

Routledge Studies in Peace, Conflict and Security in Africa

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY AND SECURITY IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Edited by
David Ehrhardt, David Oladimeji Alao
and M. Sani Umar



Traditional Authority and Security in Contemporary Nigeria

Exploring the contentious landscape of Nigeria's escalating violence, this book describes the changing roles of traditional authorities in combatting contemporary security challenges.

Set against a backdrop of widespread security threats – including insurgency, land disputes, communal violence, regional independence movements, and widespread criminal activities – perhaps more than ever before, Nigeria's conventional security infrastructure seems ill-equipped for the job. This book offers a fresh, empirical analysis of the roles of traditional authorities – including kings, Ezes, Obas, and Emirs – who are often hailed as potent alternatives to the state in security governance. It complicates the assumption that these traditional leaders, by virtue of their customary legitimacy and popular roots, are singularly effective in preventing and managing violence. Instead, in exploring their creative adaptation to governance roles after a dramatic postcolonial downturn, this book argues that traditional leaders can augment, but not substitute, the state in addressing insecurity.

This book's in-depth analysis will be of interest to researchers and policy makers across African and security studies, political science, anthropology, and development.

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In honour of all the innocent victims of violent conflicts and insecurity in Nigeria.



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Preface

This book is part of the Tradition4Peace (T4P) project that focuses on the changing roles of traditional authorities in security, conflict, and peace-building in Nigeria. The book began as a digital experiment, a fully online collaboration, in the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would not have been possible without the unwavering support and commitment of our partners.

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Introduction



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1 Traditional Authority, Security Governance, and Nigerian Agency

David Ehrhardt, David Oladimeji Alao, and M. Sani Umar

1.1 Introduction¹

As Nigerians come to grips with the result of their seventh consecutive national election, President Tinubu must ready his government to face a complex set of security threats. In the northeast, remnant splinters from the Boko Haram insurgency continue to roam the countryside and even control small areas. From the northwest, rural banditry has spread over large parts of the country, interacting in complicated ways with other forms of competition and conflict, in particular those between herders and farming communities. The southeast is witnessing increasing agitation from separatist movements, most notably the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Throughout the south, a number of former university cults have transformed into increasingly globalised criminal networks, involved in human trafficking, drugs, and cyber-crime. Kidnapping has become a veritable industry, threatening people's sense of safety in public spaces throughout the country. And while insecurity *per se* is not new to Nigerians, perhaps more than ever before there is a sense that the official state apparatus – security services, police, and military – is not equipped to deal with these complex and multifaceted threats (Mustapha & Ehrhardt, 2018).

One response to this challenge has been to look for do-it-yourself alternatives for government provision (van Zeijl, 2022), from private security guards to community policing and vigilantes. Traditional rulers are hailed as a central part of these security solutions: their legitimacy and popular roots would make them well-suited for a range of roles from dispute settlement and community policing to intelligence gathering and even commanding (government-sanctioned) vigilante groups (“National Security Summit Report,” 2021). This is by no means uncontested. Though in recent years, there appears to be a shift towards support for traditional leaders – both in public perceptions and political discourse – there also remains widespread skepticism and disappointment in traditional authority, as well as serious contestation and protracted court-cases around the actions of specific traditional rulers (Logan & Katenda, 2021).

This volume explores how the roles of traditional authorities in conflict and security have changed since independence, with a focus on the democratic



Figure 1.1 Map of Nigeria Indicating the Locations of the Case Studies by Chapter Number. https://www.cia.gov/static/a390ee3483813d3c95545e73f35e5e2b/Nigeria_Administrative.jpg

“Fourth Republic” that began in 1999. Using unique empirical materials from all major regions of the country, the chapters each discuss specific traditional authority systems and analyse their efforts to govern security: that is, to use their authority to reduce violence in society.

This introduction will outline the key questions that run through the chapters in this book. All of them are written by Nigerian experts, from different academic disciplines, and together paint a rich and nuanced picture of the way traditional authorities have continuously reinvented themselves under Nigeria’s various post-colonial regimes – as they have often done in the

past (Parker, 2023). Nigeria's traditional rulers are not unique in their persistence and creative reinvention; throughout Africa traditional authority has "resurged" after the onslaught it faced from colonialism and post-independence politics (e.g. Englebert 2002; Ubink, 2008). Although the legal specifics differ from country to country, traditional leaders play key roles in governance virtually everywhere, from land management in South Africa (Ainslie & Kepe, 2016) to electoral mobilisation in Ethiopia (Tronvoll & Hagman, 2011) and agricultural policy in Ghana (Sova et al., 2016). Traditional leaders' engagement with conflict and security is also common, from dispute settlements in Sierra Leone (Sawyer, 2008) to controlling vigilante activities in Malawi and the DRC (Eggen, 2011; Mushi, 2013).

Despite these trends, comparative research on contemporary African traditional authority is only just emerging (Holzinger et al., 2016). Nigeria is a particularly interesting case, because of its uniquely dense and diverse universe of traditional authorities. From the successor kings to the great West-African kingdoms, such as the Sultan of Sokoto and the Oba of Benin, to the ward heads (*mai unguwa*), *igwes*, and other local leaders present in virtually any community throughout the country, traditional authority in Nigeria has a richness and dynamism that is arguably unparalleled anywhere else in the world. There are hundreds of different systems of traditional rule and many thousands of individuals who claim and actively utilise traditional titles and the associated authority. New traditional titles and authorities are created constantly, for reasons of governance as well as political-economic patronage, in a practice that can be traced to the British colonial indirect rule. And all this persists without any legal recognition of the status of traditional authority in the Nigerian constitution, allowing for tremendous variation in the relationship between traditional authorities and their state and local governments.

This introductory chapter sets out three key questions that have emerged from the existing literature on traditional authorities and conflict in Nigeria, and Africa more generally:

- Who are traditional authorities?
- What roles do traditional rulers take in security governance?
- Why are traditional authorities able to engage in security governance (or not)?

These questions form the threads that connect the chapters in this volume, each chapter addressing them in their own way. In the remainder of this introduction, we synthesise the existing literature on each of these questions to outline the starting point of this book. We will also explore a deeper question that sits behind these concrete research questions: how do we interpret the historical processes analysed in this book, and, in particular, the seemingly

deterministic role of colonialism? We argue for an open-ended approach that “takes African agency seriously” (Táíwò, 2022) and focuses on the creative and emergent process of reimagination. Finally, we explain why we wrote this book and outline its structure. Chapter 12, at the end of the book, will then draw together insights from the individual chapters around the questions outlined in this chapter and suggest different ways forward, both for scholarship and policymaking.

1.2 Who Are Traditional Authorities?

In their 1970 edited volume on chiefs in West Africa, Crowder and Ikime write,

it is very difficult to define a chief in the West African context: there is no apparent relationship between the role of the Emir of Kano and Limba chiefs [from Sierra Leone]. It is only by accident that they have all been called ‘chiefs’, a distinctly colonial diminutive term, which effectively reduced the status of rulers like the Oba of Benin, who in pre-colonial times considered himself, and was considered by his subjects, a king. The Emir of Kano, one of the most powerful of the traditional rulers in the whole of Africa during the colonial period would, however, not have considered himself a King, being himself subordinate to the Sultan of Sokoto, who in pre-colonial times would have considered himself Amiral-muminin, Commander of the Faithful, rather than a king.

(1970, p. ix)

The situation is no simpler today than it was in 1970. Nigeria’s class of traditional authorities still includes long-time kings as well as local chiefs and elders; moreover, many new kinds of traditional authority have been created over the last 50 years, from migrant communities’ diaspora chiefs to the Igbo Ezes presiding over every autonomous community in Igboland (Harneit-Sievers, 1998; Ehrhardt, 2023). The first issue raised by this diversity is the question of labels. There are many different terms denoting very similar concepts: traditional (or customary, or neo-traditional) authorities, rulers, or leaders; chiefs; kings, queens, or other forms of royal address; (traditional) titleholders; and dozens, if not hundreds, of words in Nigeria’s many indigenous languages. For simplicity, we choose to use the term traditional rulers, authorities, or leaders interchangeably, because we feel it is both the most common and most inclusive of all of the terms noted above.

But what criteria do we then use to define it? Here we depart from Crowder and Ikime’s choice to focus only on chiefs recognised by the colonial state. Instead, we rely on our experience that most Nigerians appear to know traditional authority when they see it – even if their views change over time. Our definition of traditional authority is therefore emic, including any leader

who is recognised as a traditional leader within a particular community. Such recognition may come from the state, or from the informal norms of a community itself, or both; in all the cases in this volume, the recognition is also embodied in a traditional title of some kind.

Of course, specific traditional titles and honorifics are often highly contested, as are the people who hold them. Moreover, titles are created (and abandoned) with some regularity. Together, these factors imply that the class of traditional authorities is both dynamic and “fuzzy” around the edges; some leaders are considered traditional by some but not by others, and some gain or lose their position over time. These are complicating factors for analysis, but they are also reflective of the complexity of the situation on the ground. Our case-based, detailed empirical methodological approach allows us sufficient room to embrace this complexity rather than define it away.

At the same time, it is worth noting a few things that, to our mind, do *not* define traditional authorities in Nigeria. Most importantly, we do not consider “traditional” to be indicative of historicity; that is, traditional authorities do not need to have existed for very long to be recognised as such. Of course, they often legitimise their position with a discourse of historical antecedents. But even when these do exist, they are never proof of “true traditionalism” in the sense of having persisted, unchanged, for a particular length of time. Similarly, we do not understand “traditional” to indicate that the authorities are truly, intrinsically tied to the culture, traditions, or customs of a community. Much like historicity, traditional rulers generally legitimise themselves with a discourse of “embodying a community’s customs and traditions”; but the extent to which they actually do so, is a question for empirical review rather than a priori definition. In this sense, our conception is similar to Krämer’s (2020) notion of “neotraditional” authority; but we choose to use “traditional” because it is closer to the colloquial use of the term in Nigeria itself.

We now turn to the roles that traditional authorities may take in the domain of security governance, before highlighting factors that render them suitable for these roles (or not).

1.3 What Roles Do Traditional Rulers Take in Security Governance?

We understand security governance in a broad sense, as the activities that authoritative actors engage in to reduce violence in their society (DCAF, 2015, 2019). It includes deliberative problem solving, through the creation of rules and other forms of decision-making, as well as the political processes underneath (cf. Behrens et al., 2020). Depending on the specifics of the security challenge that is being addressed, this may involve anything from local dispute settlement through customary law to kinetic counterinsurgency operations; and from preaching intercommunal tolerance to rehabilitating ex-combatants after a violent conflict. Often viewed through a Westphalian lens as the exclusive domain of government organisations such as the police

and military, recent years have seen an increasing recognition of complexity of the on-the-ground arrangements involved in security governance (cf. Krahman, 2003; Ebo, 2007). Nigeria is a prime example of such hybrid governance arrangements; and more often than not, traditional authorities are deeply involved in them (Bagayoko et al., 2016).

The primary objective of this book is to document and describe the roles that traditional rulers in Nigeria have adopted in security governance over the years, as well as the trajectories that led them there. This will also allow us to engage with the literature that views traditional authorities as potential “co-producers” of public goods, such as security (e.g. Baldwin, 2015). In this literature, traditional leaders are seen as representative brokers, whose position between their own community and other communities and elites allows them to function as intermediaries that facilitate exchange and collective action (De Jong et al., 2023; Ehrhardt, 2023). They can use their broker position in different ways: by substituting for state provision as “shadow states” (Osaghae, 1998); by serving the interests of other elites, in particular politicians, as vote-brokers or “decentralised despots” (Mamdani, 1996); by shielding their community from other interests, or even helping them to “exit” from mainstream society (Ehrhardt, 2023); or by pooling resources with other elites, especially government agencies, to co-produce governance (Ostrom, 1996).

Understanding if and when traditional authorities function as brokers and getting a better sense of the specific activities they undertake in this role, is key to our understanding of security governance in Nigeria – and the potential ways to enhance it. But the literature also suggests other factors that may determine how traditional authorities can engage with security governance. This is what we turn to in the next section.

1.4 Why Are Traditional Leaders Able (or Not) to Engage in Security Governance?

As we will discuss in more detail below, traditional authorities in Nigeria have little official power over the country’s security apparatus. Yet at the same time, they engage with conflict and security in many ways, from persuasive public speaking to coordinating vigilante organisations. This raises a question: what might explain why traditional leaders engage in security governance, despite their lack of official, legal powers? This section provides an overview of three prominent existing hypotheses in response to this question. They revolve around the embeddedness of traditional leaders in their communities; their grasp of indigenous knowledge; and the relationship between traditional authorities and the state. The unique variation of traditional authority systems and governance roles in Nigeria offers us an opportunity to explore these factors across the book’s case studies. Our conclusions, presented in Chapter 12, can then form the foundation for more systematic and rigorous hypothesis testing in future research.

1.4.1 Embeddedness: Skin in the Game?

“People respond to incentives.’ The rest of commentary” (Landsburg, 2007). There is a growing literature on traditional authorities that takes Landsburg as a starting point and suggests that the incentive structure of these leaders helps to explain their role in governance. In particular, Baldwin (2015) uses the case of Zambian chiefs to argue that traditional leaders are versions of Olson’s (1993) stationary bandits. If they are truly embedded in their communities, their interests are tied to the long-term wellbeing of the community they are embedded in. Therefore, they will likely use their influence to provide local public goods and promote community development (Baldwin, 2015, p. 6). In other words, traditional leaders work to improve their communities because they are part and parcel of it, as is often said in Nigeria; because they have skin in the game.

Translating this to the realm of security, this literature suggests that embedded traditional authorities face incentives to promote security, for the benefit of their community as well as themselves. They can do this alone, as shadow states; or they can do it in genuine collaboration, or co-production, with other elites (Baldwin & Raffler, 2019). Embeddedness brings other advantages too, besides “good” incentives: accurate local information, social connections to facilitate their governance activities, the ability to promote specific framing discourses, and possibly even fairly effective (s) election mechanisms for “good” leaders (Ehrhardt, 2016; Baldwin & Raffler, 2019). This prediction, that embeddedness of traditional leaders incentivises good governance, is one of the directions of exploration that run through this book.

1.4.2 Indigenous Knowledge: African Conflict “Medicine”?

Zartman’s (2000) idea of African conflict “medicine” underlines the importance that local, indigenous knowledge may have for effective security governance. His work suggests that traditional authorities may be especially suitable not (only) because they have skin in the game, but because they can use indigenous, customary forms of dispute settlement and conflict resolution. These forms are thought to be sensitive to local culture and sensibilities, and as such more likely to be legitimate and authoritative than the activities of the police and other government-backed actors. They are often localised and connected to (spiritual) symbolism and rituals, and their purpose is generally the restoration of balance and social cohesion rather than punishment (cf. Osaghae, 2000; Graeber & Sahlins, 2017). They use a version of what Hoffman and others (2020) in the context of the DRC have called “customary capital”, symbolic capital that allows its wielders (e.g. chiefs) to rule a particular community.

But to what extent can these customary, indigenous approaches to conflict and security address the challenges of large and complex societies like

Nigeria today? Zartman's (2000) co-authors provide mixed answers, and he himself ended the book with caution:

Traditional conflict "medicine" was good for its era. Its successes were certainly not universal, but it did make a major contribution to the maintenance of stability and commonality in African societies. Independently of developments in other parts of the world, it invented mechanisms of negotiation, mediation, and arbitration that have become part of the universal human repertoire for dealing with conflict. However, modern-type conflicts that arise from deep sociopolitical change elude its integrative attentions, as they elude the ministrations of other contemporary diplomacy. To these, traditional experiences, derived inductively from long centuries of on-the-job learning, can at best add some insights.

(Zartman, 2000, p. 230)

Much of this caution comes from the acknowledgement that security issues have changed over time and that customary approaches may not be able to solve some of the newer problems. For example, how do cultural customs work across cultural groups in highly dynamic and diverse urban environments? What can localised rituals do for large-scale violence, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, or against transnational forms of conflict and crime? And what can traditional authorities do in contexts where their authority is constantly challenged, not only by the government but also by other authorities? These questions bring Osaghae to call for the construction of "an eclectic model of conflict management that draws from common values and perceptions of conflict and its management all over Africa, and that incorporates various relevant and time-tested strategies as a possible way of overcoming most of the limitations" (2000, p. 216). The empirical chapters in the remainder of this volume all describe elements of such an eclectic model, as it is emerging organically in the context of Nigeria.

1.4.3 The Relationship Between Traditional Authorities and the State

Finally, the question that has received the most scholarly attention, especially in recent years, is how the relationship between traditional authorities and the state helps, or hinders, traditional authorities in security governance. Despite the sizeable literature, there is little consensus on this question. Perhaps this is due to the failure of existing theories, often derived from cases outside Nigeria or even Africa, to map onto the Nigerian situation. But it may also reflect the fact that the state-traditional relationship has been dynamic and difficult to model. Many different labels have been tried, including twilight institutions (Lund, 2006), mixed government (Sklar, 2005), real governance (Titeca & De Herdt, 2011), state-in-society (Migdal, 2001), hybrid governance (e.g. Meagher, 2012; Bagayoko et al., 2016; Goodfellow & Lindemann, 2013), and dualism (Holzinger et al., 2016). But few of these

concepts are very precisely defined and there has been no effective synthesis of these approaches to date.

The “dualist” approach has recently gained traction in the political-science literature on traditional leaders. It assumes a fundamental analytical distinction between the state and non-state traditional authorities and views both as strategic political actors (Holzinger et al., 2016, p. 472). Usefully, these assumptions have allowed for budding systematic, comparative research on the question of the impact of the interaction between state and traditional authorities. One emerging theory in this literature is that constitutional recognition promotes security (Mustasilta, 2019) or public good provision more generally (Henn, 2023). It is derived from the more general intuition that traditional authorities are more effective if they are aligned (or “concordant”) with the state – that is, they work towards the same goal, rather than compete with each other. Constitutional recognition is taken as an indication of this alignment and, consequently, Nigeria’s Fourth Republic is coded as a case of non-alignment, or “discordance” (Mustasilta, 2019, fn. 13).

While the dualist assumption is helpful for testing specific causal hypotheses, the “discordant” coding of the Nigerian case illustrates that this assumption can also obscure key dynamics in the relationship between states and traditional leaders. So what are the alternatives to dualism? Ubink (2008), for example, outlines seven types of government policy towards traditional leaders that go beyond strict separation: exclusion, adaptation, integration, subordination, association, harmonisation, or *laissez-faire*. Muriaas (2011) similarly describes four possible modes of incorporation of traditional leaders into the state. Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) differentiate between institutional multiplicity (dualism) and institutional hybridity (integration) as possible relationships between the state and traditional leaders; in Uganda, they see the failed attempt to bring about institutional hybridity as the cause of increasing conflict and violence (*ibid*, p. 5). Renders (2012) is an example of the same agnosticism for the case of Somaliland, where government officials and traditional leaders, “in the contest over political power and economic control interact and intermingle in one and the same political space” (*ibid*, p. 264). And Millar (2017) highlights that for Sierra Leone, the very integration of traditional peace mechanisms with other actors weakened their positive potential.

We follow these authors in taking a more open-ended, agnostic approach to the separation between state and traditional authorities, letting the authors of the individual chapters describe the nature of the relationship as they observe it. Like Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013), we see multiplicity and hybridity both as possible outcomes in Nigeria, as well as a mixed regime where the state-traditional relationship varies across Nigeria. We do not consider the current situation a stable equilibrium. Rather, we see the current moment as a snapshot in Nigeria’s dynamic process of state formation, where the position of traditional rulers vis-à-vis the state is essentially still an important open question - even if it does seem to be moving in a particular direction (see Chapter 12).

Being open-minded about the state-traditional relationship does not mean that we do not think it matters for the role of traditional leaders in security governance. Quite the opposite: all authors agree that the Nigerian state matters a great deal for the impact traditional leaders can have on security. But its importance goes beyond the relatively simple issue of constitutional recognition: it is about the way in which the very nature of the Nigerian state shapes the space in which traditional authorities can act. This brings in the question raised by Englebert (2002): do traditional rulers benefit from strong or weak states? It also raises the spectre of the patrimonial, or prebendal, nature of the Nigerian state and its consequences for effective traditional leadership (Adebanwi et al., 2013).

But perhaps most complicatedly, it invites deeper questions about the long-term development of Nigeria's political system and, in particular, the extent to which this process has been pre-determined by colonial rule. The next section outlines the approach we take to that particularly thorny question.

1.5 Explaining the Nigerian State: The Limits of the Colonial Explanation

Few would contest that, historically, the Nigerian state is a colonial construct. Its borders and initial bureaucratic apparatus were created under colonial rule and, by that fact alone, British influence on Nigeria has been architectonic. But many have argued that the influence of colonialism extended beyond what it created anew. For Ekeh (1975), for example,

[m]odern African politics are in large measure a product of the colonial experience. Pre-colonial political structures were important in determining the response of various traditional political structures to colonial interference. But the colonial experience itself has had a massive impact on modern Africa. It is to the colonial experience that any valid conceptualisation of the unique nature of African politics must look.

(p. 93)

In Ekeh's view, colonialism created a bifurcated African public sphere, with a "civic" and a "primordial" part, each with their own institutions and moralities. The state is part of the civic public and effectively amoral because it suffers from "an endemic crisis of ownership" (Osaghae, 2006, p. 238). Although not explicitly mentioned, traditional leaders are associated with the primordial public, connected to ethnic and other community-based forms of morality and authority. Ekeh argues powerfully that, at least until the 1970s, the separation and confrontation between the two publics was the cause of tribalism, corruption, and other endemic governance problems. If we extrapolate this argument to our key question – the role of traditional rulers in security governance – it would seem that here too, colonialism still determines the outcome. Resonating with Mustasilta's (2019) theory of institutional discordance, the

colonial bifurcation of state and traditional authorities would continue to explain the essential weakness of Nigeria's security governance up to today.

But to what extent is this structurally-determinist argument still tenable, more than 60 years after official independence? And what might an alternative approach look like? We address these questions by, first, sketching the historical argument for the colonial explanation and, second, highlighting the need to also take postcolonial Nigerian agency seriously.

1.5.1 Recognising Colonial Impacts on Traditional Authority in Nigeria...

Like in many other parts of the world, kingship – as the embodiment of traditional authority, or the “established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them” (Weber, 1978, p. 215) – played a central role in the formation of the complex political systems and states in the territory that is now Nigeria (cf. Graeber & Sahlins, 2017). These included, among others, the Yoruba states in the southwest and the Sokoto Caliphate and Kanem-Bornu Empire in the north (El-Miskin, 2006; Parker, 2023). One of the remarkable aspects of these kingdoms is that despite the centralised, near-divine power that was seemingly bestowed on their kings, monarchical authority was effectively rarely monopolized by a single individual. Councils, ministers, advisers, and influential individuals and groups were often participants in the exercise of a monarch's traditional authority. So even where kings appeared to have divine, absolute authority, they were often much more constrained than they appeared (cf. Last, 2007 for the Sokoto Caliphate).

British conquest interrupted these trajectories of sophisticated state formation by bringing existing rulers under control of the British Crown, demoting kings to “Native Authorities” (the colonial label for all pre-existing political leaders), and governing the newly colonised subjects through their, newly subordinated, chiefs. Where political hierarchies predated colonisation, the policy of “indirect rule” through Native Authorities was relatively straightforward to implement. And even in areas where indigenous authority was on the wane, fragmented, or localised, the British did what they could to create rulers who could function as their vassals. Yet these attempts to invent authority were often met with limited success, as illustrated by the spectacular failure of the Warrant Chief system in the southeast (Afigbo, 1972; Harneit-Sievers, 2006).

Despite these failures, however, colonial rule left an indelible imprint on the structure of traditional authority in Nigeria. It redistributed power amongst different leaders, elevating (or newly creating) some while demoting others. The British strengthened Native Authorities who proved cooperative in extracting wealth from their subjects, backing them with their superior military force; these rulers, in turn, became less concerned with the needs of their people and more with the interests of the colonisers. Over time, this weakened the existing accountability mechanisms and associated legitimacy

of the traditional rulers, even as it strengthened their coercive powers – a dynamic that Mamdani (1996) has termed “decentralised despotism”. Their legitimacy was further eroded by the rise of a class of newly educated, bourgeois or ‘modern’ Nigerian businessmen, professionals (e.g. doctors, lawyers, journalists, engineers), bureaucrats, and politicians, many of whom considered Native Authorities anachronistic collaborators with the colonial regime.

Independence in 1960 ushered in a period of steady decline – and even displacement – of traditional leaders in the Nigerian political system. At the time, few expected these leaders to survive in an independent, democratic Nigeria in the long run, even though politicians realised that a quick abolishment would be impossible without effectively “paralysing the state and local governments” (Keulder, 1998; cf. Harneit-Sievers, 2006). The 1963 constitution still created state-level Houses of Chiefs, in which the former Native Authorities collaborated with the elected Houses of Assembly to govern their localities (Keulder, 1998). But the 1966 military coup, followed by the Biafran war and further years of military dictatorship until 1979, ended this arrangement and culminated in the elimination of traditional rule from nearly all formal governance in the 1976 local government reforms and the 1979 federal constitution (*ibid.*). Under the new regulations, traditional authorities could formally only advise the new Local Government Councils and play symbolic roles in their communities (Harneit-Sievers, 2006).

The 1999 constitution further confirmed this trend. It did not make any mention of traditional leaders and their roles in governance, thus effectively removing all constitutional support for their position and, seemingly, placing them firmly outside the state. Yet the legal position of Nigerian traditional authorities is more ambiguous than this fact suggests. On the one hand, traditional authorities indeed have no place in the constitution, and no constitutional protection of their position. Yet on the other, nearly all of the states in the federation have enacted a variety of laws governing the traditional chiefdoms, including for the creation of new ones and upgrading or downgrading existing ones. Additionally, numerous judicial decisions by Nigerian courts, including the Supreme Court, have accumulated a body of legal principles and doctrines dealing with traditional authorities. This suggests an increasing legal integration of traditional authorities into the state at the sub-national level – even if, in practice, the implementation of the laws is far from consistent and varies greatly across the country.

Zooming out, the story of traditional authority in Nigeria told this way seems to be one in which colonialism aborted local processes of state formation by imposing a new political unit – Nigeria. After utilising them as Native Authorities, they then displaced traditional authority systems to the informal sphere, outside the independent ‘modern’ state. Many have supported this analysis, and even argued that some of the symptoms of Ekeh’s dialectic may have intensified rather than weakened over time (Osaghae, 2006). But there are also those who take issue with the seeming “absolutised”, and “eternal” importance given to colonialism in this narrative (e.g. Ajayi, 1999; Táíwò,

2022). We will take a closer look at Táíwòs (2022) recent statement of this position, as a way to introduce the approach we take in this book.

1.5.2 ...While Also Taking Postcolonial Nigerian Agency Seriously.

Táíwò (2022) questions the scope of the colonial explanation for contemporary African politics and raises a range of unintended consequences of its prominence. “This is not”, he writes, “because colonialism plays no role in explaining events, but because we must take care to specify in each case exactly how colonialism features in the explanation, and why a colonialism-driven explanation is better than the alternatives” (ibid., p. 15). Moreover, over-reliance on colonialism as an explanation

has the unintended consequence of misconceiving the trajectory of the continent’s historical evolution and of turning scholars away from embracing, engaging with and explaining ideas, movements, practices, processes and institutions. In short, it renders illegible to un-discerning scholars an awful lot of the intellectual products of the African mind, awareness of and engagement with which the continent sorely needs.
(p. 148)

The core of Táíwò’s argument is then that “indigenous genius has taken hold of and turned to their own purposes various material and ideational artefacts that were parts of their lives before, during and after colonialism” (ibid., p. 18). This means the focus of scholarship should be on identifying, and formulating, “new syntheses informed by both [...] autochthonous inheritances and those borrowed from other sources” (ibid., p. 148).

The chapters in this volume are set up to do precisely this: look for African agency and creativity in the reimagination of traditional authority. Colonial rule still looms large, as it impacted dramatically on the position of all political systems in the country. But so did other historical events, both before and after the six decades of British over-rule. It is this view from within that allows the authors – and hopefully you, as readers – to shift their perspective from one where Nigerian politics were essentially created by British rule, to one that prioritises the dynamic processes of politics and state-making that Nigerians have engaged in for centuries. A perspective in which Nigeria may be approaching, or has already reached, the limits of the colonial explanation. Colonial officials may have had a big role in setting the shape of Nigeria when its story as a country began, but Nigerians are the lead authors of their story today.

It is perhaps important to clarify that taking African agency seriously in this way says little about the *outcomes* that such agency produces. Táíwò himself has clear normative views on his preferred outcome, captured in notions of modernity, democracy, and the rule of law (Táíwò, 2022). He sees traditional leaders as “backward institutions”, antithetical to the outcomes

he prefers (*ibid.*, p. 161). Naturally, other scholars may share his views, or have their own. In our framing of this volume, as editors, we have eschewed giving opinions about the preferred status of traditional rulers; instead, we have left this to the individual authors to decide. The relationship between traditional authority and the Nigerian state is a work in progress that has to be “worked out, experimented with, modified and contested over time” (Parker, 2023); it is a story of colonial conquest and displacement as well as long-term state formation and institutional adaptation and, indeed, indigenously genius. There is, as yet, no foregone conclusion. The chapters of this book outline the various trajectories that Nigeria’s traditional authority systems are on.

1.6 Why This Book?

This book came together under the constraints of COVID. It is part of a larger research project (Tradition4Peace) generously funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and was designed to circumvent the limitations the pandemic imposed on us in terms of (international) travel and face-to-face contact. The authors have actually never met each other face to face as part of this book project; everything was coordinated through email, phone, and Zoom (even a panel discussion at the Lagos Studies Association annual conference!). The development Research and Project Centre (dRPC) in Abuja played an invaluable coordinating role. It is with immense gratitude and respect that we now see the results of everyone’s efforts – a true product of digital modernity and scholarly professionalism.

We stand on the shoulders of many scholars who have written about traditional authority in Nigeria. Some of the earliest literature in English includes Heinrich Barth’s 1850–55 travel journal (Barth & Kirk-Greene, 1962) and Johnson’s 1921 (1966) history of the Yoruba. Then came a series of studies written by scholars in the (late) colonial and early postcolonial periods, systematically documenting the (pre)colonial and immediate postcolonial experience (e.g. Perham, 1937; Smith, 1960; Campbell, 1963; Last, 1967; Otite, 1969; Afigbo, 1972; Paden, 1973; Yahaya, 1980). Many famous works followed, including edited collections (e.g. Crowder & Ikime, 1970; Melson & Wolpe, 1971; Oyediran, 1979; Vaughan, 2005; Adamu, 2007), political analyses with relevance to traditional authority (e.g. Sklar, 1963; Dudley, 1968; Whitaker, 1970; Kwanashie, 2002; Harneit-Sievers, 2006), general Nigerian history texts (e.g. Falola & Heaton, 2008; Siollun, 2021), a range of case studies of traditional authority systems (e.g. Vaughan, 2006; Blench et al., 2006; Olupona, 2011), and (auto)biographies/hagiographies of important traditional leaders (e.g. Paden, 1986; Ibrahim, 2001).

Why add another edited volume to this list? We have already sketched out the main reasons in this introduction, so let us only briefly reiterate them here. First, with very few exceptions, there is a remarkable absence of studies that compare traditional authority systems across Nigeria. This lack of a

pan-Nigerian perspective is all the more surprising given that pan-African studies do exist. Second, most of the influential studies date back to before the start of the Fourth Republic (1999–now), leaving out the fascinating (and puzzling) resurgence of traditional authorities in Nigeria’s latest democratic regime. Third, and relatedly, the multifaceted security challenges facing Nigeria raise important questions about the appropriateness and potential of traditional leaders in security governance. And, finally, the creative re-imagining of traditional authority, especially in its relation to the modern state, provide us with a unique opportunity to identify and document the “indigenous genius” (Táíwò, 2022) that is synthesising a new Nigeria out of its complicated and contested historical experiences.

We see an important place for this collaborative volume to begin filling these gaps in the literature. To that end, the chapters that follow cover all six main geopolitical zones, as well as the main systems of traditional authority in contemporary Nigeria. These include the hierarchical Emirates, Sultanate, and other systems connected to Islam that predominate in northern Nigeria; the complex conglomerate Yoruba kingdoms in the southwestern parts of the country; the newly devised Igbo traditional rulers who govern autonomous communities in the southeast; and the highly diverse mixture of systems that characterises the Middle Belt, the region that historically separates Nigeria’s northern and southern regions. Unfortunately, constraints of time and space have prevented us from studying *all* traditional authority systems and epicentres of violent conflict in the country. Perhaps most noticeable in this regard is the Niger Delta, historically one of the country’s epicentres of conflict around oil extraction. While the findings from this volume likely contain many lessons for those other systems and cases of insecurity, we also warmly encourage other colleagues to expand their work in those directions.

The chapters are organised in two parts: the first includes the analyses with a focus on the *longue durée* history of their traditional systems, while the emphasis of the studies in Part II lies on specific new challenges or features of traditional authority systems in today’s Nigeria. Although the chapters are connected by the threads identified in this introduction, they are all written to stand on their own. Methodologically, this means that each of the chapters in this book focuses on a specific case based on original empirical data, including archival material, interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Each chapter details its own methodology; all chapters were selected for their strong empirical focus and their ability to build up a bottom-up, historically-grounded understanding of the traditional authority systems and their position in the local context. Substantively, the stand-alone nature of the articles means that they take different perspectives and may at times disagree either on the empirical situation on the ground, or its normative implications. We, as editors, have decided to embrace this diversity because we feel it is an accurate reflection of the current state of knowledge – and opinion – in the field.

Note

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Part I

Continuity and Change



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2 Assessing the Capacity of Traditional Institutions and Authorities in Maintaining Security and Peace

A Historical Perspective

M. Sani Umar

2.1 Introduction

A return to the traditional role of traditional institutions in security management is the way forward and should be considered a priority.

(Gbajabiamila, 2021)

The above epigraph is part of the recommendations from the *Full Special Summit on National Security* (p. 66) convened in May 2021 by the Speaker of Nigeria's House of Representative, Honourable Femi Gbajabiamila. The purpose of the Special Summit was to find solutions to the various challenges of insecurity confronting Nigeria in all regions of the country. These challenges include Boko Haram insurgency, cattle-rustling, farmer-herder violent conflicts, rural banditry and kidnapping for ransom, ethno-religious violent conflicts, and secessionist agitation. In his speech at the summit, the honourable Speaker observes that activities by insurgents, bandits, and criminals of every stripe pose grave threats to "the authority of the state and the foundations of our nationhood" (p. 19). Clearly, the gravity of the rampant insecurity in Nigeria cannot be under-estimated or over-emphasized, especially in light of thousands of lives lost, properties worth untold billions destroyed, and serious trauma inflicted on individuals, families, and communities.

Of special relevance to this essay is the observation in the report of the Special Summit that since these insecurity challenges "impede our efforts at progress and prosperity, *we must confront the realization that our previous and current approaches to addressing the challenges of insecurity have not yielded desired result*" (added italics)" (p. 20). The outcome of the special summit is a 149-page report which is the "product of extensive engagements with key stakeholders and contributions from pertinent players in our National Security from the security agencies, civil society organisations, and many Nigerians with direct knowledge of our security situation" (p. 66). Traditional rulers, including the Sultan of Sokoto, the Ooni of Ife, and the Eze of Ilomuanya attended the summit (p. 20).

But more directly relevant to this essay is the recommendation in the above epigraph. This recommendation is based on the observation that in both the precolonial and the colonial periods "traditional and religious institutions

played a very important role in security in the local communities,” but in “recent times many of these institutions no longer play their expected roles in security management because of constitutional provisions and the changing times” (p. 66). Similar views are also expressed in the relevant academic literature, particularly in the publications on “inter-group relations in Nigeria,” which have proliferated over the last three decades, largely in response to the increased violent ethno-religious conflicts in the country (Lenshie, 2014; Aluaigba, 2011; Sayne, 2012).

For instance, based on his analysis of fifty incidents of violent conflicts in northern parts of Nigeria that occurred between 1980 and 2004, Elaigwu (2005) suggests that “our techniques in the management of ethno-religious conflicts are demonstrably poor, and have created more divides than necessary in the old geopolitical North” (p. 60). He also observes that “our political, religious, ethnic and traditional elites must stop playing the role of aggressive crises-generators in order to help the geo-polity re-establish mutual trust and old bonds of association,” (p. 60). The view that traditional authorities were effective in maintaining peace and security in the past, and therefore they should be enlisted in renewed efforts to confront the contemporary challenges seems very plausible. But can it withstand careful scrutiny?

2.2 Research Problem and Research Question

The research problem for this essay is the view that prior good performance of traditional rulers in maintaining peace and security within their domains is a predictor of their potentials to do the same in the present. Implicit in this view is the fact that contexts are not relevant. But contexts are always relevant and often determinative. The tremendous changes in the social, political, cultural, and economic transformations that have occurred since Nigeria’s independence in 1960 have impacted on the traditional institutions in so many ways. Therefore, the question that arises is: can the traditional authorities be as effective in the context of the new security challenges that are demonstrably different from the challenges in the past? This main question raises more subsidiary questions:

- 1) How effective were the traditional institutions in maintaining security and law and order in the past?
- 2) What were the prevalent insecurity challenges when the traditional institutions used to be involved in maintaining security?
- 3) Why were they removed from providing security if they were so effective?

To answer these questions, this essay adopts a case-study of four traditional polities in Plateau State, namely: Wase and Kanam emirates, and Ponzhi

Tarok and Gbong Gwom Jos. The rationale for selecting these traditional polities is that since the beginning of the violent conflict that erupted in 2001 in Jos, the seat of the palace of the Gbong Gwom Jos, and the capital of Plateau State, there have been repeatedly large-scale violent conflicts with ethno-religious undertones, as well as other security challenges, including election-related violence, cattle-rustling, and rural banditry. Of course, beyond the ethno-religious differences, there are additional drivers of these violent upheavals that are clearly neither ethnic nor religious. The drivers range from economic deprivation to social and economic inequalities, changing patterns of land use, instrumentalization of ethno-religious sentiments and identities in the fierce competition for elective offices, as well as governance deficits, etc. These various factors have been covered in the substantial literature on the violent conflicts (Best, 2007; Kwaja et al., 2015; Mustapha, 2013; Higazi, 2008).

However, an important driver of the violent conflicts that has not received adequate attention is the narrative of historical grievances based on the continuing legacies of conquest, raids, and resistance in the areas of all the selected traditional polities during the nineteenth century. In particular, the impact of the Jihad of Shaykh Usman dan Fodio that started in 1804 and led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate (c. 1804–1903) remains the dominant theme in the narrative of historical grievances not only in Plateau State, but also in the broader region in central Nigeria known as the Middle Belt. A second important theme is the complaint against political domination by the Hausa-Fulani elite, as represented in the so-called “Kaduna Mafia,” over the ethnic minorities in Northern Nigeria. The third theme is the struggle by ethnic minorities for emancipation from that political dominance. (James, undated; Kukah, 1993; Takaya and Tyoden, 1987; Logams, 2004). Although the violent conflicts have subsided, the historical legacies of conquest, raids, and resistance still exist as a major bone of contention that has sustained the conflict, which occasionally erupts into violent upheavals. Jimam Lar observes that the perception and reality of domination by a Hausa Fulani ruling elite over ethnic minorities in northern Nigeria “are continually expressed in the context of violent sectarian conflicts like those that have affected Plateau State and southern Kaduna” (Lar, 2018). Clearly, historical tracing of these legacies will highlight how the different traditional polities examined in this essay managed the perceptions and realities of Hausa-Fulani domination, and its connection to the periodic eruptions of violent conflicts.

The basic argument is that the traditional rulers used to have the capacity for maintaining local security, law, and order because they were in charge of the machinery of government in their jurisdictions. But even after the local government reform of 1976 reduced them to mere advisory roles, the traditional rulers continued to participate in maintaining security in their local domains by exercising their influence and their intimate knowledge of their communities. Furthermore, Federal and State Governments found the traditional rulers to be relevant in the context of the new security challenges that

began to manifest in the late 1970s, especially the use of fire-arms to commit crimes. Since then, the insecurity challenges have continued to deteriorate up to the current situation that has defied all the security and law enforcement agencies, including the military, as documented in the report of the Special Summit on National Security already discussed. Given the enormity of the insecurity in all parts of the country, it is clear that the traditional rulers should be part of the new strategy for reconstructing the security architecture in Nigeria. However, it is important to recognize the limits of what the traditional rulers can and cannot do, particularly because of their lack of control of the machinery of government, especially law enforcement and security agencies. Another important constraint is the historical antecedents in the narratives of historical grievances that have made the traditional rulers a part of the issues in contention that have occasionally erupted into violent conflict.

The detailed construction of the above argument is articulated in six sections and a conclusion. Beginning with the brief notes on the historical sources in the first section on methodology, the second section provides background notes on the four traditional polities selected for this case-study, followed by historical outlines of their development, with particular focus on the nineteenth century which witnessed the jihad of Usman dan Fodio and the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate. The third section examines the transformations of the four polities under British colonial ruler in the first half of the twentieth century, while the fourth section explores the key changes in the period from Nigeria's independence in 1960 to 1976, when local government reform reduced the traditional rulers into mere advisory role. The fifth section analyses the changing roles of the traditional rulers since the local government reform and the changing contexts of the continuing deterioration of the dreadful insecurity currently confronting Nigeria. Finally, section six summarizes the major findings that form the basis of policy recommendations.

2.3 Methodology

Historical research methods consist of collecting data from diverse sources, most notably written documents when available, and oral sources, as well as archaeological remains and historical linguistics. Colonial documents and interviews with key-informants are the two sources collected for this study. Additional data was also collected from secondary literature, especially on the Tarok and Birom ethnic communities, for whom there are no written sources for the pre-colonial period of their history. In the 1910s–1920s, British colonial officers recorded their observations about the prevalent religious beliefs, cultural norms and practices, social systems, and political organizations that they found at the time of their conquest of the Birom and the Tarok ethnic groups, together with the traditions collected in all other ethnic communities in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria. Some of the reports were published as

journal articles in the 1910s–1930s, and were later updated, revised, and published in the *Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*.

The sources were analyzed using historical techniques of data analysis, which entail, first and foremost, an evaluation of the available sources through determining their provenance, the primary purpose of which is to establish the reliability of the sources. Provenance requires ascertaining the circumstances under which the sources were produced, and their subsequent transmission up to the time of using them as sources for historical reconstruction. Authorship of the sources and motivation of the authors and their potential interest in the events they recorded are important parts of establishing provenance. It is also important to know if the author of a source was an eyewitness of, or a participant in, the recorded events (Howell and Prevenier, 2001).

Because the documents used in this research are the records of British colonialism in Nigeria, their provenance is well-known. Still, it is important to note the key problems in the colonial sources, especially their racist and imperialistic features. The central assumption in the colonial sources is the superiority of the colonialists over the colonized communities. In the context of Northern Nigeria, the British colonialists initially considered the Muslim rulers of the Sokoto Caliphate and its emirates as rapacious rulers, whose continual slave raiding among their non-Muslim neighbours caused tremendous hardship and destruction (Lugard, 1906, 1011). However, as the British began to take effective administrative control, they came to depend on the emirate administrative structures and their personnel, which dictated the need for a different and more positive view of the Sokoto Caliphate (Lugard, 1929; Kirk-Greene, 1970). The British considered the non-Muslim communities as “primitive” and “pagan,” ranking them below the Muslim societies of the Sokoto Caliphate. Based on this ranking, the British imposed some features of the emirate administrative system on the non-Muslim communities, especially in the first two decades of the colonial era. This imposition became part of the historical grievances of the non-Muslim communities against the domination by Muslim rulers of the emirates. But by the 1930s, the British began to create centralized chiefdoms in the non-Muslim communities, with a view to freeing them from the domination of the Muslim influences. The Ponzhi Tarok and Gbong Gwom Jos were among the centralized chiefdoms created by British colonial authorities. Therefore, using the colonial records to reconstruct the history of these chiefdoms must take account of these complicated political issues.

After provenance, the next step in historical data analysis is corroboration from different sources. For this essay, the two main sources are the archival colonial records and oral sources collected through interviews with key informants. The oral interviews with some of the key informants reveal their dependence on the British colonial records. As already observed, the colonial records were based on the oral traditions that the British found in the communities they conquered. But the interesting twist is that the contemporary oral

sources derived from the colonial records are selectively invoked to justify partisan positions and perspectives in the narratives of historical grievances. Therefore, the real value of the contemporary oral accounts is more in the insights they provide than in their empirical reliability.

Apart from these primary sources, secondary sources, including books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations on the selected traditional authorities, were consulted for additional data, as well as insights into the historical roles of the traditional authorities in maintaining security, peace, and law and order in their respective jurisdictions.

The methodology of case-study requires in-depth attention on the specific cases while at the same time situating them within the broader phenomenon to which the cases belong. This means that the four selected traditional authorities were examined as specimens of the varieties of traditional authorities in northern Nigeria. This took the form of juxtaposing general points about traditional rulers with specific examples drawn from the materials on the four selected traditional rulers.

2.4 Contexts and Historical Backgrounds to 1900

As already noted, prior to the colonial period, the chiefdoms of Gbong Gwom Jos and Ponzhi Tarok did not exist as centralized and hierarchical political entities. Similarly, although established in 1740, Kanam was not designated as Emirate until 1910, while Wase started as a vassal of Bauchi in 1810 but was only designated as Emirate beginning from 1902. Plateau State, where all the four polities exist currently, used to be part of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria during the colonial, which was renamed the Northern Region of Nigeria at independence in 1960. In the context of the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970), the Northern Region was divided into six states, including the Benue-Plateau State. In 1976, Benue and Plateau became two separate states, and then in 1996 Nasarawa state was carved out of Plateau State. These territorial reconfigurations have significant consequences on the religious and ethnic demographics within the states by changing the status of some communities to become simple or predominant majorities, and others as significant or small minorities. Competition for elective offices and allocation of public goods and services are significantly influenced by these demographic considerations. Some of the violent conflicts in Plateau State were the direct outcome of the fierce competition between ethno-religious minorities and majorities for power and public goods.

While the historical origins of Kanam and Wase are relatively recent and well-known, the political organization of the Tarok and Birom ethnic groups are ancient and more difficult to trace, even in broad periodization of the key events that marked their historical evolution. The available oral traditions do not record events in specific periods with exact dates, but of course the events recorded orally must have occurred in the past. These oral accounts as well as the field observations by colonial officials justify some inferences about

historical changes in these communities in earlier periods. In particular, the fusion of religious and political authorities in the figures of priest-kings – documented at the beginning of the colonial period – must have evolved over long periods in the past. Similarly, it is reasonable to infer the types of insecurity challenges that confronted the communities in the past. Conquest and raid by more powerful neighbours must have ranked on the top of the security challenges (Isichie, 1983). Logically, it can be inferred that taking the offensive would have been the most effective response. Coalition and alliance with neighbours and extended kin-groups can provide good defence against conquest and raids, so also migrations into areas that provided natural defences such as mountainous regions or thick forests. If counter-offense and retreat in migrations proved ineffective, then negotiating payment of tribute can solve the threat of conquest and raid.

Although historical sources for events in the distant past are not readily available, events since the beginning of the nineteenth century are known better because of the proximity of the period and availability of historical sources, including travelogs produced by European explorers. Furthermore, the legacies of the nineteenth-century events have continuing relevance for understanding more contemporary challenges of violent conflict and insecurity. Particularly relevant is the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio which started in 1804, and led to the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate, which lasted until its conquest by the British in 1903. Coming after the decline of the Kwararafa Empire of the Jukun ethnic group, the Sokoto Caliphate became the dominant polity influencing historical developments not only in the areas inhabited by the four polities covered in this essay but also more broadly in the larger areas that eventually became Northern Nigeria under British colonial rule. The Kwararafa Empire exerted great influence over several communities in the basin of River Benue, but also in parts of Hausaland. (Obayeme, 1980; Abubakar, 1980) While the legacies of the Kwararafa are still discernible, the Sokoto Caliphate had the more lasting effects, especially on the Hausa city states, while its influence in the Benue Basin was more limited but also more contentious (Lawal and Ahmed, 2021; Maishamu, 2018).

