

NORTH-SOUTH BOUNDARY DELIMITATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE IDOMA OF THE BENUE PROVINCE AND SOME OF THEIR NEIGHBOURS, 1926-1960

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Abstract

Once upon a time, the vitality of history and the historian in guiding society to fulfil its mission of development and progress was never in doubt. The functionality of history and the historian was related to solving big problems of significant importance to our understanding of ourselves and our past or correct or improve the solutions to those problems worked out by professional historians, among others. Boundary delimitation and conflict had been a major problem nationally and internationally. In the case of the Idoma of the Benue Province, the delimitation of North-South boundary had tremendous implications to kith and kin, deepened political rivalry and it was revealed that there were cordial relations in the economic relations with their neighbours. The artificial creation of boundaries by the colonial state was to meet their prime objective of divide and rule policy and this created a serious problem to the colonized that completely undermined their pre-existing structures. This paper attempts a critique at the way the colonial state partitioned the various independent polities based on tribal, religious and ethnic lines in order to achieve her prime objective of economic pillage. With this obnoxious colonial policy, the Idoma of the Benue Province and some of their neighbours entered into a new phase of their history which was characterized by boundary conflicts, marginalization and some communities relegated to the background.

Introduction

The problems of national and international boundaries are studied in several fields of scholarship. A geographer's main interest is perhaps the relations between boundary lines and various geographical elements, but it can also be the boundaries influence on, for example, society and the economy. A lawyer specialising in international law may concentrate on the interpretational agreements for the regulation of boundary. The political scientist may analyse present day boundary problems possibly in a synchronous context. While the historian studies individual boundary dispute, preferably along a time frame or axis. It should be noted that the study of boundary and its implications are attacked from many angles, methods differ and the end products are of varying values.

This paper examined the socio-economic and political dynamics of North-South boundary delimitation on the Idoma of the Benue Province and some of their neighbours, during the period 1926-1960. Emphases will specifically be laid on the historical process that led to the creation of artificial boundaries by the colonial state in line with the grand imperial plan to divide the people through the divide and rule system based on ethnic and tribal lines. In recent times, land disputes through artificially boundary delimitation had led to conflict among some notable communities in Nigeria, among which include the Tiv and Jukun, Bassa and Ibirra, of central Nigerian area and Bansa and Kamba on the Manbilla Plateau in the present day Taraba state. However, studies into the problems of boundary disputes during the period preceding independence in 1960 are beyond the scope of this present study.

The first step by the European states to partition Africa territory was during the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. African states were partitioned by the various European powers in order to effectively oppress and exploit the material and human resources. The second stage after the Berlin Conference was the conquest and occupation of the independent polities in Africa which led to the imposition of a culture that was alien on the people. Through the imposition of colonialism on the people, provinces, divisions and districts were established. And these were for the imperial grand plan such as administrative conveniences, complete domination, and economic pillage and disunite the people in order to prevent anti-colonial struggle against colonial rule. However, in an attempt to examine and analyse the implications of North-South boundary delimitation on the Idoma of the Benue Province and some of their neighbours, emphasis shall be on the conceptualisation of boundary, the nature and pattern of relations during the pre-delimitation of colonial boundary, and colonial boundary delimitation and the implications on the Idoma and their neighbours over time.

Conceptual Framework

It is imperative to note that concepts are integral to scholarship as they sharpen our understanding of a subject matter. Boundary is one of the important characteristics of a state, and according to Anene, pre-colonial boundaries include natural features such as rocks, rivers and mountains and these boundaries were not adequately defined.¹ These boundaries do not limit the movement of people and was created artificially base on ethnic, tribal and religious lines as the artificial boundaries by the colonial state were created to represent. The advent of colonialism according to Anene² led to the creation of four types of artificial boundaries in Nigeria.

A boundary according to Enahoro³ has been described as the imaginary line which divides two piece of land from one another. It has also been described⁴ as an imaginary line which marks the confines or lines of division of two contiguous estates. Expository as these definitions may seem, the notion of a boundary as being 'imaginary' seem to connote a rather simplistic look, it is a serious question and highly evocative subject in international politics. A boundary must possess some sorts of physical attributes which may be mutually acceptable to the community for which the boundary acts as a limit.⁵

There is an element of definiteness associated with a boundary and to a nation state, it is sacrosanct. As has been put forward by Lord Curzon of Keldleston, just as the protection of home is the most vital care of the private citizen, so is the integrity of her borders the condition of the existence of the state.

It should be noted that some scholars argued that boundaries are of two types. These included natural and artificial boundaries⁶. However, there is a serious debate relating to the existence of

¹ J. C. Anene, *International Boundaries of Nigeria*, Oxford University Press, London, 1970, Pp. 48-104

² J. C. Anene, *The Boundary Arrangement for Nigeria, 1844-1906*, Oxford University, London, 1965, Pp. 83-115

³ L. O. Enahoro, "Nigeria's International Boundaries, 1884-1984: Conflict and Community", Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of Benin, Benin, Nigeria, 1989, P. 5

⁴ Ibid, Pp. 5-10

⁵ Ibid, P. 6

⁶ W. Johnson, *The Role of Political Boundaries*, Geographical Review, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1917, P. 209

natural boundaries, Ehanoro⁷ argues that, describing a boundary as natural and others as artificial are not entirely correct. He emphasised that boundaries marks such as rivers, mountains and valleys separating nations, do not exist in nature or by itself. It always owes its existence to man. When a river in its course spans a population, it does not do so because it wants to act as boundary between people. In fact, the river is often a links or highway used for navigational purposes between two communities, rather than being a boundary. It was man and its activities that ascribed to it the status of a boundary. To buttress this point, it should be noted that since every boundary divides people and not geographical units, all boundaries must in one sense be considered as artificial.

