. Both festivals were celebrated to commemorate attainment of manhood. They also served as initiation ceremonies. Each community celebrated its own but it was normally between October and December, beginning with Avbiosi and ending with Okpuje.

Conclusion

Centrifugal forces were sine qua non in inter-group relations in lulehaland. This work has demonstrated that market rings, ancestral figures and festivals were vital centrifugal forces in the socio-cultural and political organizations of the people of the clan. The work revealed that the various communities were connected in one way or another by the operation of market rings, beliefs in ancestral figures and organization of festivals. These elements were important in the growth and development of the historical consciousness of the people with respects to peaceful interactions and integration in the area and helped to distinguish them from other non-luleha

clans in Owan.

In addition, the present effort has shed light on the personality of Irimo as a centrifugal force in the unity of luleha communities as well as playing a vital role in the tradition of origin of the people. The work examined the assertion that Irimo was the founder of luleha clan and spiritual head of all socio-cultural and political arrangements in the area. In all, it should be noted that certain socio-cultural symbols such as ancestral figures, market rings and festivals helped to unite the people of luleha and made them unique from their neighbours. They also served as a way of preserving the rich cultural heritage of the people.

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Full Length Research Paper

Managerial strategies to conflict management of not-for-profit organizations in Nigeria: A study

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This study is an investigation of the managerial strategies to conflict management in non-profit making organizations in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The essences of this study are to devise effective strategies to conflict management and make appropriate recommendations for an effective conflict resolution, aimed at ensuring organizational development, productivity and societal growth. The study adopted the descriptive study pattern and used both the questionnaire method and personal interview in collecting data for the study, a total of 80 questionnaires were distributed to both the junior and senior staff of the 4 non-profit making organizations surveyed in Port Harcourt and the "Z" test was used to analyse the stated hypotheses. The research findings reveal among others, first, that the causes of conflicts in non-profit making includes poor communication gap, ethnic and religion differences, power tussle among staff, unequal distribution of rewards, competition over scarce resources etc, secondly, that conflicts in non-profit making organizations can be resolved were administrators indulge in collectives bargaining agreement, understanding of employees and acceptance of subordinate goals.

Key words: Conflict, organization, management, unions.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims at investigating managerial strategies to conflict management in the non-profit making organizations in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Non-profit making organizations are government institutions set up by acts of parliament to provide welfare services for the citizenry, aimed at improving their standard of living. But these institutions have recently been plagued by incessant conflicts which have resulted in loss of manpower, wastage of resources and low productivity.

According to Baridam (2000), number of conditions has been shown to be correlated with the degree of conflicts. They are not necessarily causes of conflict but they have seen to be associated with higher rates of conflict and may well predispose a situation in that direction. More also, whatever decisions, policies and guideline are made, there is the possibility of diverse opinions among members of the institution and there is the need for

resolution of it. Significantly for any organization whether profit oriented or non-profit oriented to grow and operate effectively, it needs to ensure that conflicts are creative rather than destructive. Conflict being an essential creative element in human relationships, it is a means to change, the means by which our social values can be achieved, if suppressed, society becomes static. Conflicts in organizations should neither be ignored nor feared. Indeed, it should be enjoyed and seen as essentially social organization phenomena with creative and destructive manifestations.

Organizations need to operate in a peaceful environment, where there is a high level of compromise and understanding between administrators, unions and employees (civil servants). Where this exists, there is always high productivity, greater commitment, which in turn leads to organizational development and better provision of welfare services in the case of the non-profit making organizational unrest, especially among the non-profit making institution has become one of the recurring problems facing administrators and the society, where its staffers do not derive satisfaction from the jobs as there

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is no sense of commitment. Conflicts in organizations are disastrous and create unnecessary economic loss both to the organizations and the society. It sometimes results in strikes, stress and low productivity, loss of man hour and wastage of resources.