Next to the insecurity challenges arising externally from conquest and raids are, of course, internal security challenges that can range from crimes such as theft, defaulting on loans, marital discord, land dispute, violation of sacred communal values, or even civil war among clans of the same ethnic group. In the precolonial era, these types of internal security challenges were usually resolved through the judicial aspects of the authority of priest-kings, as well as the influence of family members and elders in the community. Various forms of sanctions can also be imposed in the form of fines, banishment, communal boycott, etc.

The following historical sketches of four polities are necessarily brief. Still, it is possible to draw broad inferences about the security challenges that have historically confronted them and their responses. But it is important to recognize the differences between the socio-political organization of the ancient

polities from their current configurations, especially those of the Ponzhi Tarok and the Gbong Gwom Jos that became centralized and hierarchical traditional political institutions as part of the British colonial policy of indirect rule that required such centralized and hierarchical traditional political systems.

2.4.1 *Biom Socio-Political Organization to c. 1900*

The territories under the domain of the Gbong Gwom Jos used to include the greater parts of Jos metropolis and the expansive Biom-land that is home to four local government areas, and a population estimated to be around 2 million. But changes introduced by Governor Simon Bolo Lalong in 2016 have reduced the domain of the Gbong Gwom Jos to the territories of Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas. Governor Lalong's attempts to curtail the domains of the Gbong Gwom Jos further is being resisted by the Gbong Gwom Jos, who has filed a lawsuit against Governor Lalong. Furthermore, Jos North Local Government is also home to the traditional polities of the Anaguta, Afizere Jerawa, Aten, and Irigwe ethnic groups. The areas occupied by these ethnic groups are not part of the domains of the Gbong Gwom Jos. Unlike the Ponzhi Tarok, Kanam, and Wase Emirates, the Palace of the Gbong Gwom Jos is located in the urban center of Jos, the capital of Plateau State. The diversity of the population within the jurisdiction of the Gbong Gwom Jos, and its cosmopolitan location combined to create special security problems that are, to some extent, different from the ones confronted by the three other traditional polities, which are located in towns far away from the state capital.

The socio-political organization of the Biom ethnic group as observed by British colonial officials beginning in the 1900s through the 1930s is based on the twin bases of kinship and territorial residence in the numerous villages spread out in the vast areas of the Biom-land. The Biom ethnic group, consisting of several sub-units, had a tradition of migration from Lere district more than 300 hundred years ago, and "after various movements round and on the Plateau, the tribe eventually concentrated at Riyom and from there gradually spread in various directions." Riyom seems to have occupied a pre-eminent position among Biom settlements, at least in the "immediate pre-British times" when major changes seemed to have been taking place. In the course of these changes, temporal power was separated from the spiritual power of the Gwom Riyom, leading to "first decentralization and then disintegration resulted, and though Gwom Riyom never lost his position as High Priest-Chief of the tribe" (Biom-Jos Division, 1934, pp. 4–5). Following this development, each of the settlements that originated from Riyom "became independently functioning unit under the charge of its priest-chief or Gwom assisted by the village elders" (Biom-Jos Division, 1934, p. 5).

It has been observed that there are similarities between Biom and Azbenawa that cannot be explained as fortuitous. It is suggested that historical links that may have "derived from deserters from a Gobir army which

operated in this part of Nigeria during the second half of the 18th century" (Biom-Jos Division, 1934, p. 4). Gobir was one of the Hausa states, and the area where the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio started at the turn of the nineteenth century. This possible link with Gobir is quite interesting because it seemed to have set the stage for the encounter between the Biom and the Sokoto Caliphate that resulted from the jihad of Usman dan Fodio, which reached the Jos plateau via Bauchi Emirate.

According to Elizabeth Isichei (1983, p. 208) "the jihad as experienced in the Middle Belt was often essentially predatory, marked by the destruction of long-established polities and the extraction of slaves as tributes or war booty. This pattern of relationships existed long before the jihad, albeit in a much milder form." Isichei articulates the important theme of heroic resistance against the jihad armies of conquest, when she remarks that in the early nineteenth century, Emir Yakubu, the founder of Bauchi Emirate who reigned from 1805 until his death in 1845, waged the jihad in the areas of the Middle Belt. Emir Yakubu "invaded the plateau and got as far as Naraguta, just north of Jos, where he was driven back" (Isichei, 1983, p. 210). Furthermore, Isichei continues the narrative of heroic resistance:

In 1873 under a later emir, a powerful invading force was defeated by an alliance of a number of small ethnic groups from the northern plateau—Buji, Amo, Anaguta and Afusare. Deflected from the high plateau, Bauch tried an approach from the east. In 1830s, they defeated the unmounted Pyem, but were turned back by the highly mobile cavalry of the Mwahavul.

(Isichei, 1983, p. 210)

This narrative with clear villains and heroes lacks nuance, and the dates are problematic. Bauchi's so-called "powerful invading force" was defeated by the alliance of small ethnic groups in 1873. This means that Bauchi's forays through the eastern route in the 1830s could not have been as a result of the defeat on the high plateau because the defeat happened in 1873 – that is some forty years later. It is also important to note that Isichei based her accounts on "the descriptions of European visitors, unfavorably biased though they were, and a few available oral sources" from the communities that resisted the jihad. Unsurprisingly, the two sources "give a consistently grim picture of the jihad at the periphery, where war for the purposes of enslavement was frequent because profitable, and left much distress and destruction in its wake" (Isichei, p. 211). But the more relevant point to note here is that the account of Sokoto Caliphate wars of conquest and the successful resistance remains one of the key points of contention in contemporary narratives of historical grievances among the ethnic minorities in northern Nigeria – as already noted. Equally important is that when historical legacies are invoked in contemporary discourses on very contentious issues, historical accuracy is easily ignored in the partisan claims and counter-claims.

By the 1870s, the British merchants led by Goldie Taubman and his United Africa Company were already pushing inland from Lokoja on Niger-Benue confluence. The French agents were also active in the region (Kirk-Greene, 1958). In the context of the rivalry between the French and the British agents, the dynamics of political relations and military activities changed rapidly. At the same time, the military activities of the emirates established in the region, especially Wase and Muri Emirates, which were part of the Sokoto Caliphate, were almost over, although territorial disputes were still on-going, but not so much as the continuing jihad to expand the frontiers of the Sokoto Caliphate. As Tesemchi Makar has demonstrated, all the emirates established in areas called the Middle-Belt were increasingly more entangled in the local patterns of political squabbles among the dominant ethnic groups in the region. Makar contends that “the idea that the Middle Benue region became a favourite ground for slave-raiding from the Emirates does not seem to be justified.” Makar (1979) based his contention on the observation that if the emirates were “unable to conquer and administer the area, it is inconceivable how they would have regarded it as their favourite hunting ground for slaves” (p. 457). Noting that slaves were captured by both the jihad forces and their adversaries, Makar’s main point is that “the Emirates failed to exercise any effective political authority in the Benue area, and this continued to be so until the establishment of the British rule” (p. 457). Still, it is pertinent to emphasize that whatever might have been the actual historical events, the narrative of historical grievances against military activities by the jihad forces of the Sokoto Caliphate remains contentious. Equally important, these narratives are not susceptible to empirical verification or revision because they are deeply entrenched in political contestations. In fact, narratives derive their power not from empirical validity but from their imaginative power and emotional resonance.

2.4.2 Tarok Socio-Political Organization to c. 1900

The territorial jurisdiction of the Ponzhi Tarok extends over the areas of Langtang South Local Government area, where the place of the Ponzhi Tarok is located in the town of Langtang, and the adjacent Langtang North local Government area. The populations of the two local governments are predominantly comprised of the Tarok ethnic group (also called Yergam). There are Tarok communities in adjacent towns, including Kanam and Wase, as well as in Pankshin and Shendam.

In the absence of written sources, tracing the historical origins of the Tarok people must rely mainly on oral sources, which present several problems. Shagaya (2005) observes that Tarok oral sources cover a very limited time, and they are weak on chronology, thus “it is very difficult to arrive at an exact chronology of certain political developments.” Shagaya’s solution to the problem is to divide the ancient history of Tarok into two broad periods, namely: the period before the jihad of Usman dan Fodio, and the subsequent

period after the jihad up to the beginning of British colonialism in 1900 (p. 122). The colonial period is, of course, more richly documented. In fact, the colonial records contain a great deal of the oral traditions of the Tarok that were collected by the British colonial officers.

Tarok traditions report that they migrated into their present location from the neighboring area of the Tal branch of the Angas ethnic group who are the neighbours of the Tarok. The migrations occurred in several waves over an extended period, beginning in the eighteenth century, or even earlier. Tarok socio-political organization is based on a composite kinship system integrating various elements from both the Tarok migrant communities and the host communities who were indigenous in the areas into which the Tarok migrated. In their detailed study of the evolution of the Tarok kinship, Smith and Smith start by identifying the two major branches of the Tarok ethnic group, namely: 1) Hill Tarok known as Gazum or Zinni, which consists of several clans, and 2) the Low-lands Tarok known as Bwarat, which also includes several clans. (Smith and Smith, 1990)¹ In addition, there are also Tarok families who are descendants of the Ngas, Jukun, Montol, and Boghom ethnic groups who have inter-married with Tarok, thereby making Tarok society a composite of different ethnic groups, whose cultures, festivals, and traditions became interwoven.

The Tarok socio-political organization did not have a centralized hierarchical organization. Instead, political authority and leadership are fused together in the leadership of the clans, with each clan having its own head, known as *ponzhi mbin* (priest-chief) who leads in the observance of the clan rituals and ceremonies, as well as in non-religious matters. According to Shagaya (2005), the priest-chiefs of the Tarok clans never had the institutional means of enforcing their decisions; they could only rely on their influence, and the normative force of customs and traditions. Moreover, the authority of a *ponzhi mbin* is limited to his particular clan among whom he “enjoyed prestige which enabled him to persuade or influence people to do what he wanted, but he lacked actual power to enforce his will” (p. 139). The authority of the *ponzhi mbin* remained limited in both its religious and temporal aspects up to the colonial era, when Ponzhi Tarok was established as the paramount chief of all Tarok clans – discussed in more detail below.

Tarok political organization must have evolved over the centuries in response to both internal and external pressures. For instance, Smith and Smith (1990) argue that the contemporary kinship system is an amalgam of patrilineal features brought by the Tarok immigrant communities, which became infused with matrilineal features of the host communities. (p. 206–62). Similarly, Shagaya (2005) observes that in the pre-jihad period before “the most important external threat to the Tarok came from the Tehl (Montol) who were reputed as being ferocious at war.” It seems plausible that such an external threat could lead to some form of cooperation among the different clans, along the lines that may grant some prominence to one clan to lead the other clans. Working with this plausible assumption, British colonial

officials identified the priest-chief of the Lagan/Zinni clan as more prominent than the priest-chiefs of all the other clans. But Shagaya discounts the possibility of such evolution because “in warfare, each clan groupings had its own war chief” (164). The key point to emphasize is that the Tarok socio-political organization observed in the twentieth-century must have evolved over time, even though there are no sources to provide exact chronology of that evolution.

The potential of internal and external challenges to influence the evolution of social organization and political institutions is more clearly discernible in Tarok history in the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1810s through the end of the nineteenth-century, the Tarok ethnic group had to continuously contend with raids from Wase Emirate. In time, an arrangement emerged under which the priest-chief of the Gani clan was authorized by the other priest-chiefs of the Bwarat clans who share borders with Wase Emirate to negotiate with the Wase authorities. According to a report by A.B. Mathews, who was the District Office in Langtang, the three clans of the Bwarat group “used to, with others, fight against the Fulani (i.e., Wase Emirs), when they could not bribe them off themselves” (Mathews, undated, p. 5). The Gani clan served as the link with the Wase Emirate for arranging *aman* (i.e. peace accord) with Wase Emirate, as well as payment of tribute.

The earlier discussed Isichie’s account of the Birom encounter with the forces of the Sokoto Jihad is different from the Tarok encounter with Sokoto Jihad through Wase Emirate. Armed confrontation alternated with negotiated accord and payment of tributes. Wase never conquered all the different clans that made-up the Tarok ethnic group, nor were the Tarok able to vanquish the Wase Emirate that brought the menace of Usman dan Fodio’s Jihad to their doorsteps. Tarok payment of tributes to Wase, together with the pact of *aman* (accord) allowed peace to prevail despite occasional outbreaks of violence.² This is the sort of nuance that is lacking in Isichie’s simplified narrative of heroic resistance against the slave-raids by the forces of the Sokoto Jihad.

By advent of British colonialism, Wase Emirate was no longer in a position to threaten the Tarok communities through jihad. Instead, the Tarok communities were confronted with challenges of British colonialism, which included the transformation of the *ponzhi mbin* from a priest-chief who exercised authority over his own clan, into the Ponzhi Tarok who was accorded greater authority over all the clans of the Tarok ethnic group, and also as one of the centralized and hierarchical chiefs who can serve as an effective instrument of British indirect rule.

2.4.3 Wase Emirate c. 1820–1902

Wase is also the name of the town that serves as the headquarters of Wase Local Government, and the location of the Palace of the Emir of Wase. It is located to the east of Langtang South Local Government area, and to the south of Langtang North and Kanam Local Government areas, sharing borders with

both. The population of Wase includes Basharawa and Jukun ethnic groups (who were the early inhabitants of the area),³ Hausa/Fulani, Tarok, and other ethnic groups as well. Wase emirate is a part of the Sokoto Caliphate via Bauchi Emirate. It was founded in 1820 by Hasan dan Giwa, who held the title of Madakin Bauchi with territorial jurisdiction over Wase. After Giwa's death in 1828, his descendants ruled Wase under the title of Sarkin Dutse⁴ until its conquest by the British colonial forces in 1892. Beginning in 1902, Wase rulers were designated as Emirs.

In contrast to both Gbong Gwom Jos and Ponzhi Tarok, Wase Emirate is a Muslim polity, ruling over "an Islamic society that can best be described as an enclave of Islam in the midst of non-Muslim ethnic groups in Plateau State" (Samuel, 2011). Wase traditions claim the right of conquest as the basis of authority. Beginning with Hasan dan Giwa, as the founding conqueror, subsequent Wase rulers had to contend with revolts from neighbouring communities, including Tarok and Kanam. The immediate successor to Hasan dan Giwa was his brother, Abdu dan Giwa (r. 1828–1851). Abdu was the first to bear the title of Sarkin Dutse (instead of Madakin Bauchi), which signified the semi-autonomy of Wase from Bauchi. Described as "a very ambitious chief," Abdu is said to "have been continually fighting with the Yergumawa (Tarok) on the hills" (Churcher, 1913, p. 5). He is credited with extending his stay westward to Lafia. Similarly, Abdu's son and successor, Hamman I (r. 1851–1874), was equally as ambitious as his father. In addition to leading the military campaign to suppress Kanam's revolt against the hegemony of Bauchi Emirate, Haman I was "always anxious to be out fighting or raiding, keeping a base fighting camp at Kiliar in Yergum" (Churcher, 1913, p. 5).

Nearly half a century of constant military campaigns was followed by the reigns of the next three rulers, each with very short tenure: Hamman II (r. 1874–1877); Sulaimanu (r. 1877–1882) and Muhammadu I (1882–1886). Internal challenges seem to explain the lull in the external campaigns. In particular, Sulaimanu was deposed because he was not popular, (Maikano, 2011, pp. 4–5) and he lost his life trying to reclaim his position with the support of the neighbouring Shendam chieftom (Churcher, 1913, p. 5).

The final phase of the warring careers of Wase rulers came in the reign of Muhammadu II, also known as Kobri (r. 1886–1898). Three very interesting events marked his long and eventful reign. First, the visit of the Emir Bauchi to Wase coincided with a revolt from Kanam, which was defeated by the combined forces of Wase and those of the visiting Emir of Bauchi. Second, after crushing the Kanam revolt, the visiting Emir of Bauchi addressed the titleholders in Wase in which he "confirmed to them that he would not breach the official trust of the late Emir of Bauchi, Yakubu. He therefore entrusted to the Emir of Wase the entire people," thus signalling the autonomy of Wase. While these two events must have been very pleasant to Muhammadu II, the third landmark event was not so auspicious at all: "Wase was first broken by the Royal Niger Company troops in 1898 when Sarki Mohomadu II was killed" (Churcher, 1913, p. 6). Thus ended the turbulent history of Wase's

continuous attempts to maintain control over the territories it claimed by the right of conquest, which it eventually lost by defeat. The British who took over also claimed the right of conquest as the basis of their own authority.

Wase Emirate had virtually all of the typical aristocratic titles common among the emirates of northern Nigeria (Abubakar, 1974). The emirates emerged as modified versions of the political organization of the Hausa city-states known as *sarauta*, a very sophisticated system of statecraft that evolved over several centuries (Abdullahi, 1970; Last, 1985; Smith, 1960, 1978, 1990). When Usmanu dan Fodio's jihad conquered the Hausa city-states in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Hausa *sarauta* system was redesignated as emirates and infused with Islamic norms of governance, thereby making them the constituent units of the Sokoto Caliphate. The redesignation of *sarauta* as *emirate* was more in name than in substance, for the emirates retained most of the key features of the *sarauta*, especially the aristocratic titles that come with various territorial jurisdictions, and in some cases functional jurisdictions as well (Umar, 2013). These aristocratic titles were rejected by Usman dan Fodio in his critique against the *sarauta* system (Hiskett, 1960).

It is, however, very important to note variations in the titles and their jurisdictions among the individual emirates, as well as the exact number of titles that may be found in different emirates. This point is clearly reflected in the political structure of Wase Emirate that the British found in place when they took over in 1898. At the top of the structure was, of course, the Emir of Wase, who used to have the title of Sarkin Dutse in the nineteenth century as already noted. Below the Emir are senior title-holders that include the Galadima, Iya, Kuyambana, Sarkin Yamma, and Ubandoma. These titles have survived the changes introduced by the British colonial authorities.

2.4.4 Kanam Chiefdom c. 1740–1892

The town of Dengi is the headquarters of Kanam Local Government, and the seat of the Palace of the Emir of Kanam. Kanam Emirate is located to the northeast of Langtang North and Wase Local Government areas. Its aboriginal inhabitants are the Boghom (Burumawa) ethnic group, with the sub-groups known as Kingboghom, Tankwal, and Kingpi. Inter-marriage between the Boghom and the Hausa-Fulani has created the present majority inhabitants of the area, who are also mostly Muslims. Other ethnic groups in Kanam Emirate include Jahr people with their sub-groups of Mbat, Kantana, and Garga, and al Tankwal ethnic groups which are related to the Jukun.

Kanam's tradition relates the ruling dynasty to Muhammadu Sharefa, who reigned as Sarkin Kano c.1702–1730. The current Emir of Kanam, Muhammadu Mu'azu Muhammadu (*r.* 2005–to date), states that his great-grandparents migrated into the areas of present-day Kanam, where they met Boghom/Burumawa people who did not have a unified traditional political institution. The Boghom (Burumawa), who are the majority inhabitants of

Kanam, migrated to the area from Wukari, the capital of the Jukun Kwararafa Empire, thus suggesting affinity with the Jukun. The transformation from the non-centralized political system to a hierarchically centralized polity must have started with Hausa *sarauta* system brought by Maki who led the migration of the descendants of Sarkin Kano Sharefa. Maki is credited with founding the Kanam polity from the simple beginnings of a nominal chief recognized by the Boghom who gave him annual gift in the form of “one bundle of corn no doubt as a compliment rather than a tribute” (Ames, undated, p. 170). Further political developments continued under the next four descendants who succeeded Maki. Shingem, the fifth successor, is credited with developing the Kanam polity in opposition to Bauchi emirate in the first half of the nineteenth century.

During the 1850s, Kanam was confronted with the challenging hegemony of Bauchi Emirate, sometimes asserted through Wase Emirate, which was a basal of Bauchi – as discussed above. Even after the death of Emir Yakubu, Bauchi Emirate remained a formidable threat against Kanam, until the reign of Pyankpan who led “all the towns and villages in a united and completely successful revolt against Bauchi, thus establishing an independence which he maintained until the arrival of the British” (Ames, undated, p. 172).

Two very interesting aspects in the historical evolution of Kanam are: 1) its ethnic diversity despite the status of the Boghom as the majority ethnic group, and 2) the intermarriage between descendants of Maki and the Boghom that has made the two people “indistinguishable.” Emir Muhammad Muazu Muhammad made this point when he traced his family lineage to the “Boghom, who have other sub-tribes known as Kingboghom, Tankwal and Kingpi, where I come from”. (Abraham, 2019) Furthermore, Emir Muhammad reveals that “even in my house, I’m the Emir of Kanam and I’m a Muslim, I totally believe in Islam but I have brothers and sisters who are Christians. I also have heirs to this throne (referring to the Emirship of Kanam) who are also not Muslims” (Abraham, 2019).

This cohesion is a factor in maintaining the relative peace that characterized Kanam down to the present. Except for the threat Bauchi used to pose in the first half of the nineteenth century, Kanam remained relatively free from the insecurity created by conquests and raids that affected the three other traditional institutions.

2.5 British Colonialism and the Transformation of Traditional Polities. C. 1902–1960

The backbone of British colonial rule in Northern Nigeria was the (in)famous indirect rule. Simply put, indirect rule means the reliance by British colonial authorities on traditional political institutions, designated as Native Authorities, to implement policies and decisions of the colonial regime, supply information, and supply conscripted labour when needed. The most desirable Native Authority for the British were the traditional rulers who have

centralized and hierarchical structures, with clear deference and loyalty to constituted authority, and a culture of obedience to the directives from the hierarchy. Writing and record-keeping, clear judicial system, and well-established traditions of taxation are also vital parts of the desirable native authority. (Perham, 1934, 1937; Salamone, 1980).

Right from the proclamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1900, the British found the emirate system that exercised territorial control within the broader polity of the Sokoto Caliphate to be the ideal type of the native authority, and the most suitable for indirect rule. However, the British later discovered many unacceptable features and practices within the emirate systems, which occasionally led to the deposition of some emirs. Still, the British conqueror and founder of colonial Northern Nigeria, Sir Frederick Lugard, and his loyal lieutenants, were so enamoured with the emirate system that they resisted attempts to undermine the cosy relationship they had developed with the emirates in Lugard's first tenure as the High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria 1900–1906, and his second tenure as Governor General of Nigeria in 1919. (Barnes, 2009).

The transformation of the emirates into effective instruments of indirect rule was quite complex, with too many nuts and bolts that cannot be covered in detail here, especially since the relevant literature is quite extensive (Fika, 1979; Dugate, 1985; Lovejoy, 1993; Lovejoy and Hogendorn, 1990; Uba, 1985; Yadudu, 1991). Only a few key features can be highlighted for their direct relevance to the main argument of this essay. First, the British reoriented the focus of authority and loyalty from the Sultan of Sokoto as the political and spiritual head of the Sokoto Caliphate to the High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria (1906), and then to the Lieutenant Governor of Northern Nigeria, and ultimately the Governor General of Nigeria (1906–1960). At the lower level, the authority and loyalty within the emirates were reoriented, in the first instance, to the Residents as the political head of the various provinces of Northern Nigeria, and then to the Lieutenant Governor, and finally to the Governor General. Several emirs who did not accept this hierarchical structure were simply removed from their positions; even covert resistance was not tolerated.

The next important feature was the modification of the administrative agencies of the emirates, and the introduction of new ones. The *beit el-mal* that were used to administer the funds of the emirates and the system of taxation and revenue generation were modified to become the Treasury as the modern bureaucracy for revenue and fiscal management. Similarly, the Sharia courts of the emirates were modified in several aspects that included removal of some sections of substantive and procedural Islamic law, as well as the modification of the jurisdiction of the various Sharia courts. Territorial administration of districts by *masu sarauta* (aristocratic title-holders) and law enforcement by *dogara* (who functioned as the policing agents in the emirates) were also modified.

Finally, a number of new institutions and administrative practices were introduced, most notably garrisons for accommodating the British army of

conquest, magistrate courts and modern police for the administration and enforcement of British colonial laws. More thorough record keeping was introduced initially in Arabic and Hausa, and later in English, which eventually replaced the old emirate system of using Arabic and Hausa language written in the Arabic alphabet. Modern communication was introduced through the telegram and eventually telephone landlines. The British pound replaced the cowries and other monetary forms of exchange, including barter and slaves.

Although these changes were introduced in the first decade of the colonial administration, their development unfolded gradually and incrementally. Some experiments did not work and had to be abandoned; the continuous improvement and recalibration of the critical innovations that the British could not do without. These were mainly the agencies for maintaining the security of the colonial regime in the first instance, and the maintenance of law and order, especially in troubled districts that remained defiant of the British colonial authority in the first years of the colonial rule. Such defiant districts required "pacification," which is a colonial euphemism for subduing resistance through exemplary violence that leaves no community in doubt about the brute power of the British.

By the end of the first decade of colonial rule, active resistance to British conquest was largely over, and the conquering army remained in the background, while the colonial police force took over the routine functions of ensuring security through effective enforcement of law and order. As an integral part of the British colonial administration, the emirates participated in the routine but very effective system of colonial law enforcement. Moreover, since the old threats of conquest and raids by neighboring powers have been eliminated by the British, the emirates could now focus their energies towards maintaining internal security, law, and order. This development is the basis of the common view nowadays that the emirates were very effective in maintaining security through efficient law enforcement and reliable intelligence gathering.

In communities not governed by emirates in the precolonial era, the introduction and operation of British indirect rule was more complicated. Initially, elements of the emirate system were introduced, including Sharia courts with Muslim judges, who could also apply (or mis-apply, in some cases) the customary laws of the non-Muslim communities, through consultations with community elders more knowledgeable about the customary laws of the non-Muslim communities within their jurisdiction. Similarly, law enforcement, including the execution of summons and judgements by Sharia courts, was implemented through the *dogarai* that used to do so in precolonial emirates.

But the emirate system, as the backbone of indirect rule, could not be easily transplanted into non-Muslim societies for a variety of reasons, including the British lack of desire to aid the spread of Islamic religion and culture into the areas and communities that have effectively resisted the imposition of Islam by jihad throughout the nineteenth century. However, finding the

functional equivalent of the emirate proved extremely time-consuming and eventually impossible. The alternative, which was no less time consuming, was to transform the institution of priest-chiefs from the *primus interfeere* who used to head clans into a ruler of the entire ethnic group, including all of the clans. The intricacies are amply illustrated in the transformations of the Ponzhi Tarok and Gbong Gwom Jos. The transformation of the institutions of priest-chiefs into a centralized and hierarchical system similar to that of the emirate was never popular among the non-Muslim communities, despite the insistence of the British. The resistance to centralizing political leadership among both the Tarok and the Birom remained strong until the 1950s, when decolonization gathered momentum. Modern educated elites from the two communities led the efforts to secure acceptance of the political innovation of a single chief as a ruler over all of the clans of the ethnic group, rather than the old system of each clan having its own priest-chief. Yet, paradoxically, the modern educated elites were subordinate to the traditional chieftaincies after independence.

Some interesting unintended consequences resulted from the colonial transformations of the four polities in this essay: the end of the insecurity created by conquests and raids in the nineteenth century; lack of sovereignty but enhanced administrative capacity via the NA system; and better ability to maintain internal security through control of Police, Judiciary, and Prisons. Equally interesting were the challenges that confronted the four traditional rulers after their colonial transformations. One formidable challenge was the steady rise of the influence of the modern educated elite, especially through their careers in the colonial army, police, and civil service, as well as their participation in the politics of decolonization after 1945. The transformation of traditional rulers into effective instruments of British colonial rule, together with the cosy relationship that developed between the traditional rulers and the British colonial authorities, did not go well with the aspirations of the modern elite and their vision of the future of Nigeria as a modern independent country. Conversely, the turbulent nature of party politics that opens avenues to ordinary individuals without royal or aristocratic backgrounds to rise to power did not go well with the traditional rulers either. The crucial issue at stake was who would take over political leadership after Nigeria became independent. With historical hindsight, the winners were of course the modern educated elites. (Dudley, 1968; Reynolds, 2001) This means that the main insecurity challenge that confronted the traditional rulers was the new threat of their removal from power by a modern political elite who have continued to retain that power, even in contemporary Nigeria.

Yakubu Muktar demonstrated the crisis that confronted the traditional polities, the Muslim emirates, and the non-Muslim chiefdoms alike, as well as the British colonial authorities who relied on them to run local government administration. The prospect of the modern educated elite taking over state power after independence pushed the British colonial authorities to take "panic measures," (Yakubu, 1993) which forced the emirs and chiefs

to abandon their traditional grip on power in their local communities. They were required to accept what Yakub terms the “unpalatable proposition” of sharing power “with the hitherto despised western-educated elites,” who had to “be involved in emirate local government as equal actors with emirs in policy formulation and execution.” Any emir or chief unwilling to accept these changes were simply removed. Even senior emirs and chiefs were not spared as clearly indicated by removal of “Lamido of Adamawa, Ahmadu (1953); successive emirs of Argungu, Muhammadu Isma’ila and Muhammadu Sheshe (1959); the Shehu of Dikwa, Mustapha III Ibn Sanda (1954); the Atta (now Ohinoyi) of Igbirra, Ibrahim (1954) and the Atta of Igala, Umaru Ame Oboni (1956) (Yakubu, 1993, pp. 594–5). Yet, the British could not realize their objective of retaining the emirs and chiefs as an effective counter-force against the rising modern educated elite. Eventually, neither the British nor the emirs and chiefs were able to prevent the modern educated elite from taking complete control of state power at Nigeria’s independence in 1960.

The traditional rulers retained the capacity to provide security and maintain law and order, even as they had to share power with the Western-educated elites. Their task was made easy by the continuing presence of the modern institutions established by the British, namely: the military, police, intelligence service, prison, and judiciary, as well the of the modest modern infrastructure constructed by the colonial regime. In addition, the security challenges at the time were not as serious as they have now become.

2.6 The Twilight of the Power of Traditional Rulers 1960–1975

The arrangement for power-sharing between the traditional rulers and the Western-educated elites did not endure after the end of British colonialism. As the Western educated elites consolidated their grip on state power, the precarious position of traditional rulers was exposed for all to see in 1963 when the Premier of Northern Region of Nigeria and the Saraduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, removed Emir Muhammad Sanusi from the “powerful” position of Emir of Kano. This event was a continuation of what the British started at the beginning of colonial rule by removing any traditional ruler found wanting in loyalty or in performance of his duties as determined solely by the British. The balance of power has never changed since then, as amply demonstrated in 2020 when the Governor of Kano State removed Emir Sanusi’s grandson, Emir of Kano Muhammadu Sanusi II, for alleged disrespect to the authority of the Governor.⁵

Throughout the years of Nigeria’s first republic, which lasted from independence in 1960 to the outbreak of Nigerian civil war in 1967, any traditional ruler who wished to retain his position could only do so by remaining absolutely loyal to the Premier of the Northern Region of Nigeria. As the modern elite continued to dismantle one pillar after another in the Native Authority system of local government, the traditional rulers were utterly helpless. Control of police and prison were among the first to go, followed by

removal of Native Authority control over courts. As already noted, the final blow came via the local government reform of 1976. Without control of police, courts, and prisons, the traditional authorities do not have the institutional capacity to ensure security. While the traditional rulers do not control the formal institutions of asserting state power, they still retain control over the traditional system of surveillance through district and ward heads in their domains. Therefore, the traditional rulers had the means to maintain their relevance in managing the affairs of their communities, including maintenance of security, law, and order. The important point to note here is that the traditional rulers have been responding in various ways to their predicament after losing power to chairmen of local government councils.

First and foremost, traditional rulers have relied on their cultural appeal and historical legacy to maintain their relevance and influence over their communities. Depending on their individual integrity and charisma, traditional rulers can exert great influence on the state governors and even the president of the country to secure a project for the benefit of their communities, or particular individuals. Another way of extending their influence is the practice of granting traditional aristocratic titles to prominent individuals in the country. There is an expectation that the recipients of traditional titles will show loyalty and obedience to the traditional ruler who granted the title. Granting such aristocratic titles projects the vicarious power of the traditional rulers, especially in light of the seemingly insatiable appetite for such titles among Nigerian power elites.

A variation of projection of vicarious power is through princes and members of the royal families of the traditional rulers. When such members of the royal families attained prominent positions in the public service or in other agencies of the state, they can be expected to be favourably disposed towards traditional rulers, especially when making or influencing decisions that may affect their royal fathers. This scenario is not too far-fetched in the context of prevalent patrimonialism and influence-peddling in Nigeria.

In their responses to their lack of real power after losing control of the agencies of the state, the traditional rulers continue to rely on the ancient instruments of asserting royal authority that are still available to them. The *dogari* system that used to enforce the decisions of the traditional rulers, and the traditional agents of surveillance such as ward heads and district heads, are examples of the instruments of remanent power still at the disposal of the traditional rulers to maintain their influence over the affairs of their communities. Additionally, they can also deploy new instruments that have emerged recently, such as various forms of certification required to access public resources and services, including indigeneship certification, land titles, employment into governmental agencies, etc. Often such certification required obtaining clearance from the ward or district heads who are functionaries of the traditional rulers. Granting or withholding such certifications can be used as a mechanism of inclusion or exclusion (Ehrhardt, 2017). Indigeneship certification has been one of the major issues in contention that

contribute to violent conflict in the four traditional polities examined in this essay, but also in other areas of ethno-religious violent conflicts in Plateau State, as well as the neighboring states of Benue and Taraba.

Religious ceremonies and cultural festivals are occasions for traditional rulers to demonstrate their continuing relevance and influence. They deliver speeches at such occasions that reiterate their historical links to the heritage and values of their communities. They often perform important public rituals that have been, traditionally, the means of reaffirming communal identity, as well as promoting the cultural, spiritual, and material well-being of the community. For instance, the Gbong Gwom Jos is the key official at the annual Nsem Birum festival attended by thousands from all over Birumland. The festival indicates the continuing importance and relevance of the Birum traditional ruler, as well as popular acceptance of his authority.⁶

Given these various ways and means of demonstrating the public visibility and influence of traditional rulers, as well as their continuing relevance, it is not surprising that both federal and state governments have found many reasons and occasions to enlist the support of traditional rulers for various government policies, programmes, and projects. Examples range from inviting traditional rulers to grace commissioning of completed government projects, attendance at major public events such as the swearing in of a new governor, and speaking through the media in public enlightenment campaigns, etc. Other examples include appointment of traditional rulers participating in security management committees in their domains.⁷ In fact, the recent attempts to tackle the rampant insecurity in the country count on the traditional rulers to be active players in ensuring peaceful coexistence in their communities, as indicated in the epigraph at the beginning of this essay. Furthermore, several traditional rulers have been proactively involved in managing conflicts in their domains, especially in areas that have experienced the eruption of conflicts into violence.

2.7 Findings and Observations

Since the beginning of armed robbery in the mid-1970s, the deterioration of insecurity has continued unabated, leading to the current situation, in which all the security and law enforcement agencies, including the army and the air force, have been unable to stop the outrages of kidnapping for ransom, and wanton destruction of lives and properties of innocent citizens. Outlaws have exhibited the audacity to not only set remote villages on fire but also to attack military barracks and police stations to cart away arms and ammunitions, and prisons to free their incarcerated fellow criminals. As noted in the report of the National Security Summit, all the responses to the dire insecurity challenges have not worked. Hence there is need for radically new approaches, in which traditional rulers are envisaged to play critical roles.

In his insightful study of what he termed “plural policing,” Jimam Lar shows that vigilante groups were constituted as part of “community policing” in

the context of Structural Adjustment Program (ASP) reforms in the 1980s that entailed significant retreat of the state from the provision of public goods and services, privatization of state economic enterprises, and deregulation of key sectors of the economy (Lar, 2018, pp. 172ff). The state retreat was thought necessary to allow the private sector to perform better by relying on market efficiencies. A contributing factor was the dwindling government revenue in the face of increased demands for more public goods and services for the teeming population. Within these constraints, vigilantism, community policing, and for-profit security firms became part of “plural policing.” Traditional rulers were involved in the recruitment of individuals to serve on vigilante groups, as well as in community policing. Lar’s study demonstrates very clearly that traditional rulers have been actively involved in plural policing in Plateau State since 2001 when violent conflicts began in Jos, and subsequently spread into other areas in the state (Lar, 2018, pp. 228–42). Traditional rulers screened out individuals before they could join the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, whose members played a vital role in managing the communal violence in Plateau State.

Furthermore, the traditional rulers in Jos, Langtang, Kanam, and Wase had no option but to become involved in dousing the tension that kept erupting into violent conflicts over the last two decades, often with enormous destruction of lives and properties in their domains (Best, 2007). The palaces of the Gbong Gwom Jos, the Ponzhi Tarok, and the Emirs of Wase and Kanam became the centres of organizing and delivering relief materials to victims of the violent conflicts.⁸ Despite their lack of control over the governmental security agencies, there can be no doubt that these traditional rulers have played vital roles in the continuing efforts to end the violent conflict in Plateau state. The roles of traditional rulers in peace-building has been richly documented (Uba, 2007; Herbert et al., 2019, pp. 26–7).

Yet, there are challenges to consider. To begin with, there are allegations and counter-allegations that the traditional rulers were not always neutral in the violent conflicts. Some even go far to allege that the traditional rulers were complicit in instigating the violence, or providing covert support for the foot-soldiers who do the fighting. However, no convincing evidence to support these grave allegations has been provided. The unfortunate consequence is that casting such aspersions does not help matters at all.

The communal dimensions of the violent conflicts have implicated the traditional rulers in so far as they are the leaders of the respective communities involved in the conflicts. As such, the traditional rulers have occasionally made public pronouncements about the grievances of their particular communities.⁹ Such pronouncements are liable to be misunderstood as endorsement of the resort to violence in redressing those grievances. The difficulty for the traditional rulers is that their communities expect them to speak out about the communal grievances, but if they do, they are seen as taking sides in the conflict.

Another difficulty for traditional rulers is the agitation for redistricting areas within the domains of a particular traditional ruler. When state governors respond favourably to such agitations, they usually do so largely to enhance their electoral gains within the affected communities, or to settle scores with “uncooperative” traditional rulers. Redistricting entails losing parts of the territories under an existing traditional ruler and placing the “lost territories” to a newly created traditional chiefdom. All four traditional polities examined in this essay have experienced such losses of territories within their domains.¹⁰

The politics of jerrymandering of the territorial jurisdiction of traditional polities creates a conflict of interest for the traditional rulers who lose parts of their domains. Matters can become even more complicated where the redistricting results in the promotion of a district head who used to be answerable to a particular traditional ruler, but the former district head becomes recognized by the state government as an autonomous traditional ruler over his own domain. This was precisely the outcome of the long and complicated struggle for the creation of Boghom Chiefdom out of the territories of Kanam Emirate (Shehu, 2018). When violent conflict erupts between communities in two chiefdoms, neutrality from the two traditional rulers becomes very difficult, if not totally impossible. These complicated dynamics limit the capacity of the traditional rulers for managing violent conflicts, in which the rulers may have a vested interest at stake.

Another set of constraints on the capacity of the traditional rulers arises from the complexities of the insecurity challenges, particularly their variety and multiple dimensions. For instance, field observations of the various ethno-religious violent conflicts in northern Nigeria have often unfolded in distinct phases: 1) tensions build-up until a trigger event unleashes the violence; 2) the fighting may last for a day or more, and can linger on for weeks or months with isolated episodes in particular localities; 3) deployment of troops to end the fighting and restore normalcy which may last for months or even years; 4) providing relief to victims and resettling displaced individuals and families; and 5) the long and arduous task of rebuilding the peace and restoring trust in the affected communities. On the other hand, insecurity created by kidnapping for ransom, rural banditry, and cattle-rustling each has its own peculiar dynamics that dictate different responses, including the deployment of security forces into the affected areas and communities. Since the traditional rulers do not have any control over security forces, they can only request deployment from the relevant security agencies. On the other hand, the traditional rulers can play the important role of dousing tensions before they erupt into violence and can also help with prompt responses to early warning signs of the imminent break-down of law and order. Traditional rulers can also contribute significantly to mobilizing relief materials for victims, as well as leading the efforts to secure the peace and restore trust in the affected communities.

Clearly then, while the traditional rulers can, in fact, contribute to managing the challenges of insecurity in their domains, their capacity to do so is constrained in many ways, or is lacking, in some cases.

2.8 Conclusions

Although the Local Government Reform of 1976 removed the traditional institutions from the formal structures of power, and reduced them to mere advisory roles, the traditional institutions have remained quite active in the affairs of their local communities. They play critical roles in the various violent conflicts that have occurred over the last two decades. The extent of the involvement of the traditional institutions is in part dependent on their location outside of the state capitals, where the law enforcement and security agencies are more active than in the small towns and rural areas that do not have adequate governmental presence.

The capacity of traditional rulers to maintain peace and security in their domains is complicated by constraints, especially in the context of ethno-religious/communal violent conflicts. In some cases, the status and the very existence of the traditional authorities are part of the issues in contention. This was especially the case in the violent conflict between Wase Emirate and the Tarok people of Langtang, as well as the Gbong Gwom Jos and the Hausa/Muslim residents in Jos. In these contexts, it was extremely difficult for the traditional authorities to remain neutral in the violent conflict because their very existence is part of the major issues in violent conflict. As such their capacity to maintain peace and security became compromised.

Notes

- 1 See also: "Tarok History: A Brief Historical Background," Last updated on 21 April 2014, published by O'Tarok Administrator, available at <http://www.otarok.com/tarok-history/brief-history.html>, accessed on October 26, 2021.
- 2 Interview with Dr. Jimam Lar, conducted by the author in Jos November, 2021.
- 3 Interview with Alhaji Mustapha Umar, retired senior civil servant and the Galadima of Wase (age 62), the interview was conducted by the author in Jos, on March 29, 2022.
- 4 Dutse is the Hausa word for rock, and the prominent landmark around Wase is the massive Wase Rock.
- 5 "Nigeria's emir of Kano dethroned for 'disrespect,'" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51804764>, 9 March 2020, accessed on June 22, 2022.
- 6 Author's Interview with Professor Thomas Bingel born 1952 (Jos November 25, 2021).
- 7 Author's Interview with Mallam Samaila Mohammed, the first elected Chairman of Jos North Local Government, born 1950 (Jos May 7, 2022).
- 8 Interviews by the author with Dr. Jimam Lar in Jos, 11 November 2021; and with Ibrahim Hassan also in Jos, 10 November 2021
- 9 Wanton killing of our people can no longer be allowed — Gbong Gwom Jos | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News — Interview — The Guardian

- Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News, July 1, 2018, accessed on November 29, 2021
- 10 Author's Interview with Professor Ibrahim Hassan al-Wasewi, (Jos, December 10, 2021)

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3 The Changing Roles of Traditional Authorities in Security Management

A Case Study of the Benin Area of Edo State

Eghosa E. Osaghae

3.1 Introduction

Insecurity in Nigeria has grown from being an isolated or periodic problem to becoming a perennial and overwhelming crisis that has engulfed all parts of the country. The variety and complexity of insecurity, however, make attempts to engage the problems in omnibus one-size-fits-all fashion unrealistic, and this has been a major challenge to security management. The political geography of insecurity presents regional variations, tendencies, and specificities: Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorism in the northeast, banditry in the northwest and north-central, and cultism and ritual killings in the south-south, southwest, and southeast. Although the other prevalent varieties of insecurity – farmer-herder conflicts, kidnapping, abduction, and robberies – are diffused throughout the country, regional densities can still be discerned.

Based on insights from theories of conflict mobility and new regionalism which focus on how conflicts travel through cross-border diffusion of ideas and flows of illicit funds, weapons, strategies, and tactics (Soderbaum and Shaw, 2003; de Bruijn and Osaghae, 2011; Hameiri, 2013; Vilombo et al., 2014; Hentz, 2014; Osaghae, 2021), it goes without saying that the diverse forms of criminality and insecurity in Nigeria are connected. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, for example, presents one possible linkage, as do the large numbers of impoverished, unemployed, and out-of-school youths who provide the recruitment reserve for violent extremism, terrorism, cultism and kidnapping gangs; the involvement of non-Nigerians in the various groups; and the possibility that the various forms of insecurity may be backed, sponsored, or financed by external and local networks and forces.

While the points of connectedness and linkage help to frame analysis of the security problems in Nigeria and suggest possible lines of convergence and simultaneity, they do not detract from the fact that security problems are localized in flashpoints, hotspots, and conflict zones. The localization of security and conflict problems suggests a different and arguably more discerning slant of analysis, which directs attention to the specificities and contextualizes the search for solutions. This demands a more diversified and nuanced approach as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. It is within the

context of the search for more nuanced responses that emphasize contextual and situational variables and options that the roles of traditional rulers and institutions in security management have increasingly come under scrutiny.

More specifically, the seeming failure of formal and conventional approaches to conflict and security problems in Africa in general has provoked reviews and proposals that support the resuscitation and return of indigenous knowledge systems and traditional African conflict *medicine* (Zartman, 2000; Vaughan, 2004). This position seems to be true of the Benin case of focus in this study where, it has been pointed out, “Traditional methods and practices are often consulted as a last resort in times of distress and need for survival” (Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, 2013, p. 125). “Last resort,” “distress,” and “need for survival” could be taken as implying failure of extant remedies, but this has to be backed by evidence rather than accepted at face value. Support for traditional approaches has not come only from scholars and practitioners of security and conflict management, however. Indeed, the need to restore mainstream traditional institutions has gained traction across Nigeria, with top government leaders desperate to halt the wave of insecurity at the forefront. In an interview on national television in January 2022, President Muhammadu Buhari advocated a resuscitation of old traditional structures of security management that were particularly effective in reducing conflicts between host and migrant communities in the past to address contemporary conflicts between (host) farmers and (migrant) herders. President Buhari emphasized the importance of context, which makes traditional institutions and effective local governance pivotal to a more nuanced bottom-up approach to security management at the local level, where most conflicts actually occur.

A like-minded Katsina state government decided to integrate traditional institutions and village-level security structures in the efforts to tackle banditry because, as Governor Bello Masari pointed out, banditry is a community-level problem that requires the involvement of local security structures (*Daily Trust*, 3 March 2022, p. 3). The advocacy of the traditional institutions also found resonance in the 2022 theme of the annual Ahmadu Bello Memorial Lecture: “Reviving the Northern Traditional Institutions: Imperative for Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria.” The fact that these illustrations come from the north of the country which does not only have some of the most elaborate traditional institutions but has also faced serious challenges of terrorism, banditry, abductions, radicalization, and violent extremism in the last decade, tells a story of a growing perception that extant security mechanisms can no longer cope with the challenges. This suggests a last resort trajectory propelled by dissatisfaction with extant responses to insecurity, but the advocacy goes far beyond the north and has a national resonance that signposts the search for alternative or complementary/additional approaches.

The relevance of traditional approaches might not be in doubt considering that attachments to traditional ways of life remain strong in Nigeria (as is evident in the prevalence of customary law, traditional religious beliefs and

practices, and the increased employment of rituals and juju by terrorists, militants, kidnappers, cultists, robbers, local vigilantes, and even security agencies), but bringing them back in raises questions of feasibility, applicability and compatibility (Osaghae, 1989). First is the location – and subordination – of traditional authorities within larger state and governmental frameworks. How compatible are traditional approaches with the secular underpinnings of modern statehood, and to what extent can they be integrated? Second, in view of the fact that traditional authorities now operate within more cosmopolitan communities as opposed to the largely insular communities of the past, to what extent can traditional approaches which are based on particular cultures, traditions, and governmental systems be generalized and applied to so-called non-indigenes?

It is against the foregoing background that a study of the changing roles of traditional authorities in the management of security in the Benin area of Edo state was undertaken. The Benin area of Edo state offers a suitable site for interrogating questions of relevance, applicability, and effectiveness and testing hypotheses on the resort to traditional institutions in security management for at least two reasons. First is the pervasiveness of tradition in the Benin area. The social formations, culture, religions, mores, and norms of the Benin people reflect strong attachments to tradition that have withstood the tremendous political and socioeconomic transformations the area has gone through since colonialism, including most importantly, incorporation into the Nigerian state. (Ryder, 1969; Igbafe, 1979; Ikime, 1980) The resilience of the Benin social structure owes a lot to the continuing centrality and relevance of traditional institutions headed by the Oba of Benin who not only functions as the custodian of tradition but continues to wield great influence and authority of Weber's traditional authority ideal type alongside the legal-rational type that characterizes the modern state (Osadolor, 2011).