According to Boggs,⁸ four types of boundaries can also be identified, they includes physical, geometric, anthrop-geographical and compounded boundaries. It is significant for us to discuss in brief the above types of boundaries as mentioned above. Physical boundaries are artificial features such as range of mountain, watercourse, and desert area among several others. Geometric boundaries are a line or arc of a circle that can be sighted that indicated a boundary. It can also be meridian boundaries and suchlike. Anthrop-geographical boundaries are associated with various human settlements and culture, for example, linguistic, cultural and historical boundaries. And the compound boundaries define compromises between the various types of boundaries discussed above.

It is more appropriate to some extent to use the word ‘frontiers’ and ‘boundaries’ as if they are inter-changeable. One of the difficulties of trying to distinguish between these two terminologies derives from the fact that not all language had separated words for them. Frontiers and boundaries are not synonymous. A boundary denotes a line whereas a frontier more properly refers to a zone or region. For example, the French commonly use frontiers both for frontiers and boundary, but they could distinguish between frontier and limit. The German, however, have only one word, *Grenze*, to describe either a frontier or a boundary⁹. However, the below are the types of boundaries according to Anene¹⁰, and also Archibong¹¹

1. Regional Boundaries
2. Provincial Boundaries
3. Divisional Boundaries, and
4. District Boundaries

These above boundary types were delimited by the colonial state through tribal, ethnic and religious lines to perpetuate division among the people and also to achieve the imperial grand plan of divide and rule and economic exploitation. A conceptual background of North-South boundary is necessary at this juncture. According to Ugbegili,

⁷ L. O Ehanoro, “International Boundaries, 1884-1984: Conflict and Community”, Op-cit, P. 7

⁸ W. Boggs, *International Boundaries*, Oxford University Press, London, 1940, Pp. 65-109

⁹ K. D, Ladis, *The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries of American Geographers*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 1959, P. 271

¹⁰ J. C Anene, *Artificial Boundaries*, Op-cit, Pp. 46-101

¹¹ D. P Archibong, “Internal Boundary Problems in Nigeria”, A Paper Submitted for the Award of the Membership of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, October, 1987, P. 10

The North-South boundary stretches from the headwater of River Okon in the east through Obudu and then to the Northern edge of Nsukka hills from where it curves in a South-West direction to the Anambra River before it joins the River Niger above the Onitsha. From here it stretches northwards along River Niger to the Southern boundaries of Ajaokuta where it curves north-west through the headwater of River Mimi and then northwards to the middle of Teshi River and finally to the headwater of Oil River in Benin Republic¹².

According to Falola, the Northern boundary...

Roughly stretches from the tip of Mandara Mountain at Pulka, in Gwoza area and it then moves southwards to the Northern edge of Biu Plateau and then North-Westward to Ningi hill up to Confluence of Kaduna¹³.

The establishment of North-South boundary by the colonial state had far reaching consequences. As stated earlier, historical antecedents pointing to the delimitation of colonial boundaries, indicated clearly that the colonial state had never delimitate boundary without having a grand plan of dividing the people based on tribal, religious and ethnic lines in order to achieve economic pillage.

In 1919, the Southern Protectorate was split into nine provinces which included Warri, Abeokuta, Oyo, Ondo, Benin, Onitsha, Owerri, Calabar and Ogoja Provinces.¹⁴ However, in 1926, the Northern boundary was also split into eleven provinces. These included Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Ilorin, Kabba, Kano, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto and Zaria respectively.¹⁵ These boundaries were not altered despite the problems or implications it had on the people of the Nigerian area. It was until 1939 when the colonial state splits the Southern Provinces into Western and Eastern Provinces that it was adjusted. However, the Northern Provinces were left intact without any adjustment.¹⁶ The purpose for the delimitation of colonial boundary according to Adejuyigbe¹⁷ was the need by the colonial state to reduce the delay in the transaction of colonial business, and

¹² S. I. Ugbegili, "Pre-Colonial Dispersals in the Niger-Benue Confluence and Its Implications for Intermixture", in O. Akinwunmi, *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, Nigeria, 2006, P. 231

¹³ T. Falola, *History of Nigeria*, Longman Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria, 1994, P. 104

¹⁴ S. Bayero and I. M. Yaro, "Geo-Political Structures and Nation Building: The Past and the Future in Nigeria, Problems and Prospects", Being a Paper Presented at the 55th Historical Society of Nigeria Conference, at the Theme: Nigeria at 50 "The Challenges of Nation Building, Institute of Development" (IDR), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 25th -27th of October, 2010, P. 5

¹⁵ Ibid, P. 5

¹⁶ Ibid, P. 5

¹⁷ O. Adejuyigbe, "Creation of Regions and Demands for States Before 1960", in O. Adejuyigbe, *Creation of States in Nigeria: A Review of Rational, Demands and Problems Up to 1980*, Federal Printer, Lagos, Nigeria, 1982, P. 32

also for minimization of administrative costs and maximization of returns to the rulers were the main objective for fashioning administrative units during the colonial era.

At this juncture, the concept of inter-group relations will be examined. The term inter-group relation is global phenomenon used by scholars in different aspects of human endeavours to illustrate the implications, benefits or problems emanating from relations between different people.¹⁸ Inter-group relations come in various levels. There are inter-marriages, inter-national relations, Inter-ethnic relation, and inter-state, among several others. All these forms of inter-group relations were borne out of the need that no human group or community is entirely an island to itself, because resources are unevenly distributed.