The incessant conflicts in non-profit making organizations have called for questioning whether conflict resolution techniques are ever adopted. Truly, even if the cost of conflict is not highlighted in an organization's yearly accounts, organizations administrators and managers are unaware of its causes. The awareness of the true cost of conflict will stimulate organizations administrators to take appropriate measures to reducing conflict in their organizations to ensure organizational development, efficiency and high productivity to the society.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

HO1. There is no significant relationship between accepting subordinate goals and conflict resolution.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Not-for-profit organizations are set up to create monopoly of essential services and thus avoid wasteful and unhealthy competitions. Hunger (2000), posits that frustration that is, a blocking of a group's goal attempts, is a significant cause of conflict. In most cases such blocking of a group's or individuals goal could be as a result of regional or religious bias. Meheim (1960) showed that behavioural conflict can be induced merely by manipulating a group's perception of its social distance with another group. Molnars and Rogers (2001) maintained that similarities may serve as source of conflict as well as attraction. Simmel (1955), noted how similarity often leads to interaction on restricted basics, whereas the more that is shared in common and the potential grounds for conflict.

Silver (2002) maintained that communication gap often creates organizational conflict. According to him, one of the great problems of corporate life and a cause of frequent grievance is not the unfairness of management actions, but the inexplicability. Even in corporations where internal communications breakdown frequently occur, networks are the life-blood of their activity-decisions are sometimes made without adequate explanation. Often such decision appears to be arbitrary when in fact they are not. According to Williams (2000), the stage is set for conflict whenever there is overlapping or ambiguous responsibilities.

Another type of explanation of organizational conflict is drawn from a social facts tradition and from organizational theory Marsh (2004). This perspective states that the basic forces that impel people to act in certain ways are objective structural conditions of which they may not

verbalize as reason for their actions. This perspective assumes that certain characteristic of the organization are that the level of conflict in an organization over a period of time is a property of that organization in the same sense that its history, its facilities and its employees are properties of that organization or institution. Since organizations varied on this property (amount of conflict), it is reasonable to seek the cause of this amount of conflict and other properties of the organization, specifically, their variable structural characteristics with regard to size, age and structural differentiation.

Studies have suggested that the size of an institution has a significant influence on the behaviour of its members. According to Scott and El-Assal (2001) larger organizations have more conflicts because the larger the organization, the greater the absolute number of those with dispositions to political activity and the stronger their mutual support for the organization and resources. According to Baridam (2002), it is reasonable to hypothesize that larger body of workers will heighten the tendency toward the formation of autonomous employee culture resistant to the efforts of management to control it. We should perhaps add that the preponderance of worker's interest in larger organizations with bureaucratic tendencies cannot be dismissed as accidental; it must be considered a sign of the underlying stresses large size generates on a work community.

Organizational theory suggests that "the older the organization, the less it is inclined to accommodate change. The age of the organization is the limiting factor, to the extent to which relationships and structure have become frozen Burack, (2001). Our hypothesis is that conflict increases with the age of the organizations involved. New organizations possess few resources in terms of skill, experience and knowledge and this may make it more difficult to manage relationships with organizational members. According to them, an organization attempting to carryout a new set of responsibilities within an existing structure of activity may encounter resistance and opposition from the established orders. Age differences may generate structural conflicts between new groups attempting to establish or expand their domains and existing groups that seek to minimize threats and disruptions to their ongoing activities.

In many instances, labour unions have been able to achieve their objectives through collective bargaining. In orders they had to resort to strikes, lock-outs, boycotts picketing. According to Nwachukwu (2000), a strike is the cessation of work by union members. It is perhaps the most effective instrument that the union has to extract submission from employer. According to Baridam (2002), strikes involve the refusal of the union members to perform their jobs. It is the temporary withdrawal of all or some of the employees from the organizations service. The aim is to force management to accept employees' demands. The trade disputes (Emergency provision) decree 1968 provided for strikes and the trade union

Table 1. Questionnaire distribution and retrieval.

Respondents	Sent out	%	Returned	%	Accepted	%	Un-accepted	%	Not returned	%
Senior staff	30	100	28	93	25	89	3	11	2	7
Junior staff	50	100	44	88	41	93	3	7	6	12
Total	80	100	72	90	66	92	6	8	8	10

decree 197 recognized the employees' (members of the union) right to peaceful picketing. Union leaders' right to call for strikes: recognized all over the world and shall not be actionable in tort.