The powers of the Oba and traditional institutions that take their bearings from the throne, such as the chiefly orders, palace and other traditional societies, religious sects, traditional healers, trade and market organizations, and ad hoc committees that the Oba constitutes from time to time, are extensive, and include processes of adjudication and conflict management. Resilience, especially in relation to security management, is also to be explained by the strong belief in the efficacy of traditional methods of justice and redress which hinge on the supernatural and spiritual. It is believed, for example, that unlike modern judicial processes in Nigeria that are prone to endless delays and corruption, traditional methods offer instant judgement and punishment without fear or favour. The continued primacy of the Oba and traditional institutions has, of course, not been without conflicts and contradictions with the modern and secular state, but the demonstrable ability of the modern and traditional institutions to work together in responding to and dealing with problems of insecurity is what provides the point of departure of this study.

There is another compelling reason why the Benin area is appropriate for the study of the issues indicated above. This has to do with the geostrategic

location of the area that makes Benin a critical juncture of national and global flows and interfaces that underlie contemporary insecurity. There are two dimensions to this. First is the fact that Benin City and Edo state at large serves as a link between the north and the south of Nigeria, and is the gateway to the southeast and south-south of the country. This has placed the area at the receiving end of domestic and national flows of conflict and insecurity, which probably explains the incidence of conflicts between herders who mostly migrate from the northern parts of the country and local farming communities, as well as kidnappings which allegedly involve Fulani – also from the north – who have found the forests and arable land of the area suitable sites for their activities (Jatto and Stanislas, 2017). The Benin area serves as a transition and reconnaissance mid-way house to the south-east and south-south for migrants from the north.

Second, Benin is a focal point of emergent local and global interfaces that are linked to insecurity. Foremost of these is the fact that Benin accounts for a large proportion of illegal migrants to Europe, with residues in Libya and other parts of North Africa and is also highly involved in human trafficking. The area is also a hub of cultism, land wars, kidnapping, and internet fraud (*yahoo-yahoo*). The preponderance of unemployed, out-of-school, and aggrieved youths is another important factor in the emergent forms of insecurity that are intricately linked with transnational crimes and the global flow of illicit arms, funds, and drugs. One aspect of the Benin involvement in all these, namely, the complex web of rituals, juju, oath-taking, and covenants, which is deeply rooted in traditional beliefs and practices, may be regarded as both justification and entry point for interventions by traditional authorities in security management (Stanislas and Iyah, 2016). For these reasons, the Benin area presents an appropriate site not only to study insecurity in a robustly holistic manner but also to interrogate the broad range of engagements and interventions by traditional authorities as an integral element of hybrid, mixed and inclusive governance of state and non-state actors (Hussein et al., 2019; Baker, 2010; Cross, 2016).

The key questions include, how has the complex insecurity situation played out in the Benin area? What are its major forms, specificities and peculiarities, and how are they connected to the larger national and global insecurity? What roles have the Oba and traditional institutions played in security management, and how have these changed over time? Have these been done in isolation and apart from governmental and nongovernmental efforts, or in collaboration with them? Does the increasing recourse to traditional conflict mechanisms suggest the failure of conventional legal-constitutional mechanisms, and how can they be integrated in societies like Benin where traditional institutions continue to hold sway?

Having highlighted the significance of this study and the justification for the Benin area case study, the rest of this paper is organized as follows. The next section presents the methodology. This is followed by an overview of the Benin traditional paradigm of security management and the changes they

have gone through over the years. Next, we examine the roles of traditional authorities and deployments of traditional mechanisms in the face of emergent and escalating security problems. The final section presents the major findings and conclusions.

Methodology

This study examines the changing roles of traditional authorities in security management in the Benin area as an exploratory and confirmatory case study of larger issues of the relevance and problems of traditional institutions in security management in Nigeria.

Delineation and Clarification of Concepts

The key concepts that require delineation and clarification are Benin area, traditional authorities, changing roles, and security. Benin area refers to Benin City and adjoining Greater Benin communities which fall directly under the traditional authority of the Oba of Benin (see Figure 3.1). The area has the Oredo local government area at the core and includes parts of the adjoining Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, and Ovia north-east local government areas. By traditional authorities we mean traditional institutions and practices that in the Benin area are built and organized around the Oba of Benin. The Oba exercises wide-ranging executive, legislative, and judicial powers in the traditional domain. While the powers reside in the Oba and the palace, the institutions include chiefs, town, village, and community heads, chief priests, priests and priestesses of deities and traditional religious sects, native doctors and herbalists, palace groups and societies, guilds, and various traditional societies through which the Oba exercises delegated authority on matters of security. This wide-ranging and inclusive composition was in full display in 2019 when the Oba authorized a 'show of force' parade of the various groups through major streets in Benin City, as part of the more dramatic interventions to reduce crime and insecurity related to human trafficking, cultism, and kidnappings.

Changing roles refer to the ways in which the specific roles and functions of traditional institutions in security management have been affected by, first, increased modernity and cosmopolitanism and subordination of traditional authority to legal-rational authority, and second, the unprecedented complex and emergent forms of insecurity in Nigeria in general and the Benin area in particular. The point is that although Benin retains its traditional complexion, it is no longer the insular area that made it possible for the Oba to be sovereign in the past. Benin is a modern city, capital of Edo state (and Mid-West region and state, 1963–1976, and Bendel state, 1976–1991, before Edo state), the fourth largest city in Nigeria after Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano, one of the fastest growing urban centres in the country (with an estimated population of 1,782,000 as of 2021), and one of the most heterogeneous towns in Nigeria in terms of ethnic, religious, and cultural composition.

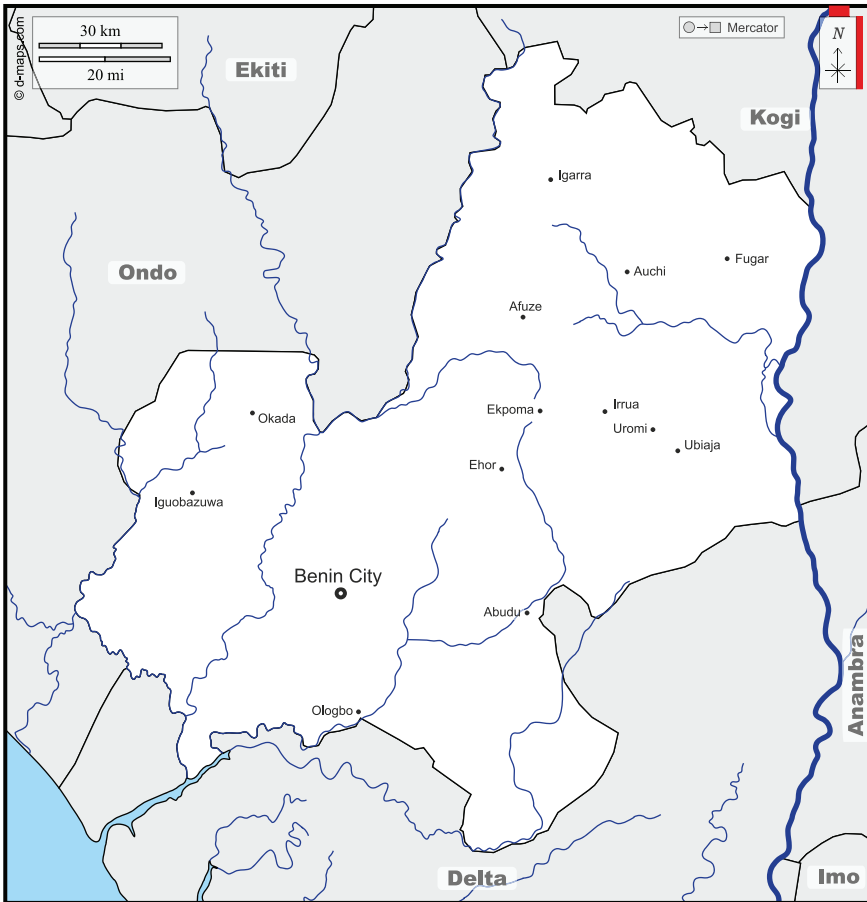


Figure 3.1 Map of Edo State and Its Main Cities and Towns. <https://d-maps.com/m/africa/nigeria/edo/edo21.pdf> retrieved 21 June 2023.

Finally, security is operationalized as human security, which “means protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting people from critical [severe] and pervasive [widespread] threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity” (UNCHS, 2003, p. 4). Based on conclusions at a meeting convened by the Edo National Association of London to discuss security issues in Edo state in 2015, Jatto and Stanislas (2017) classify security threats in the state in general according to their sources as territorial, environmental, and climate

change-induced problems, high rates of unemployment, incursion of herders, assassinations, and kidnapping. This is quite helpful, especially as the authors are able to analyze their interconnectedness, but for us, and based on interviews and focus group discussions, security and security management have to do with the reduction of physical threats to lives and livelihoods. The strategies and mechanisms of reduction make up what we refer to as security management mechanisms, which for the purpose of this study are classified into two categories: state or government mechanisms that are conventional, formal, legal-constitutional, and tangible, and traditional mechanisms that are mostly informal, spiritual, and intangible.

Research Questions

The core research question of the study is thus: is the resurgence of traditional mechanisms of security in the Benin area indicative of the weakness of formal state channels and mechanisms? To test this general hypothesis, the study seeks answers to the following ancillary research questions:

1. What is the state of (in)security in the Benin area, and which threats and problems have challenged security management the most? How has the state/government responded to them, and how effective have the responses been?
2. What factors underlie the resurgence of traditional mechanisms? What forms, types, and methods have been applied and how effective have they been?
3. How have the traditional mechanisms interfaced with formal state mechanisms? How compatible, cooperative, integral, or conflictual have they been?
4. What is the future of traditional conflict mechanisms?

Methodology

The case study method was employed. This method is well suited for exploratory studies, which aim at unravelling the nature of the subject and generating interpretive data through what Geertz (1973) calls “thick description” in a relatively unknown area, as well as confirmatory studies, which basically test hypotheses based on a small number of cases rather than a large number of cases (Lijphart, 1971; Przeworski and Teune, 1970; Lieberman, 1991; Collier, 1993). With regard to the latter, Lijphart rightly cautions that single or few cases are not enough grounds to disconfirm theories and hypotheses, but they can nevertheless raise doubts that set the stage for their review and modification. The Benin area case study is exploratory because it addresses an area of interest that is not so well studied in the light of changing security

realities and confirmatory because it seeks to test, albeit in a fairly rudimentary way, the general hypothesis that the resurgence of – and advocacy for – traditional mechanisms of security is indicative of the weakness of formal state mechanisms.

The project began with a pre-field meeting of the principal researcher and research assistants to agree on core methodological issues, including conceptual clarifications and methods of data gathering, as well as identification of key informants and of possible fieldwork problems, and how to address them. Data gathering and analysis involved desk research, a literature review and press reports (including social media) on the broad subject of Benin studies in general, the trajectories of change and transformation of the area leading up to the present democratic era, and the emergent security challenges. Empirical and primary data were obtained through interviews, focus group discussions, government reports, and other relevant documents, and participant observation. A total of 50 respondents from a spectrum of relevant sectors and interests – government officials including serving and retired police and security officers, major traditional actors (chiefs, traditional priests, security-related guilds and vigilantes, civil society, diaspora, women's and youth groups, researchers, and leaders of non-Benin or non-indigenous groups) were either interviewed individually (20 key informants and opinion leaders were so interviewed) and as part of focus group discussions which were guided by questions that had been generated and validated at the pre-field methodology workshop.

Questions were classified into sections that elicited information on the history and social formations of Benin's traditional security mechanisms, as well as changes and transformations over the years; forms, specificities, and peculiarities of current insecurity in the Benin area including the most serious and threatening, and their connections with larger national and global insecurity; changes necessitated by the emergence and intensification of new-style security challenges, whether the recourse to traditional mechanisms suggested the failure of extant formal state and non-state mechanisms; and the effectiveness and future of traditional security management mechanisms. The interviews, which were administered by three research assistants and conducted in English and Benin, observed the rules of confidentiality and ethical conduct spelt out in the consent forms which were signed by respondents, were recorded and transcribed, and photographs were taken where possible.

3.2 A Paradigm of Traditional Security Mechanisms in the Benin Area, Changes and Transformation

Great Benin where the king resides...is wealthy and industrious. It is so well governed that theft is unknown and the people live in such security.

(Laurenco Pinto, 15th century Portuguese explorer,
cited in Ryder, 1969, p. 113)

The Benin area of the present Edo State of Nigeria has a traditional security architecture that was historically built around the Oba, who exercised wide-ranging executive, legislative, judicial, and spiritual powers. From the account of the Portuguese explorer cited above, the level of security in Benin society was high. At the core of the security architecture was a community-level arrangement which involved documentation of all residents that was managed by the Oba's delegated deputies (enigie, edionwere, ohen, and special emissaries) (Ryder, *ibid*). Every new resident was duly registered and permitted to farm, trade, build a house, and take part in the community's activities after clearance by community heads and elders' councils. One interesting part of this arrangement was the communal approach to building and owning houses, which reinforced control of residency and security. No one could build a house without first obtaining the permission of the community head who afterwards appointed a team of youths to do the actual building. This made all houses community houses, as it were, and provided a unique form of security: if the owner of the house breached community rules, especially as these pertained to stealing, murder, gangsterism, rape, abduction, and other crimes that threatened collective security, such resident could be banned and the house destroyed by the same youths that built it (Interview with Chief Ogie Ogedegbe, Adolor of Ehor, and information from KII and FGD).

Crimes, disputes, and security threats were dealt with at the *Ogue-Edion* (ancestral shrine) where elders, headed by the Odionwere, sat in judgement with ancestors and gods as 'witnesses'. "The consciousness of the presence of these unseen forces," according to Idumwonyi and Ikhidero (2013, p. 129), "induces the jury to...be fair...where the truth is in doubt, recourse is usually taken to oaths and ordeals. The belief is that, after taking an oath, parties that have given false information will earn divine wrath." Here we see the primacy of belief in the power of the gods and deities to discern and punish evildoers and offenders (with ancestors, divinities, and the Oba and his lieutenants to police and enforce it), which made deterrence central to the efficacy of traditional security mechanisms. Deterrence was also to be seen in the special status accorded to acknowledged witches, wizards, sorcerers, diviners, priests, and herbalists who functioned as intelligence officers and, under the control of the Oba, were involved in tackling conflict issues that were believed to entail the supernatural. Thus, to cite one good example, "the Benin people...often turn to the oracle, in this case, *Orunmila* (the great benefactor of humanity and main adviser who reveals the future through the secrets of *iha*, the supreme oracle) to find out the will of *Osanobua* – the Supreme God" (Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, 2013, pp. 129–130). The various deities – *orunmila*, *ogun*, *sango*, *eziza*, *olokun*, *ayelala* – manifested the wrath and blessings of the Supreme Being, and the threat to invoke the wrath of any of them, or even to swear by them was usually enough to keep offenders and enemies on the right track:

A curse with Ogun, for example, is taken very seriously by Benin people because it is believed to possess a potential for instantaneous manifestation. It is often said that 'anyone who does not do the bidding of Ogun has surely set himself for a battle with the messenger of death'. Of particular interest is the hesitation of members of Benin society to swear by *Ogun-Oba* (Oba's iron god), as it is believed to be very efficacious in dispensing justice.

(Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, 2013, p. 130)

Ogue-Edion judgements, which ranged from naming and shaming culprits, fines, sanctions, sacrifices, and suspension from community activities, to banishment, were sacrosanct but matters that could not be resolved at this level were, upon appeal, referred to the Enogie and, ultimately, the Oba (who had the final say on death sentences and functioned as the Supreme Court on all other matters). These rules or indigenous laws applied to all members of the community, indigene and non-indigene alike, although "freeborn" Benin male citizens – as opposed to "slaves," indentured labourers and women generally – were privileged. According to our respondents, this indigenous system is still largely intact with only slight modifications in rural and semi-urban communities and underlies the description of Benin as a traditional area.

At the apex of the traditional security arrangement is the Oba and the palace. The Oba is the ultimate repository of executive, legislative, judicial, and spiritual authority which is woven around a complex web of societies (such as the *Ewaise* or custodians of spiritual activities), chiefly orders, guilds, and so on. Defence was coordinated by the *Ologbosere* or War General, assisted by *Idogun*, *Ogiugo*, and the *Ikpolughe*. Although there was no standing army, the *Ologbosere* could easily raise one from amongst the *eghele* and *igbama*, youth age grades, and from the armies of the several warlords and mercenaries for which Benin was famous. The army was mobilised to defend Benin from external attacks, but it was mostly used for expansionist wars which earned Benin its characterization of a military state. Internal security revolved around the structures described above, as well as specialized agencies like the *Ekonoros* (veteran witches). Another historical aspect of the security architecture was the close monitoring and control of economic relations. The Oba had a monopoly of major cash crops and some trading and manufacturing guilds, and the markets were regulated by special decrees on customs and excise duties and restrictions which were enforced by designated chiefs and other trade representatives. (Ryder, 1969; Igbafe, 1970) This way, it was possible to regulate relations and conflicts between local communities and external trading partners including migrant groups, which would be akin to contemporary relations between, for example, herders and host communities.

The evidence does not suggest that the arrangements were foolproof or always successful, but at least they were effective in checking crime and

criminality and ensuring security both at the community level and in the Benin area as a whole. What is to be noted is that even that long ago, the Benin area, under the jurisdiction of the Oba, was cosmopolitan and heterogeneous and not parochial or insulated, meaning that the paradigm of the past remains relevant to present realities, notwithstanding the fact that Benin has lost its sovereignty and is now part of a larger political structure, the modern Nigerian state. Relevant or not, however, the roles and statuses of traditional authorities have been relegated over the years: constitutional provisions for legislative chambers and functions for chiefs that were prevalent in many African countries at independence have disappeared and given way to supposedly more democratic institutions (South Africa, whose constitution accords traditional rulers and institutions significant albeit symbolic and ceremonial cultural functions (Osaghae, 1997; de Villiers, 1997), is one of the notable exceptions). The significance of the resort to traditional mechanisms of security management cannot, therefore, be overemphasized. It could yet represent a turning point in the resolution of outstanding issues of relevance, integration, and legitimacy of traditional institutions as a whole and not only for security management, but a lot depends on how effective the mechanisms turn out to be vis-a-vis the more conventional legal-constitutional mechanisms.

3.3 Recent and Emerging Security Threats and Challenges

To place the roles of traditional institutions in security management in the Benin area in a proper context that enables a determination of their continued efficacy, we need to know the major threats and challenges to security in the area, and how they have so far been tackled. From the interviews, focus group discussions, press reports and participant observation, the following threats were identified.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Benin area has been at the receiving end of global arms proliferation, with AK-47 assault rifles and locally made guns widely in circulation. The large numbers of refugees and illegal migrants repatriated to Benin from Libya and North Africa, which have been hotbeds of violent uprisings and civil war since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi and the Arab Spring, is said to be a major factor in this, as many of them are believed to have returned with weapons. (Interviews and FGD) The failure of the government's reintegration or rehabilitation programmes (initial arrangements by the state government in 2018 to pay them N20,000 monthly stipends could not be sustained) made the returnees, many of whom were also said to belong to rival cults, a huge security risk. It is noteworthy that the Oba of Benin became involved in efforts to rehabilitate the repatriated youths as part of his larger campaign to mitigate the security risks posed by illegal migration and the trafficking of Benin youths; amongst other gestures, he promised to pay them three months

stipends and organize skills acquisition programmes under the auspices of Oba Ewuare Foundation. In spite of the Oba's efforts and those of the state government, however, the proliferation of arms was never properly addressed beyond the rather general insistence by the police that only licenced firearms were allowed. Guns were freely and openly used all over Benin in cult and land wars, communal conflicts, and even at events like marriages, burials, and political party rallies, sometimes in the full glare of police and security agencies. (participant-observation notes) Interestingly, many of our respondents believed that only the intervention of the Oba and traditional methods of control such as pronouncing the wrath of *Ogun*, the god of iron, on those involved could help to tackle the proliferation.

Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking

Since the late 1980s, Benin has been one of the global hubs of illegal migration, human trafficking, and prostitution, accounting for several of the illegal migrants from Nigeria who travel to Europe through the dangerous routes of North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea (information from Idia Renaissance, an anti-trafficking NGO and Edo state government officials). It is not exactly clear how Benin became a leading centre of illegal migration (not being the poorest or most deprived part of Nigeria) but the push and pull factors of economic migration and the strong networks of family relations and clients built over the years are crucial factors (Osaghae, 2020). The networks have global and local interfaces with recent evidence suggesting strong connections with local cults in the Benin area, and they are also steeped in rituals and spiritual processes that involve oath-taking of loyalty and secrecy between patrons and clients or victims. Desperate parents and families allegedly borrow money, sell properties, and enter into indentured labour-type agreements backed by juju oaths to facilitate illegal migration and trafficking on condition of service and huge payments to the facilitators, with many of the female migrants ending up as prostitutes and slaves abroad (information from FGD). Illegal migration and human trafficking have thus become major sources of insecurity in the Benin area.

This is not only with regard to the proliferation of arms, drugs, money laundering, assassinations, and increased cultism, but the desperation associated with illegal migration and human trafficking has eroded the dignity and moral values on which order and discipline rest in Benin social formations. Since the early 2000s when illegal migration became such a serious problem, the Edo state government, in collaboration with relevant federal agencies (Police, Immigration, National Drug Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, and National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, NAPTIP), Edo diaspora groups, civil society, and external actors (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, UNHCR, European Union, EU and several European governments) has tried to stem the tide. While NAPTIP, Immigration, Police, and other regulatory agencies have focused on investigations, border controls,

and law enforcement, Edo state government has followed the social infrastructural paths of youth empowerment, skills acquisition, public enlightenment and advocacy, with the support of civil society organizations, NAPTIP, and external actors.

The repatriation of illegal immigrants from Libya and other countries also offers another opportunity of engagement. These interventions have, however, failed to produce the desired outcomes as the desperation to leave and the migration traffic have not abated. For one thing, there have not been significant prosecutions or convictions, largely because the transactions are clandestine and spiritual. Overall, the ineffectiveness of formal mechanisms has been attributed to the fact that the underlying push and pull factors, including juju, are beyond the control of judicial processes and the Edo state government. Even when the government had the opportunity to take charge – the repatriation from Libya presented one such instance – it lacked the resources to rehabilitate and reintegrate the returnees some of whom we were told, found their way back to Libya and Europe.

It is against the foregoing background that the interventions of Oba Erediauwa and Oba Ewuare after him, and the introduction of traditional solutions, assumed greater significance. According to some palace chiefs interviewed, the fact that most of the people involved (sponsors and victims alike) come from Benin, and that the transactions and networks relied heavily on juju, oath-taking, and spiritual processes conducted by traditional priests and native doctors made the interventions more likely to work better than formal solutions. The interventions by the Oba were twofold. On the one hand, through the Oba Ewuare Foundation, he made efforts to empower Benin youths through skills acquisition programmes and to support the rehabilitation of repatriated migrants. On the other, he deployed traditional (spiritual) methods by imposing bans, placing curses, and invoking the wrath of the ancestors, deities, and gods on patrons, madams, traditional priests, native doctors, and other perpetrators and facilitators of illegal migration and trafficking. The method was fully activated on 9 March 2018 when the Oba led his chiefs, priests, native doctors, and elders to offer sacrifices at various shrines and to place curses on perpetrators including priests and native doctors who administer oaths of secrecy and revoke curses placed on victims (*Vanguard*, 10 March 2018).

The Oba further warned: “No native doctor should do any charm for any potential illegal migrant to cross international border. Those who did it before now are forgiven and whoever does it from today will face the wrath of our ancestors” (*Vanguard*, 10 March 2018). NAPTIP welcomed the Oba’s intervention because the nullification of secret loyalty oaths, especially now, made it possible to prosecute and rescue victims of human trafficking who are scared to give evidence in court (*Ibid*). The curse, which was also extended to cultists, killers, terrorists, and other evil doers, was said to be very potent because it involved “traditional missiles from the palace reservoir, some of which had not seen the sun in the last 800 years...The materials had been

there even during the reign of Oba Ewuare 1, in 1440 [and] are only brought out on serious occasions such as an impending war. So, this human trafficking has become a war against us and the Oba has used the opportunity to place what I call a decree on so many anti-social activities in our Kingdom including illegal migration, kidnapping, cultism, and killing people..." (Chief D.U. Edebiri, the *Esogban* of Benin). The emphasis, as usual, was on the deterrence effect of supernatural methods:

Nobody goes against the words of the highly revered Oba of Benin, and we wish to call on *all Edo people* who are into human trafficking to desist from it forthwith...We urge [the perpetrators] in Europe and other parts of the world to renounce their trade and support for human traffickers or face the wrath of the ancestors. History is replete with the tragedies that befall people who go against the pronouncements of the Oba of Benin. In the past, those who went against the declaration of the Oba were either banished or faced a series of misfortunes.

(Comrade Solomon Okoduwa, leader, Initiative for Youth Awareness on Migration Development and Reintegration, *Vanguard*, 15 December 2017)

Our respondents believed that the traditional intervention(s) had a salutary effect on the problem of illegal migration because they claim that there has been a drastic reduction in human trafficking (although there was no data from NAPTIP and other relevant agencies to back this up, the general belief in Benin is that it is now taboo to engage in trafficking juju). Also, the initial opposition to the Oba's proclamations especially by some of those considered to be powerful Benin sponsors in Europe has died down, and the evidence suggests that the native doctors and priests have become less active in the business. Another important gain is that agencies like NAPTIP are now able to prosecute cases of human trafficking. Finally, the support of the Edo state government has also boosted the legitimacy and impact of the traditional interventions, an indication that synergy and cooperation are essential for the effectiveness of traditional security mechanisms.

Cultism

Closely related to illegal migration, human trafficking, and the proliferation of arms and drugs, and possibly the one factor that ties all together, is cultism. Cultism involves the terrorist and violent activities of clandestine youth gangs, which are commonly called (secret) cults and *confrats* (confraternities). The cults constantly engage in rival wars and assassinations and are a major factor in the proliferation and widespread use of arms and other dangerous weapons and drugs, and the periodic reign of terror (robberies, assassinations, ritual murders) in parts of the Benin area. For a long time, cultism was associated with students in institutions of higher learning, but in the recent past, it has become widespread, enlisting male and female youths of every ilk

including secondary school students and artisans. The cults in Benin include *Eiye*, *Vikings*, *Pyrates*, and *Black Axe*.

Our respondents attribute the high incidence of cultism in the Benin area to the large number of higher institutions in and around the city, massive unemployment, the longstanding involvement of traditional secret cults like *Ogboni*, *Osokpikan* and *Owegbe*, warlords and thugs in power politics in Benin, and the interface with global criminal networks of which Benin cults in particular have become important actors. Again, formal responses by the police and judicial institutions have not been very effective, as evidenced by the impunity with which cult activities are carried out. The ineffectiveness is partly attributable to the suspicion that cultists have strong connections with security and judicial officers (traditional actors are also suspected to be connected), but the clandestine nature of the operations and their links with global networks were also identified as key factors. The main traditional method that has been applied, as we pointed out earlier, is banning and cursing, but this has not also been effective – at least it has not deterred the cultists whose activities have not significantly reduced.

Fulani Herdsmen and Kidnapping

The Benin area has had its fair share of the ethnic riots that engulfed the entire country following the migration of people believed to be Fulani from the north and outside of the country to the south (Osaghae, 2017). One strand of the riots has seen conflicts between herders in search of greener pastures for their cattle (the push factor being increased desertification induced by climate change) and mostly rural farming communities, while the other has involved kidnapping-for-ransom. Farmer-herder conflicts occurred in several Benin rural communities, notably Odighi, Urhonigbe, Okada, Urhokuosa, Ugo, and Eyaen, with reports of rape, killings, abductions, and sacking of whole villages by bandits regarded as Fulani herdsmen but who were most certainly strangers and non-indigenes (information from FGDs). Kidnappings (and robberies) were also rampant on highways leading to and from Benin (Benin-Ore, Benin-Sobe, Benin-Auchi, and Benin-Asaba roads). Benin-Auchi road, leading to the northern parts of the country and the one mostly used by travellers from the south-east and south-south became an epicentre of kidnappings in the country.

The northern route connection led many to believe that the perpetrators came from the north (and neighbouring countries of Niger and Chad) and were probably part of Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West African Province, ISWAP's fund-raising operations, but some of the kidnappers that have been arrested by security agents have turned out to be locals and indigenes, not Fulani (FGD and participant-observation). The responses to the activities and herders came mainly from the state government, police, army, and other security agencies in the form of patrols, roadblocks, and increased surveillance. When these proved inadequate, local vigilante groups, hunters, community leaders, and other traditional sector actors were mobilized

to secure highways and communities. The Oba and chiefs also joined the efforts to stem the tide of kidnapping and, according to the *Esogban*, Chief D.U. Edebiri, traditional methods applied by Oba Erediauwa were effective:

during the reign of Oba Erediauwa, when kidnapping started, no one knew where the kidnappers were coming from. We had to place a curse to abate it. In that case, the juju men, the meta-physicians, the *Ewaise*, the *Ohen* and others were asked to bring their materials from homes, which we used in placing the curse then and it was very effective. Prior to that curse, it was not possible to arrest those people, they looked like people from different planets. But immediately the curse was placed on them, they became ineffective and as soon as they kidnapped, they were arrested and were paraded on television. Many left Benin and we had some peace.

Perhaps the *Esogban* was right that the first wave of kidnappings (2010–2016) in Benin was checked, but there is no way to prove that this happened because of the Oba's curse. In any case, the next wave which started in 2019 seemed to have defied traditional solutions of the curse trajectory (though our respondents insist that kidnappings have reduced in Benin metropolis and been pushed to the outlying highways). The lot has fallen on vigilante, hunter, and self-defense groups (which are supposedly 'spiritually' empowered with traditional means) to bear the traditional banner in collaboration with the police, army, and security forces on the highway operations. In effect, the greater reliance has been on the so-called kinetic operations that involve military action, as well as arrest and prosecution of kidnappers.

Land Conflicts

Land disputes and conflicts were other major sources of insecurity in the Benin area. The conflicts mostly arose from contested ownership claims (which intensified as vacant land became less available) and from the sale of plots and landed property to more than one 'owner'. The ensuing 'wars', which took the form of riots, open shootings, reprisal attacks, assassinations, and destruction of property had youth gangs, cults, elders, traditional priests, and chiefs as main actors and 'soldiers'. At the height of the wars, communities in Ugbor, Ogheghe, Ihinmwirin, Elema, and other flashpoints in Benin City were 'no-go' areas. But by far the greatest problem was with youth-based Community Development Associations (CDAs) which emerged over the years as land merchants and violence perpetrators. Oba Ewuare took the bull by the horn, as it were, when he announced the banning of CDAs in Benin communities at his coronation. The foundation for this was laid by the work of the Edo state peace and conflict resolution committee, which was chaired by a prominent palace chief, the Obasogie, Chief Eduwu Ekhator (see below). The fact that the land tenure system in Benin is still largely traditional

(the Oba is said to *own* all land in Benin) made the ban and attendant curses and punishments (like sweeping the palace grounds for months) placed on operatives of CDAs, offending chiefs, priests and other perpetrators powerful deterrence instruments. This was further reinforced by the support of the Oba's action by the state government, which passed a law prohibiting CDAs in Edo state. Although land wars have not ended in Benin – the Oba had to reiterate in January 2021 that the ban was still in force – the Oba's intervention was salutary and helped to reduce the wars (Palace sources).

3.4 Are Conventional Security Mechanisms Weak and Ineffective?

Our respondents were asked to rank the formal and conventional responses to the deteriorating security situation in the Benin area on a scale of one (very ineffective) to ten (very effective). This was done on the basis of their knowledge of and familiarity with the responses by the Edo state government, federal government, and local governments. Most captured the responses and interventions as emergency kinetic operations by the police, military, and other security agencies: patrols, roadblocks, checkpoints, increased surveillance, early warning alerts, and targeted raids by a special security joint force of police and army operatives code-named *Operation Waibazigan* (*waibazigan*, refrain from crime) set up by the state government. These were complemented/supported by non-state actors like the Vigilante Group of Nigeria and local vigilantes, hunters, and youth volunteers which, according to Ogbosor (2016) constitute the informal security sector. Operations by these various groups were concentrated at flashpoints of kidnapping, robbery, cultism, banditry, and clashes between herders and local communities, but their presence was felt throughout the Benin area.

According to the respondents, although the operations saw the killings, arrests and prosecution of many perpetrators, the state of insecurity, especially related to kidnapping, cultism, ritual killings, and the proliferation of firearms, continued without respite. On balance, therefore, the operations were adjudged generally ineffective (on average less than 4 on the ranking scale). This led to loss of confidence in the ability of the police, security agencies, and judicial institutions to ensure security. The inferred weaknesses and ineffectiveness of the formal mechanisms were attributed to a number of factors. First is the corruption and politicization of the police, security forces, and the judiciary which accounted for the failure to prosecute and punish culprits in many cases. Well-known criminals and cultists with strong connections and money were allegedly freed by the police and the courts. In the case of so-called (Fulani) herdsman and kidnapers, many of the respondents accused the police and security agencies of complicity, cover up, and protection because they allegedly had the backing of "the powers that be" at the federal level and police and security officers with whom they had ethnic and religious affinities. In fact, a youth leader believed that top police officers, especially DPOs and patrol leaders were strategically deployed to protect kidnapers and herdsman.

At a more general level, a study of the informal security sector in Nigeria reports that many Nigerians in the rural areas prefer local vigilantes and traditional actors to the police because the police are not always available when needed and cannot be trusted for protection (Ogbozor, 2016). The long delays in judicial processes were also said to explain preferences by aggrieved parties for traditional and spiritual methods whose outcomes and judgement are “instant.” Another reason that was commonly adduced is the limited powers of the state governor who, despite being the state’s chief security officer, has to rely on federal police and security agencies that were controlled from Abuja (the case of a police commissioner who remained in office for a long time in spite of public requests by the governor and Edolites to have him changed was cited). Thirdly, some respondents attributed the ineffectiveness of the formal security mechanisms to the increased use of juju, rituals and ‘spiritual means’ by the perpetrators, which allegedly made them invincible, impervious to gunshots, and so on. Such situations, they claimed, were beyond the capacities of conventional means. These were the circumstances that necessitated the recourse to traditional mechanisms.

3.5 The Resurgence of Traditional Mechanisms and Interventions

3.5.1 Cursing

Almost all our respondents identified cursing as the crux of the traditional mechanism of security management. The process entails pronouncing curses on offenders and perpetrators of crime, violence and wrongdoing that threaten the wellbeing and peace of the land in the name of ancestors, deities, and gods. It is believed that offenders will incur the wrath and punishment of the deities and gods. Curses, or their threats, have also been used to investigate, detect, and exact confessions of crime. Although proof is always difficult, the threat and fear of the inevitability of repercussion is usually enough to deter, prevent, and exact repentance and renunciation. It is as such that the effectiveness of cursing in Benin has been analyzed in terms of the deterrent, restorative, and transformative principles of conflict resolution (Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, 2013). The following example of the employment of the *Ayelala* deity illustrates the point very well:

Sometime in 2005, the Oba market in Benin City went up in flames. As the fire raged, hoodlums in the area had a field day looting goods belonging to traders in the market. More disturbing was the fact that many shops not affected by the inferno were broken into and emptied by looters. The next day, Chief John Osamede Adun, a prominent citizen in the area, invited the priest of *Ayelala*, a goddess widely revered and feared in Benin kingdom. The chief priest of *Ayelala* consequently issued a public warning that as many as have taken away goods which do not belong to them should return same immediately or face the wrath of *Ayelala*. The following morning, goods earlier carted away

resurfaced. The same feat was re-enacted when the popular Uselu market was gutted by fire a few months after.

(Akhilomen, 2012, p. 5)

Although this cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that cursing or its threat works, it does show the effectiveness of the mechanism as an instrument of control and security (it is for similar reasons that Nigerians fear to swear or take oaths by traditional gods and deities). Akhilomen (2012) believes that mechanisms like Ayelala are more effective than the methods employed by the police and security agencies because unlike the latter, they do not involve violence and trial by ordeal. We have seen how the instrument of cursing was applied to illegal migration, human trafficking, cultism, and land conflicts in 2018. In 2019, various traditional groups including *Ewaise*, *Igie-Ohen* (council of priests), priestesses of deities, market women, and traditional worshippers again gathered to offer purification and sanctification rituals and renew the earlier curses. This time, animal sacrifices were offered, and there was a parade, some kind of show of force, of traditional groups around major streets and shrines in Benin City (palace sources).

The before-and-after evidence suggests that cursing plays a largely deterrent function, but this does not apply to all cases. Thus, while there has been some appreciable decline in human trafficking, prostitution, and land conflicts (which mostly involve Benin indigenes) according to our respondents, the same cannot be said for cultism, kidnapping, conflicts with herders, and arms proliferation whose perpetrators are of mixed origins. Nevertheless, the question of whether curses apply to indigenes only has been answered by the Esogban: “the repercussion for anyone who would break the rules is known. And if those who are not of Benin extraction think that they can come here and do whatever they like and go away, it also goes with them. The only thing is that when they are dying one may not see them. This curse is not meant to affect only Benin people but anybody who resides here, or drinks the water here.” (personal communication, December 2021)

3.5.2 *The Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee*

In 2014, the Edo state government set up the State Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee as a special instrument for reconciliation, arbitration, and resolution of community-based conflicts, based on the calls by Oba Erediauwa for a hybrid government-traditional authorities committee to “address obvious defects in traditional and communal relations” (Obasogie, 2015). One such defect was the laxity in land matters that facilitated the emergence of CDAs which became notorious for the land wars in the Benin area. According to one respondent, a top government official, the appointment of Chief Eduwu Ekhaton, the Obasogie of Benin, as chair of the committee, “signposted the government’s thinking that traditional authorities were crucial to the success of peace-building and security efforts.”

The committee worked with local government councils, NGOs, political parties, community-based groups, and other stakeholders to advocate peace in elections and inter-community, inter-group relations, though its main focus was on arresting the violent activities of youth gangs acting through CDAs. The committee received petitions from aggrieved parties and performed well as an alternative dispute resolution agency on matters that regular courts could not settle due to the perceived strength of its traditional backing. Even the state government referred protracted land disputes to the committee for this reason. A notable example was the protracted case between Mr. Irene Ero and the powerful *Ohen-Osa* (chief priest) Alexander Ihasuyi over ownership of a plot of land in the Ugbor community, which the chief priest allegedly confiscated and sold to a third party (the case was referred to the committee by the state government because of a prolonged strike that made the courts unable to hear the case).

The committee also made efforts to resolve the perennial boundary disputes between Obagie and Ogheghe communities by dismantling the atrocious activities of 'jobless' youths, CDAs, community heads, and chiefs "who arrogated powers to themselves to the extent of dispossessing and selling peoples' properties" (Edo Committee, 2014). The work of the committee in this area laid the foundations for the more serious interventions that saw the Oba banning CDAs, and curbing the excesses of chief priests and *enigie* who wielded strong but unjust powers over land.

3.5.3 Creation of Traditional Conflict Resolution Platforms

The Oba's palace reintroduced several alternative dispute resolution channels to encourage peaceful management of conflicts. One of these was the open mediation platform at *Ugha-Ozolua* in the Oba's Palace, which is aimed at providing opportunity for people, especially women, to personally present their complaints to the Oba who sits on the throne to mediate and pass judgements. Our female key informants considered this a significant development as it gave traditional security mechanisms a gender face. Women have traditionally featured in traditional security management structures in Benin, serving as priestesses and heads of ritual groups like Ayelala, and the expanded opportunities in the Oba's court are likely to further consolidate these roles. The Oba has also encouraged the establishment of alternative dispute resolution committees by *enigies* and chiefs in the various communities.

3.6 Findings and Conclusions

The core research question of the study was, is the resurgence of traditional mechanisms of security in the Benin area indicative of the weakness of formal state channels and mechanisms? To test this general hypothesis, the study sought answers to the following ancillary research questions:

1. What is the state of (in)security in the Benin area, and which threats and problems have challenged security management the most? How has the state/government responded to them, and how effective have the responses been?
2. What factors underlie the resurgence of traditional mechanisms? What forms, types, and methods have been applied and how effective have they been?
3. How have the traditional mechanisms interfaced with formal state mechanisms? How compatible, cooperative, integral or conflictual have they been?
4. What is the future of traditional conflict mechanisms?

The major findings of the study which provide answers to the general hypothesis and ancillary questions may now be presented.

1. The Benin area has witnessed a deterioration in human safety and security since the early 2000s, due largely to violent activities associated with cultism, land conflicts, human trafficking, proliferation of light weapons and small arms, kidnapping, and the ineffectiveness of conventional and formal strategies by relevant state security agencies to deal with the problems. The ineffectiveness or failure of state responses was attributed to corruption, political and constitutional limitations, and the non-regular, clandestine and spiritual character of acts of insecurity that placed them beyond the limits of legal-rational and formal strategies. There is a strong perception that conventional security mechanisms and approaches are weak and inadequate, and unable to effectively address the emergent security problems in the Benin area. On a scale of one to ten, regarding the effectiveness of government efforts, most respondents scored their efforts below four, although they believed that the situation could improve if the formal security architecture was restructured. The seeming helplessness of the state government, whose roles in the security arrangement were subordinate to those of the federal government had a lot to do with this. Lack of trust and confidence in the judiciary, police, and security agencies is another major factor (Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, 2013; Jatto and Stanislas, 2017). The resort to the more 'dependable' and 'trustworthy' traditional methods and increased partnership with traditional authorities was therefore one response to trust and confidence deficits. The citizens also had a similar response as Idumwonyi and Ikhidero (2013, p. 125) have noted: "Traditional methods and practices are often consulted as a last resort in times of distress and need for survival...the search for justice and values has promoted the resurgence in patronage of traditional deities and courts (shrines)." Thus, as insecurity heightened, there was a resurgence of traditional mechanisms. Hunters and traditional vigilante groups emerged in areas ravaged by the violent activities of herdsmen and kidnappers, while the threats of cultism, land conflicts, and human trafficking which seemed

to defy conventional legal mechanisms had to be tackled by the Oba and traditional institutions under his control.

2. Traditional mechanisms provided alternative, complementary, and last-resort solutions to failing and inadequate government strategies mainly because they were better suited to addressing the unconventional nature of the sources and forms of insecurity. The security threats and problems that were believed to be most amenable and best managed by traditional means were those that belonged to the domain characterized by Idumwonyi and Ikhidero (2013, p. 125) as “theo-centric justice delivery system in the society.” The tenability and legitimacy of this system hinge on a strong belief in the efficacy of spiritual mechanisms or juju. This was most definitely the case with human trafficking, cultism, and land conflicts but even in these cases, the effectiveness of traditional methods depended on compatibility with the modern legal system and collaboration with government (especially state and local governments) and foreign partners. With regard to modern legal systems, it has been pointed out that “belief in the efficacy of a deity, divinity or juju and in like manner *Ayelala* (the goddess that dispenses justice and protects morality) has never been in doubt even by the organized courts” (Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, 2013, p. 125; Akhilomen, 2012). By contrast, the threats of herders, bandits, and kidnapers were not so easily amenable, suggesting that traditional methods were more likely to work more for and amongst Benin indigenes than so-called non-indigenes.
3. Traditional mechanisms have interfaced with formal state mechanisms quite well. This is due to two major factors. First is the relatively cordial relationship the Edo state government has had with the Oba of Benin and traditional authorities, especially in the area of security. The government’s support for the banning of CDAs by the Oba, and the establishment of an alternative dispute resolution committee on land matters headed by one of the Oba’s chiefs, evidence this cordiality. Secondly, the state government (and other non-state actors) acknowledged the limitations of conventional strategies and fell back on traditional mechanisms in solving the mysteries of kidnapping, human trafficking, and cultism. The recourse to hunters, vigilantes, and traditional rulers, and their integration into the state’s security architecture, is a very good example. It is important to note that, in the period covered by this study, no conflict of roles or authority was reported between the government or state agencies and the traditional authorities.
4. One major conclusion from this study, which is similar to that reached by other related studies, is that traditional institutions play a major role in security management in the Benin area. This is most likely to remain the case for a long time to come, but the effectiveness of those roles will depend on the continued integrity and credibility of the institutions (which are believed to be higher than those of the courts, security agencies, and other legal-constitutional agencies and processes) and the ability of the Oba and other functionaries of the traditional sector to work

harmoniously with the state government (and local and federal authorities as well).

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4 Female Traditional Institutions and the Travails of Conflict Management, Peace, and Security in Ekiti Society

Funmilayo Idowu Agbaje

4.1 Introduction

The global contributions of women to conflict resolution, peace, and security cannot be overemphasised. Most studies have focused on women as victims of conflict and discrimination without paying adequate attention to their contributions to securing the peace of the society as required by the United Nations Resolution 1325, especially in rural areas (Thompson, 2019). This study, therefore, examines the role of female traditional institutions in conflict management and fostering peace and security over time and in their contemporary manifestations among the Ekiti people in the Yoruba land of south-western Nigeria against a backdrop of the interfaces of traditional and current cultural values and ways of life. Noteworthy is the fact that a large body of literature exists on African women and their innumerable feats in making peace and security, along with significant studies of male traditional institutions and their roles in Yoruba land (Olaoba, 1997; Ajayi, 1985). Few scholarly works, however, exist regarding the role and efficacy of female traditional authorities in conflict, peace, and security processes (Amadiume, 1997).

The term “peace” has been defined by many scholars. Ibeanu (2005) notes that peace is a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international community. Peace is thus a valuable and necessary ingredient for securing lives, properties, and meaningful development (Ogomudia, 2007). Similarly, Oguntomisin (2004) notes that peace is the sine qua non with socio-political stability, economic development, and social well beings of humans. The idea of peace and security is complex due to its multi-dimensional definitions (Galtung, 1969).

In Ekitiland, peace is equated with freshness, health, well-being, harmony, calm, and tranquillity (Oguntuyi, 2007). The absence of such qualities is perceived as a conflict, which could be either latent or overt. For this research, peace will not be perceived as a mere process of passive acceptance, weakness, meekness, gentleness, or non-resistance of any kind; instead, peace is a vibrant, powerful process that creates relational and structural justice which allows for social and personal well-being (Douglas, 1996). This has been described as an ideal objective, perhaps not attainable in all conflicts.

Conflict management is an important aspect of making peace and has been defined by Pankhurst and Ivo (2003) as a practical transformation focused upon establishing equitable power relationships robust enough to forestall future conflict, often including the establishment of means of agreeing on ethical decisions within or among communities and parties that had previously engaged in inappropriate and violent responses to conflict. The idea of conflict management and security among the women in Ekiti implies the use of cooperative, constructive processes to resolve human conflicts while fostering community security as well as restoring relationships.

The process of peace in Ekiti provides opportunities for addressing issues of social justice, cohesion, and equity in access to power and resources. This is contrary to scholars' pacifism approach to the peace process (Mayek, 2013). Indeed, the women of study have mastered the use of non-violent techniques under extreme violent pressure and led others to such resistance. The Ekiti women have been able to keep the society coordinated and in good order through the necessary, often difficult phases of rapprochement. For example, these women have been able to reinforce communal peace through the various existing traditional institutions by engaging in dialogue, meetings, rituals, and dramatic performances. The procedural aspects of conflict management and security are theatrical because they entail summoning to the multi-levelled and hierarchical traditional tribunals where cases of conflict are heard and verdicts are given accordingly.

Even though several authors have written about the roles of women in conflict management and security (Agbaje, 2018; Gizelis, 2011; Valerie, 2011; Sudarkasa, 2005), there exists scant literature on the contributions of Ekiti women in that area. Scholarly preference has been generally accorded to the imperial traditions of the Oyo people while the religious and political associations of the Ekiti people are relatively neglected (Verger, 1982). In addition, the intelligence report on Aiyede-Ekiti (A.C.C Swayne, 1935) indicates that the special duties of the holders of certain titles in the family had atrophied and had in some cases been forgotten. This study thus builds on the foundation laid by scholars such as Denzer (1994) and Awe (1992, pp. 15–45) who worked extensively on women's status in Yoruba land but did not articulate women's role in conflict management and security. This study seeks to fill a gap relating to the contributions of Ekiti women in that regard.