According to Sherif¹⁹, who conceptualized inter-group relations as a state of friendship or hostility, co-operation or competition, dominance or subordination, alliance or enmity, peace or war between two or more groups and their respective members. This clearly explains the major imperatives of inter-group relations as related to the historical antecedents of the area of study. As noted in some other areas in Nigeria²⁰, inter-group relation often leads to conflict and this hampered development and peaceful co-existence between the various religious and linguistic groups in the area.

As Andreyeva²¹ aptly put it, inter-group relations can emerge both in the form of immediate interactions of the representative of various groups, and in their own extremely mediated impersonal forms. This conceptual framework according to the above, represent a society that is stratified and structured on the basis of leadership. According to Afigbo²², inter-group relations presuppose contact and interactions between groups each of which has an identity, to make some inputs into the relationship. Afigbo's conceptual framework of inter-group relations raises some fundamental questions. One of which is related to conflict as one of the outcomes of inter-group relations. The author failed to note that conflict is fundamental as community and group struggle for scarce resources, conflict abounds and this had been a factor characterizing societies in the world and not only synonymous to Africa.

Though, Afigbo tried to explain that the concept of inter-group relations make some inputs into the relationship. It is quite correct, but going by the invasion, conquest and imposition of colonial domination on the independent polities of the Nigerian area, the relationship between the colonized and the colonizers was not cordial. There is no impute whatsoever that the colonial state imputed

¹⁸ O. Y. Saad, "Colonialism Rule and Inter-Group Relations in Ilorin, 1900-1060," Ph. D Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2007, P. 35

¹⁹ O. Akinwunmi, *Inter-Group Relations In Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Op-cit, P. 11

²⁰ Area in Nigeria such as Kaduna and Plateau had been affected by ethnic and religious conflicts which has hampered development and peaceful co-existence. The Maitasene crises of 1980's was a major crises that affected Kaduna and in Jos, the ethno-Religious led to demographic changes in which Igbo traders and other traders migrated back to the eastern region for safety and all these affected the nature of their developments. It should be noted that struggle for resources was a major factor leading to conflict in this parts of the country in relation to marginalization of some groups in a given geographical location.

²¹ O. Akinwunmi, *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Op-cit, P. 11

²² A. E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their Neighbours in South Eastern Nigeria up to 1953*, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1972, P. 18

on the colonized. Rather, the metropolitan capital were oppressing and exploiting the material and human resources of the colonized.

According to Nwabueze²³, he conceptualized inter-group relations as a study focuses essentially on the series of methods, strategies or approaches to the understanding of separate groups dynamics, of diffusing tension between different group and creating or building bridges across potential or actual conflict relationships, or directly promoting harmony. It should be noted that the concept of inter-group relations as examined above, have attempted a synthesis, and actually unravelled three important characteristics of inter-group relations. These included understanding the dynamics of the groups, imputes on each group to the development of the society and the outcome in terms of possible conflict arising from their relationship.

However, the Idoma of the Benue Province and their neighbours for centuries had been inter-dependency. The relationship between these groups took place in trade and commerce, diplomatic relations, religious values, education and several others. It is against this backdrop that inter-group relations was conceptualized as a holistic paradigm by which varying groups of people actualized their socio-economic, cultural and political aspirations through uneven distribution of resources and comparative advantages leading to neither 'development or conflict' as the case may be.

Pre-Colonial Boundary and Inter-Group Relations

The relationship between the Idoma and their neighbours during the pre-colonial era was fairly cordial. In other words, it does not mean that there were no forms of hostilities resulting from their contact. However, hostilities do arise most especially over land for farming and other economic activities and also conflict of beliefs and customs during the pre-colonial era. However, these hostilities do not took the shape of tribal, religious and ethnic dimensions as propagated by the colonial state during the demarcation or delimitation of boundaries. Evidence exists that the Igbo who settled among the Idoma in the division were not in any form subdued by the Idoma. They don't pay any form of taxes, or pay allegiance to the Och'Idoma in Idoma society. In fact, according to Okpe²⁴, they were regarded not as aliens but as clan members and were given all the privileges enjoyed by the Idoma.

The Igbo traders who came to Idoma Division for commercial activities entrusted their unsold goods under the watch of the Idoma for safety until the next market days since the market were periodic for every four days intervals²⁵. This was a system that can only take place under a certain level of trust and intimacy. This level of trust was shattered with the advent of colonial boundaries. Because of the consequences of North-South boundary delimitation was the transformation of the society based on the motives of colonialism. Which were to oppress and exploit the people through the divide and rule system which was sustained by the delimitation of boundary.

According to oral traditions, the Idoma and their Igbo, Igala, Tiv and Yala neighbours had a long history of contact or a relationship with great antiquity. Traditions of origin in relation to the origin

²³ O. Akinwunmi, *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and the 20th Centuries*, Op-cit, P. 15

²⁴ O. O. Okpe Jr, "Colonialism and the Changing Nature of Idoma Relations with their Neighbours", in O. Akinwunmi, *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Aboki Producers Ltd, Makurdi, 2006, P. 299-320

²⁵ Oral interview with Obande Okewu, c. 63, a Trader, interviewed in Otukpa on the 16-10-2015

of Ai-Odo clan among the Idoma revealed that they migrated from the Igbo country to their present homeland²⁶. Colonial reports²⁷ also revealed that the Ai-Odo clan of Western Idomaland migrated from the Igbo country to their present homeland. However, this indicated that the Idoma and Igbo had a long history of interaction built on historical association that shaped their relationship up to the present times. The boundary delimitations carried out by the colonial state provided the basis for antagonistic coexistence²⁸.