According to Nwachukwu (2000), collective bargaining and union recognition as a whole world have been useless if it had no right to give their demands to the point insistence. It is a fundamental human right of all employees have a right to withdraw his labour or he becomes a slave.

Labour unions in Nigeria have had many strikes in the last 2 decades that involved work stoppage. Irrespective of the impact of strikes on society, a typical union leader believes that his aims are not to disrupt the economy or to make a show of power. They tend to believe that they are responding to forces of circumstance largely beyond their control.

Management continues to see labour as a cost of production and fails to recognize the inter-dependence between management and union. To prevent the evil consequences of a prolonged industrial dispute the government promulgated the trade disputes (Emergency provisions) (Amendment) decrees of 1969. Under this decrees, the industrial arbitration tribunal is to help resolve any disputes referred to it by the commissioner for labour. It could make awards for the purpose of cases referred to it and has 21 days to make its recommendation. Failure to comply on the part of any of the parties in the disputes is an offence under the decree.

Management, sometimes enjoy public sympathy when there is a strike that affects public interest, like closure of vital services or tend to affect the economic welfare of the society as a whole. Strikes often resented for which management enjoys public sympathy include strikes by hospital employees and public utilities. Management maximizes on this by showing that the union is the culprit and is not sensitive to public welfare. Public opinion could induce the union to cave in and taper their demands. Besides strikes, another effective instrument that unions have to fight against management is boycotts.

METHODOLOGY

This research work adopted the homothetic research design in which self administered questionnaire was used and hypotheses were formulated and tested at 5% level of significance. From a target population of 138 organizations, 80 companies were randomly selected. Our self administered questionnaire was admini-

stered on this sample. Port Harcourt is the heart of the oil and gas industry, an industry that account for more than 80% of GDP of Nigeria. The questionnaire and oral interview constituted our primary sources of data. This was so because the questionnaire is a very cheap mode of obtaining data from such category of employees as managers since meeting them face to face was somewhat difficult owing to their tasking schedules. It also placed the respondents at a liberty to answer our questions at their own convenience removing any form of pressure a waiting researcher could have caused. The oral interviews only made up for the inadequacies of the questionnaires. To properly investigate the problem, the sample was divided into 2 groups. One group consisting of senior staff (P1) of the parastatals and another consisting of the junior staff (P2) of the same organizations.

RESULTS

Primary data for this study were collected from questionnaires distributed and returned. The use of tables and simple percentages are to summarize responses by respondents on the subject matter.

Their responses were summed of senior staff and junior staff and analysed from Table 1, it shows that out of the 80 questionnaires sent out, 30 were sent to senior staff and 50 were sent to junior staff of the 4 non-profit making organizations surveyed in Port Harcourt. The break-down from the table reveals that out of the 30 questionnaires sent out to the senior staff, 28 representing 93% were returned, 25 representing 89% were accepted, 3 representing 11% was not accepted while 2 representing 7% were not returned. The table also reveals that out of the 50 questionnaires sent out to junior staff, 44 representing 88% were returned, 41 representing 93% were accepted and 3 representing 7% were un-accepted while 16 representing 12% were not returned.

Causes of conflicts in not-for-profit making organizations

In this sub-section, we present data on the various causes of conflicts in the organizations we studied. Respondents opinions are presented on the Table 2.

The various methods used in reducing/curbing conflicts

This section seeks to find out the various methods used

Table 2. Causes of conflicts in non-profit organizations.

Causes of conflicts	Senior staff frequency	Junior staff frequency
Competition over scarce resources	3(12)	2(5)
Unequal distribution rewards	4(16)	5(12)
Ethic and religious differences	4(16)	9(22)
Power tussle among staff	4(16)	2(5)
Subordinates saddled with responsibilities	-(10)	6(15)
Communication gap	10(40)	17(41)
Total	25(100)	41(100)

Source: Survey data (2008).