Against this background, this study focuses on the status and contributions of female institutions in managing conflict in the Ekiti. The focus is on the status of female traditional authorities (compound heads, quarters' heads, community heads, religious heads, age-grade groups, palace women, and regents) and their involvement in ensuring peace and security. The portfolio of these women as it relates to peace and security over time, the techniques employed, the attendant challenges, and also the elements of continuities and change in these roles in the present Ekiti society are the major interests of this study.

4.2 Historical and Geographical Background

Historically, the people of Ekiti, who migrated from Ile-Ife, formed one of the largest ethnic groups in Yoruba land. They are culturally homogeneous and speak a dialect known as Ekiti, coined from the Yoruba language. The homogeneous nature of Ekiti confers on the state some uniqueness among the states of the Nigerian federation. Slight differences are noticeable in the Ekiti dialect of the Yoruba language spoken by the border communities shared with other states. This, however, does not prevent Ekiti indigenes from understanding each other. The present Ekiti State has 16 local government councils with Ado Ekiti as the capital. It has an area of about 2,100 square miles and a population of about 2,398,954 according to the 2006 population census. If the population growth rate is the same as in the period between 2006–2013, the population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division) of women is over 1,686,575. The choice of Ekiti for this study is based on its rich history of women's involvement in conflict management, as well as the society's location in one of the major epicentres of conflicts in contemporary Nigeria such as those related to farmer-herder issues and kidnappings and related criminality in the southwestern region of the country.

The geographical location of Ekiti is within the rain forest, sharing boundaries with Kwara and Kogi States to the north and Edo State to the east. Osun State to the west and Ondo State to the south, with their many hills, make the region attractive to bandits, and as a cattle-breeding area, providing a context for resource conflict and insecurity that have pervaded the society – through the menace is currently being resisted by local communities occasionally, using traditional institutions and methods, among others. The study was conducted at Ado (central), Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ekiti Southwest and Oye local government areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria (see Figure 4.1). The research was undertaken in the rural, peri-urban, and urban areas of selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state.

This study focuses on the travails of women in conflict management, in Ekiti state among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. The salient issue addressed in this study includes the traditional activities of women through the ages; the traditional status of Ekiti women as heroines, and the attendant metamorphosis of their status in the society. Attention is paid to continuity and change as well as the struggle to be in the frontline in contemporary times, hence this study is concerned with the creative potentialities of women in the light of the mythological and historical past and the social processes of today.

4.3 Research Methodology

The qualitative study adopts an exploratory research design. These research designs have been described (Brickman & Roy, 1998) as the best methods for collecting information that will demonstrate relationships and describe the world as it is. It involves observation, oral history, case study, focused group

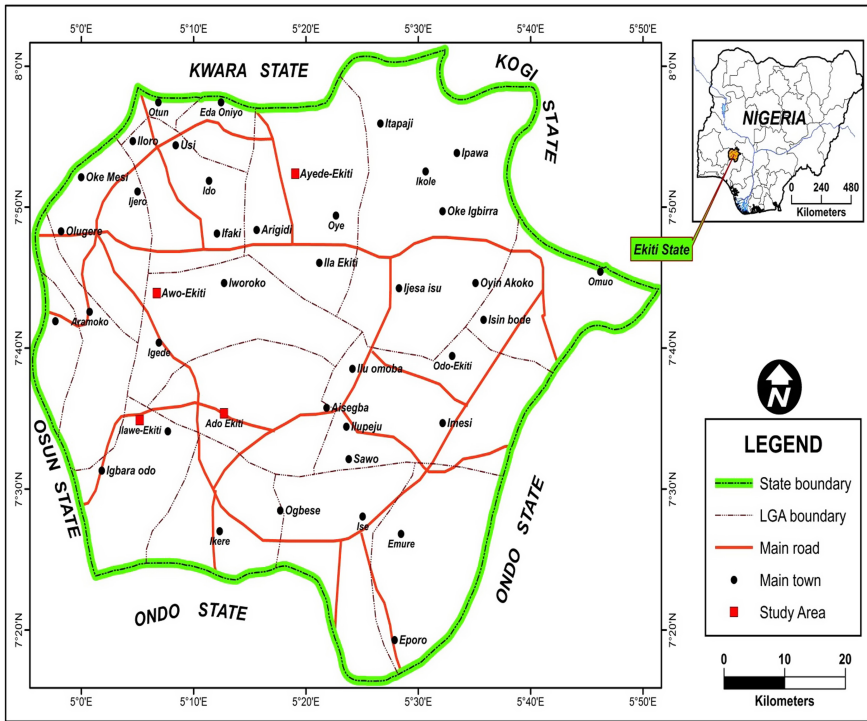


Figure 4.1 Map of Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Source: Cartographer Department of Geography, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

discussion, key informant, and in-depth interview guides of population or a representative subset. It is aimed at providing data on the entire population under study (Nworgu, 1991).

The study engages a total of six communities for its analysis. Due to the wide geographical location and the population of Ekiti people, the method of homogenous purposive sampling was used to select two communities (one urban and one rural) each from the three senatorial districts in Ekiti as follows: Ado and Awo Ekiti for Ekiti Central, Ilawe and Orun from Ekiti South, and Ikole and Aiyede for Ekiti North senatorial districts. Ekiti state is of interest to this study because the women, unlike the other Yoruba communities, are autonomous rather than subordinate to men (Lloyd, 1974, pp. 37–8). Their autonomy arose through a fairly rigid sexual division of labour, which does not exclude women from the works of life. Unlike many Yoruba communities where women work independently of their husbands and not jointly or cooperatively with them, the traditional Ekiti women go to the farm with their husbands, carry out the same duty on the farmland as their male counterparts, and these women also carry out the additional chores of sorting and

selling farm produce in the market. The women in traditional Ekiti communities are cooperative while working with the males, rather than subjective or competitive. This study focuses on Ekiti women who are directly involved in peace activities. This has helped in reducing variation; simplifying analysis and facilitating group interviewing (Patton, 1990).

A total of 83 study participants were involved in data collection out of which 77 were women and six were men (see Appendix I). Men were included to get the male perspectives on women's role in peace and security. Female study participants comprise market women, palace women, women in traditional council, women in the shrines, mothers, and wives who have had direct exposure, contact, and experience of the problem under research. In addition, this sampling method helps in targeting the traditional stakeholders in peace and security especially as it concerns gender issues not easily accessible in scholarship due to the concept of *Ìnìjìnlẹ̀* (deep secret) among the Ekiti women. The concept of *Ìnìjìnlẹ̀* is enshrined in the ritualistic elements of peacemaking among the women.

Data was obtained from primary and secondary sources with the help of two research assistants. Primary data was collected using Key Informants' Interviews, in-depth interview group interviews, archival materials, and non-participant observation. Secondary data was derived from textbooks, journal articles, policy documents, newspapers, and the internet. Carefully designed interview and group discussion guides, embellished with thought-provoking themes on the contributions and challenges of women's involvement in peace activities in Ekiti state, were used for data collection. The process of collecting data was not without some limitations and challenges. Issues included language differences, non-availability of key study participants, and outright expression of fear by some of the prospective study participants about the research's motives. Nevertheless, conscious steps were taken to address these challenges in a way that they do not affect the quality of the study. Collected data were content analysed using thematic narration style by interpreting the concepts of peace and conflict as communicated by research participants.

4.4 Discussion of Findings and Analysis

This study probed into the sources of conflict in Ekiti, the mechanisms of making peace among women, the challenges faced in the process, and the peacemaking practices that had changed with those practices that had remained across the ages. Women were discovered to be a minority among traditional rulers in the Ekiti communities; but the female traditional custodians comprised several different categories, including the *Adelẹ̀Oba* (regents), *Olori* (king's wives), *Èyẹ̀ 'Lóbirin Ilẹ̀* (women head chiefs), *Èyẹ̀'Lóyẹ̀* (the women chieftaincy title holders), and other female leaders. These women were discovered to be the transmitters of cultural values to their progeny and future generations through the use of artistic expressions such as song, dance, tattoo, proverbs, maxims, and folk tales. Figure 4.2 shows the hierarchical

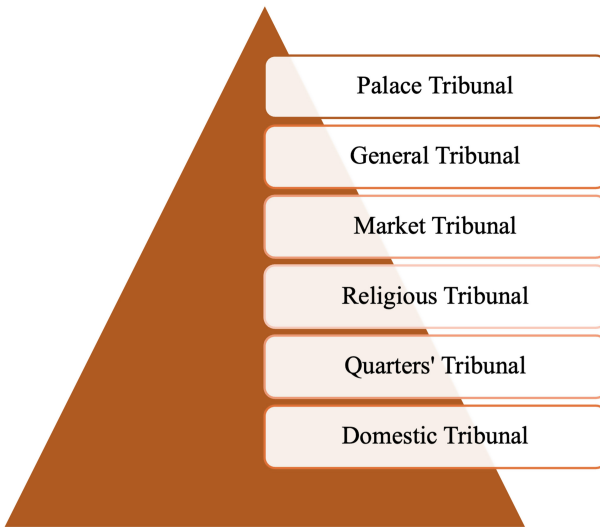


Figure 4.2 Hierarchical organisations of women tribunals in Ekiti land.

Source: author.

organisation of traditional female tribunals responsible for conflict management among the traditional Ekiti women.

The presence of hierarchy notwithstanding, these women were reported to work towards the communal peace of their communities; hence the women participate actively in community affairs. Some posts were filled in line with a parallel sex system, that is, with a male and female officer. For instance, the ruling kings in most of the remembered history of Ayede Ekiti kingship have been men. In Ado Ekiti, however, *Yèyénìrèwú* was a female king who ruled in the sixteenth century. In the matrilineal royal clans, however, women played a very important leadership role, and seem to have executed a considerable amount of influence behind the scenes. The king's wives were particularly powerful, but other female members of the royal clan were also very supportive of the administration of the community. Furthermore, in many areas, this study found out there were priestesses who were very important in traditional peace practice. Women and mothers were also immortalised as goddesses. Music, dancing, and poetry were all used to honour mothers (Apter, 1995).

In the remainder of this chapter, this study has segmentalised the women's status and contributions to peacemaking in the following categories:

1. Female Palace Institutions and Conflict Management

- Regent (*Adele Oba*)
- Wives of Kings (*Èyé 'lori or Olori*)
- Princesses (*Ọjà*)

2. Female Socio-Economic Institutions and Conflict Management: Market Leaders (*Iyalaje or Iyaloja*)
3. Socio-Political and Community Female Traditional Institution and Conflict Management (*Eye 'Lobirin Ile*)
4. Age Grade Institutions (*Akojo Egbe*)
5. Female Religious Traditional Institutions
6. Family Institutions (*Obirin Ule*)

4.4.1 Female Palace Institutions and Conflict Management

Regent (Adele Oba)

Some Ekiti women were expected to serve the communities in both political and religious capacity. Within the category of these women fell the *Adelé Oba* (Regent) (Raji, 1999). A Regent has to occupy the royal throne during the interregnum – after the death of a king. According to the former Regent of Orun Ekiti, she was usually the daughter of a demised king:

She was picked among other children of her father, presented to the *Ifa* oracle for selection to hold the forte and take custody of the tradition in the ancient town, pending the emergence of a new *Oba*.

(KII, 2021)

A Regent would oversee the affairs of the town pending the selection of a new king. Her role was like that of the king in all its ramifications. She would be made to appear in her father's robes with a crown on her head. The status of a Regent was more than a figurehead (Olaoba, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Ekejiuba, 2005) because of the significance of the crown to the Yoruba monarchs as a symbol of authority, royal identity, and emblem of sacred power. Therefore, since a Regent's appearance is almost like that of a king, she could not be classified as a mere figurehead but as an authority. It is maintained (Olajubu, 2003) that the institution of Regency could also be indicative of a matriarchal society prior to the establishment of patriarchy as the prevailing system in Yoruba land. Even so, Raji (1999) describes the initiation process of a Regent in Ekiti land as similar to, if not the same as, the initiation of a king. The peak of the status of women in the traditional Ekiti palaces, therefore, is the position of a Regent. The period of an interregnum is significant to this study because that is the period a selected Ekiti princess bears the responsibility of making peace in the society and at the highest cadre, just like a king. It was revealed that the selection process of an *Adelé Oba* was almost the same as that of a king.

After seven days of traditional rites and performing several sacrifices by the high chiefs, a princess would be chosen as an "*Adele*."

(IDI, 2021)

This showed the extent a woman could wield her influence on her subjects if chosen as *AdeléỌba*. The responsibilities of Regent cut across every aspect of people's lives. The former Regent of Awo Ekiti stated thus:

Bọba ẹe ba lóri ohun gbogbo náà l'adeléỌba

Meaning:

A Regent rules over everything in the town, the same way as a king.

(KII, 2021)

The myth surrounding the ideology of allowing women to drive the vehicle of a town during interregnum varied from one community to the other. While interviewing the former Regent of Ado-Ekiti, who reigned from 1988–1990, it was revealed that this was so because of the humble nature of a woman which was believed would make her less ambitious and thus she could be entrusted with the position until the new king is chosen. In her words:

The position of a Regent was a restriction on my movements and conducts. So, I quickly handed power over to the chosen *Ọba*. Whereas, a man would have found it difficult to relinquish power due to the lure of power.

(KII, 2021)

The above notion was also corroborated by the former Regent of Ilawe-Ekiti, who explained that this process would give the chiefs sufficient time and space to search for and enthrone the new king.

The general ethics discovered to be surrounding the position of a Regent in the Ekiti communities are greater than that of *Ọba*. She must appear as a man in public, she must suspend all of her primary responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, and attending to all other household matters for her to oversee the affairs of the town effectively. She must abstain totally from sex and was not to think of having children during this period. It was the general belief that if she does not adhere to these principles, peace would be absent in the towns and the aftermath would be chaos; and there existed penalties for the violation of any of these rules by a Regent. Any Regent who engaged in sexual relations with either her husband or any man might not be able to conceive again, and the man might die sooner than expected (IDI, *Ológun Adelé of Ado Ekiti*, 2021). This great sanction is meant to prevent greater catastrophe in the town.

Germane to this study is the power conferred on a Regent to make peace at several levels. Conflicts among the people, be it men or women (especially controversial issues that were beyond the power of quarters' chiefs), would be brought before her. During the period of her reign, she would preside over the council of the town. The men respected her judgments, and they were considered as final. She took on the burden of running the affairs of the entire community and it was her responsibility to ensure peace and tranquillity.

This study discovered that it is a general notion that women are symbolic of peaceful co-existence in the absence of a king in Ekiti. For peace to exist in a town after the demise of the king, a woman must serve in the interregnum. It is thus her prerogative to preside over the court palace exactly like a king. Regency is remarkably the peak of political power in any traditional Ekiti community. Beyond regency, there were given instances when women ruled throughout as the substantive monarchs in some Ekiti towns. In Ado-Ekiti, a female ruler, *Yèyénirèwú*, ruled between 1511 and 1552 (KII, 2021). This, again, brought to the fore the effectiveness of the hidden powers of women as leaders and peacemakers. Thus, the essentials of women that make them unique in terms of their roles and responsibilities in the society, are not only natural but also cultural.

Wives of Kings (Èyé 'lorì or Olorì)

Moreover, there were also women in the palaces known as the *Èyé 'lorì*. The *Olorì* comprised of the wives of the reigning king, the demised kings, and the princes. They all lived in the palace in the olden days of Ekiti. The traditional responsibilities of the *Olorì* were described thus:

They were royal queens whose responsibilities were to take care of the palace, prepare meals, take care of the king, settle disputes among themselves and in case of any ceremony or festival; the *Olorì* were responsible for adding glamour by singing songs and dancing in a royal manner.

(KII, 2021)

It was discovered that the role of the *Olorì* transcended singing and dancing in traditional occasions. Although the glamorous identity of *Olorì* could not be overlooked, another aspect discovered and worthy of documentation in this study was their contributions to the peace and security in their various communities. Johnson (2010) mentions that the role of *Ọba's* wife is to coordinate the activities of women in the town. According to him, she is the only one who can quietly correct the *Kabiyesi* (the king). It is forbidden for an *Olorì* to fight her co-*Olorì* or engage in any fight. In case of any physical quarrel in the palace stead, the *Olorì* involved would be immediately stripped naked and ashes would be poured around her (*'Wọ̀n á ka léérú'*). The eldest of the remaining *Olorì* would ask the others to fetch water in a mortar. This was known as *pon omi sodo gun*. The defaulted *Olorì* would be asked to pound the water until it became solid. In addition, while pounding, the water must not splash on the floor; otherwise, the offending *Olorì* would be profoundly whipped. This punishment is an impossible task but a very disgraceful one for a defaulted *Olorì*. The researcher discovered the essence of the punishment was to discourage fighting among the *Olorì* in the palace. As another example of this, in Ilawe Ekiti, a stubborn and arrogant *Olorì*, known

as *Olori* Ọmọ̀sùnládé, was reported to have existed in the history of the town. According to a senior *Olori* in *Aláawẹ́*'s palace, she was de-beaded (*hàn a ka lákùn*) by her fellow *Olori*. She was then made to fetch water into a basket for seven days after which she was summoned to appeal to her mates in the *Àjo-Olori* (the tribunal of the *Olori*) (KII, 2021).

As noted earlier, peace and security in Ekiti are synonymous with physical and spiritual well-being, hence the *Olori* are also responsible for making propitiation to the gods of the land from time to time to invoke peace and thereby support the kings in the administration of the town. It is common for the past and present *Olori* to meet at the *Ọwá -ọwà* (one of the palace's ancestral tombs) monthly, to pray for the peace of Ekiti. These women are the brain behind the actions, health, and overall success of the king. They are consulted by kings on possible solutions to pressing security challenges. They take from their wealth of experience to procure peace in the area. This has been documented (Acholonu, 1995) as the power behind the scattered instances of male dominance.

Princesses (Ọjà)

Furthermore, in the traditional palace stead, there exist the *Ọjà* (the princesses). The *Ọjà* are the daughters of both the demised and the reigning kings; they are highly respected individuals expected to follow the footsteps of the *Olori* in manners and attitudes. A married *Ọjà*, (even if not married to a royal personality) will continue to enjoy the prestige of a princess in her lifetime. *Ọjà* is more than a titleholder. Indeed, *Ọjà* also have traditional conflict management mechanisms within and outside the palace (Oguntuyi, 1979). This study revealed that *Ọjà* has the power to stop conflict on the street and she would be obeyed even by people older than her in age. She possesses the power to make peace, even in an impromptu circumstance. Cases involving cheating, street fighting, and abuse could be handled by *Ọjà* in Ekiti. Moreso, she may preside over a case in the presence of *Ọmọ̀dé Ọwá* (palace guard), who on such occasion, would carry her father's staff as a sign of authority for her. She cannot handle grievous issues like murder, spiritual imbalances, and adultery. Like the rules guiding the *Olori*, fighting is also forbidden for *Ọjà* (IDI, 2021). There is a hierarchical orderliness in the operatives of the *Ọjà* which correlates with the notion of Bascom (1970) that the Yoruba tradition recognises respect for seniority. It is noteworthy, therefore, that *Ọjà* is not only a peacemaker but also, a peacekeeper within the palace stead and outside of it.

4.4.2 Female Socio-Economic Institutions and Conflict Management: Market Leaders (Iyalaje or Iyalaja)

There are traditional chieftains among the traditional selected Ekiti women known as *Èyẹ́' Lọ̀jà* or *Èyẹ́'Lájé* (the head of market women). This traditional

position is very symbolic of the peace and security of Ekiti. There is no community without *Èyé' Lójà* in Ekiti. To describe the nature of conflict in Ekiti society, Oguntuyi (1979) mentions the significance of the market as the forum of all unusual meetings; public offenders are punished in the market square. Noteworthy is the fact that the market square is a female-dominated arena, with a woman as its head, overseeing the affairs of other women in the market (Olaoba, 2000). It is her sole duty to resolve conflicts among market women. She is also responsible for the regulation of market norms and prices of goods. Noteworthy is her spiritual responsibility in the market square to invoke peace through rituals and prayers. This is because the marketplace is believed to be an arena for both physical and religious conflict (group interview, 2021). The people believe the marketplace harbours both human and spiritual beings such as the ancestors and worshipped gods. The market square is also an avenue for the public to convene and voice their complaints to the *Ọba* and his chiefs.

An *Èyé' Lójà* is saddled with power to see beyond the physical in the market arena. For her to avert any impending danger on the people, she must be vast in the knowledge of the town. She must be very tolerant and must be able to lead many people. She must also be vigilant and wise (KII, 2021). In essence, female market leaders had numerous important roles and functions to carry out in Ekiti. This goes beyond her responsibilities already made known by various scholars as a commercial leader among women (Awe, 1992; Denzer, 1994). She is discovered to have also played the role of peacemaker between her subjects. Many of her conflict management roles confer on her a great deal of power and respect. The *Èyé' Lójà* has the prerogative of maintaining law and order in the market square. She is the one to regulate the measures and prices of goods. It is her duty to manage any conflict among the traders or between the traders and the buyers. She was also reported to be working hand in hand with the palace guards. One of the sanctions within her power is the imposition of a fine to punish defaulters. Such fines are usually material things depending on the gravity of the offence. For instance, in a case of someone selling inappropriately, by cheating the people of the right quantity or by selling at a very high price, the *Èyé' Lójà* might visit the defaulter's market post unannounced and scattered all her goods as a warning to her. In essence, it was the duty of the *Èyé' Lójà* to enforce market rules and etiquettes.

4.4.3 Socio-Political and Community Female Traditional Institution and Conflict Management (Eye 'Lobirin Ile)

There are also female traditional chiefs representing the interest of women in the general council of a community, led by the *Oba*. The chieftaincy title popularly known as *Èyé' Lóbirin Ilẹ̀* in Ekiti, signifies the head of every woman in a community. Generally, Awe (1989, 2005) presents a vivid vision of an African woman in the organisation of the Yoruba society. She evaluates the position of an *ìyálóde* using the former *ìyálóde* of Ibadan, Efunsetán Aníwùrà, as an example. In a similar vein, *Èyé' Lóbirin Ilẹ̀* is a type of honorary

president general for all women's societies in the town. She has her insignia of office, just like the male chiefs. This position represents an attempt to give women a voice in government and it is the recognition of their ability to participate meaningfully in the political process. By the same token, Denzer (1994) highlights the engaging interests of traditional female heads to organise campaigns protesting unpopular regulations and legislations that affect women. Such political positions are occupied by Èyè 'Lóbìrin ilẹ̀ in the selected communities of study. These women also perform the roles of king-makers in Ekiti towns (Faseke, 1998). A woman head states:

Women had always been playing very prominent roles within our system. There is what we call 'Obìrin Ilẹ̀' (women of the land), which I am the head. These women are like enforcers in the community. They enforce discipline among women in the community. They are quite powerful and cannot be ignored.

(IDI, 2021)

The Èyè 'Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀ or *Oba Obìrin* is someone whose responsibilities are like that of *ìyálóde* title in some other Yoruba towns. Traditionally, the title is given to the most prominent and distinguished lady in town (Denzer, 1994). She commands the respect of a group of warriors, and she is the representative of women in the traditional council where the voices of women are heard (Porter, Lyon, Adamu, Obafemi and Blench, 2005). She is also the most senior female in the hierarchy of chiefs. Falola (1984) describes her as a chief to whom all the women's palavers are brought before they are taken to the king. She is a sort of queen, a person of much influence, who is looked up to with much respect. Èyè 'Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀ are women who made the most significant contributions to facilitating peace in the community. They have their peacemaking mechanisms aimed at the development of their communities. The women set up their council, similar to that of the male chiefs (*Àbálóyè*) among men. The membership of their council comprised groups of wise and respected women of experience known as *Eyeloje*:

The Èyè 'Lóyè were usually selected from each quarter of a town. A quarter of a town known as *Ògbón* would be represented by a woman at the general Èyè 'Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀ council.

(Group Discussion, 2021)

The peculiar age-long traditional practice, discovered amongst Ekiti women, is that they meet at five days intervals to deliberate on issues on peace, security, and development. This practice is commonly referred to as *ìpàdé Ọrọ̀rún* or *Àjọ ọrọ̀rún*. The word *ọrọ̀rún* means *ojo marun marun* (five days interval). At this meeting, they usually make peace among themselves. The quarters' chiefs would bring all of the conflicts they found difficult to resolve within their quarters into the *Àjọ-Obìrin* (women's central tribunal), before

the women's head. The quarters' chiefs have the mandate to manage conflicts among the women in their various quarters. They have the authority to make peace and contribute to the harmony of their community without the influence of their head. However, they must bring the reports of their activities to the general women's council at five day intervals. Also, conflicts beyond the power of the quarters' chiefs would be brought to the central tribunal of the *Èyè' Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀*.

Peacemaking at the quarters' level was limited to issues bothering the neighbourhood while peacemaking at the general level had to do with issues concerning the society at large.

These women, known as *Obìrin Ilẹ̀* (women of the land), meet on an appointed day in a week to discuss crucial issues in the community. In case of any quarrel among them, the women would summon the people involved and settle the case amicably, sometimes without such cases reaching the *Èyè' Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀* or the general municipal. Whatever decision the women made within their group, however, must complement the total ethics of the whole community.

The constitution of the traditional women's tribunal (*Àjọ Obìrin*) is highlighted thus: the queens (*Èyè' Lori*), female head chiefs (*Èyè' Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀*), the priestesses (*Èyè Mọlẹ̀*), market female heads (*Èyè lójà*), and quarters chiefs (*Èyè 'Lóyè*). The responsibility of the *Èyè' Lóbìrin Ilẹ̀* was described to be multifarious. She intervenes and makes peace among women and within the society at large. Whenever disputes arose, the council of women holds a hearing of the parties in an isolated spot known as the tribunal (*Àjọ*) and after deliberation, they pass judgements. They mediate between both sides and lay down a course of behaviour, in particular, for the party in the wrong. Furthermore, it was discovered that these female chiefs take on similar roles when any women behave badly in wider society. In cases of insolence, drunkenness, delinquency, adultery, and betrayal and the like, the women handle the cases accordingly.

Significantly, these women intervene in conflicts among the male chiefs and the *Oba* himself. They persuade male chiefs whenever there is an argument that could lead to conflict, and they are the spokeswomen of all the women groups in the town. That is the women age-grade associations, the market women, and the priestesses conveyed their messages to the general council through them. The *Ìyálóde* of Aiyede-Ekiti states that she has a peculiar manner of tabling the issues bordering on women and the general well-being of the town. For instance, if she wants to convey an exciting message from women to the king, she may sing a song like:

Uré wọlé dé (2x)
Ònìyàn kọ bá fẹre
Kẹ dide ò

Kẹ kọhọ rẹ sókè kobirin
Uré wọlé déò e

Meaning:
Goodness has come (2x)
Whoever loves goodness
Should stand on their feet
Raising their two hands for the women
Because goodness has come

She went further that a more critical message could inspire a dirge thus:

í un Ojúún rí
Í i kun mómò jẹ
í un Ojúún rí
í kun mómò mu
í Aiyédé ní mò yíò e

Meaning:
She said what she saw
Asked her not to eat
She said what she saw
Asked her not to drink
She said Aiyede town has turned upside down.

A song like the above would arrest the attention of the *Ọba* and his chiefs because it denoted a crisis that must be quickly dealt with to avoid escalation. The status and power of women in Ekiti in antiquity is thus significantly reported, healthy, and productive.

4.4.4 Age Grade Institutions (Akojo Egbe)

To adequately address pressing conflict and security issues, Ekiti women have been discovered to organise themselves into various groups ranging from political to religious groups to maintain peace and promote harmony. These groups are known as *Egbé* (age-grade associations). Unlike the male pattern of *Egbé* like *Emesè*, *Ègìrì*, and *Èlérúkùkù*, the female pattern of *Egbe* is categorised as the *Iye* (old women), *Ayiléko* (middle-aged women), and *Ọmọ-dúdan* (young women). The three groups of women are concerned with the tranquillity of the community. They sing and warn of unwanted vices in the community, and they have the responsibility of sanctioning evil perpetrators in the society (See Apter, 1993). The instrument of warnings for the *Ayiléko* is called an *Ayíde* (female town crier) followed by female drummers. The drums usually used in carrying out this mission are *Áyu* and *Àpìrì*. The ingenuity of women in the worship of deities is worthy of mentioning in this study. Ekiti women celebrate

traditional festivals (*Ògbè sẹ̀*, *Ùdirókò Osun*, *Ojúná*, *Ọwá-ọwà*) to re-enact the past by invoking the spirit of peace into the community. They also sing to forewarn evildoers, reminding them of similar acts in the past and the nemesis of such acts. They serve as agents of peace and human security (through volunteering as mediators and negotiators), actively participate in the political, social, and religious sphere of the town and bear the responsibilities of sanctioning a trouble breeder by apportioning well-deserved punitive measures. If any sign of insidious quarrel is noticed, they promptly summoned the protagonists to question and calm them. The political (age-grade) associations of women bear names that convey messages of peace and harmony among the people. For instance, they bear names like *Ìfẹ̀lẹ̀rẹ̀* (love is profitable), *Ìrẹ̀pọ̀ dùn* (unity is sweet), *Ìtẹ̀ síwájú* (development or progress), *Àláfíà* (peace), and several other names reflecting the ideology of women in the society. As scholars (Oguntomisin, 2004; Mikell, 2005; Okonjo, 1983) have already indicated in their works, the age-grade movement is used as a vibrant mechanism in the maintenance of social order in the society.

In addition, women of study have also contributed to reconciling the whole society in times of crisis. Whenever war broke out among the people in the traditional times, the oldest set of women in the clan would go to meet the opposing clan and to interpose themselves between the fighters to make them see reasons to stop the war. Whenever words proved fruitless, the women would threaten to expose their nakedness or go on their knees. In either case, the gesture signified a curse for those who bore the responsibility for such a grievous act. Due to the respect the enemy soldiers had for the women they would usually lay down their weapons before the fateful acts are accomplished. If they refused to lay down their weapons, however, the old women would go naked and go on their knees, would fearlessly crawl towards the combatants. It is believed that the assailants would suffer the ultimate punishment for having disobeyed and obliged their 'aged mothers' to expose their nakedness and kneel for them. This tactic was used during the *Kiriji* war that lasted for sixteen years (1877–1893) in Yoruba land (KII, 2021). The significance of this practice to the contemporary nature of violent conflicts in Nigeria is questionable as there seems not to be any regard for women and children, who before now, were classified as inviolable but are presently, not only violated but in some cases, used as weapons.

The women were also popular for their satirical songs in the society. Such songs are meant to correct social ills in the society. In Aiyede-Ekiti, the women sang a song to protest against the rulership of Ata Oṣo in 1935 thus:

Ikòkò tó nkéran kádiyẹ
ìníjìnlẹ̀
Ọdẹ wọ nwọ nyíẹ máa kiyèsì
Wọn nkó kẹbúkẹbú

Meaning:

Hyena that steals goats and chickens

It has meaning

May you hunters take note of it

Because it can steal anything.

In the above song, the *Ata Oso* was figuratively referred to as Hyena, representing a wild tyrannical King. Hence it was the usual practice for the women to convey their messages through songs using figurative expressions (IDI, 2021).

4.4.5 Female Religious Traditional Institutions

Peacemaking among women is socio-religious in nature in Ekiti. The concept of security and conflict management transcends resolving conflicts, it also encompasses constant appeasements to the ancestral spirits of their forebears. It is strongly believed that the gods want to prevent evil occurrences and help peace to reign in the whole community. In the traditional religion of Ekiti people, there are certain religious beliefs associated with womanhood. Appeals are made in prayer and song to the female principles of care, perseverance, and meekness to regulate the violent posture of the male principle in the religious setting. An example of such seems apposite here:

Odún dé lónì oo
K'ódún yi yabo
Abo lala bó mọ
Abo ni tura
Abo ni rọra
K'ódún wa ma y'akọ
Akọ ló ni lile (Apter, 1995, p. 107)

Translation:

Our festival has arrived today

May this festival turn out to be fruitful

It is in fruitfulness that peace is hidden

It is the women who comfort

It is the women that soothe

May our festival not turn out to be unfruitful

For toughness is of the male.

(Apter, 1995, p. 107)

While the society is largely patriarchal, with most lines of heredity and rule being passed through the male line, Ekiti women have retained their role as the holders of wisdom, the keepers of magic, and the spiritual guardians

of the clan. The importance of the status of women in traditional times is reflected throughout the cosmology, even if not often translated into political lines. Findings from the field, for example, showed among other things that Ekiti women played a strategic role in the spiritual healing of the wounds of war after the Benin war, which shook the entire Ekiti kingdom in the sixteenth century. The process was described thus:

The healing rituals they engaged in were intended to purify and cleanse the war returnees of blood guilt. The women tied their wrappers in an unfashionable way and fetched water from the river while they poured it all over the town praying for the healing of the land.

(KII, 2021)

This was reported as the genesis of the monthly fetching of water by women to invoke the spirit of peace and development. Also, there were women considered to be priestesses in the shrines. They have the prerogatives of ensuring peace and security by engaging themselves in different activities channelled towards peace. They also work hand in hand with the other women in the town to promote peaceful co-existence. In case of mysterious occurrences among the women, the priestesses are usually the ones to unravel the mystery. There are times, however, when the mysteries might be difficult to unravel; hence the priestesses may resort to what is known as *ìbúra* (oath-taking) by the parties involved in a mysterious case:

Taking an oath is not a mere solemn assertion of telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, which is a feature of the western court; it is a process, charged with punitive powers. It is taken on the names of some dreaded gods like *Ọlọta Ulé Adó, Òrìsà Àjàgbó, Òrìsà Ojuńá, Ògún or Ọwákúnrùngbò n.*

(IDI, 2021)

There are objects considered sacred and were used as tools for *Ibura* (oath-taking). Sacred objects like metals, cornmeal, broomstick, mortar and pestle, and even some body parts like breasts (symbolising fertility) are charged as magical phenomena, symbolizing the type of predicament that will befall a false oath-taker. Oath taking in African traditional society was a fearful ritual (Aniekan, 2020). It involves deities and ancestors who are called to be witnesses to the agreement between two conflicting parties. In Ekiti, parties to an oath-taking are bound by pledges connoting calamity and death should anyone breach a part of the agreement.

The most prominent idea that emerged upon examining the traditional Ekiti communities' peacemaking is the women's intense respect and reverence for life, humanity, and all aspects of existence. They do not believe in the separation of the physical and the spiritual and see eternity as ongoing and not because of linear transcendence. Every aspect of their socio-political

lives is bounded by religion and firmly anchored in the belief in the family as the single most important micro-political entity. This is germane to the postulation that an African family is a political unit (Ajayi, 1985). Thus, the domination of women in several positions of spiritual and religious power is meant to maintain peace and balance in the society. This is in accordance with Abiodun's (1989) quote of Verger thus:

...*Ó ní gbogbo ohun tíenìyàn bá n se, tí kò bá fi ti obìrin kún un*
Ó ní kò lèṣeṣe...
Ó ní kí wọn ómáa fi ibà fún obìrin, Ó ní tí wọn bá ti fi ibà fún obìrin, ilé
ayé yìò máa tòrò (Verger, 1965, p. 218)

Meaning:

in everything human beings do, if they do not guarantee the place of women, they will not succeed. They should acknowledge the power of women. When women's power is acknowledged, then the world will be peaceful.

Following the ideology of Kaplan (1997), selected Ekiti women's peacemaking structures are believed to rest on certain pillars composed and sustained by mystical principles. These principles were within the custody of women and guided by deep secrets (*injinle*). This ritual power was used to maintain harmony in the society; hence while men in principle held political offices and authority, women controlled the ritual base that made political rule possible. Women as spirit mediums and religious officials were able to participate in healing, theo-politics, and acted as seers for their communities to forestall any unfortunate occurrence. The feminine principles of spirituality pertaining to the earth, deities, and legendary martyrs (like *Òsun*, *Ògbè sè*, *Òrínláṣe*, *Yemọnja*, *Èrìnmò*, *Ojúná* and *Íyàgbá*, *Ìrò mò*, *Orò Kéréje*, *OròOlófin*, and *Olúa* and *Òsanyìn*) are channelled towards the creation of ethics of living a peaceful and exemplary life (Group discussion, 2021). These goddesses were symbolic not for their sacred and dreaded nature, but the symbolism of the existence of these goddesses was caution, justice, and peace. They could be likened to some legendary martyrs in other Yoruba land such as *Móremí Àjàsorò*, *Olúorogbo* and *Olúrónbí*, and mythical progenitors that abound in other Yoruba cultures. In these contexts, women and femininity were associated with the very essence of life as well as the well-being of society.

4.4.6 Family Institutions (Obirin Ule)

There are also women reported to be responsible for peacemaking in the homestead. These women are usually the eldest in the compound, the mothers-in-law, the first wife in a polygamous family, and the first daughter in a compound. A woman of old age is an indication of wisdom and experience, both of which are considered crucial elements for peaceful living.

Also embedded within the notion of old age is the assumption of integrity and responsibility, which explains why the women are in charge of managing conflicts and securing their compounds. The instruments employed for peacemaking by these women are cross-examination, maxims and proverbs, praise poems, stories, and songs. Also, more serious instruments such as oath-taking, ordeal placements, the invocation of the spirits of *ò ìtọ́mọ odùduwà* (truth-telling), *alálẹ̀*, *àbá*, *yèyè* (the ancestors), and the *alájọbí* (the ties that bind a lineage) may be applied to cases of witchcraft and murder (Group Discussion, 2021). All of these entail a process of submitting accused persons to a form of test, believed to be under supernatural control. It is considered a painful process, hence used as a last resort by the people of Ekiti.

Observably, the traditional selected Ekiti women live in compounds according to each family. A compound is usually circular in shape and very large in space. It is commonly referred to as *Ọ̀gbón*. The open space at the center of the compound is known as *Aede*. The significance of *Aède* in the traditional Ekiti family settings serves as a domestic court for women living in a compound to settle any conflict between them. There is another space at the upper part of the compound described as *Akòdì*, which served as the major court of a compound during the pre-colonial period. This was where the elderly ones in a compound usually meet to deliberate on issues about the welfare of their family members. *Akòdì* also serves as a family space where sensitive conflicts within the family compound are settled. Even though the *Akòdì* is predominantly a male arena, it is reported as a normal practice to find women of old age in their midst. This is because elderly women are also classified as men due to their innumerable experiences of life and due to the cessation of monthly periods that pragmatically presents them as men (IDI, 2021). There are several areas in the home where women manage conflicts. They manage conflicts among children in the household because they are primary teachers in the field of life. While describing the hierarchy among the women in the traditional Ekiti compound, the first wife was called the commanding officer to the other wives (Oguntuyi, 2007). She is supposed to supervise the activities of her co-wives. The status of mother-in-law is also significant to peace in the traditional Ekiti family. Married women are expected to be tolerant and promote dialogue in the homestead.

4.5 Coninuity and Change: The Future Foretold?

The influence of Ekiti women goes a long way in making peace between family members, within and among communities. One major reason women are still relevant in managing conflicts in Ekiti is that they can blend the political with the social mechanisms of resolving conflict. The women do not operate independently of the social value system. The women perceive their traditional roles as expedient for present-day political purposes and use their roles fluidly to adapt to the needs of a situation.

The interviews conducted for this study gave examples of these dynamics in the past, as well as the present day. For example, a case was mentioned of Olújodá market in the historical past of Awo Ekiti which used to be held every nine days by different settlements; Ọ̀dọ̀, Ùju, Uléoná, and Ìjọru (This was around 1940 as discovered from KII, 2021). These settlements were united by *Olújoda* market until the Ọ̀dọ̀ people engaged the other surrounding hamlets in warfare. It was recalled that the incessant attacks from Ọ̀dọ̀ people forced the people from other settlements to move close and a more central market called *Atọ̀wọ̀ṣe* was created. The great strength of the new market, as well as its flourishing trade in kolanut, attracted the envy of Ọ̀dọ̀ people who intensified their attacks on their neighbours. The Ọ̀dọ̀ people would attack in the morning, especially on a market day, hence this early morning attack was referred to as *Ogun Ọ̀wúrọ̀*. The women from Ìjọru, Ùju, Uléoná, and other surrounding hamlets gathered together to resist the attacks of the Ọ̀dọ̀ people. In the year 1957, the women of Awo Ekiti came out in hundreds, tied their wrappers the wrong way and held 'ewéọ̀ mù' also known as fern leaf (*Asplenium bulbiferum*) in their hands singing thus;

*éèréúnfééèéèrèúnféé oun mowò,
oun mo mú sọmọ lálẹ̀ kénrèúnfééééèè*

Meaning;

We do not like what is happening

We do not like it

That is why I left my children for the street to shout that you also,
should not like it.

(KII, 2021)

The women's united efforts helped them to put a permanent stop to Ọ̀dọ̀ attacks. The Ọ̀dọ̀ women negotiated peace with the people of the new settlement and many of the people from Ọ̀dọ̀ moved in to settle with them. A similar occurrence was reported recently in Ikole in 2018 regarding how herdsmen were coming to graze on the people's farmland. This resulted in resistance by the natives who, after several warnings, decided to spray the plants with pesticides that are poisonous to animals. The result was not good as many cows and sheep were found dead the next day. This led to reprisal attacks by the herdsmen. Farmers were waylaid, beaten, and killed while some women were raped or kidnapped. The police could not do much in resolving the conflict. The women came out singing dirges to the palace, demanding the urgent attention of the king in addressing the conflict. As a result, the Ikole council of chiefs met with the leaders of the cattle rearers, and pacts were formed in a bid to resolve the conflict (KII, 2021). It is worthy to note that incessant farmers/herders' conflict is common to all of the selected communities for this study.

Despite these historical continuities, however, the interviews also noted changes in the dynamics of Ekiti communal living, especially since colonialism. In essence, gender roles in (post-) colonial Ekiti society witnessed what may be termed as fragmental transformation. Evidence from deeper investigation supports the reality of cultural adaptation that systematically reaffirmed female influence (KII, 2021). The women appropriated this through continuous appeal to the spirit of non-violence and most of the time, the authority (state and local) still relates to their appeals and listens to them. Women have been able to make negotiations from within their traditional space because it is considered non-contentious and non-threatening. The women chiefs and the spiritual leaders continued to thrive in their responsibilities. However, the policymakers did not adequately recognise their contributions to the peace and security of the state. The contemporary women chieftains continue to make peace within their domain and in the general council. Their power to resolve conflicts, however, had been reduced due to the introduction of western courts of law. It was also discovered that despite the discrimination meted out on women of study, they could still manage to transform their situations in such a way that they carried out their responsibilities. The women tend to organise themselves based on the various traditional groups that exist in the communities and they continued in their mission of peace, security, and development. Traditional rites and customs are still being carried out jointly by both the male and female rulers and/or their representatives.

Furthermore, the participation of women as peace agents is still very much alive among contemporary Ekiti women. Recently, in the heat of the recent farmers-herders crisis in Ekiti State that had led to the killings of several people, women all over the state joined their counterparts from other communities to march peacefully to the state government secretariat where they demanded an end to the killings. The women stormed the street invoking the spirit of peace, change, and justice into Ekiti land. The women tied their wrappers outwards in an unfashionable manner, singing and praying for the non-occurrence of such evil events in Ekiti land. Even though some of these actions were met with negative reactions from the public, it is pointless denying that the impact of such actions was achieved by the women. This trend shows that even though, in so many years, the strategic role of women in managing conflicts continued to be glossed over, their positive contributions had never been in doubt. The challenges lie, therefore, in recognising the similarities without denying the differences of conflict management styles among the traditional Ekiti women and the modern Ekiti women.

This study confirmed the different and essential roles of women in promoting a culture of peace and security using traditional methods and networks as well as the potential challenges they faced in the process. This study, therefore, probed into the sources of conflict in Ekiti, the mechanisms of managing conflicts, and fostering security, and the challenges faced in the process. It has been established that Ekiti communities have a dual sex political system which allows for substantial female representation and involvement in

governance and also constituted a symbol of peace and cooperation. This was opposed to outright imperialist patriarchy which has a basic masculinist ideology that celebrates violence, valour, conquest, and power in varying degrees, and which denied women their rights, subjugating and properticising them in a strict hierarchical system of governance. In Ekiti, matriarchy and patriarchy co-existed in harmony. In other words, gender roles in Ekiti societies are a means of dividing, but also a means of integrating and co-opting in dynamic ways that enabled stability based on justice, equity and fairness. This enabled a system where women's power became based on the centrality of their social role in relation to men, and men's general belief in the sacredness of women as mothers.

Furthermore, it is evident that opportunities exist for women in traditional Ekiti society to take leadership roles in politics, religion, and social and economic life. The positions of authority as female traditional chiefs are indicative of the cultural values, norms, and beliefs which, when combined, give pride of place to gender identity and social cohesion needed for the peaceful and crisis-free existence of the people while reducing social exclusion or ostracism. The crux of opinion here is that women's existence in Ekiti communities and their contributions to conflict management, peace, and security are based on ethics of care and rooted in a broader communal ideology, which operates based on the mutuality of human interests through a web of relationships where everyone played their part for the good of the collective and the validation of the personal. Ekiti women seem to not place themselves in a dichotomous relationship with men, rather, gender relations are fluid, dynamic, and complementary as espoused.

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. First, efforts to strengthen women's participation in conflict reconstruction should identify different non-violent forms of female, political agency. The participation of women in all aspects of peacemaking will ensure that a greater diversity of views and methodology is reflected in decision-making. This is good for the democratisation process.
2. Security measures in Ekiti should consciously adopt some of the traditional mechanisms used by women in resolving conflicts. In other words, local knowledge that does not necessarily support western ideas should not be overlooked.
3. There is a need to look inward and encourage female traditional institutions to contribute to the development of the society. External assistance, therefore, must be adapted to supplement rather than overwhelm existing local grassroots peacemaking initiatives. They must bring to the fore, local experience placed firmly in historical

context for the participants. In doing so, interventions in conflict situations would be informed by the western contemporary agenda.

4. There is the need for extensive research, by scholars, into the diverse contributions of women towards managing conflicts and enhancing peace and security, and the government should provide adequate funding in that regard. It is recommended that peacemaking rituals engineered by women in this study, which contain important psychological and spiritual healing powers, should not be allowed to pass away. Rather, they should be re-invented as African women's contributions to peacemaking models.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 4.1 List of Research Participants.