Culturally, there were values borrowed by the Idoma from their neighbours and there seems to be an overlap in the language spoken in the area. The entire region where these people lived or inhabited are located within the general Kwa languages group, but there is a clear indication that of language borrowing as in the case of the dialects of the Igbo speaking peoples. For example, element of language borrowings are found among the Idoma-Igala areas and the Idoma-Igbo areas. For example, the use of Agbo by the Idoma was said to have been borrowed from the Igbo.²⁹ While the institution of the *Alekwu* and the use of masquerade along the Benue Valley indicated that they were wide range of cultural contacts between the Idoma and their Igala and Igbo neighbours prior to the advent of British colonial rule. According to Apata³⁰, among the Idoma, Igala, Nupe and Igbo, there were living traits of cultural contacts. These included the beating of drums and the blowing of flutes, wide use of tribal marks, the art of carving, weaving and blacksmithing are very common among the people and this to a large extent showed the extent of borrowing of socio-economic and cultural values between the various groups in the Middle Benue Valley.

In reality, delimitation of boundaries by the colonial state and its impact became more evident with the establishment of colonial administration. Communities which had lived as one discovered a new phenomenon in their existence. Diver's methods and principles which truncated the pre-existing socio-economic and political order for the interest of the metropolitan state as we shall see in the course of the study emanated. The pre-colonial relationship between the Idoma and their Igbo, Igala, Tiv and Yala neighbours remained fairly cordial. It was the advent of colonial boundaries that set the ground running for the conflict between the Idoma of Benue Province and the Ngbo and Ezza of Abakaliki District of Onitsha Province as we shall see in the course of the study.

North-South Boundary Delimitation and Its Implications on the Idoma of the Benue Province and Some of their Neighbours, 1926-1960

Prior to the artificial creation, adjustment and re-adjustment of boundaries by the colonial states, the Idoma of the Benue Province and their neighbours had fairly cordial relations. In other words, there had been no major conflict or crises between the Idoma and their neighbours as compared to the boundary conflicts between the Tiv and their neighbours or between Kabba and Ilorin in the Western Provinces. The advent of colonial boundary delimitation was not only seen as a threat to the unity that existed among the various groups of peoples in the area of study, but as a strategy

²⁶ Oral interview with Ameh Abah, c. 75, ex-military personnel, interviewed in Otukpa on the 16-10-2015

²⁷ Acc No INT/ASS/1/5 Intelligent Report of Otukpa District, Idoma Division, by Capt. G. D. C Money, 1926

²⁸ O. O. Okpe Jr, Colonialism and the Changing Nature of Inter-Group Relations, Op-cit, P. 343

²⁹ NAK, Acc No. INT/AR/1/6 Intelligent Report on Otukpa District by Capt. G. D. C Money, Op-cit

³⁰ A. M. Yusufu, "The Igala and Some of their Neighbours in the 19th and 20th Centuries", in O. Akinwunmi (eds), *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria during the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Aboki Publishers Ltd, Makurdi, 2006, P. 213

by the colonial state to divide and rule the people through ethnic, tribal and religious lines. However, the focus of this sub-section is to examine the implications of North-South boundary delimitation on the Idoma of the Benue Province and some of their neighbours during the period 1918 to 1960.

According to Anene³¹, Africans during the boundary making were passive and also negotiation and consultations were made prior to the delimitation of colonial boundaries. The argument by Anene was not entirely correct. The colonial state does not seek, negotiate or make consultations with the colonized for delimitation of boundaries. The colonized also resists colonial boundaries imposition in some areas in Nigeria. Area such as Adamawa, systematic resistance was carried out against the Anglo-German boundary delimitation. In the consequence, boundary pillars and fence raised by the British and German colonial states were all destroyed by the colonized.³² Also, in Obudu District of Ogoja Province³³, the indigenous population removed all the pillars that had been erected by the Anglo-German boundary Commission, as an attempt to sabotage the efforts to maintain European types of boundary. Be that as it may, Anene's position and view on African being passive to colonial boundary making was not entirely correct, because Anene failed to put into consideration the historical antecedents of the people whose attitude was not passive as revealed by other sources. In other words, Anene was quick to make conclusions without proper consultations and study to contend that the colonialists were fair in the process of boundary making. To further amplify the view by Anene, it would be pertinent for him to undertake a detailed study of certain units of the boundaries in order to bring out vividly the complex nature of European diplomacy and the extent to which interest of the indigenous population was considered, most especially taking into account the historical antecedents of boundaries delimitation by the colonial state within the Southern and Northern Provinces.

Environmental determinists³⁴ held the view that the equatorial forest region of the Southern Nigerian region hindered interactions between the Igbo and their neighbours. However, this assertion is not entirely correct, because the human society, no matter the nature of the environment cannot be in isolation from other groups. The Igbo had been in constant relations with the Idoma as revealed by some scholars.³⁵

One of the implications of North-South boundary delimitation was that some Idoma communities such as Etteand Agilawere delimited into the Southern Protectorate. While others communities such as Otukpo, Okpokwu, Ugboju, Oyangede among several others were in the Northern

³¹ J. C Anene, *International Boundaries of Nigeria, 1885-1960: The Formation of an Emergent Africa Nation*, Longman Publishers, 1960, P. xv

³² Ibid, Pp. 67-108

³³ NAB, File No. 8704 CSE/1/854572, Memo from Divisional Officer, Mamfe to the Senior Residents Cameroons Province, Buer, 1926, P. 5

³⁴ A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chief: Indirect Rule in Southern Nigeria, 1891-1929*, Longman Publishers Ltd, 1972, P. 8

³⁵ A. E. Afigbo, (check footnote 20) he maintained that the high forest of the south hindered the relations between the Igbo and their Neighbours. However, Afigbo tried to debunk the notion, because it is not possible for a society not to interact with one another. Even animal in the forest interact with each other despite the tick forest they are inn. A complex being such as man cannot be detained by forest, because prior to the 8th Century man had knowledge of Iron technology and through iron working man revolutionized farming and through this process bushes were cleared for agriculture and through the same methods forest are cleared to make road such as foot path which aided communication between the various communities in southern Nigerian area.