Table 3. Conflict management methods.

Methods used	Senior staff frequency %	Junior staff frequency %
Agreement to issue between administrators and staff	9 (36)	9 (22)
Understanding to Issues between administrators and staff	4 (16)	8 (12)
The use of collective bargaining	10 (40)	17 (27)
Recognition of employees goals	2 (8)	14 (34)
Total	25 (100)	41(100)

Source: Survey data (2008)

by administrators in reducing/curbing conflicts in non-profit making organizations. The responses by respondents is displayed in Table 3.

We also sought to find out the extent to which administrators and employees agreed to conflict control in non-profit making organization. Their responses are given on Table 4.

Respondents were also asked the extent that understanding exists between administrators and employees on a particular conflict situation. Their responses are given on Table 5.

Test of hypothesis

In this section we tested the hypothesis we have formulated earlier for this study.

Statement of hypothesis

There is no significant difference between senior and junior staff beliefs in the use of collective bargaining between administrators and employees in conflicts resolutions.

Decision

Since the calculated value of the test statistic (0.33) is less than the critical value (1.96), we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that no significant difference

exists between senior and junior staff in their beliefs in the use of collective bargaining.

Discussion of findings

The testing of our hypotheses is of utmost significance in order not to make our study a mere assumption, so from our result, we have seen that, there is a relationship between collective bargaining and trade dispute. Not-for-profit organizations that resolve their conflict by compromising will accomplish their objectives or goals. The researchers also found out that organizations that bargain with their workers experience fewer problems.

The not-for-profit sector of any economy is important for several reasons. First, countries desire certain goods and services that profit-making companies cannot or will not provide. A knowledge of not-for-profit organizations is important if only for the sole reason that they account for an average of 1 in every 20 jobs in countries throughout the world. However, this type of business does not exist without problems, especially in a country like Nigeria, west Africa. It is unrealistic to think that conflict would not arise in not-for-profit organizations. Man is by nature competitive and this easily becomes conflict if not properly harnessed and channeled. Since people generally want different things and must compete for scarce resources, conflict is inevitable whether the conflict is over price, wages, working conditions, layoffs, grievances, procedures or budget. It is important to learn to deal with it constructively. This means learning how to develop effective negotiating skills. In management, parlance,

Table 4. Responses to conflict control by administrators and employees in non-profit making organizations.

Question	Extent	Senior staff		Junior staff	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
To what extent do administrators and employee agree to conflict control in the organization?	Great extent	13	(52)	21	(51)
	Moderate extent	9	(36)	14	(34)
	Less extent	3	(12)	6	(15)
	Total	25	(100)	41	(100)

Table 5. Responses on the extent of understanding between administrators and employees.

Question	Extent	Senior staff		Junior staff	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
To what extent does understanding exist between administrators and employees on a particular conflict situation.	Great extent	8	(32)	15	(37)
	Moderate extent	9	(36)	16	(39)
	Less extent	8	(32)	10	(24)
	Total	25	(100)	41	(100)

Table 6. Computation of test statistics.

Respondents	Very significant	Significant	Not significant	Total
Senior staff	13	10	2	25
Junior staff	20	18	3	41

$$P_1 \text{ (Proportion of Senior Staff)} = \frac{13}{25} = 0.52$$

$$P_2 \text{ (Proportion of Junior Staff)} = \frac{20}{41} = 0.49$$

$$Z_{\text{cal}} = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{x \sqrt{\frac{P(1-P_1) + \bar{P}(1-P_2)}{n_1 + n_2}}} = \frac{0.52 - 0.49}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.52) + 0.51(1-0.49)}{21 + 41}}}$$

$$Z_{\text{cal}} = 0.33$$

it can be said that man sometimes needs motivation. He also needs incentives as well as recognition from his superiors to spur him to better activity where these things are lacking in the organization, "man" feels dismayed, dissatisfied and starts to descend and starts asking for his rights. The result is conflict between senior and junior employees. It is not enough for management to always ask junior staff to increase his productivity, but management should endeavour to reward the workers who have put in their best by promoting them or by giving them adequate fringe benefits.