Awo Ekiti		
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
1	Mrs. M. Jegede	Oke Uba quarters, Awo Ekiti
2	M.B. Aladesiun	Oke Uba, Awo Ekiti
3	M. Ojo	Ijisun streets, Awo Ekiti
4	Regina O.	Uju Awo
5	Ms. A. Farounbi	Ijisiun Street, Awo Ekiti
6	Bosede Bada	Uju quarters, Awo Ekiti
7	O. Bamisaye	Ijisiun Quarters, Awo Ekiti
8	M. Adu	Ijisiun Quarters, Awo Ekiti
9	Alhaja M. Ibada	Uju Quarters, Awo Ekiti
10	Mrs. Kehinde Jonah	Uju, Awo Ekiti
Ado Ekiti		
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
11	Mr. S. Ojo	Palace guard, Ewi's Palace
12	Olori A. Adelabu	Saso, Ewi Palace
13	Princess O. Adejugbe	Ewi's Palace
14	Chief Mrs. C.O Babasola	Ewi Palace
15	Princess Ade Adejugbe	Ewi Palace
16	Adeyinka Adelabu	Ewi Palace
17	Princess Adeyinka Adelabu	Esa Palace
18	Chief Mrs. Eye Gba	Ewi Palace
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
19	Chief Mrs. Olanipekun	Odo Yinmi Street, Ado Ekiti
20	Chief Mrs Waye Osho	Oja, Erekesan, Ado Ekiti
21	Chief Bosede Adejugbe	Ewi Palace, Ado Ekiti
22	Chief Mrs Aduloju	Idemo street, Ado Ekiti
23	Princess Omolunde Adelabu	Oke-Isa, Ado Ekiti
Orun Ekiti		
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
24	Mrs O. Bamgboshe	Ugbogun Road Orun Ekiti
25	Mrs A. M. Olotu	Ugbogun road, Orun Ekiti
26	Mrs F. Opeyemi	Ugbogun Road, Orun
27	Bamigbose J. A.	Akalim Road, Orun Ekiti
28	Bamshe O.A.	Alaafin Ilaya Road, Orun Ekiti.
29	Olori Bolatito Adewumi	Olowuro Palace, Orun Ekiti
30	Sunday Adeleye	Olowuro Palace, Orun Ekiti
Ilawe Ekiti		
S/N	Names	Address
31	Mrs I.Akinola	Oke Ibedo Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
32	B. Oloruntoba	Idofin Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
33	Princess B. Awoniyi	Idofin Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
34	Queen A. Alabi	Alaawe's Palace, Ilawe Ekiti
35	Mrs Bosede A.	Olubedo Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
36	B. Agboola	Oke Ibedo Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
37	O. Ige	Oke Ibedo Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
38	Mrs O. Abei	Adin Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
39	O. Afere	Adin Quarters

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

40	Deaconess F. Atere	Adin Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
41	W. Olapasiku	Idofin, Ilawe Ekiti
42	M. Ademilika	Adin Quarters, Ilawe Ekiti
43	Mrs T. Oladele	Oke Ibedo, Ilawe Ekiti
44	Chief Mrs Babalola	Oke'Bedo Ilawe Ekiti
45	Chief F. Aladeyelu	Idofin Quarters, Ilawe
Ikole Ekiti		
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
46	Gbenga O. Ayodeji	Ara Quarters, Ikole Ekiti
47	Felicia A. Olajumoke	Ilofin Quarters Ikole
48	Mrs B. Bolaji	Okejebu, Ikole
49	Mrs E. Adebayo	Ilofin Quarters, Ikole
50	Bamitale O.	Ilamo street, Ikole Ekiti
51	Mrs A. Fasiku	Elekole Palace, Ikole Ekiti
52	A. Adeoye	Elekole Palace, Ikole Ekiti
53	O. Ajayi	Okejebu Quarters, Ikole Ekiti
54	A. Ajayi	Okejebu Quarters, Ikole Ekiti
55	F. Adewumi	Asin Quarters, Ikole
Aiyede Ekiti		
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
56	Ms. A. Farounbi	Ijisun street, Aiyede
57	Eye Ioola	Owaiye Quarters, Aiyede Ekiti
58	Mrs Olonkan	Owaiye Quarters Aiyede
59	Alhaja Rahman	Owaiye Ayede Ekiti
60	Chief Mrs Adeyeye	Aiyede Ekiti
61	Chief Mrs M. Ajibade	Okekim Quarters Aiyede Ekiti
62	A. Oloye	Idirisa Quarters, Ayede Ekiti
63	Chief Mrs B. Afuye	Idinsa Aiyede
64	Mrs O. Francis	Idirisa Quarters, Ayede Ekiti
65	O. Dauda	Okediri street Aiyede Ekiti
66	Chief Mrs Olomola	Owaiye Quarters, Aiyede Ekiti
67	Mrs G. Owolabi	Opo- Ijelu Quarters Aiyede
68	Mrs O. Famoriyo	Owaiye, Ayede
69	Mrs Aladesingba	Owaiye Quarters, Aiyede Ekiti
70	S. Femsola	Okekin Quarters, Aiyede
71	Mrs F. Bejide	Okekin Quarters, Aiyede
72	Princess B. Adeoye	Ata Palace, Aiyede
73	Princess O. George	Palace, Attah, Aiyede
74	Chief Mrs Arowojobe (Iyalaje)	Idirisa Quarters, Ayede Ekiti
S/N	NAMES	ADDRESS
75	Mrs F. Ojo	Ilofin
76	Adeyeye J.	Ilofin street
77	Funmilayo A. Ojo	Alaafin Ilaaja Road
78	Yeye Olomi Ogunsola	orere owu Quarters
79	Eye'mole	Okewo Quarters
80	Ologun Adele	Palace
81	Mobolaji A.	Owaiye
82	Chief Mrs Ibitola	Attah Palace
83	Abike Omolugeyin	Ugbogun street

5 The Diminishing Relevance of Traditional Rulers and Securitization in the South-West

David Oladimeji Alao

5.1 Introduction

The maintenance of peace and security in Nigeria, like in any nation, is the primary responsibility of the government as explicitly provided for under the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended in 2021, in Chapter 2 (14b)). It states that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.” It is worrisome that for a long time, Nigeria has been going through multidimensional security challenges while the government is increasingly becoming helpless. This failure of the state to perform its primary responsibility in respect to security of lives and property informed Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019, p. 1) to observe that “the state has failed in three major areas: security of lives and properties, promotion of the rule of law, and provision of visionary leadership.”

The increasing security challenges nationwide have become sources of concern to the citizenry while the traditional rulers who are expected to contribute meaningfully to the security upkeep of their domains lack the capacity to do so due to institutional challenges and their failure, in some instances, to live up to the traditional demands of their offices (Abdullahi, 2019; Osakede and Ijimakinwa, 2015). The expectation that the traditional rulers should be able to contribute meaningfully to the maintenance of security in their domains is borne out of the understanding that they are so close to their people. Also, the criminal elements and violent actors do not emerge from another planet but dwell among the populace, and the traditional rulers have local knowledge of their environments to enhance the national security. It is reasoned that if each of the local domains is peaceful, the same will be achieved at the national level. However, the 1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria has consigned the role of traditional rulers in Nigeria to an advisory capacity. They are therefore left with traditional respect based on much cherished cultural norms and values which cannot be used to compel or punish people in the way that the government can.

This diminishing relevance of traditional rulers and the rising insecurity in the South-West region constituted the issue that this study explores. This line of thought was further strengthened with increasing restiveness in Nigeria that are manifesting in terrorist activities, herdsman/native farmers’ violence,

kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, cultism, and other sectarian conflicts, believing that most if not all of these challenges emanated from local communities. This chapter has the following objectives:

1. Determine the factors that accounted for the authority of the traditional rulers in pre-colonial Oyo Empire to maintain peace and human security;
2. Evaluate the influence of colonialism on declining authority of the traditional rulers in human security management of the defunct Oyo Empire;
3. Examine the effects of post-colonial administrations on the declining authority of the traditional rulers in the securitization of South-West.

The study has adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study is South-West Nigeria. It relies on a qualitative approach as the data was sourced from relevant books, journals, internet sources and documentaries, and key informant interviews (KIIs).

5.2 Literature Review

5.2.1 Traditional Rulers in a Transforming Society

The definition of a traditional ruler is an evolving subject and can be connected to their powers and functions over a specific period of time in Nigeria. Bello-Imam (1996, p. 218) defines a traditional ruler as “a person who by virtue of his ancestral position occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area and whose throne has been in existence before the advent of the British in Nigeria.” This definition speaks to the position of the traditional rulers in the pre-colonial era when tradition and culture were held in highest esteem. Literature abounds of the superiority of the colonial masters over the traditional rulers as revealed in the Olubadan Oba Oyenusi suspension in 1947. Also, the Western Regional government dethroned Alafin, Oba Adeyemi 1 in 1955 as documented by Waston in Vaughan (2003). The implication is that the traditional rulers that showed evidence of non-compliance with the authority of the colonial and post-colonial master were dealt with while subservient ones were given relative autonomy. This suggests that the above definition might not capture them succinctly.

Cookey et al. (2010) views a traditional ruler as “the traditional head of an ethnic unit or clan who for the time being is the holder of the highest traditional authority whose title is recognized as a traditional ruler’s title by the government of the state.” This definition, in effect, represents the status of traditional rulers in colonial and post-colonial dispensations when grading,

recognition, and presentation of the staff of office were done by the colonial government – a responsibility that has currently shifted to the state governments. This explains why Abdulkadir and Adagba (2005) remarked that the post-colonial Nigeria witnessed a long march of traditional institutions into irrelevance. Ajayi (1992) therefore notes that the reflections of the stress of the traditional rulers in contemporary Nigeria are personal humiliation, salary cut and stoppage, suspension and banishment, and dethronement. Among those who suffer such fates are Onojie of Uromi Kingdom in 2016 (but reinstated in 2018) and Deji of Akure, Oba Oluwadamilare Adesina Osupa III on 10 June 2010. As Jahun (2015) rightly observes that though the functions of traditional rulers have diminished from having legislative, judicial, and executive powers to a mere advisory status, they still enjoy the vestiges of their former powers as custodians of culture and tradition within their domain, particularly when such powers have not been bastardized.

The traditional ruler system is not limited to Nigeria or Africa. The practice is entrenched in Britain and India while African countries like Benin Republic, Ghana, Mali, Rwanda, and Burundi assigned varying degree of power and authority to them. There are three major schools of thought on the traditional ruler system in modern dispensation. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in its report in 2007, listed the abolitionist, retentionist, and political enhancer as demonstrated by, for example, Egwurube (1985) and Tonye and Osemwota (2013).

First, the abolitionist avows that traditional institutions are not compatible to modern day administrative systems and should be cancelled (e.g. Fatile 2010). In addition, ECA (2007, p. 10) notes that the institution was a partner to the colonial master and cannot be adequately integrated into the contemporary governmental system. This school resonates with the development in countries like Guinea in 1957, Burundi in 1960, Mali in 1961, and Rwanda in 1962 that have abolished traditional authorities. This is perhaps comparable to the experience in India under the 26th Amendment Act of 1971, though the institution was not wiped out. It is also not surprising in Nigeria that politicians rely largely on traditional rulers for political mobilization as well as other dirty jobs. However, this paper argues that the traditional rulers as the custodian of cultural norms and value should not be consigned to the dustbin of history, as this will lead to erasing who we are and the loss of our identity.

The second school of thought, the retention group, argues for political enhancement of the position of the traditional rulers. Their position is that they should be allowed to participate in an advisory capacity and non-executive capacities (Egwurube, 1985). Hence, Dore (2011) notes that when the socio-cultural context of a society is neglected, there would be wastage of resources and human efforts. This might have influenced the 1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria.

Third, Ejioko (2004) provides the last school of thought, as the middle course between the abolitionist and retention group. The school acknowledges the

weaknesses of the traditional institutions during the colonial era but views them to be crucial resources that could be deployed to promote democratic governance and bring about rural transformation, facilitating access of rural communities to public services (ECA, 2007, p. 11). Ironically, the study observes that the same set of political elites canvassing for the eradication of the position of traditional rulers are the people contending and skimming to assume that position in this modern dispensation. This paper argues that if the same position condemned in the past is turning out to be of great interest to the modern-day elites, there are chances that the office could be transformed to align with the demands of a modern governmental system. Therefore, abolition is not the answer to multi-dimensional challenges that may partly be self-imposed even by the traditional rulers.

5.2.2 Human Security

The concept of human security became prominent after the Cold War with increasing studies in areas like human rights and developmental issues among others. The idea is that sovereignty is meaningful when a nation is able to meet the minimum standards in good governance which is understood in terms security provisioning for its citizens and other social responsibility in guaranteeing their general welfare (Rugumamu, 2001, p. 2).

The first attempt to redefine human security was by the UNDP in the Human Development Report 1994 entitled *New Dimensions of Human Security*. It states that “human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity” (UNDP, 1994, p. 229). This is attainable when peace prevails and the process of attaining it is inclusive. It emphasizes the need for a change of focus exclusively from states, territory, and military questions to individuals as the heart of security concerns. The key components in the report are identified as economic, food, health, personal, community, and environmental, as well as political security.

Skons (2007, p. 243) therefore notes that “if the ultimate objective of security is to save human beings from preventable premature death and disability, then the appropriate security policy would focus on prevention instruments and risk reduction strategies for their causes.” Prevention strategies in this instance cannot but include government intentional and concerted efforts to meet the basic needs of the citizenry in an inclusive manner while loopholes that encourage human abuse to be filled. Achieving this goal in an inclusive manner should accommodate the cooperation of the citizenry, including traditional rulers.

This position could have informed Alkire (2003) to view human security as the need “to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, without impeding long-term human fulfilment.” Therefore, Keizo (1998) notes that “it is my deepest belief that human beings should be able to lead lives of creativity, without having their survival threatened or their

dignity impaired.” The urgent need to refocus attention particularly on the major components of human security informed many international organizations and agencies to propose more integrated and comprehensive policies and strategies to place human security at the top of the local, national, regional, and global agenda (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2016)). This position agrees with Stewart (2004) that “human security forms an important part of people’s well-being and is therefore an objective of development which aims at the enlargement of human choices while insecurity cuts life short and thwarts the use of human potential.” In effect, the goal of the Nigerian government to ensure security of life and property cannot be effectively achieved without the adoption of an inclusive approach that will also accommodate the traditional rulers.

5.3 Method of the Study

This study is based on secondary sources, including academic literature, as well as a range of key informant interviews with purposely selected traditional rulers, past and current government officials relevant to the subject matter, intellectuals, and carefully selected personalities residing in South-West Nigeria. The interviews were largely unstructured but organised around the core questions of this chapter. Details of the interviewees are included on Table 5.1. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically; where

Table 5.1 List of Key Informants Interviewed

S/N	NAME	Place of Interview	STATE	INTERVIEW FORMAT
1	Alake of Abeokuta, Oba <i>Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo III</i> Oct. 20, 2021	Abeokuta	Ogun	Video
2	Are Alabi, Former Commissioner for LG And Chieftaincy Affairs Oct. 20, 2021	Abeokuta	Ogun	Video
3	Late Alaafin of Oyo, Oba <i>Adeyemi 111, lku Baba Yeye</i> Nov. 7, 2021	Oyo	Oyo	Video
4	Dr Michael Popoola Nov. 5, 2021	Ilishan	Ekiti	Video
5	Dr Victor Adesiyon Nov. 4, 2021	Ibadan	Oyo state	Video
6	Professor Adesegun Oct. 27, 2021	Sagamu	Ogun state	Video
7	Professor Jones Aluko. Nov. 2, 2021	Ibadan	Osun state	Video
8	Professor Haliso Olajumoke Oct. 27, 2021	Ilishan	Ogun state	Video
9	Professor Onakoya Nov. 8, 2021	Abeokuta	Ogun State	Video
10	Professor Michael Oni Nov. 4, 2021	Ibadan	Osun State	Video
11	Professor Emeritus Michael Omolewa Nov. 5, 2021	Ibadan	Oyo state	Video
12	Late Olubadan of Ibadan, Oba Saliu Adetunji	Ibadan	Oyo State	Video
13	Professor Barrister Olarewaji Nov. 4, 2021	Iperu	Ogun	Video
14	Dr. Ngozi Nwogwugwu Nov. 5, 2021	Ilishan	Ogun	Video

information from the interviews is used in the analysis, it is referenced in the text.

5.4 Historical Development of Traditional Rulers in South-West Nigeria

5.4.1 Pre-Colonial Yoruba Land, Traditional Rulers, and Security Management

The pre-colonial Yoruba occupied southwestern Nigeria with the northern boundary around the river Niger and the southern edge marked by the Bight of Benin. It spanned to the West to Benin Republic and part of Togo as well as eastward, to the contemporary Edo State (Oseghale, 2009). Ile-Ife was the first capital city (meaning the place of dispersion) of the Yoruba and its history shrouded in three major sources that were transmitted through oral history and developed by scholars. According to myth, *Oludumare* or *Olorun* (The God of the Heavens) sent down some mystical beings with chains to create solid land, plants, and animals in the world full of water and the spot of landing was Ile-Ife or Ife. The legend revealed that the mystical beings emerged as the progenitor of human race and the Yoruba were believed to be the first set of beings on earth where all human civilization emerged – contrary to Biblical or Islamic accounts that God is the creator of heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1, 26 & 27 and Quran 7:54 & 6:101).

Others connected the origin of Yoruba to migration from Mecca, arguing that the first form of migration into Nigeria took place around 2000 BC. Johnson (1921) also narrated that Oduduwa was the leader of the group that left Arabia in the Middle East while Lucas (1970) observed similarities between Egyptian religious practices and that of Yoruba. Akinjogbin, (1992) alluded to a modified myth that Ile-Ife was founded by the deity Obatala, but the power fell into the hand of Oduduwa. This generated rivalry between them, but Oduduwa eventually became the first king. Egu (2011) revealed that other descendants of Oduduwa began to spread to different locations. These included the Olowu of Owu, Onisabe of Sabe, Onipopo of Popo, Oba of Benin, Orangun of Ila, Oniketu of Ketu, and Alafin of Oyo. The third account of the origin of Yoruba linked it to persistent migration of various tribes into the west and south of Africa prior to AD 600 (Blier, 2012).

Egu (2011) documented that Oduduwa put in place a well-established limited monarchical system of government with a more or less centralized administrative system. Though the other communities that emerged from Ife were autonomous, they all looked to Ife as their primary place of origin. The king was assisted by the chiefs who were in charge of their respective ward but responsible to him. The King and the chiefs formed the highest executive, legislative, and judicial body. The same administrative system was replicated in other towns and villages. The security of the land was directly the

responsibility of the King (Oni of Ife) while the soldiers provided internal and external security and were used to raid other communities to expand their frontier. Other lower levels of administration were the compound and family units. For the security of the land, power and authority were decentralized. Cases that could not be resolved at the family level were referred to the compound head while cases from the compound that could not be resolved were referred to the village head and this arrangement was hierarchical in nature as the Oni was the final arbiter in the land. This arrangement provided for the security of the land and created room for political, economic, and social expansion, and inclusiveness.

It is worth noting that from 1000 to 1500 AD, Ife occupied a position of prominence in political, economic, religious, and social life, as noted by Akintoye (2010). It had established itself in the famous artistic tradition in African history, thereby exporting its political system to other kingdoms.

5.4.2 From Ife Kingdom to Oyo Empire

Oduduwa's youngest child, Oranyan was credited as the founder of the Oyo Empire after his exploit in Benin in the early 14th century. Oral history as presented by Akintoye (2010) revealed that during the push northward to expand the territory with his brother, a disagreement arose and he moved southward until he got to Bussa (present day Niger State, Nigeria) where he was welcomed and presented with a big snake with charms on the neck with the instruction that wherever the snake stopped for seven days, there, he should settle (Akintoye, 2010). The snake eventually stopped at Ajaka, that grew into the Oyo Empire, where he became the king.

The history of the old Oyo Empire revealed that the traditional ruler, the Alafin of Oyo, was indeed powerful. The Alafin was directly in charge of the security of his domains as well as peace keeping and peace building (Gyekye, 1997, p. 233 and Afigbo, 1972). The Alafin ran an effective and efficient administrative system, with a strong army and cabinet ministers through whom relative peace was achieved as well as noticeable economic growth and development. The Alafin shared his sovereignty with the Oyo Mesi whose membership consisted of aristocratic seven chiefs from the seven wards in Oyo city. Oyo Mesi members were the Kingmakers and constituted the executive, legislative, and judicial arms of government. Members of the Oyo Mesi included the *Agba Akin*, *Samu*, *Alapini*, *Akiniku*, *Laguna*, *Asipa*, and *Bashorun* (Johnson, 1921). The *Bashorun* was the Prime Minister while *Agba Akin* was the Priest of *Oranmiyan*. The *Alapini* was the High Priest of *Egungun* (masquerade, that is associated with the reincarnation of their dead hero and the immortality of the soul) and *Samu* was the sacrificial master while *Asipa* was the mayor of the city. The *Laguna* was the roving ambassador and *Akiniku* was the chief of defence staff. The separation of power in the empire was an impetus for effective administrative system and enthronement of peace and stability (The Tribune, 2021).

The Alafin was a very powerful ruler but in practice, he was subjected to the control of Oyo Mesi that created a form of checks and balances. This, the Late Alafin of Oyo, Oba Adeyemi, in a KII, described as the beauty of the Yoruba indigenous administrative system. The traditional system of administration ensured nobody was above the law as there were checks and balances even for Alafin as demonstrated in modern rule of law. The legal officers include members of the *Ogboni* secret societies that were charged with the protection of the land. It is imperative to note as observed by Johnson (1921) that the Oyo Mesi were subject also to the control of the *Ogboni* cult members. The head of the military was the *Are Ona Kakanfo*. The sub war heads were *Eso*, seventy in number, nominated by the Oyo Mesi and confirmed by the Alafin. The arrangement for the security of the land was an inclusive, bottom-top approach while the women played a significant role as peace makers and builders, as demonstrated by Alao (2012). The *iyalode* (leader of the women) was also a palace chief.

Crimes were either classified as social or spiritual (Udigwoman, 1995, pp. 64–5). The common social crimes included theft, murder, fornication, adultery, fighting, lying, and rudeness to elders. The spiritual crimes were those of individual relationship with the gods and goddesses and their shrines. Olaoba, (2002, p. 83) notes that “obviously, no offender escapes punishment in Yoruba society while this is true, no one was made a scapegoat for the offence he has not committed; doing so amounts to incurring the wrath of the ancestors.” This position was echoed during the KIIs with the late Alafin of Oyo, Professors Onakoya, Haliso, Barrister (Professor) Olarewaju, and Professor Aluko. In addition, it was very rare for any innocent person to be punished due to rigorous investigation that was devoid of sentiment. The prevalence of relative peace in the pre-colonial era was achieved as the punishment/discipline the offender received was different from the experience of the contemporary era, as demonstrated by Aina and Alao (2018) and Olaoba (2002). Punishment/discipline served – and still serves – six major purposes which are strange to the modern judicial system. The purposes were directed towards retribution, reformation, deterrence, compensatory, reconciliatory, and the reintegration of the agents of violence back into the society. The Alafin had the final saying on capital punishment and the norm was that there would be no befitting burial for the agent of violence (Johnson, 1921; Akintoye, 2010).

The empire flourished between 1300–1896 AD while it reached its apogee between 1600 and 1896. The map of Oyo Empire at its peak is shown as Figure 5.1. Oyo Empire started declining according to Franz (2009), among others, during the reign of Alafin Abiodun. The army was neglected and his attention was focused on commerce and displays of wealth, which allowed the sub regions to break away, such as Dahomey, the present Benin Republic. Professors Haliso and Abiodun in KII further noted that the subjects could not whole heartedly trust the Alafin of Oyo because of his deep involvement in the slave trade for financial gain which was seen as a wicked scheme from

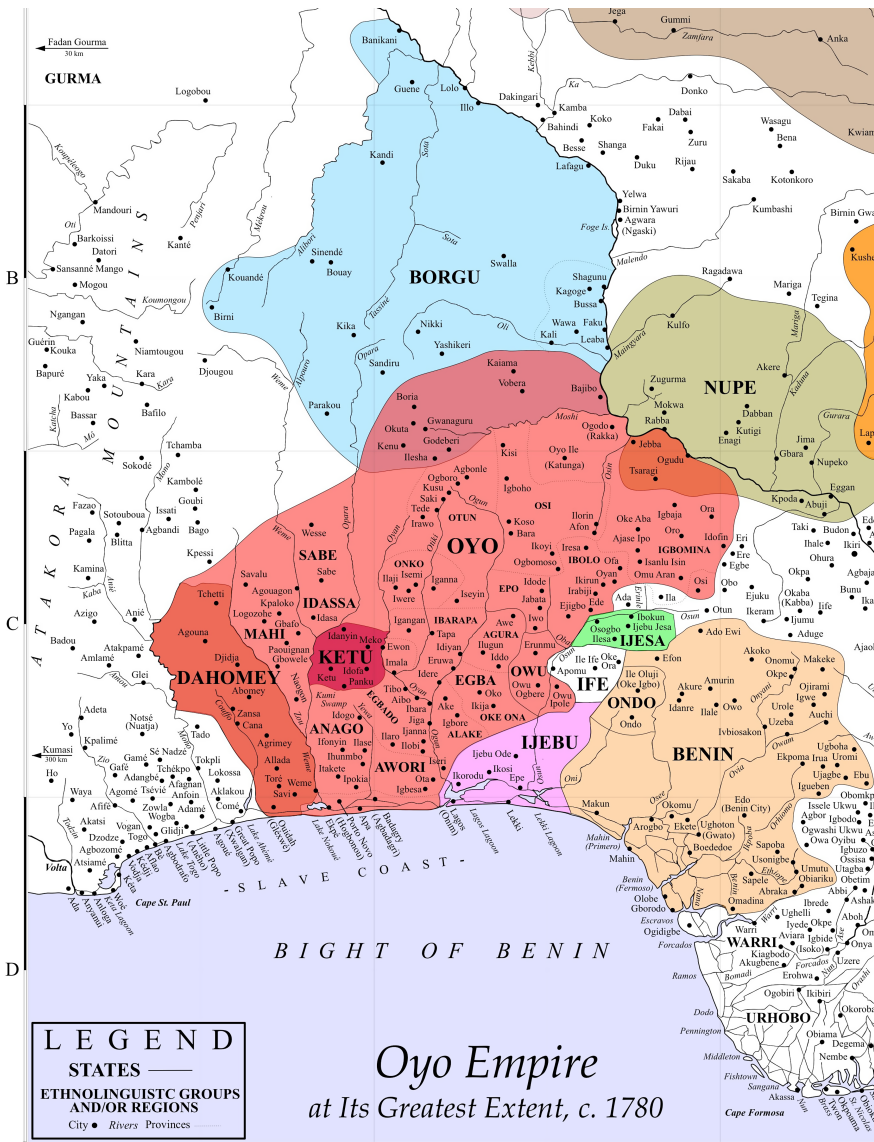


Figure 5.1 Oyo Empire at Its Peak in c. 1780.

Source: Lovejoy (2021), p. 445.

the person that they looked unto for security. The final blow came at the end of the eighteenth century when there were rivalries between Alafin Aole and the military commander Afonja while other territories rebellion became prominent (Franz, 2009; Johnson, 1921).

5.4.3 Traditional Rulers and Security in Yoruba Land in Colonial Era

The need to provide raw materials for industrial development beyond the earlier Christian missionary efforts attracted the attention of the European countries in Africa. Though King Henry of Portugal in 1431 commissioned the exploration of Africa, the Royal Niger Company could be given the credit for acquiring the territory that eventually became the British Colonies. As a result, in 1851, the Decomo of Lagos was compelled to sign a treaty that transferred all the land in Lagos to the British Crown. The choice of the British government to patronize the traditional rulers was based on their home experience that the Queen or Kings has influence on governance, the lack of funds and personnel to run direct administration, and the success of indirect rule in India and Northern Protectorate (Akintoye, 2010). Aluko (2002) contends that it was the effective political administration that was in place in Nigeria that prompted the British colonialists to make use of these political structures referred to as Indirect Rule. This explains why the Late Alafin of Oyo (Oba Adeyemi) in a KII noted that contrary to the claim that the colonizer did not meet a functional administrative system, there was in existence a fully functional and organized parliamentary system of government which started long in Yorubaland before it was adopted in Britain.

The colonial masters, according to Johnson (1991), without consideration for the development that took place after the decline of Oyo Empire and the Yoruba wars where Ibadan became more prominent and powerful than Oyo, appointed the Alafin of Oyo as the paramount leader. This development led to misgivings among the Obas and warlords in the rest of Yoruba land. Ibadan protested, as well as other Yoruba Obas as narrated by Adeyemi (2014). Hence, the colonialists created an autonomous province in Ibadan in 1839. However, in 1886, the Alafin of Oyo (Adeyemi I Alowolodu 1876–1905) eventually signed a general peace treaty that ended the prolonged wars in Yorubaland as narrated by the late Alafin of Oyo in a KII in his palace. This led the British to formally become involved in Yoruba land while another treaty signed in 1888 by Alafin of Oyo placed the whole South-West under the British Protectorate (Akintoye, 2021). A section of the Empire, Dahomey (Benin Republic) fell into the hand of the French Government while Heligoland (now Togo) was initially occupied by the Germans and the rest under the British Government.

To assume full control over the land, the colonial administration directed the traditional rulers to disband their armed forces with the view of reducing their influence. Afolayan (1993) noted that some key warlords who disobeyed the order like Ogedengbe of Ilesha, Aduloju, Fabunmi, and Oso Akereke were arrested and were taken to Oke Imo, near Ilesha. These onslaughts weakened the traditional rulers and forced them to cooperate with the new stronger power. Their war power was effectively eliminated by 1900. As a result, the final authority over the security of the territory shifted to the colonial authorities while powers over local communities were transferred to the Obas, but

they were put in check and at times humiliated to show that they were under superior authority.

For instance, the late Alafin of Oyo, Oba Adeyemi, in a KII of 7 November 2021 narrated that, to demonstrate that a new order was in place, Captain Bower, the Resident of Ibadan, visited Oyo in 1895 and complained that two palace officials disrespected him. The Alafin at the time apologized and punished the offenders but Bower was not satisfied. He requested that the officers should be released to him, but the Alafin refused. Bower compelled the Alafin to prostrate and humiliated him before his subjects. Still not satisfied, early on 12 November 1895, Oyo was bombarded by Bower's soldiers and many people were killed, houses razed, the palace destroyed, and the Alafin sustained injury. This became a warning signal to other Yoruba Obas (Akintoye, 2010).

Professor Aluko (KII 10) and Professor Oni and Dr. Popoola in the KII conducted research that revealed the power of the colonialist over the traditional rulers. For instance, the attempt by the people of Ado Ekiti to remove their Oba, Ewi Aladesanmi II, in 1942 failed. It failed because the panel set up by the colonial officials found him guilty of breaching the tradition, but not British rule. He was reinstated after he had been declared dead and funeral rites performed by the community.

The KII with the late Alaafin of Oyo, Alake of Abeokuta, Are Alabi, the former Ogun State Commissioner for Local Government, and Chieftaincy Affairs and Emeritus Professor Michael Omolewa further confirmed the weakening of the Obas over the administration of the localities and security matter. They revealed that the authorities of the Obas on peace-making, conflict resolution, and security were checkmated as a result of the colonial administration introduction of a constabulary police and court system. The traditional rulers still retained their respect and authority in dealing with security issues at local levels and were consulted from time to time on local policy directives.

As part of the changes in the administrative system, there were British District Officers, whose districts were grouped into a province under the control of the Resident. Eighteen Provinces were constituted to form the Western Province under a Lieutenant Governor based in Ibadan while the administration of Lagos colony was different (see Table 5.2). To ensure effective security coverage of the territory, the British introduced the formal court system: the District Court was superior to Native Court, while the colonial government had the final authority on who was to be appointed as king – and so they also had the power of removal.

However, the pressure to accommodate the elites and the traditional rulers into the administrative system led to the creation of the House of Chiefs in the 1954 Constitution and the elites were in the main legislative House. Blench (2006) was right in observing that:

From the point of view of the colonial authorities, supporting traditional governance was a convenient and cheap method of both maintain order

Table 5.2 Provinces, Divisions and Native Authorities in Western Nigeria in 1945

<i>Provinces</i>	<i>Divisions</i>	<i>Native Authorities</i>
Abeokuta	Egba	Abeokuta
Abeokuta	Egbado	5
Benin	Asaba	23
Benin	Benin	Benin
Benin	Ishan	11
Benin	Kukuruku, later Afenmai	36
Ijebu	Ijebu-Ode	Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-Remo
Ondo	Ekiti	16
Ondo	Okitipupa	5
Ondo	Ondo	3
Ondo	Owo	6
Oyo	Ibadan	Ibadan
Oyo	Ife-Ilesha	Ife, Ilesha
Oyo	Oyo	Oyo
Warri	Aboh	3
Warri	Warri	3
Warri	Urhobo	28
Warri	Western Ijaw	13
Total	18	156

Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20050429123438/http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Rotunda/2209/Western_Nigeria.html, accessed 17 March 2023

and collecting tax with limited resources. Nonetheless, it remained very clear where the ultimate power lay; leaders who demonstrated any significant independence of mind were rapidly hustled into exile and replaced with more pliant substitutes.

However, the contention between the educated political elites manifested on 22 November 1953 when Bode Thomas, a lawyer and politician, was made the chairman of Oyo Divisional Council – an office he took over from the Alafin. On entering the hall for the Council meeting, only Alafin did not stand up to receive him while Bode Thomas yelled to him. Out of annoyance, the Alafin placed a curse on him that he should continue to bark like dog. On getting home, Bode Thomas was said to have barked throughout the night and died in the early morning.

The new dispensation under the colonial regime, to an extent, reduced the influence of the traditional rulers in governance, by positioning them under the British colonial government. Nevertheless, even if the colonial regime was autocratic and repressive, the traditional rulers played a meaningful role within their domains and contributed significantly to the peace and security of the region.

5.5 Traditional Rulers in the South-West and the Growing Insecurity Since 1960

Since independence in 1960, the security architecture in Nigeria has to a large extent been based on reliance on the military and paramilitary establishments. Prominent security challenges have included the civil war of 1967–1970, uncountable instances of ethno-religious violence, armed robbery, cultism, herdsman-farmers' crisis, and terrorism that have claimed thousands of lives and destruction of properties. The United States Institute of Peace (2021) aptly notes that "Nigeria is a bellwether for the continent. A weakening economy, rising insecurity and violent conflicts threaten progress made in its democratic development amid deepening distrust in government and institutions."

The controversy between the new elites and the traditional rulers before independence continued into the post-independence period. This explains why Loveridge (1959, pp. 201–3) stated the need to cut the traditional rulers to size at the African Heads of State Conference in Accra in December 1958. He noted that the institutions "do not conform to the demands of democracy." The same position resonated from Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the aforementioned conference. As a result, no official provision was made to incorporate the traditional rulers into the new administrative/security arrangement beyond the respect accorded them by their willing subjects and their roles in an advisory capacity (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1976; 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

The creation of an additional region in 1963 by splitting Western region into two and subsequent creation of states by the military governments led to the old Western Region becoming eight states inclusive of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti, and Osun that are now in South-West region, while Edo and Delta states were merged into the Southern region. Each state has its own Council of Oba, where there was multiplicity of traditional rulers and titles, some invented by the government based on political expediency and others in line with cultural norms.

Suffice to note that traditional rulers have become glorified civil servants as the governments approve the office, the occupants, and the emolument. Hence, it has been a situation of responsibility without sufficient authority. Subsequent military governments in Nigeria followed the path of the civil regimes but for the sake of legitimacy and to have direct access to the masses, they created the impression of tolerating the traditional rulers. In effect, the traditional rulers have become a commodity that could be used to satisfy the demands of the government/political gladiators and put into effective use in situation of crisis when the government might be helpless and dispose at will. This position was buttressed by not less than 70 per cent of the interviewees while Professor Michael Oni, Professor Onakoya, the former Secretary to Ogun State Government, Professor Jumoke Haliso, and Professor Jones Aluko, the former Permanent Secretary of the defunct Oyo State Government

also observed the failure of many traditional rulers to abide by the traditional norms and values, that to a large extent accounted for the gradual erosion of their long cherished authority. They equally noted that greed and unscrupulous lobbying of the politicians to become traditional rulers or for grading contrary to established culture and tradition significantly wiped out their goodwill.

The late Alafin of Oyo and the Alake of Abeokuta in the KIIs added that the lack of constitutional powers for the institution added to the challenges of insecurity in the South-West region. He specifically noted that cases of insecurity and conflict were in some instances best handled by the traditional rulers within their localities because of their closeness to the people and the respect their subjects still accorded them. He referred to the case of school children who were kidnapped from Lagos and were found tied to trees in the forest by the hunters very close to Oyo in late October 2021. He said the hunters first came to him to report the incident and brought the children to his palace before he handed them over to the police.

The late Alafin of Oyo, Alake of Abeokuta, and the immediate past Olubadan of Ibadan in the KIIs conducted lamented on the relegation of the traditional rulers and noted that the state government often used them as the last resort whenever there was a security crisis. The late Olubadan specifically noted that:

They were not only relegated but the government is now taking over their customary or traditional roles. They were distorting history by selfishly creating chieftaincy title and altering ascendancy to the throne which led to his face off with Governor Ajimobi and my decision and those of many illustrious Ibadan people to challenge him in court.

The Alake of Abeokuta observed that:

Any traditional ruler who is not prepared for disgrace must respect himself. The political arrangement does not confer power on the traditional rulers. My subjects that must prostrate before me on given political position will come and be issuing directive. The security situation has deteriorated because the traditional rulers who know the nooks and crannies of their territories are only placed on advisory capacity and has made their subjects to often disregard them.

Elumoye and Orizu (2021) reporting for This Day revealed the displeasure of the traditional rulers on their relegation when Etsu Patigi, representing the Sultan of Sokoto on behalf of the National Traditional Council of Nigeria before the National Assembly Joint Committee on the review of the 1999 Constitution, noted that:

Constitutionally and protocol wise, traditional rulers are relegated to the background. However, the colonialists needed them to consolidate their indirect rule, the politicians needed them to stabilize their governments and the military needed them to gain acceptance. All the respective levels of governments needed them to maintain peace and security; as traditional rulers were always at hand to douse conflict that the police, the military and the government officials could not contain.

Records abound of traditional rulers that were unilaterally deposed by governments in the South-West. The list included the former Deji of Akure, Oba Oluwadare Adesina who fought his wife in public and the Olowo of Owo, Oba Olateru Olagbegi on political issues (Orjinmo, 2010) and Asadu, 2010). Also, in Ogun State, Governor Dapo Abiodun downgraded 75 Obas promoted from the position of Baale by his predecessor, Governor Ibikunle Amosun (Oludare, 2023). The implication on security is that when the positions of those who are supposed to be stakeholders in security matters are threatened by politics, little can then be expected of them.

However, the government should also consider the extent to which traditional norms and values have been perverted by traditional rulers for political recognition, upgrading of status, financial gains, greed, and failure to align with the interest of their communities. For instance, Professors Aluko and Haliso in the KII noted that the modern-day Oba were fond of debasing their cherished offices by attending night parties, having inappropriate relations with young girls, snatching the wives of their subjects, and openly supporting political parties that negate their moral codes. They noted that the Oluwo of Iwo, Oba Abdulrasheed Akanbi was publicly fighting with another monarch Oba Akinropo Agbowu Ogbaagba in February 2010. These attitudes were gradually eroding the confidence of the government and their subjects in the institution and their ability to effectively become agents of security and peace. Adeshina, in Orjinmo (2010), opined that “by pledging to respect the culture by protecting, preserving and promoting traditional values the Nigerian constitution recognizes the important role of traditional leaders.”

It is also ironic that the traditional rulers who ought to be the agent of security are themselves not secure. Many of the traditional rulers have been kidnapped and their palaces consumed by violence and violated even by their subjects (Akinfenwa and Akingboye, 2016). Though nearly all instances of insecurity were blamed on Boko Haram, armed banditry, or herdsmen with accusing fingers pointed to the Fulani in the South-West, there was also evidence that many of the criminals caught were natives from the South-West, as this is a manifestation of general instability in Nigeria (Adebayo and Adebisi, 2019). In response to the general security challenges, the late Alafin of Oyo, Oba Lamida Adeyemi, as reported by Oluwole (2019), stated his concerns in his letter to the President, Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2019 that:

I am worried about the security situation in the country, especially in the South-west geo-political zone, nay the entire Yoruba-speaking area of the country including Kwara, Kogi and Edo states," his letter read. "This has to do with the incessant and increasing menace of Fulani herdsmen that have laid siege in almost all the highways of Yoruba land.

As a reaction to the letter from the Alafin of Oyo and the public outcry, the Nigerian President, General Muhammad Buari (Rtd) on 31 July 2019 convened a meeting of traditional rulers in the South-West where he outlined various security measures, including CCTV coverage of major roads and intensified intelligence gathering (Olufemi, 2019).

Within the South-West, the growing insecurity also led to a high-level meeting of the state governors and the traditional rulers. It was triggered in particular when His Excellency, the Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, was waylaid by armed bandits (Orjinmo, 2020). From this meeting of 4 February 2019, the idea of forming a regional security emerged. Ajayi (2021) reported Oba Oyediran requesting all traditionalists to mobilize their traditional resources to fight the invaders. Hence, the head of Soludero Hunters' Association, Oba Nureni Ajijola Anabi noted that they would not rely on guns to function but the use of their ancestors' power to deal with the enemies of peace. To ensure that the members of the group would not engage in illegality, Ajijola Anabi said that "all of us in hunters' association will swear by god of iron" so that no one would embark on illegal activities."

The fact that the Nigerian Police has been overwhelmed with multi-dimensional security challenges and the military has been engaged in not less than thirty-four out of the thirty-six states of the federation reflected on the stress that the security agencies were undergoing. This led the former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Lucky Irabor to observe that "the military operations in the 36 states of the federation have constituted a drain on the finances of the military" (ARISENEWS, Nov.2, 2021). The prevailing security challenges informed the governors in the South-West to formally establish Operation *Amotekun* in Ibadan in June 2019 otherwise known as Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN) (Mou, 2023)). In order to legalize their operations, it was decided that each of the States should enact laws to back it up. The members of the *Amotekun* were recruited through the traditional rulers due to their knowledge of the integrity of the recruits. In a swift reaction, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared the *Amotekun* as illegal stating that there was no extant law to back up the existence as noted by the Attorney General of the Federation in the Vanguard of 9 January 2020 that:

The setting up of the paramilitary organization called "*Amotekun*" is illegal and runs contrary to the provisions of the Nigerian law. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) has established the Army, Navy and Airforce, including the Police and other numerous paramilitary organisations for the purpose of the defence of Nigeria.

In a swift reaction, the commander of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Oyo State command, Olajide Sunday Ayodele remarked that:

The Amotekun initiative is for peace. It will bring more peace to the people of our region. There cannot be any conflict between the conventional security agencies and our men because we have been working together over the years. We have a very good relationship with other security agencies in the country. Therefore, I can assure you that there won't be conflict.

Aliyu et al. (2020)

No one is left in doubt that with the support of the South-West Governors and the traditional rulers, the security outfit has remained and recorded some landmark achievements and has been collaborating with other formal security outfits to improve the security situation in the region, though there were instances of abuse by members. A case to keep in mind was the report by the Daily Trust (2020) that *Amotekun* killed eleven people in three weeks. But despite these cases of abuse, there is growing evidence that even without constitutional provision for the traditional rulers in Nigeria, in the face of daunting security challenges, they have been contributing their quota to the security of the region as manifested in the formation of Amotekun and the reliance on them by the governments in crises situation.

Overall, this research has confirmed that the post-colonial governments in Nigeria have not been able to create a constitutional role for the traditional rulers in a modern administrative system – despite the traditional rulers' closeness to their subjects, and their ability to settle conflicts and provide a platform for smooth engagement with the government and their people. All the interviewees except three agreed to this position, while those not favourably disposed to the traditional rulers blamed them partly for the treatment received from political class. The issues of greed and lobbying of politicians to become traditional rulers, contrary to established culture and tradition, were also cited in the KII's with Professor Michael Oni and Professor Aluko while Dr. Victor Adesiyon lamented on the bastardization of the institution by the emergence of traditional rulers enthroned politically. This has made the position to be that of patronage rather than respect for long cherished culture (Aina and Alao, 2018).

The government has also significantly downplayed the traditional rulers' involvement in security provisioning, even though there is glaring state failure in that regard. The government's use of traditional rulers for their political gains and their influence in security matters dwindled because internal security in the contemporary era is the responsibility of the Nigerian Police. The court system only minimized their capacity to adjudicate in conflict resolution beyond the respect conferred on the traditional rulers by their subjects. In addition, greed and disrespect for cherished tradition as well as blind support for governments to retain power further whittled down their relevance in their

domains. The perverted process of emergence of traditional rulers reduced their respect and influence in conflict resolution and security matters.

One must note that it might be very difficult to adhere largely to cultural norms and values to ensure security in the South-West in the modern dispensation, but in spite of the bastardization of the institution, many individuals still respect the traditional rulers and prefer their intervention in conflict resolution over relying only on the court system as succinctly demonstrated by the late Alafin of Oyo during the KII. The study therefore argues that because of the closeness to their subjects and the propensity to mobilize the people to support government programs and their capacity to contribute meaningfully to peaceful coexistence within their domains, the traditional rulers should be seen as essential partners with government in security matters and their roles should be strengthened.

5.6 Conclusions

This essay suggests that in spite of the diminishing relevance of traditional rulers in South-West Nigeria, they are still found to have important potential to guarantee peace and security in the region. It further concludes that the diminishing authority has been a response to transformation of the governmental system that has created an elusive gap in security management. The lack of constitutional roles in security matters is partly because of the perceived belief of the political elites that the arrangement is not compatible with a modern administrative system. In addition, the study concluded that the proliferation of traditional titles renders the office weak and the perceived dwindling level of integrity of traditional rulers was partly an effect of jettisoning the cultural norms and values of the society.

5.7 Recommendations

The paper recommends that:

1. State governments should find ways of strengthening traditional rulers, bearing in mind that because of their closeness to the grassroots, they can be used to complement other security agencies to ensure security and peaceful coexistence.
2. The government should cease from grading the traditional rulers as each knows his sphere of influence since it has become the instrument of politicization and victimization.
3. The traditional rulers should be provided with constitutional responsibility in the affairs of their Local Government Area beyond their current advisory role.
4. The government should minimize the politicization of traditional titles with respect to appointment, grading, and removal as these

have the tendency to cause more confusion in the society while the established customs should be upheld.

5. The traditional rulers should respect the office they occupy rather than ridiculing it for financial gains.
6. There is need to train the traditional rulers constantly and regularly in conflict management, such as in mediation and arbitration, to enhance their skills and expertise to meet the demands their office makes of them.
7. The lack of unity of purpose between the federal government and state governments on the approach adopted to fight insecurity was counterproductive, while the government should agree on the modus operandi of informal security outfits to minimize confusion and collaborate to achieve greater results. This calls for meaningful collaboration between the state and federal governments as well as among the security agencies to ensure the security of the region and the nation at large.

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6 The Changing Roles of Traditional Authorities in Conflict, Security, and Peacebuilding in Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils in Bauchi State

Ahmed Salisu Garba

6.1 Introduction

Nigeria is no exception to the long-standing significance of traditional authorities in African communities in terms of security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution (Logan, 2013; Ntayi et al., 2015). Emirs, chiefs, and other local leaders who have traditional authority have historically been crucial in resolving disputes and preserving security in their individual communities (Ubink, 2008; Albert, 2005). Despite the establishment of contemporary governmental institutions and the increasing complexity of conflicts in Nigeria, traditional authority still has a significant effect (Nwolise, 2007).

The Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils are found in the Nigerian state of Bauchi, which is in the north-east region of the country. The choice of the two emirates for this study was informed by the fact that first, Misau was once under Katagum until 1907 when it gained independence. The two emirates have a history of working together such as the way they joined forces to crush Mahdism in their territories in pre-colonial times even though there are mild hostilities between them such as the complaint of Katagum against Emir Sale of Misau for waging war against Muslims in the name of Jihad. On top of these reasons is the unique events that happened in the two emirates. In Misau, it was a crisis of confidence between some district heads under the emirate and their subjects. In Katagum, it was the story of allegiance of the people to the emirate. It will be interesting to examine and understand the uniqueness of these events.

Due to many circumstances, including political, social, and economic advancements, these emirates, like many others around the nation, have seen a number of changes in their roles and responsibilities (Owusu-Ansah, 2013). The increase in rural banditry and kidnapping for ransom throughout Nigeria's north, along with allegations that some traditional authorities colluded in the commission of these crimes at the expense of their constituents, serve as the first illustration of this claim.

Despite these negative effects on the function of traditional authority, scholars have observed their involvement in the management of many different types of conflicts, such as land disputes, chieftaincy succession,

and intercommunal conflicts (Ubink & Van Rooij, 2011; Odock, 2016). Additionally, they have received recognition for their efforts to provide local security, frequently filling in for state security institutions that have fallen short (Baker, 2009; Owusu-Ansah, 2013). Furthermore, they have been instrumental in fostering peace by participating in mediation, atonement, and the restoration of social harmony in their local communities (Ntayi et al., 2015; Baines & Rosenoff Gauvin, 2014).

In spite of their historical and contemporary significance in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding, especially as it relates to Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils in Bauchi State, there is little empirical research on the institution, which necessitates a re-examination of their roles in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding within these contexts.

By exploring how traditional authorities' roles in security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution have changed through time and the variables that have influenced these changes, this study aims to close this knowledge gap. By doing this, the study hopes to offer a comprehensive understanding of the functions and contributions made by traditional leaders in preserving stability and security within the framework of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils. The study's specific goals are to, firstly, look into the historical contributions of traditional leaders to security, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils. The second step is to examine the factors that have contributed to the changing roles of traditional authorities in these domains. The third step is to assess how these modifications affect traditional authorities' efforts to promote peacebuilding, security, and conflict resolution in Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils. The fourth is to make policy recommendations targeted at increasing the roles and efficiency of conventional authorities in security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution.