Protectorate.³⁶ The Southern part of Idoma Division was merged with Onitsha Province up to 1924. The Northern part of Idoma was also merged with Munshi Province up to 1924. It is interesting to note that the factor that led to this grouping by the colonial administrators was the desire to implement Lugard's pet policy of grouping, such as towns and villages, regardless of their pre-colonial cultural and political structures and antecedents³⁷. There was an imperial grand plan by the British colonialists also to divide a people that were living in peace within a defined area. This had a far-reaching consequence on the people of Idoma. It denied them the opportunity to rule and control their resources. External control on resources was the major factor for colonialism. One of the implications of this on the Idoma of the Benue Province and their Igbo neighbour was that the Native Authority System in Nsukka wielded considerable control on the Idoma. It should be noted that the Idoma during this period of British colonial conquest in 1898 to the final establishment of districts in 1927, the Idoma inhabiting the Southern parts of Idoma Division resolved their disputes in the Native Authority in Onitsha Province.³⁸

It should be emphasised also that the delimitation of the North-South boundary co-opted some Idoma communities into Southern Protectorate. The Ette, Otukpa, Owurkpa, Orakam and Agila communities were merged with the Igbo in the Southern Protectorate. In 1910, a boundary demarcation expedition led by Captain Byng-Hall passed through Ugboju and Onyangede to link up with their Idoma counterparts in Southern Nigeria³⁹. These peoples were agitating to be parts of the Idomaland in Northern Protectorate, because of they were marginalized by the Igbo communities. The Ette and Agila communities in Igbo country were Idoma by their origin, and they have been marginalized by the Igbo communities. They don't have access to land, even community land were not accessible to them, except through close friends and associates whose wishes to permit the usage. According to an informant, he stated that...

We are denied so many opportunities in Nsukka area and Enugu state as a whole. Our children were not given the opportunity to any good things. It is the Igbo people that enjoyed all the things. Some of them, when a minor quarrel broke out they will tell you to go your state, that what are you doing in another man's land⁴⁰.

This commonest stereo-typical characterization of the Idoma by the Igbo is that the Idoma were not indigenes of the area they found themselves at Nsukka in the present day Igbo country. However, an Igbo trader opines that...

³⁶ NAK, MARKPROF, AR/INT/1/5 Idoma Division, by Capt. G. D. C Money, 1926

³⁷ Kirk-Green, A.H.M. "A Review of the Exploration of the River Benue with Special Reference to the Administration of the Royal Niger Company. JHSN Vol., I, No. 3, 1958, P. 49

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ V. G O'kwu, "Idomaland Under Colonial Rule, 1900-1960", Seminar Paper Presented at the Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1974, P. 9

⁴⁰ Oral interview with Akor Celestine, c 64, a Farmer, interviewed in Nsukka, on the 13-10-2015

The Idoma are Hausa alike, they are referred to as ‘‘Oyen Hausa’’, meaning Hausa alike. They were called so because they behave similar like the Hausa people⁴¹.

From the above, it should be noted that the perception of some peoples in the Southern Protectorate was that all ethnic group in the Northern Protectorate were Hausa. They refer to peoples from the North as such and this is not correct, partly because they were varying ethnic groups in the Northern Protectorate that were not Hausa, Such as Idoma, Bajju, Fulbe, Tiv, Nupeand several other ethnic groups. This ethnic groupwere not Hausa and a general perception of some of the peoples in Southern Protectorate is contrary to this view.

However, prior to the creation of artificial boundaries, relations between both peoples were fairly cordial⁴². The question of identity was more pronounced with the creation of North-South boundaries and the adjustment and re-adjustment. It should be noted that evidence available shows that the creation of boundary compounded the problems in the Nigerian area. And one of the outcomes was the conflict and stereotypes among the various groups in the focus area.

Despite the fact that boundary dispute had been a common feature of African societies during and after colonial rule. In the case of the Idoma ad their neighbours, boundary conflicts was also an important area of concern to this current study. The Agila people of Idoma Division came into serious boundary disputes with the Ngbo of Abakaliki District in Onitsha Province. The causes of the conflict was as a result of some Idoma hunters went on a hunting expedition and they embarked on the burning of bushes which resulted in burning down of some Ezza houses and this escalated into serious conflict that led to the death of six Idoma persons and affected areas such as Igumale in Idoma Division⁴³.

It was also discovered that four yam bans and fifty six Ezza’s family houses were burnt by the Idoma. This incident occurred in Aganacha area within Agila District of Idoma Division. The disputes between these two communities re-surfaced in the post-colonial era. In 8 March, 1986, at about 3 O’clock in the afternoon,⁴⁴ one AgilaAlege and nine others reported to the police station at Agila that the Ezza from Ebonyi state burnt down ten of their houses. In the course of the investigation, it was revealed that six Ezza were murdered by the people of Agila and this complicated the already tense situation. However, in the attempt to solve the crises, a buffer zone was carved out which was six kilometre into Benue state⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Oral Interview with Chinyere Omah, c. 46, a trader, interviewed in Nsukka on the 13-10-2015

⁴² O. O. Okpe Jr. ‘‘Colonialism and the Changing Nature of Idoma Relations with their Neighbours’’, in O. Akinwunmi, *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, 2006, Pp. 297-321