The study finding reveals that there are various causes of conflicts in not-profit making organizations in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. These causes include among others poor communication gap, ethnic and religion differences, power tussle among staff, unequal distribution of rewards and competition over scarce

resources. Our study also reveals that, those conflicts in non-profit making organizations can be resolved when administrators indulge in bargaining, accepting subordinate goals and understanding of employees' wishes and desires in the institutions. Our analyses further revealed that well implemented strategies on conflicts management will ensure operational performances and the provision of better services to the society.

From the analysis, it is revealed that the effects of industrial harmony in the workplace are considered vital and necessary for improved workers efficiency. To all intents and purposes, not-for-profit organizations must take into cognizance several important factors at play in the labour management systems, such as management policy which has been described as one of the major factors of conflict in labor management relations, where the management evolve and normally imposes policies

on labor without consultation and mainly where such a policy is detrimental to the welfare, then it is possible that they can react to the policy.

Another issue that must be discussed is in the area of communication network, which is seen as another determinant of conflicts in not-for-profit organizations, breakdown in communication disrupts effective communication among individuals in the organization and eventually this disrupt industrial harmony. Communication is a very useful tool for effective management and administration. The more effective the channel of communication there are, the more cohesive members of a group becomes. Therefore, it is pertinent for management to always allow a 2 communication for easy resolution of differences. When a union goes on strike, it is the general practice for the union to pick the employer by placing persons at the plant enhances to advertise the dispute and to discourage persons from entering or leaving the premises. During picketing, placards are carried by the office building to inform other workers or the public that the employer is unfair to their union. Although the strikes are usually accompanied by picketing, picketing may take place without a strike. Glueck (2000) defined conflict management as all actions and mechanisms used by executives (or parties in conflict or independent third parties) to keep conflict from interfering with achievement of the enterprise's objective. Kochan, Huber and Cummings (2005) maintained that conflicts with organizations arise as a result of goal incompatibility. The first step, therefore, in developing an effective strategy for conflict resolution in any context lies in recognizing the underlying goals that the parties are seeking in the process and accepting the legitimacy of their efforts to pursue their goals. Studies have indicated that the presence of a super-ordinate goal may serve to reduce dysfunctional conflict. Super ordinate goal "those ends greatly desired by all those caught in dispute or conflict which cannot be attained by the resources and energies of each of the parties separately but *which* require the concerned efforts of all parties involve" leaf, (2000) Craig (2001) contended that a super ordinate goal causes conflicting organizations to resist an external threat to the survival or growth of an inter-organizational set by reducing ethnocentric attitudes, negative stereotypes and opponent - cantered behaviour.

Conclusion

In concluding, it is pertinent to say that a rigorous use of questionnaire method, helped in gaining a deeper understanding of the research problem under investigation. Suffice it to say that, the search of foreign and local literature was quite revealing as it exposed the problems common with conflicts to non-profit organizations. Primary data were collected to substantial the researcher's beliefs which underlined the key research questions and

hypotheses posed. Accompanying questions revealed the need for an effective need for conflict resolution. This must be well managed, if non-profit making organizations are to be result oriented. The conclusion made from the investigations shows that there is an understanding between senior and junior staffs of non-profit making organization on accepting subordinate goals within the organization and the rise of collective bargaining between administrators and employees are avenues for resolving conflict situations.

Recommendations

- i.) Organizations administrators should device effective means for avoiding future conflicts in their organizations, this they can achieve by engaging effective communication between staffers and administrators.
- ii.) Organizations administrators should ensure to properly handle conflict situations by involving in bargaining between employees and administrators representatives.
- iii.) Organizations administrators should ensure to entrench employees goals and expectation in policy making.
- iv.) Organizations administrators should distribute rewards to employees evenly; this should be based on performances, contributions and on productivity of the employees.
- v.) The issue of power tussle among staff should be checked by the administrators. This can be achieved through an effective reward systems based on merit and productivity.

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