To accomplish these goals, the study employs a qualitative research approach, using original information collected from a range of key informants, including traditional authorities, government representatives, civil society actors, and community members to analyse the following questions: what have been the traditional leaders' historical roles in Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils' efforts to maintain security, settle disputes, and foster peace? What factors have contributed to the changing roles of traditional authorities in these domains? How have these modifications affected the work of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils to maintain security, resolve disputes, and foster peace? What policy suggestions may be made to improve the roles and efficacy of traditional authorities in resolving disputes, maintaining security, and fostering peace?

The importance of this study rests in its potential contributions to both academic and practical fields, particularly with regard to the functions of traditional leaders in security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution within the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils. First, the study intends to address a gap in the existing literature on traditional authority in Nigeria, especially in the

northeastern region, in terms of academic contributions. The study will offer helpful insights into the dynamics, difficulties, and possibilities encountered by these players in a fast-changing social, political, and economic context by exploring the shifting responsibilities of traditional authorities in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding. By applying these frameworks to the setting of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils, the study will also advance the theoretical understanding of hybridity theory and social capital theory, adding to the body of knowledge already known in this area.

This study concludes that a variety of factors, including socio-political trends, state policies, and local dynamics, have moulded the shifting responsibilities of traditional authority in Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils in terms of conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding. These changes might have an impact on the capacity of traditional leaders to maintain peace and security in their communities. The study intends to provide policy recommendations that can improve the responsibilities and efficacy of traditional authorities in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding by analysing these alterations and their underlying causes.

6.2 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

6.2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study intends to give readers a clear understanding of the fundamental ideas surrounding the evolving responsibilities of traditional authorities in security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Within the context of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils, the following terms will be defined and discussed:

1. *Traditional authorities*: According to Ubink (2008), traditional authorities are local leaders who obtain their authority from customs, traditions, and unofficial institutions. Emirs, chiefs, and village chiefs are examples of traditional leaders in Nigeria who have authority and sway over their own communities (Nwolise, 2007).
2. *Conflict resolution*: According to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2011), conflict resolution is the process of resolving disputes, disagreements, or conflicts between parties. Conflict resolution in the setting of traditional authorities may entail the employment of informal channels, indigenous knowledge, and customary practices to resolve conflicts (Ubink & Van Rooij, 2011).
3. *Security*: According to Busan, Waever, and De Wilde (1998), security refers to the safeguarding of people, communities, and institutions against harm, such as physical violence, crime, and other dangers to their well-being. By upholding law and order, working with state

security services, and fostering social cohesiveness within their communities, traditional authorities may contribute to security (Baker, 2009).

4. *Peacebuilding*: According to Lederach (1997), peacebuilding is the process of addressing the underlying causes of conflicts, fostering reconciliation, and setting up the framework for long-term stability and progress. By mediating disputes, facilitating communication between disputing parties, and promoting social harmony and cohesiveness, traditional authority may contribute to peacebuilding (Ntayi et al., 2015).

6.2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Traditional Conflict Resolution Theory (TCRT), the Human Security Theory (HST), the Hybridity Theory, and the Social Capital Theories are four theories that can be utilized to frame this research issue.

Theorizing about traditional conflict resolution (TCRT)

According to the Traditional Conflict Resolution Theory, traditional leaders who have a thorough awareness of the norms, values, and traditions of their communities may resolve disputes amicably by using traditional techniques including mediation, negotiation, and arbitration (Nwolise, 2007). This theory places a strong emphasis on the role that cultural background plays in resolving disputes as well as the function of traditional authority in preserving social order and stability in their communities. The TCRT can be used to evaluate how traditional authorities in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils use native conflict resolution techniques and change their strategies in response to new situations.

Human Security Theory (HST)

According to the Human Security Theory, the state is not the primary concern for security but rather the safety of individuals and communities (Andersen-Rodgers & Crawford, 2018) 1994). In order to advance lasting peace and development, it highlights the necessity of addressing the primary causes of insecurity, such as poverty, social injustice, and political marginalization. The HST takes into account how different players, such as traditional authorities, might contribute to the safety and wellbeing of people and communities. The study of traditional authority in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils' contributions to resolving the causes of insecurity and promoting human security within their communities will be made possible by applying the Human Security Theory to this research issue. Additionally, it will aid in examining the degree to which traditional authorities cooperate with other

parties, including governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations, in order to advance security and peacebuilding initiatives.

Hybridity Theory

In many post-colonial nations, traditional and modern state institutions coexist, interact, and have complicated influences on one another, according to the hybridity theory (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009). According to the hybridity hypothesis, traditional authority and state institutions frequently cooperate, compete, or complement one another in the context of resolving disputes, maintaining security, and promoting peace (Mac Ginty, 2011). By examining how traditional leaders' interactions with state institutions, such as the police, courts, and government organizations, have shaped their involvement in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding, the hybridity theory can aid in explaining how traditional leaders' roles in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils have changed over time. This strategy can also shed light on the elements that have helped conventional authority survive political, social, and economic change.

Social Capital Theory

According to Putnam (1995), social capital theory emphasizes the value of social networks, norms, and trust in promoting cooperation and group action within communities. By encouraging mutual trust, support, and reciprocity among community members, traditional authority, in accordance with this view, can play a significant role in creating and preserving social capital (Woolcock, 1998). Traditional leaders in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils can support security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution by employing their social networks, influence, and knowledge of local norms and customs. Social capital theory can provide some insight here. By examining traditional authorities' roles as significant sources of social capital, this study can investigate how they support the maintenance of social order and community cohesiveness by encouraging cooperation, communication, and reconciliation between disputing parties.

Therefore, by combining the Traditional Conflict Resolution Theory, the Human Security Theory, the Hybridity Theory, and the Social Capital Theory, this research will be able to analyse the changing roles of traditional authorities in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils, their contributions to conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding efforts, as well as the factors causing these changes and the challenges they face. This will help in understanding the factors that support traditional authorities' adaptation and effectiveness in the face of social, political, and economic changes, as well as the challenges and possibilities they run into when attempting to maintain peace and security in their communities.

6.3 Literature Review

With a focus on the particular context of Katagum and Misau Emirates in Nigeria, this literature review will provide an overview of the existing studies on the roles of traditional authority in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding. There will be four primary sections to the review.

6.3.1 The Role of Traditional Authorities in Conflict Resolution

In order to settle disputes and uphold social order, traditional authorities have historically played a significant role in conflict resolution across Africa (Boege, 2006). They do this by utilizing their extensive knowledge of regional customs, social norms, and informal institutions. In Nigeria, traditional authorities, including emirs, chiefs, and village chiefs, are frequently involved in resolving disputes over inheritance, land, and other matters that affect their communities (Nwolise, 2007). In contrast to formal state institutions, these authorities frequently use customary practices, indigenous knowledge, and informal procedures that may be more accessible, culturally suitable, and regarded with trust by local people (Ubink & Van Rooij, 2011).

According to a number of studies (Zartman, 2000), traditional conflict resolution techniques have the ability to facilitate reconciliation, mend relationships, and advance social peace. Other academics, however, have expressed worries about the potential negative effects of depending on traditional authority, such as their propensity to exacerbate existing power disparities, sustain gender biases, and impair human rights (Hellum & Derman, 2004).

The function of traditional authorities in resolving disputes is still not well understood, particularly in the context of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils. By analysing the methods used by these authorities to resolve conflicts, the variables that affect their effectiveness, and the effects of their involvement on the region's larger dynamics of conflict, security, and peacebuilding, this research will help close this knowledge gap.

6.3.2 Traditional Authorities and Peacebuilding Initiatives

In recent years, there has been a growing understanding of the potential role that traditional authority could play in peacebuilding attempts, particularly in post-conflict environments (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2011). Traditional leaders can take part in a range of peacebuilding initiatives, including mediating intercommunal conflicts, encouraging societal cohesion and reconciliation, and addressing the root causes of violence and conflict (Richmond, 2016; Boege et al., 2009). Their reputation, local knowledge, and social capital typically serve as the basis for their engagement in peacebuilding initiatives since these factors enable them to mobilize support, foster trust, and encourage cooperation among several stakeholders (Botes, 2003).

Traditional authority does play a role in peacebuilding, but there are some challenges and limitations. They may be implicated in the disputes they are attempting to settle, or they may be unable to address the numerous structural and systemic issues that underpin violence and instability, according to some academics. In addition, the involvement of traditional authorities in peacebuilding may raise issues of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability, particularly in light of the presence of underrepresented groups like women, young people, and minority populations (Murithi, 2006).

Particularly in the context of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils, the role of traditional leaders in efforts to promote peace is still not entirely recognized. This research will contribute to filling this knowledge gap by analysing the means through which these authorities engage in peacebuilding initiatives, the factors that affect their success, and the implications of their involvement for the region's larger dynamics of conflict, security, and peacebuilding.

6.3.3 The Socio-Political Context of Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils

Bauchi State in northeastern Nigeria is the home of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils. Conflict and insecurity have touched this area in a variety of ways, from tribal disputes over land and resources to Boko Haram's and other extremist groups' ongoing insurgency (Olojo, 2013). The genesis and longevity of these conflicts have been influenced by the intricate interplay of historical, socioeconomic, political, and environmental elements, offering considerable difficulties to state institutions, civil society groups, and local communities (Adesoji, 2010). The complexity of conflicts, including the rise of insurgency, organized crime, and resource-based disputes, has put traditional authorities' ability to handle conflicts using only indigenous techniques to the test (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2011). To solve security issues and advance peacebuilding, it has become necessary to investigate novel ways and work with different stakeholders, including governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, and civil society groups.

Traditional leaders in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils have been forced to modify their roles and approaches in light of this in order to maintain social order, foster peace and stability within their communities, and respond to the changing security environment (Olonisakin & Okech, 2011). However, there is still a lack of adequate documentation and analysis of the precise ways in which these authorities have addressed these issues, as well as the variables that have influenced their involvement in security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. By offering a thorough analysis of the socio-political environment of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils and its implications for the evolving responsibilities of traditional authority in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding, this research helps to close this gap. The study provides useful insights into the difficulties and opportunities faced by traditional authorities, as well as any lessons that might be applicable to other

situations in Nigeria and abroad, by shedding light on the dynamics at play in this particular setting.

6.4 Research Methodology

This section provides an overview of the research methodology used to examine how traditional leaders have changed their roles in resolving disputes, maintaining security, and promoting peace in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils of Bauchi State.

6.4.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative research approach, which enables a thorough and in-depth knowledge of the intricate social, cultural, and political aspects that affect how traditional authority plays a role in resolving conflicts, maintaining security, and fostering peace. In addition to examining the broader contextual factors that affect the dynamics of conflict, security, and peacebuilding in the region, the qualitative approach is well suited for examining the perspectives, experiences, and motivations of various stakeholders, such as traditional authorities, state officials, community members, and civil society organizations. The specific context of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils in Bauchi State was the subject of a case study design. This method permits a thorough analysis of the evolving roles of traditional authorities in various fields and offers insightful information on the particular difficulties and opportunities they encounter when participating in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding projects.

6.4.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Data for this study was gathered using both primary and secondary sources. In the first instance, participants in semi-structured interviews utilised to collect primary data included: two emirs, two academicians with expert knowledge, and two local government officials the Katagum and Misau Emirates; locals affected by the research area's peacebuilding efforts, insecurity, and violence; state officials and representatives of security institutions working in Bauchi State to promote peace, security, and conflict resolution; and finally, representatives of non-governmental and civil society organizations involved in various peace efforts. The study applied purposeful sampling, which means that participants were selected based on their applicability to the study's objectives, familiarity with the subjects under investigation, and capacity to provide a range of rich and varied perspectives on the shifting roles of traditional authorities in security, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Table 6.1 below provides information on the interviewees:

Secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, including academic journals, books, reports, policy documents, and media stories, to

Table 6.1 Details of the Interviews Conducted for This Study

<i>Category</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Interview Date</i>	<i>Emirate</i>
Traditional Authorities	1. Alh. Ahmed Sulaiman [R4]	Emir of Misau	22/11/2021	Misau
	2. Alh. Aminu Mohammadu Malami [R1]	District Head of Udobo	28/11/2021	Katagum
Academicians/ Experts	1. Dr. Hamma Bashar [R5]	Public Administrator and expert on Misau History	22/11/2021 27/11/2021	Misau Katagum
	2. Professor Asabe Sadiya [R6]	University Professor of English/Expert on Katagum Affairs		
Local Council Officials	1. Dr. Musa Kawu Kalla [R2]	Officials of Local Government	29/11/2021 22/11/2021	Katagum Misau
	2. Hakimin Hardawa [R3]			

supplement and contextualize the primary data obtained through interviews and focus group discussions.

6.4.3 Data Analysis

This study’s data analysis employed a thematic approach, combining inductive and deductive coding approaches to help recognise, classify, and understand patterns and themes that appeared in the data. There were multiple steps in this process:

1. When necessary, transcribing and translating focus group discussions and interview transcripts;
2. Getting acquainted with the information by carefully reading and rereading the transcripts;
3. Creating an initial coding system based on the study’s goals, a literature review, and key findings;
4. Using NVivo (qualitative data analysis software) to organize and analyse the data while applying the coding system. In this case, in-depth interviews done in Misau and Azare were coded into R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, and R6.
5. Improvement of the coding framework via an iterative process of comparing, rewriting, and coding codes and themes to make sure they accurately represent the data.
6. Interpretation of the results, which includes relating them to the study’s goals, theoretical frameworks, and body of current knowledge.

The concepts of reflexivity, transparency, and trustworthiness served as a guide for the data analysis method in order to ensure the credibility, reliability, and validity of the research findings. This included using three different data sources, member verification, and peer debriefing.

6.5 Findings

6.5.1 Historical background of Misau and Katagum Emirates

On the one hand, Katagum Emirate is the second-largest emirate in Bauchi, serving as the administrative centre and hub of social and political activity. The majority of the population is Muslim, with Christians also present. The emirate's local government area has a population of 293,020, with an expected 411,700 by 2016. Islam influences the culture, with Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri as main languages. The ninth Emir, Mallam Abdulkadir, relocated the emirate's administrative centre to Azare town in 1910. On the other hand, Misau Emirate, part of the Misau Local Government Area, has a population of 261,410, with a population forecast of 367,300. Christianity is a minority religion, and Hausa is widely used. The main source of income for the populace is agriculture, with the region known for growing various crops. Both emirates are located in the northern part of Bauchi State (see Figure 6.1).

6.5.2 Change in the Security Roles of Traditional Authorities

The interviewees were clear in stating that traditional authorities' functions in Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils' dispute resolution have changed in response to shifting socio-political and security situations. To address disagreements between various communities, such as land disputes and farmer-herder conflicts, traditional authorities have become more involved in mediation and negotiation attempts. They have also been crucial in managing neighbourhood tensions and complaints that could spark larger disputes.

The study also discovered that traditional authorities' capacity to mobilize social capital, as well as their legitimacy and local expertise, are key factors in how effective they are at resolving disputes. They can improve communication and encourage peace between opposing parties thanks to their profound awareness of regional customs, norms, and power dynamics. According to the study, traditional leaders in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils have been crucial to efforts to foster peace. They have played a significant role in assisting neighbourhood-based peacebuilding initiatives, such as the construction of youth-inclusive peace committees, which help prevent, resolve, and transform conflict at the local level. These initiatives attempted to strengthen social cohesiveness, address the sources of violence, and advance a lasting peace. For example, R5 states that,

traditional authorities initiated peace building through the youth in their communities. Each Unguwa has its 'Sarkin Samari' who ensure

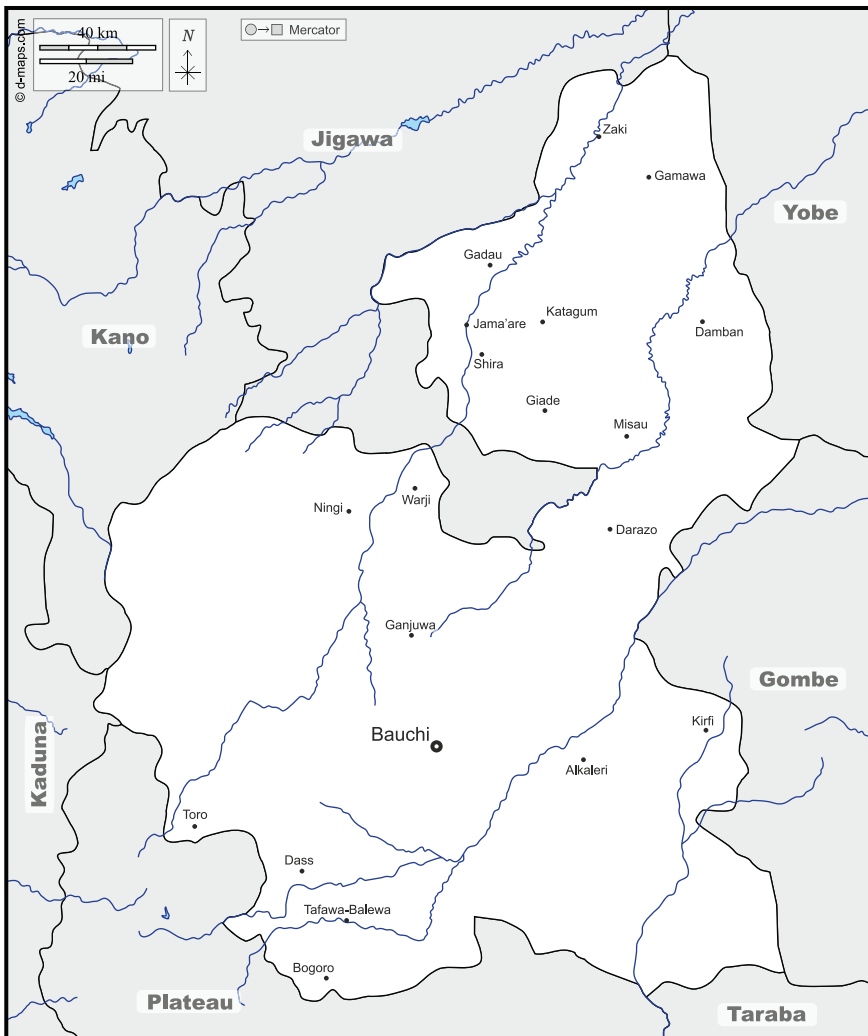


Figure 6.1 Map of Bauchi State and Its Main Cities and Towns. Source: <https://d-maps.com/m/africa/nigeria/bauchi/bauchi21.pdf>, retrieved July 21, 2023.

understanding among youths in the community and then reports to the ‘Mai Unguwa’ who will afterwards report the situations to the ‘Hakimi’ and consequently to the ‘Sarki’.

R6 supported this assertion when stated that,

The Emir of Misau had in so many ways contributed to the development of the entire Misau emirate. He had appointed committees to

handle responsibilities including, peace building, conflict resolution, youth and women development, Finance, sports, Health insurance and so forth. He identified intellectuals including me who are both indigent and residents of Misau emirate to handle the committees. I am a member of the Misau Emirate Development Foundation (MEDEF) and we sponsor student's scholarships and a lot of poverty alleviation programs.

Traditional leaders also support local security governance by coordinating with state security institutions, providing intelligence and information on potential threats, and taking part in community policing programs while carrying out their duties related to security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. They assist local security governments by interacting with state security organizations and exchanging intelligence and information on potential threats. They have collaborated with state actors, civil society organizations like Miyetti Allah in Katagum, and religious leaders to advance peace education, social cohesion, and economic development in order to address the root causes of instability and violence. For example, R2 states that

Now in Katagum emirate...there are various officers appointed by the Emir to handle different matters in the society and they report to him directly. On security matters for instance, he has officers like the Mai Dala who is in charge of prison, Dan Dalma (shugaban dandali) in charge of marriages and other activities in the community. He gives information on marriages taken place in the emirate and other events. There is also the Sarkin Daji who is in charge of forests, farm lands and handles farmer-harders issues in the emirate. In addition, under this Emirate, there is also a Security Advisory Committee that advise the emirate on security matters. The emir also formed the Forestry Committee with the District Heads of Azare and Madara, Sarkin Daji and Sarkin Fulani as members.

They had contributed to security even in the past. R1 stated that

During the periods of banditry and cattle rustling even before colonialists came, Katagum Emirate had officers such as Sarkin Yaki, Sarkin dawaki, Sarkin Baka, and many other whose responsibility was just to protect the areas under the Emirate against all form of aggression. This was possible because the emir was in control of all aspect of administration. He was a Judge and the religious leader.

Generally, R1 claims that today's population continues to despise going to court: "For the resolution of their disputes, they choose to come to us. Every time, our method is more equitable than what the courts decide." Traditional dispute settlement does not follow strict procedures, according

to R5. Traditional authorities ensure that issues are resolved permanently. Additionally, R6 implies that if the populace has faith and confidence in their traditional leaders, they will consent and approach them to mediate and resolve any conflict that may arise between them. According to R2, there are currently two committees under each ward in Katagum and Misau: the Security Committee (*Yan Committee*) and the Arbitration Committee (*Zauren Sulhu*). Creating peace among the populace is the goal of *Zauren Sulhu's* handling of both civil and criminal problems, according to R2. Usually, matters that fall outside of their purview are brought to the district head (*Dagachi*), and if he is unable to handle them, they are brought to the district head before being brought to the Emir.

R3 observes that it is a well-known historical truth that disputes are resolved through established institutions both inside and outside of the palace. "We created '*Zauren Sulhu*' in each region to be used in cases of disagreement between husband and wife, traders, neighbors, speakers of four different languages, or even over land. We work together to resolve such disagreements amicably and without charging a fee." In addition, regarding the injustices committed during litigation, there is a great deal of uproar against the police department and court personnel.

A lot of people turn to the "*Zauren Sulhu*" for settlements because of the justice system's delays. Because they are the most helpless victims of corruption, it greatly benefits the less fortunate members of society, especially the poor. "We resolved four cases in a single night yesterday, November 21st, 2021. We resolve disputes every day, whether they are between husband and wife, neighbors, or farmers, continued R4."

R5 claims that the youth in the emirates' communities are the ones who start the peace-building process. For instance, in Katagum, every area (*Unguwa*) has a youth leader ('*Sarkin Samari*'), who ensures that youths in the community are communicating with one another. The youth leader then reports to the ward head ('*Mai Unguwa*'), who then reports the situation to the district head ('*Hakimi*'), and finally to the traditional ruler ('*Sarki*'). According to R1, a security committee made up of the district head, police and immigration officers, representatives from Miyetti Allah, other *sarakuna*, and local government officials now exists. The three years that this group has been working have been successful in reducing conflicts between farmers and herdsmen (*Udawa Fulani*). They have educated *Udawa* leaders in Jigawa and Yobe about the ideal time for them to arrive for grazing at their locality by visiting *Udawa* leaders there, and they have had great success.

But the interviews also imply that the traditional roles of the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils with regard to security within their spheres of influence have changed. According to one of the key individuals who participated in the in-depth interviews (R1), in the past, the Katagum Emirate (which included Misau until 1907) had officers like *Sarkin Yaki*, *Sarkin Dawaki*, *Sarkin Baka*, and many others whose sole duty was to defend the areas under the

Emirate against all forms of aggression. The emir's control over every facet of government made this possible. He was both a judge and a reverend. Today, however, traditional authorities are no longer as powerful as before due to 1976 local government reforms that placed them under the control of local government councils. This reform impacted negatively and brought changes in their roles on peace, security and peacebuilding in their spheres of influence. R4 added weight to this assertion when he stated that

firstly, they transfer Police out from the Palace. They cannot enforce anything Judicially including the services at prison as they used to do before. They cannot enforce judgements even on land issue. Land Decree had lessened the powers and the issue of land which is sacrosanct and the actual security threat. Now land is under the custody of the Federal Government and no more under the traditional institutions and so the Emir can do little to nothing in that regard.

Additionally, "*Mahada*" is a book that existed and was used in districts, claims R1. This book is used to gather data on a variety of topics. Information on the population of the area, including data on births and deaths, is gathered and maintained in this book. Additionally, the number of men and women, kids, blind people, lepers (*Kutare*), etc. The emir will use the knowledge to benefit his administration. Through this effort, information regarding newcomers to the area is readily known, and every stranger who arrives will introduce himself to the leader nearby so that he is recognized. But while Emirs are no longer powerful and this kind of book (*Mahada*) is no longer in existence, R2 affirmed that things had changed.

6.5.3 Factors Responsible for the Change

R3 claims that a significant rise in population is one of the causes of the change. Then, there is a level of disregard and a demonstration of the emirates' unimportance, especially in light of a lack of resources and supportive laws to regulate the emirates. If the powers and functions of traditional authorities are restored, it will be a significant improvement over the current security conditions. R3 also stated that the number of traditional bodyguards (*Dogarawa*) has decreased significantly due to a shortage of resources and funding for their upkeep. There is no structure and limited system recognition. Few unemployed people with little to no expertise, compared to what was previously available, are brought in to serve as the *Dogarai* because the original *Dogarawa* are virtually extinct.

So, in sum, this study finds that an increase in population, government negligence, and a general lack of government attention to the emirates, especially due to a lack of resources and enabling laws to regulate the emirates, are major causes of changes in the role of traditional authorities in

security, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Along with political meddling, resource limitations, and the complexity of the disputes they strive to resolve, there is also no structure or minimal recognition by the system.

6.5.4 *The Impact of Traditional Authorities on Security in Katagum and Misau*

Despite the changes in the role of traditional authorities in the two emirates, the interviews strongly claimed that traditional authorities are still relevant and could play positive roles in maintaining security if given the chance. In Katagum emirate for example, according to R2,

ways have been developed to handle security matters. For instance, there are various officers appointed by the Emir to handle different matters in the society and they report to him directly. On security matters, he has officers like the Mai Dala who liaises with the prison, Dan Dalma who is responsible for social activities. There is also the Sarkin Daji who takes care of the forests, farm lands and handles farmer-harders issues in the emirate. In addition, under this Emirate, there is also a Security Advisory Committee that advise the emirate on security matters. The emir also formed the Forestry Committee with the District Heads of Azare and Madara, Sarkin Daji and Sarkin Fulani as members.

He further stated that:

the security committee is responsible for the security of the District completely. Youths are involved in providing security every day and the Emirate helps with funding which is complemented by the Local Government Council at appropriate times. Strangers are detected and reported at all times. And anytime the Emir gets information of issues of security concern he instructs the committee to investigate and report back.

Similarly, in Misau, R6 reports that the emir formed committees to handle duties including fostering peace, resolving disputes, empowering women and girls, handling finances, organizing sports, providing health insurance, and other things. In the words of R6, the emir chooses him and others – “he chose me and other intelligent Misau Emirate citizens who are also poor to run the committees. I am a part of the Misau Emirate Development Foundation (MEDEF), which sponsors numerous programs to fight poverty as well as student scholarships.”

Despite these developments, however, the interviewees suggest that despite changes in the roles of traditional authorities in peace, security and peacebuilding due to social, political, and economic causes, they still have positive contributions to make in the spheres of influence.

6.5.5 Challenges

The interviewees also highlighted many challenges that the emirates are facing in fulfilling their roles. First, and perhaps most prominently, they noted the low pay scale: R1 states that it is certainly not motivating.

We receive N80,000 [approx. €100-160] each month, but we also have a lot of obligations. The only time politicians work with us is during elections. They see us as rivals in the governance arena. For instance, while you were present, a large number of the officials the government assigned to this district to conduct the pre-trial census work were visible. Now that they require lodging and food, I must do it without assistance from the government. The reason we are doing it is for our people. They would not be able to complete the task unless we instructed our employees to work with them. Given the size of the area, we lack a formal vehicle for work. (R1)

A related issue is the lack of resources available for their activities. R4 revealed that the state government is responsible for maintaining the entire palace: "We utilize it to manage our spending and budget, which is subsequently included in the state budget, and we receive our fair amount." The policy has its own formulas for allocating shares to traditional institutions: 3 per cent goes to Bauchi and Katagum, 4 per cent to Misau and Ningi, and 5 per cent to Dass and Jama'are. According to a formula, each emirate will receive a percentage of the total allocation for the traditional institutions based on its size and rank. But in the end, these funds are seen as insufficient to fulfil all the tasks that are expected of the traditional system.

The interviewees also highlighted the lack of a clear legal framework. R3 states that the actual issue is the absence of an enabling statute to support traditional institutions: "We place a lot of importance on interpersonal relationships and religious perspectives." R4 revealed that there were a number of reforms that, in his opinion, formed the cornerstone of the power reduction. Traditional authorities, under colonial rule, possessed certain statutory and executive authorities. But since then, a great deal has changed. The police have been removed from the palace. Traditional leaders are unable to carry out any judicial orders, including those regarding prison services or land disputes. The Land Decree had reduced the authority, the sanctity of the land, and the genuine security threat. The Federal Government now has custody of the land, not the traditional institutions, so the Emir can do very little in that sense. And so, formally, all responsibilities have been eroded.

Politically, there are also challenges. The major issue, in R1's opinion, is that traditional authorities frequently clash with law enforcement and security personnel over issues of justice. "We always argue with them because they extort people, which we find repugnant. Court appearances are now despised. For the resolution of their disputes, they choose to come to us."

In addition, R3 claims that as democratic politics developed, the level of crisis increased. Because of how effectively organized politics is, traditional institutions are no longer taken seriously and are given little to no weight. A state governor who values a state's historic institutions will take all reasonable steps to support them in his state; but the dependence on politicians is seen as problematic. According to R4, the situation has gotten so bad that the Emir now needs permission from the Local Government Chairman before leaving town. And yet traditionally, the Local Government Chairman is the putative subject of the Emir. The old framework, R4 continued, has been politicized. The Emir is no longer able to punish defaulters; if it were said that the Emir would order a *Dogari* to initiate legal action against someone who mistreated the Emir as it was previously possible, the entire community would erupt in protest.

Today, there is nothing that can be done if someone enters the palace and abuses an emir. It has gotten to the point where the Emir no longer even knows when a government agency or private contractor is working on a project in the neighbourhood, despite the fact that this is the proper procedure, to notify the Emir before entering the area or starting any project, a development that put traditional authorities on hold, R3 claimed. "They are currently helpless. They are subject to willful throning and dethroning. That the institution is being demoted is just sad. It is necessary to strengthen the traditional authorities. Not just by the government, but also by the people in terms of respect and importance."

6.6 Discussion

The study examined the evolving responsibilities of traditional leaders in resolving disputes, maintaining security, and promoting peace in the Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils in Bauchi State. From the study, the following significant conclusions were drawn:

1. Traditional authorities' roles in conflict resolution have changed in response to shifting sociopolitical and security environments. Despite having little to no control over the affairs of their domain and lacking support from the government, traditional authorities are increasingly becoming relevant in the maintenance of peace, security, and peacebuilding in their domains.
2. Traditional authorities have actively participated in peacebuilding initiatives at the local and state levels, helping to promote social cohesion, avert conflicts, and deal with their underlying causes.
3. While legitimacy, local expertise, social capital, and capacity all play a part in how effective traditional authorities are in their tasks, political involvement, resource limitations, and the complexity of conflicts can also have an impact.
4. Due to the difficulties they face, the participation of traditional authorities in peacebuilding raises questions concerning accountability and transparency.

In Katagum and Misau Emirate Councils in Bauchi State, the study has shed important light on the evolving responsibilities of traditional authority in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding. Further study in the following areas, though, could deepen our comprehension of these problems and guide practice and policy.

1. The Future of Traditional Authorities in Conflict Resolution and Security

Future studies should investigate the long-term potential of traditional powers in security and conflict resolution, looking at how they might change to accommodate shifting political, social, and security situations. This entails looking at potential influences on the functions and applicability of traditional authority in these fields, such as urbanization, globalization, and technological improvements.

2. Comparative Analysis of Traditional Authorities in Different Nigerian States

A comparison of traditional authorities' roles in resolving disputes, maintaining security, and promoting peace in various Nigerian states could shed light on the wide range of experiences, difficulties, and possibilities that these players have to deal with. Shared trends and best practices, as well as contextual factors, may influence the functions and efficacy of traditional authority in many contexts. And if perhaps not for the Nigerian regions, this is one accomplishment of the effort.

3. The Role of Women in Traditional Authorities and Peacebuilding Efforts

The role of women in traditional authority and their participation in attempts to establish security, stability, and peace should be the subject of further study. The feasibility and durability of gender-sensitive methods for conflict resolution and peacebuilding could be investigated in this study, as could the opportunities and constraints for women's leadership and involvement in conventional institutions.

6.7 Policy Recommendations

Scholars and practitioners can advance our knowledge of the evolving roles of traditional authorities in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding by conducting further research in these areas, which will also help to shape the creation of more effective and inclusive policies and interventions in these fields. The following policy recommendations are put forth in support of the roles of traditional authority in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding in Katagum and Misau Emirates in Bauchi State based on the study's findings:

Strengthening the Role of Traditional Authorities in Conflict Resolution

1. Create and implement capacity-building programs for traditional authorities that emphasize negotiation strategies, mediation techniques, and conflict resolution skills to improve their ability to settle disagreements amicably and prevent escalation.
2. Promote cooperation in dispute resolution between traditional authority and official state institutions, enabling the sharing of information and the creation of complementary strategies that make use of the advantages of both systems.
3. Encourage communication and collaboration between traditional authorities, civil society groups, and local leaders in order to address the underlying causes of conflict and create long-lasting, community-based solutions.
4. Encourage inclusive dispute resolution techniques, making sure that marginalized groups' viewpoints, such as those of women, young people, and minority populations, are taken into consideration when making decisions.

Enhancing the Security Role of Traditional Authorities

1. Enhance channels of communication and coordination between state security agencies and traditional authorities to promote efficient sharing of information, intelligence, and resources.
2. Include traditional authorities in the planning and execution of community policing tactics, taking into account their in-depth understanding of regional dynamics and their capacity to mobilize social capital for security needs.
3. Offer traditional authorities training and resources to aid in their efforts to combat violent extremism, including fostering social cohesion, economic growth, and peace education in their localities.
4. Create protections against armed groups and criminal organizations targeting or enlisting traditional authorities, safeguarding their safety and independence as they carry out their security responsibilities.

Supporting Traditional Authorities in Peacebuilding Initiatives

1. Facilitate traditional leaders' participation in discussions, workshops, and capacity-building programs that are aimed at promoting social cohesion and addressing the sources of conflict on a local, state, and national level.
2. Promote the participation of traditional leaders in community-based peacebuilding efforts, such as the formation of peace committees,

- youth clubs, and women's groups, which help to transform conflicts at the local level by preventing them from occurring in the first place.
3. Encourage accountability, openness, and inclusivity in traditional authorities' participation in peacebuilding initiatives, addressing concerns about representation and making sure that the interests and goals of marginalized groups are taken into account.
 4. Promote additional research on the functions and success of traditional authority in peacebuilding, producing evidence-based lessons learned and best practices to guide policy and practice in various situations.

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Part II

Contemporary Problems and Solutions



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7 Importing Militant Jihadists

Analysing the Response of Traditional Authorities to Muslim Youth Extremism in the Nigeria-Niger Border Areas of Sokoto State

Murtala Ahmed Rufa'i

7.1 Introduction

The whole of West Africa appears to be on fire, as different winds of conflict and social upheaval blow through the region. From Mali to Niger and Nigeria, Benin to Burkina Faso and Guinea and beyond, there is bloodshed everywhere, from one form of conflict or another. At their root, many of these conflicts can be traced to local and domestic socio-economic and political conditions, manifesting in marginalisation, exclusion, injustice, corruption, and international dynamics (e.g. in Libya). As Marc et al. (2015) argue,

The multiple forms of violence in West Africa overlap to form an interlocking and mutating landscape of conflict across the region. Lines of potential fracture, such as religious, ethnic, cultural or linguistic differences, which in and of themselves represent the countries' multi-ethnic make-up, have acted as incendiary devices in which perceptions of injustice, marginalisation, and exclusion are manifested.

(pp. 9 and 11)

Nigeria is one of the most affected countries in the region. Its traditional forms of conflict of identity, ethno-religious and regional chauvinism, the settler-indigene and other intergroup disharmony (including political conflict and electoral violence) have now transformed to the most sophisticated and complex forms of violence in the form of Boko Haram Islamist insurgencies, the secessionist movement of the violent IPOB/ESN, aiming at establishing an independent state of Biafra, and the brutal rural terror of armed banditry that is ravaging the North-West geopolitical zone and its skirmishes of kidnapping spreading to all parts of the country.

Many view the Boko Haram insurgency and armed banditry, with their interlocking trajectories, as the most dangerous conflicts in Nigeria as they cross lines of identity and ethno-religious, economic, and political conditions. In other words, what makes Boko Haram insurgency and banditry particularly dangerous and complex is their tendency to appropriate the space of identity, ethno-religious tensions, and socio-economic marginalisation. Empirically, the view of violent extremism as a manifestation of religious

exploitation clouds the factors of economic marginalisation and corruption behind it. It's little wonder, therefore, that banditry in Nigeria's North-West has taken a similar path, presenting itself as Islamic fundamentalist radicalisation and extremism. For example, Nivette et al. (2007, pp. 755–6) examine the influence of collective strain on support for violent extremism among an ethnically diverse population and note that “the degree to which individuals neutralize moral and legal constraints amplifies the impact of collective strain on violent extremist attitudes.” This dimension seems to strategically give banditry a regional West-African and even global perspective and appeal through its extensive linkages with a more notorious Boko Haram extremist group, the ISWAP, JAS, Ansaru, and, to some extent, the Al-Qaeda.

This linkage (1) attracts international solidarity from similar extremist groups and (2) draws human and material support from these groups. Little wonder, therefore, that from the angle of narratives, banditry in the North-West has been internationalised, especially by bandit groups operating in the communities and societies along Nigeria's international borders: Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, and Kebbi states, especially the Illela-Konni and Sabon-Birni borders in Sokoto State, Kwangalam, Mai Adua, and Jibia borders in Katsina and Maigatari border in Jigawa. Starting from this internationalisation of banditry vis-à-vis its connections to religious radicalisation and extremism, this study analytically examines the role of Muslim extremism through the activities of *Lakurawa* Islamist group, which originated from Mali and came into the Niger-Nigeria border communities in Sokoto State. It focuses specifically on the role of traditional and Islamic authorities who have, probably against their original intentions, been central to the growth of this new extremist security threat in their communities.

Around 2017, the *Lakurawa* established a base at Gudu and Tangaza Local Government Areas, just about 60 miles away from Sokoto town, the headquarters of Sokoto state in northern Nigeria. The new Islamic sect started with less than 50 indigenous youth in 2017, but this number has since increased to over 200, mainly young boys within the ages of 18–35, not least by providing stipends to young members. Members embrace heterodox practices and esoteric interpretations of the Holy Qur'an. They also emphasize their purity and refuse contact with the rest of the society. They established camps around Gwangwano, Mulawa, Wansaniya, and Tunigara along Nigeria-Niger border areas, that they called *Darul Islam* (land of the purified/land of Islam). The followers of the sect have similar pattern of religious separatism with any other radical Islamic movement in West Africa. They also used small arms in intimidating and harassing the locals in the name of implementation of the *sharia* law in the affected Local Government Areas.

The new sect often conducts preaching sessions and forces natives to listen. Since the rise of this gang, the Sokoto State Government, in collaboration with the Sokoto Sultanate Council (the main Islamic and traditional body in the area) and other security agencies, have made concerted efforts to stop the growing influence of the group. At the community level, local traditional and

Islamic authorities have also identified the emerging influence of the group, especially among young people, as a challenge to their own authority in the area. Hence, these local traditional and Islamic authorities have started taking action to address the growing religious extremism among youth in their communities. The active involvement of local traditional and Islamic authorities in responding to violent extremism among Muslim youth in these communities has seldom been the subject of academic analysis.

The objective of this chapter is to understand the rise of the *Lakurawa* in Sokoto and the role of traditional rulers in the history of this group. As the chapter will show, traditional rulers initially helped bring the *Lakurawa* to their communities for protection, but then responded to their rise in prominence through preaching against the youth recruitment and providing information to security agencies about the activities of the group. This chapter will explain these dynamics and put them in the context of the broader dynamics of religious extremism and of self-organised security governance in Nigeria and West Africa more broadly.

Following this introduction, section two briefly discusses the methodology of this chapter and section three provides an overview of the debate concerning factors appealing to radicalism and extremism, with the goal of situating the broader dynamics of violent banditry that internationalises through escalating and nurturing its connections to Islamic extremist groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Ansaru. It argues that beyond this misappropriation and exploitation of extremism and radicalisation, the armed banditry has no link to Islam, let alone the radical Islamist groups of Boko Haram, ISWAP and Ansaru. Section 4 then introduces the study area, while Section 5 assesses the *Lakurawa* group and their use of Muslims youth extremists along Niger-Nigeria border communities. It is through the activities of *Lakurawa* Islamists from Mali operating along these border communities that not only banditry was internationalised but also the values and norms of extremism and radicalism were planted, with devastating socio-political and economic and security implications. How the communities responded to this radical drama is addressed in section six, which analytically examines the responses and reactions of traditional authorities to Muslims' youth extremism in the communities under review. Empirical interview data and observations provide evidence to support the narratives, and section seven concludes the study by highlighting some of the main issues and implications arising from this case.

7.2 Research Methodology

There are many ways of conducting research. The methods researchers use to carry out their research depend upon a variety of factors. These factors, according to Snape and Spencer (2003, p. 1), include: researchers' beliefs about the nature of the social world and what can be known about it (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology),

the purposes and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research participants, the audience for the research, the financiers of the research, and the position and environment of the researchers themselves. In this context, owing to the general limitations of quantitative methods in capturing the “fabric of global phenomena that include complex interactions of culture, institutions, societal norms and government regulations, among a few concerns” and the necessity to understand informants’ perceptions about Muslim youth extremism, this chapter employs a qualitative method.

Bryman (2004, p. 46) maintains that a qualitative approach to research delineates “an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied.” Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 17) conceive it as “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” In other words, in investigating the issues of violent extremism and responses of traditional authorities and religious leaders, one must delve into the context and interact with informants/stakeholders to critically understand their views, attitudes, and experiences on specific issues regarding Muslim youth extremism along these troubling borders. Rules, norms, regulations, values, views, and behaviours are cultural-religious issues that are largely non-statistical constructs, hence not easily amenable to quantification. The process of culturalisation to extremism is deeply rooted in religious teachings and other terms of *bid'a* (religious innovation), which can only be adequately captured by qualitative techniques. Moreover, socio-cultural issues, norms, economy, politics and other idiosyncratic variables rooted in youth extremism can only be captured and investigated through qualitative methods because of their flexibility and depth in capturing these complexities.

Qualitative techniques are also suitable because they take on board people’s experiences and the meaning they individually or collectively attach to the dynamism of the role of traditional authorities in youth extremism. This approach, with its characteristics of profundity and thoroughness, is more particularistic about contextual issues (Devine, 2002, p. 199) such as traditional authorities, religious leaders, Islamic preachers, Qur’anic and *Islamiyya* school teachers, Muslim youth, leaders of Islamic sects, etc. In the interviews, the informants’ attitudes and behaviour were placed in the context of their individual experiences and the wider social, economic, and political settings under which Muslim youth extremism takes place in the borders of Nigeria and Niger Republic. This is a holistic approach that captures the meanings, divergent views, process, and context (Bryman, 1988, p. 62; Devine, 2002, p. 199).

7.2.1 Methods of Data Collection

For the qualitative approach, Key Informant Interviews (KII) in the form of semi-structured interactions were conducted with relevant traditional authorities,

religious leaders, and teachers along Nigeria-Niger borders. This included interviews with Muslim youth organisations, members of the vigilante groups operating in the communities, and members of various Islamic sects such as Qadiriyya, Tjjaniya, Izalah, and Shiite. In addition to the above, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the research communities in Sokoto and neighbouring border communities. FGDs were used to collect data from youth who are members of the Islamic extremist sects that exist in these communities. Similarly, as part of the qualitative approach to the study, a documentary analysis was employed. This meant that relevant documents, such as newspapers, books, journals, religious books, and various religious documents for the teaching and propagation of Islam were critically analysed in relation to the major objectives and questions of the study.

7.2.2 Sample and Sampling Method

To ensure the fecundity of the data, purposive sampling was used to determine the interviewees (respondents) for KII and FGDs. This is a qualitative sampling technique where respondents are selected based on their demonstrable membership of certain group or community (Higginbotton, 2004, p. 13). It is a method where research participants are selected based on pre-determined criteria; location, knowledge, and relevance of the respondent are all important to the study (Patton, 2002). This sampling method is the best instrument in choosing the appropriate respondents who will provide the data appropriately needed for this research (Patton, 2002). In view of the nature of the Muslim youth extremism and the variation in the methods, 35 interviews and five FGDs were conducted. The aim was to achieve informational redundancy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and theoretical saturation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), which are necessary for generalisation and drawing relevant conclusions. The yardstick used for measuring redundancy and saturation was the point when more interviews could not generate new information (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65). Thus, both sampling technique and sample size was determined by the research topic, the aims of the study and “feasibility, cost and time available” (Berkowitz, 2006, p. 2) to do the fieldwork and complete the study. Purposive sampling was also employed in selecting communities located along Nigeria-Niger borderlands. Variations in terms of rural and semi-urban communities and variations along dominant religious sects will be employed.

7.3 Interfacing Banditry and Extremism: Violent Extremism and Fragility

The concept of extremism is ubiquitous and often misappropriated and mis-exploited as advance ideological interest in achieving political goals. In popular and scholarly discourse, it is connected with anything and everything cultural, religious, geographical, and even gender-related. As a result, the literature on extremism and its various manifestations is abundant and

ideologically differentiated. Another issue that compounds any conceptualisation of extremism is its association with violence. It is logical to assume that all forms of extremism are violent in nature, and every extremism is likely to discharge violent energy. Violence is the most common strategy of extremists to achieve results quickly, and so the concept of extremism is defined by its association with violence. For example, Mandaville and Nozeu (2017), define violent extremism as any violence by non-state actors inspired and justified and is often associated with 'extreme' political, religious, cultural, or even social ideologies.

In religious terms, extremism, according to Wibisono, Loius and Jetten (2019), connotes ideological beliefs underscored by obligations, spiritual obligations to change a political system based on suggested or ascribed religious norms through violence. Accordingly, extremist groups often fight for their political agenda against a traditionally popular and mainstream system that is generally accepted by the majority. Examples of such groups include ISIS, against the Syrian Government, or MILF, against the government of The Philippines. Any definition of extremism that is pursuing a political agenda is often a reaction against political oppression, exclusion, and injustice. Because the majority of the global citizens identify as religious, extremism can be tied to religion (Mandaville and Nozeu, 2017). It is perhaps this linkage that also allows for the connection between religious extremists with terrorism. Unfortunately, and historically evidently, religious extremists "are willing to murder because they embrace theologies that sanction violence in the service of God. They have no sympathy for their victims because they view those victims as enemies of God. They readily sacrifice their own lives because they expect huge and immediate afterlife rewards in return from martyrdom" (Berman and Iannaccone, 2006, p. 2).

Religious extremism by the above argument tends to raise more questions, especially in relation to their extremist values and activities with absolute expectations of good rewards in the afterlife or in heaven. These questions create confusion in understanding concrete activities and motivations for violent extremism. The interface between the aspiration to achieve political objectives and expectations of heavenly reward after death, on one hand, explains "religious radicalisation" and fundamentalism and, on the other hand, tells us nothing about the activities of other non-religious extremist organisations, such as "Tamil Tigers", which have employed similar strategies, such as suicide attacks, to achieve their goals. Violent extremism therefore represents not only an ideology but a strategy of agitation by groups and individuals, who feel deprived, marginalised, excluded, discriminated against, oppressed, exploited, or dominated. And, because religious people tend to easily connect to God and the reward they expect after death, this belief can be mobilised and manipulated. This is perhaps why different agitated groups (even those who do not have knowledge of religion) employ it to mobilise supporters, universalise their ideas, and draw sympathy.

Violent extremism should therefore be construed as a process of radicalisation for violence, in that individuals are ideologies to pursue a certain political or religious goal through the instrumentalisation of violence. This sits well with the theme of this study, especially in view of the activities of the *Lakurawa* across the West African sub-region. But it begs another fundamental question – what are the feeders and drivers of extremism or violent extremism?