⁴³ D. P Archibong, ‘‘Internal Boundary Problems in Nigeria’’, Op-cit, P. 10

⁴⁴ Ibid, P. 11

⁴⁵ Ibid, P. 11

It should be noted that factions of Otukpa communities of Western Idomal society were merged with the Igala Division during and after the boundary delimitation by the colonial state⁴⁶. According to an informant,

The delimitation of boundary that led to creation of what was now Kogi State had not resulted into a serious conflict as we used to hear of peoples in other areas, because we and the Idoma have lived together for a long time before I was born and we speak similar language, Inter-Married, lived in the same compound as family and goes to the same market places every market days without any major conflict⁴⁷

The delimitation of boundaries by the colonial state had far reaching implications on the Idoma of the Benue Province and their Igbo, Igala, Tiv and Ogaja neighbours. As stated earlier, trade routes were blocked, which affected commercial activities between the various groups in the Provinces. It is pertinent to note that the delimitation of boundaries by the British colonialists resulted into conflict between the Idoma and the Igbo, particularly the Ezzacommunity in present day Ebonyi state. The Igala sees the Idoma as ‘brothers’ and this was partly because of their histories which predated their migration from their ancestral home.

North-South boundary delimitation, with the creation of divisions, districts and the subsequent re-adjustments of boundaries by the colonial state also led to the development of ethnocentrism and tribalism between the Idoma and their Igbo neighbour. These had a far reaching consequence on the pre-existing relationship that existed between them. This problem was further compounded by the creation of states in Nigeria. As stated earlier, the North-South boundary was delimited through religious, ethnic and tribal lines in order for the metropolitan state to exploit the material and human resources. These imposed on the colonized, that marginalization of smaller group is necessary through the control of resources. This was the case of the Idoma-Igbo and Idoma-Tiv relations. The Idoma communities in Igbo country such as the Ette and Agila communities, who by the virtue of the North-South boundary delimitation found themselves in Southern Protectorate, were marginalized and relegated to the background.

Boundary delimitation led to the blockage of trade routes. In other words, boundary delimitation and their policies were partly antithetical to the age-long commercial networks between the Idoma and their neighbours. The grand plan of the colonial state was to divide communities from each other hitherto truncated the earlier commercial or trade relations through obnoxious policies such as taxation and restrictions of people’s movement among several others. Trading activities was affected by the delimitation of boundaries by the colonial state. For, example boundary pillars were erected to express the limit of movement of people for trading activities and other socio-economic functions. In other words, the Idoma communities readily saw these pillars as embodiment of their

⁴⁶ Some Otukpa people were merged with the Igala in Igala Division. They had been over the years agitating for being marginalized, as continues threat to their existence was forcefully carried out by the Igala or the host community. They were not given any benefits in the state and they were agitating to be part of the Idoma in Benue State.

⁴⁷ Oral Interview with Otache Emaikwu, c. 68, a farmer, interviewed in Aloomo, along Otukpa road, on the 14-09-2015

loss of freedom of movement and free interaction with their kin and kith or with the Igbo communities in Southern Protectorate⁴⁸.

However, with the establishment of railway in Otukpo in Idoma Division in 1921⁴⁹, the colonial state brought the Igbo workers from Southern Protectorate and gave them positions such as supervisors and few of them as labourers. According to oral account,

The Igbo that came with the white people to construct the railways spoke English language and they were assisting the white people in supervising the Idoma and other peoples working in the railway. The Igbo people, most especially those that are educated were in close associate with the white people. As such they held positions in the railways⁵⁰

Socio-economic relations between the Igbo and the Idoma can partly be understood by the position the colonial state took by relating with the various groups in the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, most especially the Igbo contact with the early missionaries. The Idoma of the Benue Province were regarded by the British colonialists as “primitive”.⁵¹ And the Idoma that inhabited the Western parts of Idoma Division were referred to as by the British imperialist as being in a “semi intoxicative state”⁵² These were some of the propaganda used by the colonial administrators in Idoma Division in order to perpetuate their evil, by exploitation and oppression. The Igbo were also regarded as segmented society. However, the Igbo’s were regarded by the colonial state as being more educated than the Idoma. This was a factor that gave the Igbo a superior identity over the Idoma at railway station and the schools established during the colonial era. The Igbo’s were the earlier teachers brought from the southern parts of Nigeria by the colonial state to teach in the schools earlier established in Idoma Division.⁵³ This was so because of the earlier contact the Igbo had with the Christian missionaries than the Idoma. The advent of colonial education in the Northern parts of the Idoma Division was dated to 1920’s, while the western and southern parts of the Division, western education was introduced from 1934 onwards.⁵⁴

In the case of the Igbo, colonial education was introduced as far back as 1898⁵⁵. This was because of the proximity of the Igbo to the coast. Colonial reports⁵⁶, revealed that teachers in the early

⁴⁸ Oral Interview with Okewu Attah, c 79, Ex-Native Authority Worker, interviewed in Owurkpa on the 17-10-2015

⁴⁹ G. Ode, “The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division, 1908-1960”, M. A. Thesis, Department of History, A. B. U. Zaria, 1982 and also see I. O Ediba, “Colonialism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960” Op-cit, Pp. 22-106

⁵⁰ Oral Interview with Okpe Obande, c. 87 and above, Ex-Native Authority worker, interviewed in Otukpo, on the 14-10-2015

⁵¹ NAK, MARKPROF, Acc No. AR/INT/1/5 Intelligence Report on Idoma Division, by Capt. G. D. C. Money, 1926, and also see V. G. Ukwu, “The Establishment of Colonial Administration in Idomaland, 1921-1930”, in *Savannah*, Vol. 5. No. 1, 1972, P. 43

⁵² NAK, MARKPROF, Acc. No. AR/ASS/1/6, Assessment Report on Otukpa District in Idoma Division, 1926

⁵³ I. O. Ediba, “Colonialism in Nigeria: A Case of the Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960” Ibid, Pp. 37-186 and also see S. Adakole, “Otukpa Under Colonial Rule: A Study of Colonialism in A Nigerian Society, 1908-1960”, M. A Thesis, Department of History, A. B. U, Zaria, 2014, P. 180

⁵⁴ NAK, MARKPROF, Acc No. AR/ASS/1/6 Assessment Reports on Otukpa District, Idoma Division, Op-cit

⁵⁵ O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1994, P.

⁵⁶ NAK, MARKPROF, Acc No. 1, Idoma Division, 1936

schools established by the Christian Missions in Idomaland were mostly Igbo. In other words, the teachers in the schools were predominantly of Igbo origin at the earlier stage of the establishment of the schools in Idoma Division. Consequently, however, stereo-typical characterization on the part of the Igbo's that the Idoma were inferior people to them. A people that had been interacting without such ethnocentric and bias notion suddenly through the boundary dichotomy by the colonial state, a sense of disunity, hatred and biasness became the new order. Although, there were moments of unavoidable difference and open hostilities between the both communities, these relations endured nevertheless, through adjustment, consensus and adaptations. North-South boundary and its subsequent adjustment and re-adjustment wrapped the indigenous population into stereotyping and through this process ethnicity, tribalism and struggle for resources prevailed in the relations between the Idoma and the Igbo. According to Y. B Usman, all political boundaries are artificial, because they are politically demarcations of territories made by political authorities for political purposes.⁵⁷ From the above, it is clear that the colonial boundary were delimited for the British to achieve their grand plan of oppression and exploitation of the people through divide and rule system and the entrenchment of ethnocentrism on the colonized as in the case of the Idoma-Igbo relations.

The delimitation of boundaries by the colonial state also creates a number of far reaching implications on the Idoma and their neighbours. Colonial taxation was a major aspect of the indirect rule system, which was, in some districts higher in incidence than others. The incidence of colonial taxation made it imperative for some Igbo to migrate to Otukpo District and other districts in Idoma Division in order to be employed in the railways station from 1918-1921.⁵⁸ On this level of inter-group relations, the colonial state did not have a uniform taxes for all colonized in the Nigeria. It was reported according to colonial records that incidence of tax was less in Idoma Division to compare with Nsukka Division.

The high incidence of tax in Nsukka Division of Onitsha Province made it possible for Igbo migrants to migrate to Idoma Division. Other factors responsible for this are many. However, two fundamental factors will be mention. The first was the high incidence of tax in some parts of Igbo areas, and the second was the establishment of railway that afforded the Igbo with the opportunity of accessing British colonial currency and gain employment. However, the creation of divisions led to administrative conveniences, divide and rule and grouping of peoples which also gave room for easy assessment and collection of taxes. Decennial population or head count of the colonized were carried out, and in this, the wealth of each division or district were assess. Through which taxes were collected for the interest of the metropolitan state. Boundary delimitation by the colonial administrators was a serious factor that causes division among the people.

In 1898, when the decision was reached by the colonial state to amalgamate the Northern and Southern Protectorates, boundaries between pre-colonial polities already existed. However, when the British colonialists determine boundaries, they contemplated various factors which they argued. They justified boundary creation as a structure that will assist the colonized population that does not have a define territory. And the territory of the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno had been acquired through conquest and signing of treaties. Substantial areas were mapped out from the

⁵⁷ Y. B. Usman, *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria*, Published by A. B. U Press Ltd, Zaria, Nigeria, 1994, P. 27

⁵⁸ See A. J. Ebute, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland, 1908-1960," Op-cit, P. 162

Sokoto, Borno and Mandara regions respectively.⁵⁹ The deceit by the colonial state remains on noticed when a colonial official stated that, in those days we just took a paper, a blue pencil and a ruler and we put down at Old Calabar and drew that blue line to Yola. I recollect thinking when I was sitting, having an audience with the Emir of Yola, surrounded by his tribe that it was a very good thing that he did not know, that I with a blue pencil had drawn a line through his territory⁶⁰.

A general overview of the implications of boundary delimitation in Nigeria, it is important for us to note that the delimitation of boundary between the Northern Protectorate and the colony of Lagos, Ilorin was excluded from Lagos administration and the extension of the colony of Lagos authority over Yorubaland. In consequences, this resulted in the split of the kingdom of Ekiti into two separate parts. The first was Owo which was grouped in the Northern part and Afenmai was in the Southern parts of Nigeria respectively⁶¹. The prime objective of the British to delimitate this boundary was to place both banks of the River Niger and Benue under British administration, in order to exercise the laws that facilitated the apprehension and punishment of offenders.⁶²

Delimitation of North-South boundary and its subsequent re-adjustments through creation of provinces, divisions and districts led to the predilection of the indirect rule system among the Idoma and their Igbo neighbour which was an aspect that defined their relations. Indirect rule was a system that gave the indigenous chief “power” to interpret and implements colonial policies through the Native Authority institution⁶³. It should be noted that the system of indirect rule was only applicable within a define boundary under a chief or emir as the case may be. The colonial state was aware that when they have a firm control of the political aspect of the colonized, exploitation of the material and human resources will be achieved. To do this, delimitation of boundary was carried out from 1918 by Captain F. F. W. Byng-Hall, whose tricks and cunning led to the creation of divisions and districts in Southern and Northern Provinces.