Seen from the perspective of two opposing poles, violent extremism is driven by and “push” and “pull” factors. The push factors are negative social, political, economic, and cultural drivers of individual and group decision-making, while the pull factors are positive expectations, characteristics, or benefit derivable from participation in extreme violent activities. In the case of the *Lakurawa* gang, all these factors play a role, and they are different, yet connected, to the factors pushing and pulling armed banditry in North-West Nigeria more generally. The connection between the two types of violence, I argue here, is related to the fundamental idea of fragility. It connects all the push factors of social and cultural stereotypes, socio-economic exclusion and deprivation, the overall consequence of relative and absolute poverty, and the pull factors of the benefits of violence as assurances of rewards, either in the present or the afterlife. Thus, what is fragility and how did it drive violent armed banditry in Nigeria’s North-West and, indirectly, lead to the activities of the *Lakurawa* in the border communities of Sokoto?

7.4 Brief Background of the Study Area

Sokoto State is located in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Niger Republic to the north, Kebbi State to the west, and Zamfara State to the southeast. The state has twenty-three (23) local governments; about 27,825km, estimated population of about four (4) million people, mostly Hausa-Fulani. The population in the state is evenly distributed between rural and urban centres, but some forested areas around Gudu, Tangaza, Gundumi, and Tureta are thinly populated due to aridity (Abdu, 1983). Agriculture, livestock production, trade, and commerce are the backbone of the rural and urban economy, and most households are directly involved in these economic activities.

Historically, the headquarters of the state, Sokoto town, was founded by Sultan Muhammad Bello as a result of a Jihad that swept most parts of the present northern Nigeria and beyond in the nineteenth century (Usman Bugaje, 1991, p. 26). The Jihad was an Islamic movement that created an ideal Islamic state under the Caliphate system in 1804. Its main ideas were fermented, nurtured, and spread by young Islamic scholars in the nineteenth century (El-Misri, F.H, 1963). The initial centre of this movement was Degel, but pressure, insecurity, and constant threats from the constituted traditional authorities led to the relocation to Gudu (on 21 February 1804) (Usman Bugaje and Ibrahim Jumare, 2017, p. 11). Balle town is the present headquarters

of Gudu Local Government Area and located about 40 miles to the north-west of Sokoto town. The town and its adjacent villages have formed the stronghold of the *Lakurawa* activities. The occupation and presence of the group in this area is linked to its historical significance in Islamic revolutionary movements. Gudu and its neighbours (Tangaza) were associated with major developments of the Sokoto Jihad; the election of its leaders, the writing of the manifesto of Jihad, the intellectual reawakening, and the quest for acquiring arms for self-defence all took place in the area (Kani, 1988, p. 28). This is because the area attracted scholars from far and wide on the eve of the Jihad, creating a culture of Islamic intellectualism. The Local Government Area is located along the porous international border between Nigeria and Niger Republic and only a few hundred miles from Mali.

As a result of the Jihad, Sokoto town became the headquarters of the Sokoto Caliphate (Abubakar, 1982). The British colonial conquest of the area in 1903 gave birth to Sokoto Province, comprising the present states of Kebbi and Zamfara. After the attainment of Nigeria's independence in 1960, Sokoto became the state capital. Kebbi and Zamfara states were carved out of Sokoto in 1991 and 1996 respectively. Events in any of these tripartite states are likely to have significant impact on each other, due to these historical, cultural, religious, and geographical affinities. Therefore, most parts of Sokoto State have, in recent years, been ravaged by armed banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and terrorism.

Gudu Local Government Area and its immediate neighbour Tangaza are the twin capitals of the *Lakurawa*. Both LGAs are affected by chronic poverty and unemployment with high levels of rural-urban migration. The two are the worst-hit by poverty in the state, with Tangaza housing about 92.5 per cent and Gudu 57.5 per cent of extreme-poor people in the state. They also form the least educationally-developed LGAs with increasing cases of out of school children at the level of about 58 per cent yearly, (Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2022). The basic performance indicators, such as access and quality education, have been very low in the LGAs. Insufficient public and teachers have worsened over the years, and the two areas have only eleven Junior Secondary Schools. Therefore, it is a region notorious for illiteracy, out of school children, and unemployment. In terms of infrastructural facilities such as hospitals, water supply, electricity, and roads, the LGAs also suffer acute deficits. Rural poverty in the LGAs is therefore very high and this combination of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, proximity to a highly porous international borders, and ungoverned/under-governed spaces created a fertile ground for the *Lakurawa* in the rural parts of the LGAs.

7.5 Origin of the *Lakurawa* Along Sokoto Borders

Fear begets fear and desperate situations create desperate solutions. This was, perhaps, the story of the *Lakurawa* radical group's operational activities in border communities in western parts of Sokoto. The *Lakurawa* are herdsmen

but turned militant in the wake of the Malian crisis and the spread of fundamentalism and terrorism in West Africa. Just like the so-called attempt to “jihadise” armed banditry in the North-West by making reference to links with Boko Haram, JAS, JASWA, Ansaru, and recently ISWAP and shouting “Allahu Akbar” when attacking or raiding villages and in confrontation with security agencies, the *Lakurawa* similarly exploited the fragile history of Mali to achieve their nefarious agenda of militarisation and extremism. In this context, the *Lakurawa*, according to the Magaji of Balle, originally “are herdsmen, light skinned, speaking Arabic and Fulfulde languages from Mali, invited to provide security to our communities.” (Interview, 2021).

These border communities were, prior to the invitation of the *Lakurawa*, beset by an array of security challenges: farmer-herder conflicts, resource-based conflicts, ethno-religious clashes, and regular cases of cross-border armed robbery and cattle rustling (Acting Village Head of Balle, 2021). Therefore, prior to the coming of the *Lakurawa*, villages of Wassaniya, Tabaringa, Mulawa, Jina-Jini in Tangaza and Gudu LGAs suffered from these threats but used local peace-building and conflict resolution mechanisms in addressing them. However, the relative peace and the socio-economic activities of the people were shattered by the bandits most from Zamfara State, which the local people call *Zamfarawa*. Banditry started in Zamfara around 2011 but was allowed by authorities to grow and spread like wildfire, across the entire North-Western region (Barnett, 2022, p. 12). Thus, within a decade (2011–2021), the phenomenon has inflicted unimaginable damages in across five out of the seven States (Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina and Sokoto) in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria (Rufa’i A.M, 2021).

The *Zamfarawa* bandits started operations in Tangaza and Gudu border communities around 2016/2017. These areas are about 150 miles away from Zamfara State, and about 80 miles from eastern Sokoto State, that shares a close border with Zamfara. Like most parts of Zamfara State, the bandits also ravaged eastern Sokoto communities, around Isa, Sabon Birni, Rabah, Goronyo, and Illela Local Government Areas. It was this close-border relation, according to the Magaji of Balle, “that led to different bandit gangs, camps, and nefarious operations in eastern parts of Sokoto State” (Interview with Magaji of Balle, 2021). Therefore, it was from these eastern districts that the bandits encroached on both Tangaza and Gudu LGAs, ransacking and inflicting terror on the communities. These bandits are mostly Fulani herdsmen, engaged in different forms of atrocities: killing, maiming, gender-based and sexual violence, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and mass looting of resources, across ethnic and religious lines (Rufa’i A.M, 2021). This has resulted in the increase in the number of internally displaced persons and Nigerian refugees in the neighbouring Niger Republic (Abubakar Musa Balle, 2021). Perpetual fear and anxiety gripped the communities, not least because of the likely collaboration between the new *Zamfarawa* bandits and indigenous criminal groups against the communities. Therefore, considering the level of rural unemployment, poverty, ungoverned spaces, and highly porous borders, characterised

by regular movements of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), if this alliance is eventually formed, Tangaza and Gudu Local Government Areas would be more devastated than Zamfara State (Asiwaju, I. J, 2006).

It was within this desperate situation that *Lakurawa* were invited. According to an informant:

The District Head of Balle in Gudu Local Government together with the District Head of Gongono in Tangaza Local Government met with Alhaji Bello Wamakko, the then Chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and discussed how to tackle *Zamfarawa* (Bandits). They finally reached conclusion to hire *Lakurawa* from Mali in order to deal with *Zamfarawa* bandits. This was the first effort. *I myself told Bello Wamakko that this was not a good effort* (sic) (emphasis added).

(Magajin Balle and Acting District Head of Balle 2021)

The activities of *Lakurawa* in these communities were simply an importation of troubles in the name of security. Alhaji Aminu Dikko Tangaza, a community and religious leader, further narrated that “the armed group was invited by leaders of the communities few months ago for security reasons” (Interview with Aminu Dikko Tangaza, 2021). However, although many individuals including traditional and religious leaders in these communities attested to the presence of *Lakurawa* militant Jihadists hired as security forces, the security agencies discussed and debunked the story. The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) stated that

the news of the presence of the herdsmen suspected to be Malians and armed known as LAKURAWA, have been going the rounds lately (sic). They are sighted around Marake forest in Gudu Local Government and Wassaniya, Tunigara, Mulawa, Jina-Jini villages in Tangaza Local Government of Sokoto state. The said herdsmen are light skinned; speak Arabic and Fulfulde languages with close to 3,000 Cattle apparently looking for greener pastures. The herdsmen are reasonably believed to be Malians and reside in a forest in Niger Republic sharing border with Gudu and Tangaza Local Government Areas of Sokoto state and they come to the area largely owing to availability of water for their animals.

(Maruf, 2018)

Regardless of whether the *Lakurawa* are herdsmen or not, it is important to note even the security agencies had acknowledged their presence in these communities. Moreover, when the *Lakurawa* came, they were quite effective at pushing out the *Zamfarawa* bandits. However, they also strategically took over control of the communities they operated in, with attendant consequences of imposing their “extremists’ ideology”, violent extremism, and fundamentalism. Their primary objective was to introduce their version of

the *Sharia* legal system. For instance, according to Bashiru Tagimba, a youth leader in Tagimba village the main activities of *Lakurawa* in those communities include:

1. They preach;
2. They don't like Tijaniyya movement (sic). They even used to remove their white cloth, which they [the Tijaniyya] circle during prayers;
3. They collect Zakat of cattle, sheep, and goat from the herdsman;
4. They check people's phones and break the memory cards that contain music.
5. They lash (sic) people who dance and sing, etc. (interview with Bashiru Tagimba, 2021).

This means that the *Lakurawa* appear to want to preach Islam and spread the *Sharia* legal system. However, not only was this contrary to why they were imported (as security) but their ways are actually contrary to the teachings of the mainstream sects, Tijjaniya, Qadiriyya, and Izala in the areas. This was certainly a bone of contention between *Lakurawa* and some communities and, by extension, with Sokoto State Government and security agencies. For example, in the wake of the brutal activities in 2018, of *Lakurawa* and other allegations of "occupation by jihadist, armed group" security agencies were dispatched to the areas (See Meya, 2018; Maruf, 2018). The complex nature of the *Lakurawa* activities, their invitation to communities, and its aftermath are eloquently captured in the narrative provided by the Acting District Head of Balle ...

I didn't invite nor attend the meeting [with the *Lakurawa*]. But the District Head was in attendance, because the invitation was done on his insistence. They solicited for support in cash, cows, logistics and weapons for both their invited *Lakurawa* guests and their newly recruited youth in the communities, to fight the ravaging Zamfarawa bandits. My advice to them then was not to allow their children to participate in this dirty job. That is why few youths were recruited from Balle town. Mukhtar, the son of the District Head and later appointed chief treasurer of the *Lakurawa* and his father the District Head, were not in any way happy with my position. I insisted, it is not good for us, as ruling class, with royal blood and members of the Sokoto Sultanate Council, to be associated with militants and terrorists. Mukhtar had strong contact with *Lakurawa* ... Yes! When Mukhtar died in a fire incident in a filling station, *Lakurawa* came to District Head, claiming their sixty-three (N63) million Naira in custody of Mukhtar, his son and the chief treasurer of the *Lakurawa*. But the District Head denied this claim. They even begged and requested for half of the money, still the District Head refused to

give them the money and finally they brutally shot him to death in the presence of many people in the palace (sic).

(Magajin Balle and Acting District Head of Balle,
2021, FGDs, 2021)

This is illustrative of the operational complexity of *Lakurawa* activities in the area. Mukhtar and his father, the District Head of Balle, were at the forefront in inviting the *Lakurawa* into the area. This demonstrated the trust and confidence the *Lakurawa* had on Mukhtar by entrusting him with the sum of 63 million naira. However, it could be stressed that local socio-economic dynamics, perhaps, beyond the issue security accentuated the “importation” of the *Lakurawa* militant group. The importance of religious extremism in radicalisation and terrorism is well grounded in the literature (see Wibisono et al., 2019; Mandaville and Nozel, 2017; Glazzard et al., 2017). In this respect, already, even before the activities of the *Lakurawa* in the communities under review, there was element of religious extremism gradually booming. For example, in an FGD Session, participants alluded to this inter alia:

The local extremism here in our community is not a new idea. It was in their blood since time immemorial. For example, in 1999, during Bafarawa regime, this Nasiru Jankobari led an attack at Rafin Kubu in Gudu local Government. He hired armed robbers from Kaduna in which Mamman Shanta was killed, including Ruci, son of Isa Tubali and one person of Dankatsari town of Niger Republic. They buried their weapons at Tafkin Kwato and promised to pay a second attack. Since that time, the security of our dear communities was destabilized. And you can see Mu'edidi Yaya with support of some Fulani leaders invited *Lakurawa* militants from Mali to Tagimba town to Balle meeting in the said Primary School.

(FGD and KII in Balle, 2021)

Accordingly, it is very clear that the dynamics of the *Lakurawa* activities have roots within the general dynamics of the socio-cultural and political complexities of the border communities. This means that by extension, one can assume an illustrative scientific phenomenon in which the border communities, being blessed with large forests, were clearly in contact with *Lakurawa* militant Fulanis, even before the fear of the *Zamfarawa* bandit attacks. This is because many research informants alluded to *Lakurawa* marrying women from these communities around Gudu and Tangaza LGAs. If not out of a long relationship and harmonious interaction, one would not expect, given the strict local marriage requirements, *Lakurawa* to simply get married to women from these border communities.

In addition to the above, another important factor which feeds into the dynamics of *Lakurawa* activities in Sokoto border communities, and which is intertwined with the fragility question, is governance failure (Kura, 2021).

Clearly, there is a big gap in the architecture of governance and security in Sokoto state and Nigeria generally. The presence of *Lakurawa* and even the operations of their activities point clearly to the fundamental challenges of security governance. It shows the borders are porous, intelligence gathering is failing, and government presence is minimal. It is from a lack of confidence in the government that these communities looked elsewhere (up to Mali) for their security. Similarly, the activities of the militant *Lakurawa* jihadists showed that they have been in the area since 1999. It is only when the jihadists elsewhere in Nigeria, and the Sahel region, started spreading their extremist ideological tentacles that the *Lakurawa* activities were noticed and began to attract national and international concern. This points to the way in which the broader rise of Jihadi extremists' movements, and the public discourses around them, affects small-scale groups with (more or less) Jihadi credentials. Because, to further consolidate their activities, the militant *Lakurawa* not only married wives from the border communities; they also recruited youth from the communities. This is easy, as many of the youths had extremist tendencies. Accordingly, many youths were recruited in the areas.

7.6 Traditional Authorities: Saviours as Culprits

As often alluded in several scholarly works and even by security agencies, the successes of banditry and *Lakurawa* activities had been attributed to the support being provided by traditional authorities. In the first instance, the presence of *Lakurawa* in the border communities was at the invitation of the traditional leaders as a way of providing security and peace and to protect the areas from bandits' invasion. This is a negation of duties and abdication of responsibilities; it is also part of the same pattern of private, or hybrid, solutions to governance problems that all the cases in this book discuss. The Sokoto border communities would see the traditional rulers as "saviours" negotiating their security with militant jihadists or 'Mujahidun' as they are also known – whose presence, of course, is only necessary because of government failure to provide security.

The traditional authorities were also complicit in this drama in other ways – for example, by the involvement of a traditional ruler to the extent of having a custody of *Lakurawa*'s money to the sum of 63 million Naira (Interviews, Magaji, Attahiru, Aliyu, Bello, Shamsu, Imam, 2021). In fact, in Balle, the *Lakurawa*, through the traditional rulers, requested "for money to buy weapons for the newly recruited. Money was given to them" (Interview, Bello, 2021). The involvement of traditional rulers is not new. Even in the overall armed banditry activities, traditional rulers have been clearly fingered in the conflict (e.g., Obi and Iwuoha, 2023).

There is, however, another twist to the story. As the *Lakurawa* grew out of the control of the traditional rulers and other patrons who had brought them for security reasons, these leaders now turned around and tried to contain the problem. In this regard, the most important role of traditional rulers in trying

to control, and curtail, the activities and violent operations of *Lakurawa*, is to try to steer Muslim youth away from joining them and further escalating their ideological recruitment in extremism and radicalization (Alhaji Abubakar Sani Religious Leader in Tagimba, 2021). Although this was done late, and according to (Magajin Balle and Acting District Head, 2021), following government military intervention, it has likely contributed to curtailing the further spread of the *Lakurawa's* extremist ideas and values. The following represent ways through which the traditional authorities had helped to address the problem they had themselves created as stated by Bashir Bello (Youth Leader, 2021):

1. Travelling around all villages and communities addressing the youth against extremist ideas and values;
2. Organising seminars and workshops for youth and religious leaders on how to counter violent extremism;
3. Supporting religious leaders, scholars, Imams, and other clerics to issue sermons, preaching, and other religious activities amongst the youth to counter-violent extremism.
4. Engaging local civil society organisation on campaigns against youth recruitment into youth extremism;
5. Serving as intelligence gatherers for security agencies; and
6. Providing relevant information to government.

The traditional rulers also worked together with religious leaders in this regard. For example, religious leaders from Qadiriyya, Tijjaniyya, and Izala sects preached to the youth against the activities of the *Lakurawa* and the bandits. Similarly, imams conduct Friday sermons against the activities of the *Lakurawa*. But despite these efforts, the *Lakurawa* are still active along these border communities.

7.7 Conclusion

The spreading and entrenchment of any ideological group is never easy to erase – perhaps especially so for extremist ones. The fragility of the Sokoto border communities around Gudu and Tangaza LGAs, both in terms of livelihoods and state presence, meant that initially, the presence of the *Lakurawa* was sought after and very much welcomed. In the early years, around 2016–2017, most villages and community leaders supported the idea of inviting the *Lakurawa* to end the challenges of banditry. The support was born out of the fear of what was happening in Zamfara state and elsewhere in Nigeria, considering how the bandits succeeded in destroying the rural communities and rural economy in many states. This fear was essential to winning the support of the people. At first, the *Lakurawa* won the battle against the *Zamfarawa*

bandits, and a measure of normalcy was returned. Yet not long after, radical motives manifested in a more harmful and devastating manner. This then led the traditional authorities and other local leaders to reverse their position and try out different means of countering the extremist ideas and presence of the *Lakurawa*.

The dynamics of the activities of the *Lakurawa* highlight several important features of Nigeria's current security predicament. First, the case underlines the importance of fragility and the absence of government in pushing communities to organise their own security provision – for example, by hiring violence specialists from elsewhere, including other parts of the Sahel region. Second, the *Lakurawa* underline the risks of self-organised forms of security, including vigilantes and other self-help groups. Although “imported” in response to a specific security threat, the *Lakurawa*'s current reach and activities – including but not limited to the imposition of the *sharia* legal system, collection of *zakat*, lashing violators, killings, recruitment of youth, and their historical connections with some communities in Sokoto since 1999 – are suggestive of the fact that they have become dominant actors in the socio-economic activities of the Sokoto border communities. The insights from this case have implications for the many other Nigerian communities that have resorted to similar methods, several of which are detailed in other parts of this book.

A third feature worth highlighting is the religious dimension of the *Lakurawa* case, and in particular the way in which the *Lakurawa* group has been able to capitalise on the wider rise of Islamic extremist discourses in the Sahel and broader West-African region. It has strengthened their recruitment capabilities and made them even more difficult to counter. Finally, the role traditional and other community leaders have played in this story is worth underlining: pushed to help protect their communities against the looming threat of Nigerian banditry, they brought in the foreign *Lakurawa*; but as they witnessed their erstwhile protectors turning into threats in their own right, they were forced to turn on them instead. Taken together, these features not only suggest that *Lakurawa* operational activities will take a much longer time to erode and eliminate; they also show that security provision in this context is beyond the communities – and their traditional leaders – to address. It is a multi-stakeholder project that requires all relevant actors' consistent engagement – in collaboration, coordination, and cooperation (cf. Mustapha et al., 2020).

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8 Traditional Institutions and the Management of Herder-farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State

J. Shola Omotola

8.1 Introduction

For centuries, the relationships between herders and farmers in Nigeria have been fairly stable and mutually reinforcing. Both were noted for economic interdependence and peaceful coexistence (Tukur, 2013; Blench, 2010). In recent times, however, these positive tendencies have been severely disrupted and supplanted by fierce competition for space, power, and resources, with attendant threats to and/or violations of each other's means of livelihoods, thus creating a relationship fueled by fear and mutual suspicion (Omotola et al., 2019; Omotola, 2020a; Okoli, 2014; Kuna and Ibrahim, 2015; Abbas, 2010). The consequences have been dire: killings, destruction of property worth billions of dollars, humanitarian emergencies including refugees and internal displacement of persons, and rising tensions over the past decade. These have had negative implications for social cohesion and nation-building, as well as the overall security and development of the country (Odoemene, 2017; Egwu, 2015; Adekunle and Adisa, 2010; International Crisis Group, 2017).

Many studies have been devoted to different aspects of the problem: causes, manifestations, geography, management (including official and unofficial responses), actors, and consequences (The Conversation, 2022; Ademola, 2020; Brottem, 2021; Chukwuma, 2020; Nwazor et al., 2021; Okoli and Ogayi, 2018; Omotola, 2020b; Omotola and Hassan, 2015). However, there has been a lopsidedness in the time and space allotted to each of these sub-themes. For instance, greater emphasis has been put on formal, state institutions and actors at the expense of informal, non-state actors, who also play, or at least have the potential to play prominent roles in the management of the conflicts. Moreover, most of the extant studies, with limited exemptions (for example, Bello and Abdulahi, 2021; Akov, 2017) have focused on the problem at the national level, to the detriment of the situation at sub-national and local levels, which are also critical to a much more nuanced understanding of the current trends and dynamics of the problem. Such institutions that have been marginalised in the burgeoning scholarly literature on the subject matter include traditional institutions. Though broader in scope to include traditional religions and festivals, the main emphasis here is placed

on chieftaincy institutions. This study seeks to contribute towards bridging this gap by critically interrogating the changing roles (continuity and change) of traditional institutions in conflict management and peacebuilding regarding herder-farmer conflicts in Nasarawa state, Nigeria. This is a state where the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded no fewer than 107 incidents of pastoralist conflicts with 539 fatalities between 1997 and 2020.

The study is predicated on four research questions: What is the history of the involvement of traditional institutions in the management of herder-farmers conflict in Nasarawa state, Nigeria? In what ways have traditional institutions been responding to the problem of herder-farmer conflict in Nasarawa state, Nigeria? How adequate or otherwise have such responses been and why – what challenges were faced in the process? What lessons can be learned from such responses for sustainable security, development, and peacebuilding in Nigeria? This study engages these questions with a view to underscoring elements of continuity and change in these processes, thereby deepening knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.

The central argument of the study is that traditional institutions, particularly its chieftaincy variant, may have been, wittingly or unwittingly, playing conflicting roles in peace-building and management of conflicts between herders and farmers in the state. This development may not be unconnected to a number of factors: a) lack of clarity in the constitutional roles of traditional institutions; b) undue politicisation, commercialisation, and judicialisation of traditional institutions; and c) declining state capacity and attendant expansion in ungoverned spaces across the country. Despite these challenges, traditional institutions remain relevant in the management of herder-farmer conflicts in the state. Attention must be paid to these issues in repositioning traditional institutions for sustainable security and peace-building in Nigeria.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first briefly highlights the debates in the literature regarding the roles of traditional institutions in conflict management and peacebuilding in Africa. The second presents the methodological framework of the study. This is followed by the analytical fulcrum of the paper dealing with the main findings of the study presented in section three. This section is further divided into five subsections, namely the manifestations of herder-farmer conflicts in the state, the roles and mechanisms of interventions by traditional institutions in managing the conflicts, performance assessment, a discussion of continuity and change in conflict and traditional institutions, and lessons for sustainable security, peacebuilding, and development in Nigeria. The final section recaps and teases out salient concluding issues from the study.

8.2 Traditional Institutions and Conflict Management in Africa

The continuing relevance of traditional institutions in Africa has been a subject of debate over the years. The debate has yielded three contending

perspectives on the subject. One perspective sees traditional institutions in a positive light, as agents of change. The second considers them to be inimical to development and transformation, having been polluted by colonialism and the patrimonial nature of the post-independent state. The third takes a middle course, perceiving them neither to be here nor there (Ajayi, 1992).

Nevertheless, in Nigeria traditional institutions are generally considered important instruments of social organisation and they provide a foundation for social change (Akinwale, 2010). Led by traditional rulers who occupy office either by virtue of heredity or appointment in line with the provisions of native laws and customs, they are usually popular symbols of tradition, culture, customs, and their preservation (Abdulsalam et al., 2020, p. 59). Based on these cultural capitals, including their vast knowledge of the acceptable traditional methods and procedures that have been passed from one generation to another, and a deep understanding of the morals, values, and ethics of the society, traditional institutions in Africa are reputed for playing important roles in conflict management and peacebuilding. On the strengths of these institutional and cultural virtues, Waindim (2018) notes that African societies were able to develop structures that promoted “peace education, confidence-building, peacemaking, peacebuilding, conflict monitoring, conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution.”

Specifically, Abdulsalam et al. (2020, p. 60) document how traditional institutions in Nigeria have been contributing to conflict management and peacebuilding. According to them, they do this by:

reconciling and integrating both parties in conflicts, maintaining law and order in the communities, promoting the use of informal settlements, checks and balances in the society, managing improper communication and interaction breakdowns among their subjects, fostering communal solidarity and unity, engendering peaceful co-existence of people of different religious, ethnic and social background, dealing with pressures from external forces outside the community that results in breeding internal pressures as well as facilitating socio-cultural bridge reconstructions in a post-conflict situation.

(Abdulsalam et al., 2020, p. 60)

Lawal and Audu (2021) explore the role of traditional institutions in conflict management in Africa over the years. They found that such institutions at the onset, that is, during the pre-colonial period, “played a key role in the spread and use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) – in the conduct of wars and consolidation of their hegemony over vast territories.” This alleged complicity, according to them, has changed under the post-colonial era during which “African chiefs have transformed into agents of conflict resolution and disarmament.” Using what they called “age-hallowed cultures and values” of their kingdoms, they were able to “mediate between warring parties to lay

down their arms to embrace peace and reconciliation for the stability of the social order.”

Another study by Ambali et al. (2021), draws insight from the Ife-Modakeke conflict to also highlight the importance of traditional institutions in conflict resolution, notably the use of a committee system, peace advocacy, and peace education. They, however, raised concerns about the efficacy or otherwise of their interventions in the conflicts.

The review of literature as presented above reveals some obvious trends. One, it speaks to the relevance and salient contributions of traditional institutions to conflict management and peacebuilding in African societies over the years. Two, it also highlights elements of continuity and change in the roles of traditional institutions. Third, the review suggests a mixed result in terms of performance evaluation, with elements of success and failure. Yet, the review underscores the continuing relevance of traditional institutions in conflict management and peacebuilding in African societies.

8.3 Study Area, Data, and Methods

Located in North Central Nigeria and popularly referred to as the “Home of Solid Minerals”, Nasarawa state was created out of neighbouring Plateau state on 1 October 1996. It is bordered to the West by the Federal Capital Territory, the North by Kaduna, the South by Benue and Kogi, and to the East by Plateau and Taraba states. The state has an area of 27,117 square kilometers, and an estimated population of 2,532,395 million in 2016. Administratively, the state has thirteen Local Government Areas and sixteen Development Areas. Like most other states in the region, Nasarawa state is home to many minority ethnic groups, many of which fall into the category of what Omotola (2007, 2008) calls “sub-ethnic identities”, notably the Koro and Yeskwa in the far northwest; the Kofyar in the far northeast; the Eggon, Gwandara, Mada, Ninzo, and Nungu in the north; the Alago, Goemai, and Megili in the east; Eloyi in the south; the Tiv in the southeast; the Idoma in the southwest; and the Gade and Gbagyi in the west while the Hausa and Fulani live throughout the state. The institutions of traditional authority are correspondingly diverse, as many of these ethnic communities have their own. The state is also multi-religious, with about a 60 per cent Muslim population, a 30 per cent Christian population, and the remaining 10 per cent are comprised of traditional ethnic religions (Liman and Wakawa, 2012).

Largely agrarian, the economy of the state is predominantly based on agriculture, notably crop farming such as maize, yam, groundnut, millet, soybeans. Animal farming is also practiced, including livestock herding and ranching: cattle, goat and sheep. Though historical, the state has in recent times witnessed the escalation of diverse forms of conflicts, including ethnic and religious conflicts, cattle rustling and rural banditry, herder-farmer conflicts and so on. The ethnic composition of the state, together with the agrarian nature of its economy that not only engenders poverty and inequality, but

also compels the cohabitation of farming and cattle herding, has been one of the main triggers and drivers of herder-farmer conflicts in the state (Omotola, 2021a; Aderinto and Achem, 2019).

The study adopts the descriptive research design. As such, the study deploys triangulation in data collection, exploring both primary and secondary sources to generate quantitative and qualitative data. Primary data were collected using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) administered on purposively selected participants in the selected communities. Quantitative data were derived from secondary sources, notably the ACLED.

The fieldwork administered in late November and early December 2021 covered five purposively selected Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely Awe, Doma, Lafia, Keana, and Obi LGAs. Among other considerations, the five LGAs not only have respectable traditional institutions, but also had the highest number of incidents and/or fatalities in the state as at the time of the study. As evident in the ACLED dataset, these five LGAs together accounted for 91 per cent of the incidents and 93 per cent of the fatalities in herder-farmer conflicts in the state. Lafia LGA assumes more significance beyond its high number of incidents and fatalities. First, it hosts most of the NGOs that played important roles in the peacebuilding process in the aftermath of these conflicts. These include the Catholic NGO, the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC); Centre for Women, Youth, and Community Action (CWYCA); and the Shelter Life Environmental Initiative (SLEI), whose leaderships were enlisted for FGDs/KIIs. Second, it also hosts the head office of Miyetti Allah, the umbrella body coordinating herders in the state. Third, Lafia hosted the highest number of internally displaced persons as a result of the conflicts. The specific communities covered included Ihuman, Imon, Agbashi, Lafia, Migilli, Obi, Keana and Agon, Tundun Kwashi, Ashige, RUGA Settlement at Gidan Madaki, Rijiyai Mai Kogo, Kwaghshiri, Agaza, Kanje, Tundun Kauri, and a few others. They were selected based on the trends, intensity, and consequences of herder-farmer conflicts in those communities in the recent past. Four (4) FGDs were administered per LGA, making a total of 20, each devoted to a homogenised group: farmers, herders, traditional rulers, and CSOs. The same procedures were applied in the administration of KIIs.

Secondary data were collected from books, journals, newspapers and magazines, and online sources. The ACLED was particularly helpful in generating quantitative data. The database offers comprehensive and updated quantifiable data on pastoralist conflicts and other forms of conflicts. The analyses of data were carried out using mixed methods, with both qualitative and quantitative techniques, including content analysis.

8.4 Research Findings

8.4.1 Trends of Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State

Conflicts between herders and farmers have become a recurring feature in Nasarawa state (Amnesty International, 2018; Aderinto and Achem, 2019).

Between 1997 and 2021, for which data on pastoralist conflicts are available from ACLED, the state recorded a total of 107 incidents of such conflicts, which resulted in a total of 539 fatalities. Though characterised by fluctuations, available data reveal that both incidents and fatalities have been on the increase over the years. These incidents and fatalities were recorded between 2010 and 2021 as presented in Figure 8.1.

As shown in Figure 8.1, conflicts between herders and farmers tend to reach their peak in the years preceding general elections. This was particularly the case in 2014, which recorded 19 incidents and 210 deaths. The same trend occurred in 2018, with a whopping 44 incidents of such conflicts and 182 deaths. The figures for 2021 were equally high with 19 incidents and 49 deaths. Generally, the rise of the incidents beginning from 2010 upward is not surprising. As studies have shown, the state experienced “the appearance of ‘new’ pastoralists since 2011, when the Boko Haram insurgency began to hit the Borno communities” (Blench, 2018, p. 7). However, the high number of incidents and fatalities in 2021 can better be explained in terms of the upsurge in the activities of armed banditry in the entire northern parts of the country, particularly the North-West and North Central regions. For the avoidance of doubt, the North Central, comprising of six states (Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, and Taraba), and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as a whole recorded a total of 3,481 conflicts and 13,591 fatalities between 1997 and 2020 (Omotola, 2021a, 2021b).

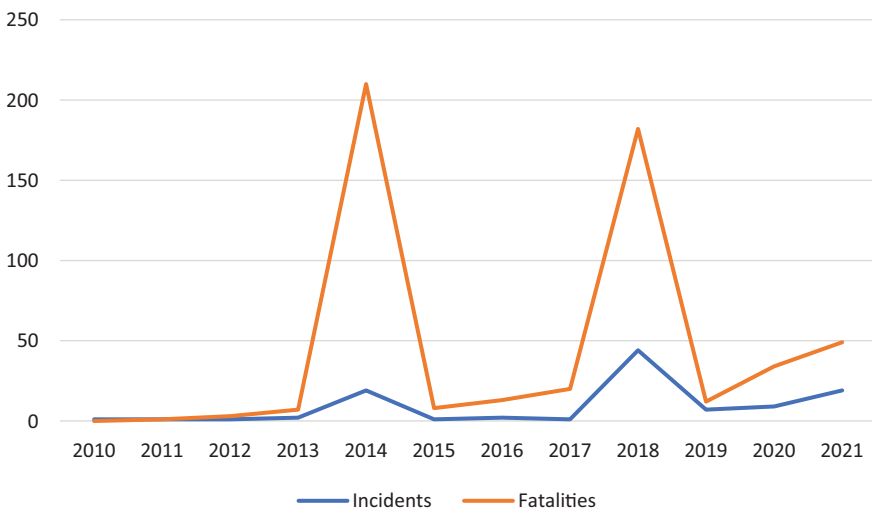


Figure 8.1 Incidents and Fatalities from Farmer-Herder conflicts in Nasarawa State, 2010–2021.

Source: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 2021.

Figure 8.1 also demonstrates the fact that fatalities or deaths are not always a function of the number of incidents. For instance, while 19 incidents in 2014 claimed 210 lives, the same number of incidents claimed 49 lives in 2021. Similarly, 44 incidents resulted in 182 deaths in 2018, which is less than the 210 lives lost across 19 incidents in 2014. Many factors intervene to influence the links between incidents and fatalities. These include the type of weapons deployed by the warring parties, the duration and the timing of the conflicts, as well as the nature of the response(s) to the incident in terms of their timeliness and effectiveness, among others (Omotola, 2020a; 2020b).

In terms of geography, the incidents and fatalities cover almost the entire state. Specifically, ten of the 13 LGAs of the state were directly affected by these conflicts, with varying degrees of incidents and fatalities over the years. The data are presented in Figure 8.2.

As evident in Figure 8.2, incidents and fatalities cover 10 LGAs: Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Keana, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, Obi, Toto, and Wamba. Out of these LGAs, Keana is the most affected for both incidents and deaths, which stand at 30 and 147 over the same period respectively. This is followed by Lafia with 20 incidents and 103 fatalities. While Obi recorded 19 incidents and 63 deaths, Awe had 18 incidents and 81 deaths over the same period. Akwanga was the least affected by both number of incidents and fatalities, having three (3) apiece of each. Again, this buttresses the point made earlier that fatalities are not always directly correlated to the number of incidents.

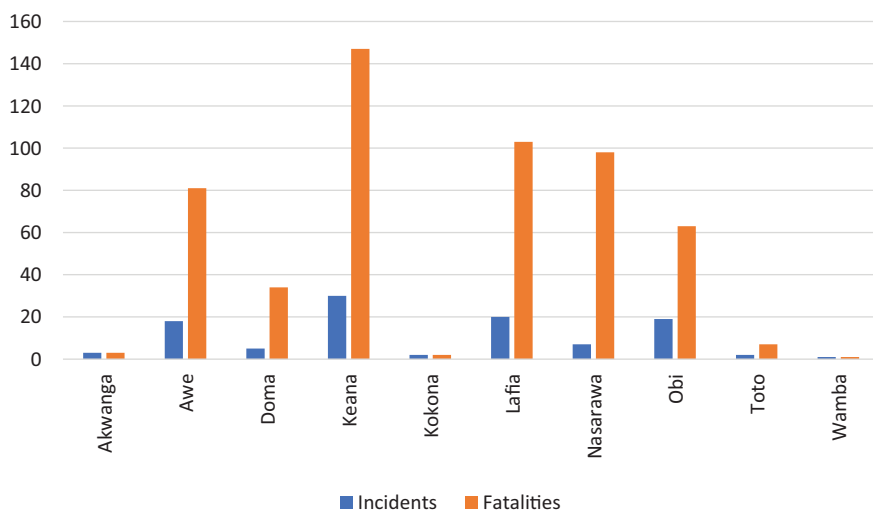


Figure 8.2 Spatial Distribution of Farmer-Herder Incidents and Fatalities per LGA.

Source: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 2021.

8.4.2 The Role of Traditional Institutions in Managing Herder-Farmer Conflicts

Traditional institutions in Nasarawa state are reputed for their involvement in the management of herder-farmer conflicts. Though with varying degrees of success, according to popular perceptions gained through KIs and FGDs in the study areas, this perspective was widespread among participants across the state. One of the participants in Tudun Kwashi, Lafia LGA, for example, expressed this position thus:

Traditional rulers play active roles in managing conflict between farmers and herders in Lafia. They try in the event of a conflict between farmers and herders to convene meetings which in this forum, leaders of both contending parties are admonished on the need for harmonious coexistence. Farmers and herders through regular meetings, cultivate a cemented relationship and understanding. Also, this helps to forestall any conflict.

Another participant in FGD in Lafia expressed a similar perspective thus: "In the history, traditional rulers were very good in their involvement in managing farmer-herders conflict in Nasarawa State. This was one of the reasons that the government had to rely on them for good governance." This perception cuts across the various categories of respondents, notably farmers, herders, traditional institutions, and civil society organisations.

The specific roles played by traditional institutions in the management of herder-farmer conflicts in the state were highlighted by study participants across the state. Firstly, traditional institutions intervened through the convocation of peace meetings, or better still, what some called town hall meetings between farmers and herders in most of the affected communities. Such meetings, some of which were said to be proactive based on early warning signals, and others reactive in response to specific conflict incidents, were considered to have not only reduced the regularity and intensity of conflicts but also assisted in generating familiarity and the development of closer ties and understanding between farmers and herders in many of those communities. One interviewee at the Agaza Palace, Keana in Keana LGA of the state reflects this point succinctly: "frequent meetings make them familiarized with themselves."

Secondly, traditional institutions were also credited with the organisation of informal community policing initiatives across most of the communities in their various domains. The most notable of such initiatives, as attested by participants across the various LGAs, relates to community security arrangements championed by local vigilante groups across various communities. In most of the communities covered by the study, respondents reveal that vigilante groups deployed various strategies in promoting local security, including patrol of community farms and settlements, providing early warning signals to community leaders and stakeholders, as well as collaboration with formal

security apparatuses of the state, especially the police. This initiative has been credited with some success as attested by most participants in FGDs and KII.

In addition, traditional institutions also contribute to conflict management and peacebuilding through the use of committee systems, notably peace and security committee at community levels. One unique element of such committees highlighted by respondents pertains to their inclusiveness with membership drawn across critical stakeholders such as traditional institutions, farmers, herders, formal and informal security agents, religious institutions, civil society organisations, and the community at large. Inclusiveness is credited with promoting a sense of belonging and building trust not just in the peacebuilding process, but also among the various stakeholders. Inclusiveness and trust are critical to the success of any peacebuilding initiative, the lack of which has been identified as one of the main reasons for the failure of policy responses to the problem of herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria. This was particularly the case with respect to the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) policy that ended up generating suspicion and distrust among stakeholders along regional, ethnic, and religious lines. RUGA was designed by the federal government of Nigeria in 2018 as a response to the escalation of herder-farmer conflict, the primary objective of which was to set aside designated portions of land to be developed into grazing reserves across all states of the federation. The idea was widely regarded as a land grabbing device in favour of the Fulani herders by the government of the day. As Ademola (2020, p. 103) captures it, Nigerian stakeholders were at loggerheads over grazing settlements and “affected parties have rejected proposed policies, including cattle colonies, cattle routes, grazing reserves, and Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements” because of “the fear of ethnic domination and suspicion among Nigerian stakeholders.”

Also, traditional institutions in Nasarawa state adopt advocacy for peaceful coexistence and peace education. The emphasis here is said to be on sensitizing the people about the dangers and perils of conflicts and the need to eschew all forms of violence. This is important because “education that promotes a culture of peace has been generally recognized as ‘an important peacebuilding strategy in a post-conflict society.’ Among others, utilities, ‘peace education cultivates the knowledge base, skills, attitudes and values that seek to transform people’s mindsets, attitudes and behaviors that, in the first place, have either created or exacerbated a conflict’” (Castro, nd: 1).

Furthermore, traditional institutions also engender peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders by integrating known herders into their host communities and preventing unknown herders from settling in those communities. This point was poignantly noted by participants drawn from Keana Youth Peace Movement (KYPM), a CSO in Keana LGA, during FGD and KII sessions. The import of this claim, by logical extension, is that for any new herdsmen to be granted a residency permit in local communities, they must first have acquainted themselves with local authorities. The benefits of such a strategy for peacebuilding are many. One, it prevents a situation whereby

the identity of new entrants into the communities are hidden or unknown. Two, it creates the prospects of familiarity between traditional institutions and by extension the host communities and the migrant herdsmen. Three, it can facilitate easy and seamless integration of such herdsmen into their new settlements and surroundings. Four, it makes it possible to track and monitor the activities of such herdsmen.

Moreover, traditional institutions promote conflict management and peacebuilding between herders and farmers in their domains through partnerships and collaboration with formal state institutions. This takes diverse forms. One, based on their extended grassroots networks and connections, and as the custodian of the customs and tradition of their domains, they always have first-hand access to early warning signals and reports from various communities. Most of the participants in FGDs and KIIs across the various communities held that traditional institutions in most cases often shared such early warning signals/reports with security agents and in the process have been able to avert some tensions from degenerating into an outright conflict between herders and farmers. Two, in the eventual outbreak of violence between farmers and herders, traditional rulers were reputed for their quick response by inviting security agents for quick intervention. One interviewee captures this point thus:

Invitations have always been extended to security agents to control the situation. These security agents in the state have demonstrated much effort in handling farmers-herders conflict without supporting any group. For instance, the recent farmers-herders conflict in Ashige (last two weeks) was immediately brought under control by the security agents as invited by traditional rulers in the affected community to avoid loss of lives and property.

In addition, traditional institutions not only host Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) engendered by herder-farmer conflicts in their domains, but they also provide relief materials for them: shelter, clothing, and food. Oftentimes, they do this in collaboration with state institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The role of the traditional ruler of Awe and Obi were particularly highlighted in this respect.

Furthermore, traditional institutions were also said to be involved in post-conflict peacebuilding, especially in the areas of reconciliation and negotiation between farmers and herders across the state. Participants across the study areas emphasised two important aspects in this respect. One relates to the issue of compensation, which was said to be contentious in most cases. The other has to do with the safe return and resettlement of IDPs. In both cases, traditional rulers were said to have been playing decisive roles, including conducting investigations into claims and counterclaims by the warring parties and interacting with formal state institutions in securing assistance for the affected people.

8.4.3 An Appraisal of Performance

The above narratives reveal the roles that traditional institutions have been playing in managing conflicts between farmers and herders in the state; and the mechanisms through which these roles have been executed. A more fundamental concern pertains to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of such roles and mechanisms. We adopt two approaches in addressing this concern: inferences from the trends of conflicts between herders and farmers in the state and public perceptions garnered through FGDs and KIIs.

As evident from the trend analysis of herder-farmer conflicts in the state, there has been an upsurge not just in the number of such conflicts, but also in terms of their frequency and fatalities. At the risk of repetition, having already illustrated with available data in Figures 8.1 and 8.2, the number of incidents rose from one in 2010 to 19 in 2014. It further rose to 44 in 2018 before it fell to 19 in 2021. Over the period between 2010 and 2021, a total of 107 incidents were recorded across 10 LGAs of the state. Although there were fluctuations in between, the trends generally suggest an increase in occurrences (see Figure 8.1). Also, in terms of fatalities, the outlook over the years has been gloomy. Specifically, with zero death in 2010 according to ACLED data, herder-farmer conflicts claimed seven lives in 2013, skyrocketing to 210 in 2014 and 182 in 2018 before falling to 49 in 2021. The spatial dimension of the problem has been scary. Though much more pronounced in some LGAs than others, it is such that it affected ten of the 13 LGA across the state (see Figure 8.2). In the absence of documentary sources regarding the specific roles of traditional institutions in managing herder-farmer conflict in the state in the past, it is difficult to directly input the escalation of the problem to the failure of traditional institutions. Whereas the escalation suggests the inability of traditional institutions in effectively dealing with the problem, deeper issues, particularly state failure and associated contradictions, would appear to have played more fundamental roles in the declining efficiency of traditional institutions.

Public perceptions about the effectiveness or otherwise of traditional institutions in managing these conflicts are mixed. On the one hand, some participants in the FGDs and KIIs were of the view that traditional institutions had lived up to expectations in managing herder-farmer conflicts in the state. Some notable responses in this respect include: "Traditional rulers have adequately responded in managing conflict between farmers and herders"; "The measures taken are very adequate"; "The response is effective hence, our living together in peace", etc. On the other hand, some participants in the FGDs and KIIs held a contrary opinion that traditional institutions had not lived up to expectations. As some of them put it: "These challenges undermine their effective performance in this task of conflict management in the state"; "The response is not adequate hence an increase in the incidence of farmers-herders conflict"; "Traditional rulers' response is not too adequate"; 'Traditional rulers' response is not too adequate as conflict still occurs between farmers

and herders”; “Traditional rulers’ response is not enough as herders are still grazing on people’s farms”; “The response is not adequate as peace has eluded the area.” This mixed assessment, an embodiment of hopes and disappointments, is in tandem with the findings of many extant works of literature on the subject matter (see Ambali et al., 2021).

On the balance, considering trends of herder-farmer conflicts in the state and public assessment of participants in FGDs and KIIs in the study area, the pendulum tends to tilt more on the side of inadequacy and the ineffectiveness of conflict management interventions by traditional institutions in the state. While they remain relevant, having resiliently survived years of official onslaughts against them (Vaughan, 2000, 2006), the changes they have suffered would appear to have persistently undermined their capacity and delivery in conflict management and peacebuilding. This is the focus of the next section.

8.4.4 Continuity and Change in the Management of Farmers-Herders Conflicts

From the foregoing narratives, traditional institutions in the state would appear to have invested so much in conflict management and peacebuilding in conflicts between farmers and herders in the state. Despite their interventions, the conflict continues to subsist and intensify across the state. What factors explain this development? The proposition is that the answer lies to a very large extent in the elements of continuity and change in the nature, form, and character of herder-farmer relations on the one hand, as well as the changing dynamics of traditional institutions in the state and the country at large on the other. Continuity and change in both realms (herder-farmer relations and dynamics of traditional institutions), as will be illustrated shortly, have largely undermined, if not incapacitated traditional institutions in delivering on the promise of their huge potentials and capabilities in sustainably managing herder-farmer conflicts in the state as the repository of the traditions, customs, and values of the people. The main argument of this section is in agreement with extant literature, which underscores the dynamics of the traditional institution. Boege (2011, p. 437) aptly illustrates this thus:

It would be misleading, however, to think of the traditional realm as unchangeable and static. It is far from that. Custom is in constant flux. It changes over time (albeit slowly) and adapts to new circumstances, exposed to external influences, e.g. modern statutory law. Hence, traditional institutions are not some anachronistic relics of the past, but part and parcel of the present. They are here to stay for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, traditional is not the opposite of modern.