However, the implication of the above was that each divisions or districts in the Northern Provinces were received an alien political structure that disrupted the pre-existing political structures. The indirect rule system was alien to the Idoma and their neighbours. And through this system, warrant chief⁶⁴ was established by the colonial state among the Igbo, Tiv and the Idoma respectively to assists in economic pillage of the colonized. In the case of the Idoma, the colonial administrators categorized them as “Primitive society” because of the absence of centralized political structure and in this regards an individual was selected among a lineage or clan as the District Heads. This was in the case of AbutuObekpa in Otukpa District in Idoma Division⁶⁵. Boundary delimitation by the British administrators gave (British colonialists) the opportunity to rule through the divide and rule system through grouping of people within a defined territory neither called district or

⁵⁹ J. C. Anene, *The International Boundaries of Nigeria*, Longman Publishers Ltd, London, 1970, Pp. 67-158

⁶⁰ A. S. Muhammed, “Boundary Making in Nigeria”, in *The Nigerian Forum*, The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 7, October 1981, P. 10

⁶¹ L. S. Baba, “The Boundary Question in Amalgamated Nigeria: A Case of Ogori and Magongo, C. 1918,” A Paper Presented at the Department of History, A. B. U, Zaria, 2010, P. 6

⁶² Ibid, P. 6

⁶³ A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southern Nigeria, 1891-1929*, Longman Publishers, London, 1972, Pp. 78-142

⁶⁴ Ibid, P. 37

⁶⁵ S. Adakole, “Otukpa Under Colonial Rule: A Study of Colonialism in A Nigerian Society, 1908-1960,” Op-cit, P. 84

division. With the formation of the Idoma Central Native Authority institution in 1946 and Otukpo as headquarter, some Idoma communities outside the Idoma Division such as the Ete were not inclusive. They were under the Nsukka Division of the Onitsha Province⁶⁶. In other words, some Idoma communities were excluded from the political affairs of the Idoma Division consequently due to boundary delimitation that led to the creation of Idoma and Nsukka Divisions respectively.

The present study is not, however, a general examination of the implications of South-North boundary delimitation and its subsequent adjustment and re-adjustments by the colonial state. Rather, it is restricted to the relations between the Idoma and their neighbours in their present location. The choice of the North-South boundary and adjustments and its implications had some advantages, two of which will be mentioned. First, the Northern boundary has not been adjusted by the post-colonial government, leading to series of communal and boundary clashes among various communities in Nigeria, most especially, the Agila-Ngbo of Central Nigeria, Jukun and Tiv of central Nigeria among several others⁶⁷. Secondly, since the appearance in 1970 of J. C. Anene's pioneer work on boundary in Nigeria⁶⁸ and Y. B. Usman's work⁶⁹ on the Myth of the Amalgamation of 1914, scholars have neglected the study of boundary delimitation and the implications on the unity of Nigeria. It is against this premise that this study does not claim to be an exhaustive one, partly because state creation which was a post-colonial development had impinges on the unity of the people of the Nigerian area and further researchers will assists us to unravel and proffersolution to inter-communal clashes through boundary adjustment and struggle for resources.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, the paper attempted a synthesis on North-South boundary delimitation and its implications on the Idoma of the Benue Province and their neighbours during the period 1926-1960. From the findings however, it was revealed that the pre-existing structures were undermined by the colonial state. And through boundary delimitation, conflict or feuds were aggravated, which after the attainment of independence in 1960 it became a serious national question in Nigeria and Africa indeed. However, it is not enough to claim that the pre-colonial relation was entirely cordial or romanticized, there existed conflicts, but not as antagonistic as portrayed in colonial historiography. Taking together therefore, colonial boundary delimitation had impinges negatively on the Idoma and their neighbours, leading to the establishment of stereotypical characterization which defined aspects of their relations, most especially socio-political relations.

⁶⁶ NAK, MARKPROF, Acc No. AR/ASS/1/9 Assessment Report on Idoma Division, 1934

⁶⁷ H. Mahmoud, "Inter-Ethnic Relations and Inter-Ethnic Conflict", in A. M. Yakubu, *Northern Nigeria: A Century of Transformation*, Arewa House, A. B. U, Zaria, 2005, P. 451

⁶⁸ C. J. Anene, *International Boundaries of Nigeria*, London Publishers, 1970 and also see J. C. Anene, *The Boundary Arrangement for Nigeria, 1884-1906*, Ph. D Thesis, Oxford University, London, 1965

⁶⁹ Y. B. Usman, *Misrepresentation of Nigeria*, A. B. U Press Ltd, Zaria, 1994

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AbutuObekpaStepen	7 4 Y e a r s	Ipole, Otukpa	Retired Custom Officer	27-12-2016
UcheOkpara	7 8 Y e a r s	N s u k k a	T r a d e r	8-01-2016
OkopiOchefu	6 9 Y e a r s	O r o k a m	F a r m e r	21-12-2015
ObandeOkewu	6 3 Y e a r s	O t u k p a	T r a d e r	16-10-2015
A m e h A b a h	7 5 Y e a r s	O t u k p a	Ex-Military Personnel	16-10-2015
ChinyereOmah	4 6 Y e a r s	N s u k k a	T r a d e r	13-10-2015
OtacheEmaikwu	6 8 Y e a r s	A l o m a	F a r m e r	14-09-2015
OkewuAttah	7 9 Y e a r s	O w u r k p a	Ex-Native Authority Worker	17-10-2016
OkpeObande	8 7 Y e a r s	O t u k p o	Ex-Native Authority Worker	14-10-2015
OkleyinOhemu	8 5 Y e a r s	O t u k p a	F a r m e r	04-01-2016
James Itodo	7 3 Y e a r s	O t u k p a	F a r m e r	05-01-2016
ObajeOkpe	8 3 Y e a r s	O y a n g e d e	F a r m e r	18-12-2015
Benson Chukwuemeka	7 2 Y e a r s	N s u k k a	Trader and a Farmer	09-01-2016

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