At the general level, the form and character of herder-farmer relations, like those of the Nigerian state itself, have drastically transformed over the years (Omotola and Alumona, 2016). Almost everything positive about the relations

between the two otherwise mutually reinforcing groups have given way for negative manifestations: from mutual trust to mutual suspicion, interdependence to unhealthy rivalry and competition, from harmonious to acrimonious relationships, etc., leading to undesirable outcomes: loss of lives and properties and humanitarian emergencies. These have had negative implications for social cohesion and nation-building, as well as the overall security and development of the country (Omotola et al., 2019; Omotola, 2021a, 2021b).

With these developments, it is difficult to pinpoint aspects of the relations, conflicts, and their management by traditional institutions that have remained unaltered over the years. Nevertheless, some elements of continuity were identified by respondents across the state. One, interdependence between farmers and herders remains inevitable through migration, settlement, and economic activities. Second, conflict and cooperation have remained a constant feature of these forms of interdependence. Both parties compete, struggle, and fight over scarce environmental resources, but are interdependent and cooperate on economic activities, especially trading. Third, traditional institutions have also remained key actors/players in these processes of interdependence, with major, but at times conflicting, roles.

But there have been fundamental changes not only in the form and character of the relations between farmers and herders but also in the nature of traditional institutions that have tended to undermine their capacities and effectiveness in managing the conflicts. To begin with, whereas farmers and herders have always competed for scarce resources (land, water, among others) *ab initio*, such competitions were moderated by the existence of grazing routes mutually respected by both parties. Grazing routes are designated grazing paths set aside for the movement of cattle from one part of the country to another. However, due to many factors such as population expansion, infrastructural development (buildings, roads, railways, etc), and farming, some of these routes have been encroached, making it difficult for cattle to move freely about without wandering from these routes. In recent times, however, the situation has changed due to a number of reasons, notably population explosions, infrastructural development (buildings, roads, railways, etc), and environmental scarcity. Both parties trade blame for infringements on their rights. While herders accuse farmers of encroaching, blocking, or farming on grazing routes, farmers accuse herders of grazing on their farms and in the process destroying their crops. The intensification of competition for scarce resources engendered by these and related factors generated an increase in the number of conflicts between the two parties, thereby overstressing the capacity of both formal and informal institutions of the state, especially traditional institutions. This position was widespread among participants in the FGDs and KIIs across all the LGAs covered by the study.

Secondly, in the past, herders in most parts of the state, as participants attested during FGDs and KIIs, practiced mobile pastoralism, a practice whereby herds are moved across short distances in search of food and water. They were not usually settlers in the local communities where they went in

search of pasture and water for their cattle. But in recent times the situation has changed. Many of the herders have permanently relocated, more than ever before, from other states to settle across many LGAs in Nasarawa state. The increase in the number of settler herders in local communities was identified by participants as one of the fundamental changes that have contributed to the escalation in the number and intensity of conflicts between farmers and herders in the state. This development, according to respondents, came with its own associated complications. Among others, it exposed traditional institutions to undue pressure from the herders, many of whom began to sell landed properties to them. For some of the locals, the selling of farmlands to herders by traditional institutions not only reduced available space for farming, but also began to give a false sense of entitlement among the settlers – that is the herders – as if they are natives. This position was widely held among respondents across Obi and Keana LGAs of the state.

Thirdly, contrary to the situation at the onset, participants in FGDs and KII affirmed that herders in the state, like their counterparts in other parts of the country, now carry sophisticated weapons as they herd their cattle. This development was partly blamed for the increasing intensity and casualties often associated with such conflicts in recent times. While herders have been generally blamed for carrying dangerous weapons, including AK47s, the problem seems broader. Respondents also highlighted the effect of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the state, as in other parts of the country. This is in agreement with extant studies that underscore the nexus between various forms of conflict in the state and the proliferation of SALWs. Akpuh and Osah (2019), in particular, argued that while SALWs may not be the main causes of ethno-political conflicts in the state, they contribute to the persistence of the conflicts. A young participant in an FGD session from KYPM corroborates this thus: “Youth use weapons at their disposal to wreak havoc in the community.”

The widespread availability and use of drugs, especially by the youth in the state, like in other parts of the country, was also identified by many respondents across the state as one of the changes affecting the effectiveness of traditional institutions in effectively managing the conflicts. As an interviewee in Tudun Kwashi in Lafia LGA puts it:

In the past, we were living together peacefully with each other. This was due to the fact that we had the fear of God in us. Today, the reverse is the case as the youth have turned to drug intake, drunkenness and smoking habits. The act of drug intake makes them live a bad life of disobedience to parents and elders. In a nutshell, drug intake by the youths is the main cause of this severed relationship between farmers and herders in the area. This is because most of the herders are youths.

In another interview with a traditional leader at Rijija Mai Kogo, Tudun Kauri in Lafia LGA, the drug question was emphasised thus: “In the past, Fulani took

care of their cow by themselves but today, they left tending of their cows to children who take a lot of drugs to get themselves charged.” One of the participants in an FGD session with traditional institutions at Otusho Palace Agbashi, Doma LGA was much more emphatic, especially regarding how drug abuse by the youth is undermining the capacity of traditional institutions to effectively manage conflicts between farmers and herders in the state. As he puts it:

The change between now and the past is as a result of illicit drugs taken by youths. When they take drugs, they engage in destructive activities. Some of them are cultists and upon drugs intake, they commit crimes and destroyed the good relationship built by our fore-fathers. Drug intake makes them despise the advice of traditional rulers.

A few other changes directly related to traditional institutions, which undermine their effectiveness were also highlighted by the respondents. In terms of formal powers, usually a function of constitutional provisions, traditional institutions across the country have suffered some setbacks. Today, “there is no constitutional provision for the enforcement of the resolution reached in arbitration.” This is because “the traditional institutions no longer have full rein of operation, since they have to operate in a context where their authority is limited by Federal, State and even Local Government authority.” Again, “without the means of enforcing the decisions reached in the arbitration, the parties in conflicts may refuse to abide by the terms reached” (Igwubor, 2020, p. 211).

The lack of constitutional empowerments meant that traditional institutions had to rely on traditional and charismatic sources of authority for relevance in their jurisdictions. In most cases, these sources have been highly unstable and fluctuating due to many other internal and external forces, including political interference in almost every facet of life for traditional authorities, most notably the politicisation, commercialisation, and attendant judicialisation of the appointments and coronation of traditional rulers. A respondent alluded to this thus:

The continuity is in doubt because traditional rulers are imposed by the government and most of them live outside the community. This makes it difficult for them to handle conflict.

This finding is in line with the position of Ukase and Abraham (2016, p. 37) in their study of land and chieftaincy in central Nigeria. Chieftaincy disputes, according to them, occur in the region for various reasons:

1. The politicisation of the selection process of traditional rulers;
2. Nepotism and imposition of some unpopular candidates, and intimidation of some elders and some people into accepting such candidates;

3. Discrimination in the selection process, especially against a section of the community contemptuously referred to as strangers, visitors, or settlers as the case may be;
4. Artificial or self-acclaimed classification of clans or sub-clans in a district into royal and non-royal with the deliberate intention of disqualifying some candidates from contesting; and
5. Incessant litigations in courts after the completion of the selection process.

The increasing politicisation, commercialisation, and judicialisation of the appointment of traditional rulers has not been without its contradictions (cf. Onuoha and Enyiazu, this volume). For Ukase and Abraham (2016, p. 37), “the politicization and commercialization of the chieftaincy institution have been a bane to the stability of the institution” in the region. Above all else, this development often ends up polarizing the jurisdiction of affected institutions along diverse fault lines of cleavages, including ethnic, clannish, and religious identities. This position was emphasised during the FGD session at Ihumon Village, Awe LGA where a participant noted:

Most of the herders are Muslims as well as the traditional rulers. On the other hand, farmers are Tivs with few traditional rulers that are Christians.

Again, unlike in the past up to the immediate post-independence period, traditional institutions heavily rely on formal institutions of the state for their existence. Their appointments, coronation and staff of office, promotion/grading, remunerations, and almost every other thing are in the hands of government in most cases through the Ministry of Local Governments and Chieftaincy Affairs. Because they owe their “lives and death” to the government, most, if not all of them are forced to become unduly partisan in line with the dictates of the government of the day at any point in time. As a demonstration of loyalty in exchange for relevance and patronage, mandatory attendance at official and unofficial state functions has become the order of the day. A KII participant in Lafia captures this tendency thus:

The change that occurs from ancient times and today is that in the past, traditional authorities did not depend on the government in administering their enclaves but today, they depend solely on government for almost everything they do thereby, making them political in their responsibilities.

The question of monetisation also featured across a few of the LGAs covered by the study. Some respondents insisted that traditional institutions have monetised the process of conflict management in their domain, making conflicting parties pay some amount of money before their cases could be heard.

This point came across very strongly among participants at Imon, Adudu Chiefdom of Obi LGA of the state.

Finally, another important change, albeit an offshoot of a combination of the foregoing changes and factors, limiting the effectiveness of traditional institutions in managing conflicts between farmers and herders, concerns the declining respectability and legitimacy of traditional institutions. The crisis of confidence meant that for many of the respondents, traditional institutions are considered part of the problems to be solved, rather than a solution.

Without any doubt, the aforesaid changes have weakened the role and effectiveness of traditional institutions in sustainable conflict management and peacebuilding. However, traditional institutions remain relevant today largely due to two main reasons. The first has to do with their cultural capital not just as custodians, but also as the managers of traditional customs and traditions in their domains. The second is not unconnected to declining state capacity and the attendant crisis of legitimacy (Omotola and Alumona, 2016a, 2016b), which has continued to hamper productivity and efficiency in almost all aspects of national life.

8.4.5 Lessons for Sustainable Security, Peacebuilding, and Development

There are important lessons to be learned for sustainable security, peacebuilding, and development. What is generally required is to pay increasing attention to the changes that have occurred in the structure and organisation of traditional institutions and how such changes have affected their capacities and effectiveness in responding to conflicts between herders and farmers in the state. It is also very important to address the root causes of the conflicts as highlighted in the study.

More specifically, respondents highlight some salient issues for sustainable management of the problem by traditional institutions. One, early warnings were considered to be very critical to effective management of conflicts, especially in terms of preventive diplomacy. This is predicated upon the fact that traditional institutions as custodians of customs and tradition and by virtue of their extended local networks and connection occupy a vantage position regarding access to such signals and reports and should therefore always make such available in time to relevant stakeholders for prompt processing and response. Two, emphasis was placed on the need for granting formal powers to traditional institutions through constitutional provisions. Associated benefits of such powers include the potential for greater legitimacy derivable from the combination of traditional and legal-rational authorities. Others include the need for greater synergy between traditional institutions and formal institutions of the state, especially security agencies; greater interface between traditional institutions and other non-state actors such as CSOs, religious leaders, and the media; the need for expanded space and roles for non-state actors in the management of herder-farmer relations; and the sustenance of existing initiatives that work. These include the use of

committee systems based on inclusiveness, strengthening of local security and community policing initiatives, especially vigilantes, and continuing collaboration between formal and informal security outfits.

The study reveals that the sustainable management of these conflicts and peacebuilding transcends what traditional institutions alone can handle. Other actors are critical. The state, through security agencies, needs to pay better attention to the question of late deployment, early withdrawal, or reduction in the number of security agents deployed for peacekeeping in affected areas. Participants in the FGDs and those interviewed noted this challenge across the state. This has turned out to be inimical to sustainable peacebuilding. The lesson here is that there is a need for early and adequate deployment of security agents not just in number, but also in terms of the equipment, including communication gadgets and motivation (welfare) required to deliver. The government should not always be in a hurry to withdraw security agents on such missions at the slightest sign or sight of ceasefire by the warring parties.

The management of returnees and its processes are also very pertinent for sustainable peacebuilding. Issues of post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation, security, empowerment, and confidence building are very important. A situation whereby IDPs hurriedly returned to their communities, either voluntarily or not, only to be confronted with the gory pictures of their destroyed and/or burnt houses and properties is not healthy for peacebuilding. In some of the LGAs visited for the fieldwork, especially Awe and Obi, this was the situation. Houses and schools destroyed remained unattended years after. Yet, most of the returnees claimed that they returned empty-handed, meaning there was little or nothing for them to restart a new life upon return to their communities. If IDPs are to return and start their lives afresh without looking back into their past travails, there is a need to provide each affected household with some start-up capital, at least. All that these returnees received, according to them, were promises that never materialised.

Closely related to the above is the fact that some of those who chose to return claimed that they did so not because the environment was conducive for that. Rather, they made the hard choice between staying in the IDP camps and dying of hunger and starvation, or risking returning to their communities to die there and, if lucky, start whatever they could to eke out a living. The main lesson here is that both state and non-state actors need to do more in their management of the IPD camps. If they had given adequate attention to the welfare needs of IDPs, including security, food, and had met health and sanitary requirements, the premature urge to return to their communities, despite unfavourable conditions that could endanger their lives and engender future conflicts, could have been avoided.

Sustainable peacebuilding also demands investment in demilitarisation, especially of society. This is important in the wake of not just the massive proliferation and use of SALWs in these conflicts, but also the escalating rate of crime across the state. As the findings of the study reveal, previous efforts

aimed at tracking and withdrawing SALWs have not been productive. All actors need to do more in this regard.

There is a need for sustainable peace education through CSOs, media, religious houses (Churches and Mosques), and schools. The peace message should emphasise the need to eschew violence and embrace peaceful coexistence. The question of the accountability of all actors is also important.

The various abuses levied against security agents, for example, including corruption, extortion, and human rights violations, may not be unconnected to the absence of efficient accountability mechanisms. For the security sector, there is a need to deepen security sector reform to make security agents much more attuned to the values and ideals of security provisioning in a democratic society. There is a need for capacity building in the theories, principles, approaches, and practice of conflict management and peacebuilding, not only for traditional institutions but also all relevant stakeholders.

8.5 Conclusion

The chapter engaged the roles of traditional institutions in managing conflicts between herders and farmers in Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Specifically, it placed emphasis on the history, roles, performance, and lessons of the involvement of traditional institutions in managing these conflicts for sustainable security, development, and peacebuilding in the state. It also underscored salient elements of continuity and change in these processes. As the chapter reveals, traditional institutions have been playing, wittingly or unwittingly, conflicting roles (positive and negative) in peacebuilding and the management of conflicts between herders and farmers in the state. Nevertheless, traditional institutions remain relevant in the management of herder-farmer conflicts in the state. The chapter highlighted factors rooted in continuity and change responsible for this development and offered actionable recommendations for improvement. The study has research implications, notably the possibility of replication to ascertain the extent of conformity, or otherwise, with the situation in other states of the federation.

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9 Traditional rulers and the Amotekun Regional Security Network in the South-West

Oludayo Tade

9.1 Introduction

The Western Nigeria Security Network also known as *Amotekun* was a response to the changing nature of insecurity threats which the residents in southwestern Nigeria started experiencing around 2019. It was not that the region had no criminal occurrences particularly, violent crimes like armed robbery, rape, cult clashes, and criminal gangsterism, among others, however, kidnapping took a new turn in the year 2019 which made travelling on major highways a deadly enterprise and no one was immune from kidnapping. Kidnappers pounced on lecturers, monarchs, civilians, commuters, clergy, and were even daring to the extent of attacking the convoy of the Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu despite the complement of security which he enjoyed. He was, however, lucky that his security aides repelled the attack (Akinrefon and Ojomoyela, June 11, 2019). More so, the 2019 rise in security threats across the region did not absolve traditional rulers from being kidnapped. On 26 November 2020, a first-class monarch in Ondo State, the Olufon of Ifon, Israel Adewusi, was attacked by suspected kidnappers and killed on his way back from the state council of Obas' meeting (Johnson, 2020). On 14 April 2021, unknown gunmen stormed the palace of Obadun of Ilemeso-Ekiti, Oba David Oyewumi and, without any respect for the traditional ruler, dragged him out of his throne into a waiting car (Ogunje, 2021).

It was consequent upon these attacks that the stakeholders in the southwestern region called on the state governors to convoke a security summit where all stakeholders gathered to discuss the state of insecurity and what should be done to stem the tide. Scholars like Funk (2012) had opined that those efforts towards building peace must involve local actors because fighting insecurity, crimes, and other social problems should be able to unearth local strategies towards neutralizing peculiar security threats. The possible line of thought was that although criminal elements are within the region, external criminals are obviously invading the zone to explore other opportunities with serious implications for peace and economic development in the region. This is why traditional rulers and other traditional institutions moved to intervene and activate traditional social control mechanisms in collaboration with the

political leadership within the region. *Amotekun* is populated by hunters, Oodua People's Congress (OPC), and other vigilante groups who deploy traditional mechanisms to control crime and maintain peace. Among others, the security outfit is to collaborate with formal security agencies such as the Army and more closely with the police in fighting crimes and criminality, disarming unauthorised persons in possession of arms, undertaking routine day and night patrols on highways, remote areas, forests, and inland waterways, and using local intelligence gathering and use of technology to fight crimes.

While studies have shown the contributions of traditional hunters, deities, and monarchs, among others, to peacebuilding and security from colonial to post-colonial Nigerian societies (Ani and Ojajorotu, 2018; Tade and Olaitan, 2015), empirical study about the evolving nature of security and the role of legally backed traditional structures like *Amotekun* is still in its infancy. Even more crucial for this study is the question of the involvement of traditional rulers in structures such as *Amotekun* that is created by sub-national governments (state governments) based on the local traditional systems of security of the people. To date, there is no empirical study that interrogates the place of traditional rulers in the *Amotekun* intervention and its implications for the operationalisation of the regional security outfit as well as peace and security in the southwest region. A study by Nwoko (2021) only interrogated *Amotekun* as a self-help initiative which emerged due to the failure of the federal government who controls the central police structure to fulfil the social contract to protect the lives and properties of its citizens.

Few existing works have been focused on the prospects and anticipated challenges in relation to legal backing of *Amotekun* (Nwoko, 2021; Odewale and Lamidi, 2020), and how its founding has been interpreted as targeting the Fulani herders and its influence in the formation of other regional outfits (Oxford Analytica, 2020). Against this background, this paper sought answers to the following questions: what is the place of Yoruba traditional rulers in the operationalization of *Amotekun* and how does their inclusion or exclusion shape the impact of the regional security body in the area of peace and security?

Contemporary realities, however, show that traditional rulers are also victims of crime, a rare phenomenon in the days of yore when traditional rulers were feared and considered sacred and representative of the gods of communities. Traditional rulers as heads of traditional institutions are important for intellectual probing on security because, since the precolonial times, they have been saddled with the duties of protecting the lives of their communities. Also, they are a bank of experience in relation to security and traditional mechanisms of social control.

The balance of this paper is structured into four sections: The first reviews related literature on the traditional institutions and the roles that kings played in the security of their communities from pre-colonial times, underscoring the variations which have occurred and the factors underlying it; two deals with methodology detailing how data was collected, while the third section

presents the findings followed by discussion of the same and then, fourth, conclusion.

9.2 Review of Related Literature

Traditional institutions, which are headed by kings, make contributions to peacebuilding, peace-making, and the security of lives and properties. These contributions date back to the pre-colonial era which is often described as the golden era for traditional rulership and their institutions. From Republic of Benin, Ayo (1986) reported that the pre-colonial era was the golden era for traditional aristocrats. Scholars have accounted for the historic feats recorded by traditional institutions in precolonial Nigeria (Aghemelo and Osumah, 2009; Aghahowa and Atuanya, 1996). Traditional rulers were administrative heads of independent kingdoms like Oyo empire, Ijebu kingdom, Kanem Borno empire, and Ife Kingdom, among others, before colonization. They influenced politics and formulated and implemented policies together with their council of chiefs. As it was noted in some other parts of West Africa, colonialism birthed a change in the nature of traditional rulership in that rather than serving their people, they were conscripted to serve and worked for the interest of the colonial powers. Indeed, traditional rulers had constitutional recognition under the colonial rule, particularly in the 1946 and 1951 constitutions, while the independence constitution permitted traditional rulers to be members of National Assembly. Consequent upon this was the establishment of House of Chiefs in the west, the north, and the east.

The prestige which traditional rulers had and enjoyed with their subjects was diminished through humiliation, deposition, and intimidation (Ikelegbe and Oyibo, 1996). This marked the intensification of clashes between the kings and their subjects. Associated with this is the rise of educated elites and assertive nationalism which contributed to the erosion of the acceptance that they had enjoyed. Indeed, the discourse was around the undemocratic nature of traditional rulers, which was viewed as ascriptive, personalised, and antithetical to democratic values. (Tonwe, 1998). This may have been politically motivated as the case between the late Premier of Western Nigeria, Chief Obaafemi Awolowo and the Oba Akenzua of Benin around 1955, during which Awolowo advised the king to distance himself from politics before it became a disadvantage. This was due to the role played by the king in the formation of the Benin Delta People's Party, a platform put in place to canvass the creation of the mid-western region. The realisation of such a goal would however diminish the influence of the Premier Awolowo in the area (Uyulawa, 2007). At independence, then, political elites eroded the significance and symbolism of traditional rulership and assigned to them a ceremonial and advisory role. For example, under the military rule, and to date, traditional rulers enjoy being appointed as Chancellors of universities. Later, the seat of traditional rulers became increasingly politicised (Agbakwuru, 2012). Before then, the promulgation of Land Use decree of 1978 reduced

the political and economic bases of traditional rulers. This was followed by advice by the Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida military administration, which advised traditional rulers to distance themselves from politics (Aghahowa and Atuanya, 1996).

Chizea and Osumah (2015) examined the role of traditional rulers in the fight against insecurity. The authors aver that traditional rulers had prospect to contribute to security. Indeed, Akinwale (2010) advocated the synergy between traditional means of social control and modern means of social control to neutralise threats of violence and insecurity in Nigeria. In relation to their usefulness in peace and security, Aghedo and Asumah (2012) noted that traditional rulers have been useful in mediating over communal clashes, settling (land) disputes, and promoting social cohesion. But there are various issues surrounding what they could handle. For instance, Aghahowa and Atuanya (1996) raise issues around the scope of what traditional rulers could handle, and argued that traditional institutions would be unable to handle issues of terrorism and banditry. They further argued that some traditional rulers are co-creators of these security threats.

Despite the above, the potential that traditional rulers have in mitigating security threats has been pointed out in some existing studies. For instance, traditional rulers can mobilise against commoditised kidnapping in their domains through placing traditional curses on perpetrators. This was the case in Benin when the king led other traditionalists to place curses on human traffickers, cultists, and killers (Ebegbulem, 2018) and they reported that the curse had positive impacts on the reduction of crime rates. Apart from this, they also have the capacity to mobilise community landlords to fight crimes and threats occurring in their domain. They are consulted during intercommunal clashes including chieftaincy matters, as well as customary law. They also mediate in conflict situations. They settle communal disputes (see Tade and Olaitan, 2015; Chizea and Osumah, 2015). Their influence could also be seen in mediating in industrial disputes involving government and labour unions in Nigeria and they were critical actors in reaching the amnesty deal between Niger-delta militants and the federal government, which eventually brought peace to that troubled region of the country.

In their paper, Bagayoko, Hutchful, and Luckman (2016) examined hybridity in security governance in Africa which encompass formal and informal and state and non-state security actors, and concluded that the traditional system also contains certain forms of power hierarchies which may not work for everyone, particularly the weak, the vulnerable, and the excluded. They noted that states operate alongside non-state violent groups, challenging its (state's) monopoly use of force, while other non-state groups cooperate with the state. Security sector reforms, which have been largely driven by formal arrangements, have proved difficult to implement and have not achieved much. The hybrid system empowers local chiefs, traditional and religious institutions, rebel groups, warlords, and mafia groups (see also Jarstad and Belloni, 2012). A hybrid security system, according to Bagayoko et.al

(2016:7) “is characterized by the coexistence and interaction of multiple state and non-state providers of security, as the state shares authority, legitimacy and capacity with other actors, networks and institutions across the formal/informal divide.” As observed by Helmke and Levitsky (2004) the interactions between formal and informal agencies can be analysed as complementary, mutually accommodating, competing, and substituting.

While an informal security and justice sector have crept into the security sector reforms, there is little understanding of how this works. We also know less about the extent to which both formal and informal structures blend to ensure safety. As anticipated by Bagayoko et. al. (2016, p. 3), disorder and conflict will lead to the emergence of new forms of authority and political regulation with an African root. Undoubtedly, new forms of security threats, such as highway kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, regional threats, and a collective feeling of insecurity led to the formation of new security outfit known as Western Nigeria Security Network also known as *Amotekun*. *Amotekun*'s emergence is partly due to the failure of the centralised policing system to deliver security and promote law and order. It is the lacuna created by the policing system that is being filled by this “home-grown” indigenously developed security outfit in western Nigeria.

Ekeh (1975), in his famous analysis of two publics, pointed out how the second public comprises of traditional authorities, local communities, kingship groups, and religious faith organizations. These groups constitute what could form security and justice institutions in communities. Indeed, the functionality of formal structures of security systems has been argued to be dependent on how the informal institutions or traditional institutions operate because they are intricately linked. This is what is represented in the way *Amotekun* has been structured. It comprises of all informal traditional security organizations which fused together with a legal backing, which formalised its existence. Traditional security providers use historical norms and traditions (charms) and because people know the significance of the dos and don'ts, they enjoy more recognition than the state and are believed to be more efficient where state is absent. Some of the traditional security systems include vigilantes, local militias, or community protectors like Sungungu in Eastern Africa or the Bakassi boys (Pratten, 2008). While aforementioned studies have mentioned conditions which threw up non-state security systems, none has examined a regional framework supported by traditional institutions like the *Amotekun*.

The importance of traditional mechanisms has been stressed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) (OECD, 2007, 2010) that although “traditional systems may not be recognizable in western states, may still perform the same functions and generate the same output as formal state institutions. Respect and willingness to accommodate such system... can be helpful in restoring governance.” According to Santos (2006, p. 61), “today, the recovery of the traditional in Africa, far from being a non-modern

alternative to western modernity, is the expression of a claim to an alternative modernity." This is true, as the traditional approaches have been attested to be context-specific and have more ways of transforming conflict and restoring orderliness. Using them, therefore, could usher in more fruitful ways of handling insecurity, crimes, and conflicts of varying degrees and dimensions. Letting us know the importance of tradition in laying foundation for peace, Lederach (1995) noted that "understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in and must respect and draw from the cultural knowledge of a people." Just as peace has cultural dimensions, crimes and conflict have the same and must be explored to have desired solutions.

9.3 Methodology

This research employed exploratory design and was conducted in southwest Nigeria. Of the six states in the region, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo states were purposively selected for this study because they have been more prominent in the activities of the *Amotekun* Corps. To reach participants both through formal and informal channels were utilised. Formal involved sending introductory letters to the headquarters of *Amotekun* in the three selected states to seek approval and permission to interview critical stakeholders. While some worked through the letters, informal sources of reaching the leadership of the Corps proved more useful for this research, partly because it is a new agency and trust has to be established to known people. Hence, participants were reached through purposive, network, and convenience sampling techniques.

Three (3) State Commanders of *Amotekun* in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo were reached through a network of relations, four traditional rulers who are on the Board of *Amotekun* (one in Oyo state and 3 from Osun state to unpack how their roles have shaped the security in their respective states); three commandants of the Vigilante Association of Nigeria (one from each of Oyo, Osun, and Ondo to understand their relationship with traditional rulers and how these impacts on their ability to discharge their duties and achieve desired results); three leaders of Hunters' Association and three members of the Oodua People's Congress. Also, two *Amotekun* Corps members were interviewed and the head of Homeland and Security in the headquarters of Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission in Ibadan was reached and interviewed.

These interviews were conducted within the desired spaces of the participants usually in their offices and were recorded with digital recorders, while the research assistant took notes and pictures (where necessary) while the interviews lasted. The interviews ranged between 30 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes in length. Secondary data sources were used to complement the primary data collected including archival documents, national dailies, and journal articles. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber and were checked for accuracy. The emergent data was then coded

to identify emerging themes around the research questions and was thematically analysed. In what follows, I present the data in line with the themes along the lines of: factors underlying conceptualization of *Amotekun*, and the inclusion of traditional rulers in the *Amotekun* structure.

9.4 Conceptualising *Amotekun*: Precipitating Factors

In this part of this paper, an attempt is made to elaborate on the influencing conditions which catalysed the establishment of *Amotekun*. These factors are: rising insecurity/fear of insecurity, threat to the political legitimacy of sitting Governors, the need to protect the economy of southwest, and the rise in the call for regional protection from external invasion.

Before the attack on the governor alluded to in the beginning of this paper, informal stakeholders within the region had raised alarm about the invasion of the region by those they called external “terrorists” through the northern part of the country. Since the forests have become the hibernating fort of kidnapers, they called on the governors to rise up above partisan politics and save their people. The notion of politics is an important factor in decision making in Nigeria. Political affiliation can impede or drive development initiatives. Party politics usually intervenes in what are defined as criminal acts and influences how resources will be mobilised to neutralise the problem. This is what is called the political will of office holders. This political will becomes important for analysis because at the time *Amotekun* was formed, five of the six Governors in the southwestern Nigeria were of the incumbent ruling party at the centre, the All Progressives Congress (APC) while one belonged to the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Oyo State was the only PDP state, and is equally affected by kidnapping and farmer-herder clashes which have led to the loss of lives. However, despite party differences, data extracted from the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN Commission) indicated that the governors decided to work together to earn the trust of their people, retain their legitimacy, and defend the collective geographical boundary of western Nigeria. The position to “do something” to the problems of criminality (kidnapping, robbery by bandits, and Fulani herdsman invasion/farmer-herder violence) was put forward by the governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu after speaking with the press on the attack by suspected kidnapers on his convoy:

I have encountered them (kidnappers) before, so security issue is not limited to the masses alone. My convoy was targeted but my security people shot into the air to scare them away. They fled into the bush on Akure-Ibadan road. We, as governors, will do something about the issue. We are discussing with the Federal Government. It is real that travellers are not safe on the road. There’s an urgent need to stem the growth of criminal activities and banditry in our region and, as leaders, we must be proactive in our approach to addressing the issue.

(Akeredolu quoted in Akinrefon & Ojomoyela, June 11, 2019)

While the governor promised to work together and ensure the security of their people, the modality had not been decided but traditional rulers who are custodians of culture and tradition were not quiet. They also vowed to flush criminals out of their respective domains in the region. To them, traditional means of social control should be used in stemming the tide of insecurity. The monarchs held meetings with their respective governors on the way forward. The Alara of Aramoko Ekiti, Oba Olu Adeyemi, said,

We must deploy all, including traditional approach. We, monarchs, should support any genuine means secretly, openly, overtly and covertly. What is bad is bad and should be rejected. That is our position. Whatever we have, whatever powers, traditional powers inclusive, must be deployed.

(Punch Interview/June 8, 2019)

Some traditional rulers were prompt in their responses to the kidnapping threat within their domains. Some activated the vigilante committee like the Gbogan Rapid Response Team (GRRT), some organised hunters, while others constituted their local/community security outfit, bringing together representatives from different existing traditional outfits to watch over the troubled spots. This was the case in Iwo in Osun State, where the monarch organised hunters to mount surveillance on the Iwo-Osun axis of the highways where people were being kidnapped. In Iwo Osun State, local hunters were used prior to the formation of *Amotekun* to reduce the incidence of kidnapping. In an interview with the Punch newspaper, the Oluwo of Iwo stated:

When the attacks became rampant, especially along Osogbo-Iwo road, I summoned all traditional rulers in my domain. Since then, I have been meeting with them regularly. We also pay close attention to movement into and out of our domain here. It was a difficult time for us then; but we were able to stem the tide then. I also provided patrol vehicle for security men. My border stretches to Ibadan, Ikire, Ede and Ejigbo axis.

(Oluwo/Punch Newspaper interview/June 8, 2019)

Another monarch in Osun State also said:

When two people were kidnapped in my area last month, I held meeting with our hunters. They have been given marching orders. I won't allow such invasion here; but we need cooperation and support of government to further secure our area. We will resist them because our people can no longer move freely. They cannot go to their farms and the situation is becoming worrisome.

(Punch Interview/June 8, 2019)

It is important to note the use of the word “invasion” by the monarch. It is deliberate and this is based on their understanding that, though there are threats from within, the external dimension to the problem, if not attended to, was capable of causing social problems.

Another Monarch who is on the governing board of *Amotekun* said:

I instituted a security committee that enumerated households or carried out what I call vulnerability survey to determine the security needs in the community. The committee counselled and each household was levied five thousand naira only to pay and equip those recruited for the community protection.

(Olubosin of Ifetedo/October 31, 2021)

Apart from the monarch, the Agbekoya Farmers Association also promised to mobilise their strong men to fight criminals invading the region. It was at this point of collective insecurity that the security summit was called in Ibadan, Oyo State in 2019, where state governors in the region, traditional rulers, farmers, herders, hunters, and vigilante associations, among others, attended and they brainstormed on the shape that the security firmament of the region will take. What this shows is that the traditional institutions have been involved in the security discourse and taking steps to maintain peace and security within their domains despite their constitutional limitations. While they still push for more constitutional empowerment, the law establishing *Amotekun* places them on the governing board with responsibilities.

In Ogun state Security Network Agency Law (2020, p. 5), for instance, the composition of the governing board of the security agency, that is, *Amotekun*, comprised of “a retired law enforcement or Military Officer not below the rank of a Colonel or its equivalent in the other security services. It also has the commissioner of police or his representative, one member representing the different armed forces of Nigeria operating in the state, comptroller of customs, comptroller of Nigeria Immigration service in the state, the State commandant of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps in the state, executive secretary Ogun state Security Trust Fund or his representative, representative of community development association, one member representing the State Council of Obas and the Ogun State *Amotekun* Corps Commander.” This same law set out the duties of this security outfit to include: gather, document, evaluate, and analyse data and information to convert to actionable for tactical, operational, and strategic goals; share intelligence about crime, crime in progress, suspicious activities, criminal suspects, and other criminal activities; collaborate with similar security agencies in others states, including but not limited to Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo to deter kidnapping, terrorism, destruction of livelihood, criminal damage of property, cultism, highway robbery, and any other criminal activities, and to assist the police in apprehending such criminals; protect lives and properties; ensure that all persons travelling along highways, major roads, remote areas, hinterland, forest, and

inland waterways are free to participate in their normal social and economic life without fear or hindrance; and assist the police and other security agencies to carry out any other lawful activity for maintaining law and order in the state.

9.5 Security Threat Will Affect Economy: How Desire of Economic Integration Births *Amotekun*

One of the factors which led to the formation of *Amotekun* Security Corps was to ensure security with a view to protecting the economy of the region. Insecurity in any region, place, or community drives away investors. Prior to 2019, the southwest had established an agency to drive economic integration of the region in order to ensure that they can tap-balance their strengths and boost the economy of the region. This agency is known as Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) commission. The DAWN commission played a critical role in mobilizing critical stakeholders to hold a security summit in June 2019 and came up with a communique after three days of technical sessions. The outcome of the security meeting was what led to the establishment of Western Nigeria Security Network, originally intended to be called the Southwest Security Network. It was initially thought that it could be collectively managed through the pooling of funds of owner states together (KII/Male/DAWN Commission). But since the constitution does not make room for regional security structure, each state was advised to go to her legislature to pass a law establishing the state security network agency. Consequent upon this, each state reverted to her law-making chamber to pass a law establishing the security outfit for each state, but their operation is still networked due to their geographical contiguity and the ideology which birthed it. In a key informant interview, the head of the Homeland and Security at DAWN Commission explains:

The idea of *Amotekun* security emerges from DAWN Commission. Security threats will affect economy of the region and that was the reason behind the security summit which gave birth to the *Amotekun* Corps.

(KII/DAWN Commission/Male/October 2020)

Since it was designed to be an indigenous security outfit to leverage on traditional, as well as modern forms of fighting crime, other critical partners such as hunters, vigilante associations, Oodua People's Congress (OPC), and other traditional security outfits were part of the design. Data showed that the Governors were spurred to stand up for their people as the constitutionally recognised Chief Security Officer (CSO) of their states. This was stated by a participant:

The governors are the CSO of their states and sit at the state capital while the Obas claimed that they are the CSOs of their domains and

their territories. For this, a role was couched out for the traditional rulers. So, in some states like Osun, traditional rulers are picked from each Senatorial district of the state to be on the *Amotekun* board. I refer to them as silent key stakeholders because they are not given a clear constitutional role but they play very important role in the community.

(KII/DAWN Commission/Male/October 2020)

If traditional institutions were by design part of those who conceptualised *Amotekun*, what roles are assigned to traditional rulers (kings) in the operationalisation and implementation of *Amotekun* security outfit?

9.6 “Silent Key Stakeholders”: Traditional Rulers in the Operation of and Implementation of *Amotekun*

As explained earlier, traditional rulers were part of the first set of stakeholders who advocated a security summit and the use of traditional mechanisms of social control to fight invasions of the region by criminal elements. Some of these traditional rulers had mobilised hunters and some local traditionalists as security even before the setting up of *Amotekun* to protect areas of their influence from kidnappers and criminal Fulani herders. It therefore should be a natural course of action for them to be included as one of the drivers of *Amotekun*. The law that sets up *Amotekun* recognised one “monarch representing the State Council of Obas” on the Board of *Amotekun*.

Being at the grassroots, the importance of traditional rulers cannot be overstated because crimes are local, and it is often easy to spot and identify trouble makers within each community using the structures put in place by the traditional rulers which can be useful in improving the security of the communities and state. Moreover, one of the Monarchs on the board of *Amotekun*, in an interview, disclosed the centrality of traditional rulers in improving security through the deployment of traditional mechanisms of social control. “We use traditional social control but because of the mythologies surrounding it we can’t reveal what it entails.” (IDI/Orangun Oke-Ila/27/10/2021). They perform other functions and give necessary guidance and advisories where and when necessary.

Apart from sitting on the board of *Amotekun*, traditional rulers are involved in the recruitment process to ensure that only people who have something to do with security are recruited. Because they are based in communities, traditional rulers can get information concerning individuals who have applied to work with *Amotekun* and, based on the information concerning the applicant, advise the recruitment committee rightly. They also sign engagement forms of those willing to work in *Amotekun*. Explaining their level of involvement in *Amotekun*, the Orangun of Oke-Ila in Osun state said:

We were involved in the process because of our traditional roles in the community as well as in security matters. We own our territories and

closer to the people to protect them in all ramifications. *Amotekun* is constituted with local hunters, herbalists among others because these groups of people were consulted before the build-up to *Amotekun* Corps establishment.

(IDI/Orangun Ile-Ila/Osun state/October 27, 2021)

Adding to the above, the Olubosin of Ifetedo, another Monarch on the Osun Board of *Amotekun*, stated that:

I am a member of the governing Board of Osun state security and this gave me the opportunity to be part of the recruitment process of *Amotekun* Corps. And I thank God that so far, *Amotekun* has been efficient which was testified to by one of my chiefs yesterday during a stakeholders' meeting in the palace.

(Interview/Olubosin of Ifetedo/October 31, 2021)

The Olufi of Gbogun has this to say too:

Obas are just there for moderation and cautioning of every parties involved. The board which we are part of are not the executive arms rather we are just to help interpret government policies.

(KII/Olufi/ November 12, 2021)

One could infer that the involvement of traditional rulers in the *Amotekun* Corps has contributed to the framing and execution of the ideas which threw up the Corps. They are part of the cleaning process in that they are one of those who can attest to the moral quality of anyone recommended to work as *Amotekun* Corps and their signature implies that such a person is known and can be trusted with the security of people. They also consult with other stakeholders within and around the state on how to firm up security and get other informal security organizations such as vigilantes, OPC, hunters and Agbekoya, among others, to buy into the *Amotekun* scheme. A monarch during an interview expatiated on this thus:

Consultation is important if you want to succeed as a king and I see it as a major role of traditional rulers. You must consult widely because you get vital information through your sources. In fact, most of the existing traditional security organisations were consulted for the build up to the establishment of the security outfit.

(Orangun Oke-ila/Interview/October 27, 2021)

Apart from the above, traditional rulers constitute an important part of the intelligence gathering machinery for the operation of the Corps. They are able to do this because they have committees and relate with their people who bring critical security information which can be worked upon to improve the

safety of all members of the particular community and state. It follows that each of the communities which constitute the domains of influence of the traditional rulers have their own unique security challenges prior to the birthing of the Corps and, so, it was easy to use the existing framework to boost the workings of the Corps. This was attested to by the *Amotekun* Commandant in Osun State during an interview on the role of traditional rulers in the Corps and security in general:

They (traditional rulers) play good roles and helped in security matters. But there are some of them that breed some thugs who eventually become security threat because of land issues and power tussle. An instance of this can be seen in Ilesha mining sites. However, they cooperate with us, assist us and help us in monitoring in their respective communities.

(Amotekun Commandant/Osun State)

The position above goes to show the important contributions which traditional institutions play in security and peace. According to this key informant, while not all traditional rulers are committed, the committed ones are able to ensure peace and order in their communities. This happens in particular with traditional rulers who take the security of their people as the most important duty.

They start peacekeeping from the community level by mediating in conflict and solving intra-community feuds. Through the deployment of traditional methods of oath-taking, conflict over land, social problems, and rape, among others, are dispensed with at the community level. Indeed, data showed that due to their knowledge at the community level, incorporating the traditional rulers in the security outfit ensures that the known local security threats are easily identified and neutralised. However, a major threat to security is the political dimension to insecurity. This happens when politicians' parley with political thugs and equip them with lethal weapons which, mostly, are not retrieved from them after elections. These weapons are then used to disturb the peace of affected communities. The *Olubosin of Ifetedo*, one of the traditional rulers on the board of *Amotekun* in Osun state, explained that:

On many occasions and during elections, politicians distribute amulets to community youths. These youths eventually use these ammunitions to terrorize the community after election because those ammunitions were not recovered by the politicians who gave them. All kings know these people but they cannot act because they are not given the power. Also, because of the political influence these thugs have, they cannot be dealt with.

(Monarch Olubosin Interview/October 31, 2021)

9.7 Discussion of Findings

Social, political, and economic factors bolstered the setting up of the *Amotekun* Corps: the need to preserve the region from invasion from criminals from without, sustain the economy of the region by emplacing security, rebuild the trust of the residents of the region in the political leadership capacity and will to protect them, and ensure security networks for the region. The setting up of *Amotekun* unified the region towards ensuring a peaceful ecosystem. This finding aligns with the assertion that disorder and conflict should not be viewed as a terrifying occurrence, as they could lead to the emergence of a new security system which is not only indigenous but one that has an African root (Bagayoko et al., 2016; Chabal and Deloz, 1999; Bayart, 1993), and this is what *Amotekun* typifies.

The role that traditional rulers play in the security of their communities cannot be over-emphasised. These rulers ensure that what could otherwise have snowballed into major security threats are neutralised through the traditional structures of social control, put in place even before the establishment of *Amotekun*. They do this by administering oaths, and settling land conflicts, rape crimes, and other forms of social problems. However, since they lack the ultimate power to prosecute, they rely on the state government and formal agencies of security to complement their efforts. As found in this study, political power compromises security at the local level. For instance, politicians patronise local thugs who may become threats to communal peace, since they enjoy the political patronage of those in power. This makes them a security risk which cannot be taken out without securing the commitment of the state governor/government.

Owing to the important role played in the conception of the security outfit and perhaps their centrality to the security at community level, traditional rulers have been recognised and given a space on the board of the security outfit where they are able to provide intelligence, advise on the operations of the Corps members, and ensure that trustworthy persons are employed. They also mobilise traditional security organizations to carry out security threat analysis and fill the gap where necessary. The usefulness of traditional rulers in ensuring the security of their people predates colonialism. Crozier (1964) and Bagayoko et al. (2016) noted that states can form synergy with traditional chiefs and justice bodies and subcontract security provision to local policing bodies such as *Amotekun*. By entering into partnership with traditional security organisations, the state gives legitimacy to customs and traditional means of social control by legalizing their operations and presenting them as a capable ally in the business of security governance within their territory.

9.8 Conclusion

This study set out to achieve two goals: to understand how traditional rulers contributed to the conception of the Western Nigeria Security Network, also known as *Amotekun*, and also examined the nature of their inclusion and the

impact it has had on the security outfit. This was against the background that traditional institutions performed security functions in the precolonial and colonial eras to protect the lives and properties of their subjects. Although their role in the security has been reduced during the colonial era and in postcolonial contexts, the rising insecurity which engulfed the southwestern part of the country in 2019 triggered the need to engage traditional institutions. Findings show that traditional rulers had mechanisms for social control in place through the mobilization of traditional organisations such as vigilantes, hunters, and OPC at community levels to improve security in their communities. Indeed, some monarchs reported to have conducted security risk analyses to understand the security needs of their communities and emplace mechanisms to ensure safety. This is showing ownership and cooperation of the traditional institutions in the security of lives and properties.

Traditional rulers were either vicarious or direct victims of kidnapping and one was killed in the process. Hence, traditional rulers contributed to the conceptualization of *Amotekun* through the mobilization of traditional security organization to support the initiative. The formation of *Amotekun* was therefore to preserve the ancestral land of the Yoruba from invasion by criminal elements, particularly the criminal Fulani herders, and to rescue the economy of the region, as insecurity would affect the regional economic integration initiative of the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria being funded by governors of the region. Also, the Corps was conceptualised to build the trust of the people of the South-West in their government, as the insecurity was already making the people see their governors as incapable of protecting them.

With regards to how their inclusion shaped the workings of the security outfit, the law setting up *Amotekun* recognised the inclusion of a traditional ruler as a member on the Board. Through this, traditional rulers perform advisory roles, moderate activities, and caution where necessary. More importantly, through this vantage position, traditional rulers provide intelligence information, being close to communities; since crime is local and actors live within communities. Traditional rulers are key stakeholders who, by virtue of their position, deploy traditional mechanisms of social control. They also ensure that corps members recruited into *Amotekun* are people of integrity as they may sign recruitment forms or recommend competent people to the Corps. Taken together, the involvement of traditional rulers in conceptualisation and operation of *Amotekun* has been functional for the delivery of security services across communities within the region, with a clampdown on kidnapers, criminal herders, and other forms of criminality.

While *Amotekun* does not yet have the required compliment of staff, nor does it have the approval to carry some calibres of weapons, like the AK47, to confront high-calibre-weaponised-criminals, the outfit presents an alternative to fill the performance lacuna created by the failure of a centralised policing system under the present democratic dispensation. The centralised security architecture seems incapacitated to rise up to deliver

on her mandates to areas experiencing precarious insecurity. Beyond the southwest, the success of the launch and the achievements being recorded by the *Amotekun* outfit are impacting other regions and re-defining the landscape of security governance, with other regions establishing and patterning their own regional security after the southwest, such as *Ebubeagu*, which was established in Southeast Nigeria on 12 April 2021, following peculiar security challenges.¹ While the central policing structure still subsists, the trust which people have in *Amotekun* shows a bright future in which people will come forth with information that will help in ensuring security in their region. On the flip side, the incipient decline in the trust of people against centralised policing signpost that in no distant future, Nigeria may have a leadership that will be favourably disposed to and approve of a decentralised policing system. Traditional rulers are a vital component in the security architecture. Since crime is local and local governance begins with the traditional institutions at the local level, there is need for greater collaboration between state governments in southwestern Nigeria and traditional institutions to tame crime at the local level. Such collaboration should include incentivising traditional rulers who are able to ensure safe community, while traditional rulers compromising security architecture should be sanctioned to serve as deterrence. Such collaboration should also be legalised by the states houses of assembly. There should be periodic community security council meeting held between the government and the traditional rulers, to improve security in communities.

Note

- 1 <https://thenextier.com/ebubeagu-regional-security-outfit-in-south-east-nigeria-reasons-for-the-discontents/>

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10 Traditional Authority and Grassroots' Peacebuilding Mechanisms in Lagos

Ayodele Ibrahim Shittu

10.1 Introduction

Despite the popular notion that modern and traditional institutions exist side-by-side across African countries (Drake, 1960; Ikeanyibe, 2017; Amzat & Razum, 2018; Koenane, 2018; Chimhowu, 2019; Akudinobi, 2021), social, economic, and political policy documents have often failed to acknowledge the potency of African traditional authority systems. This contradicts earlier thinkers' arguments that traditional authority systems can be instrumental to securing effective collective actions (Drake, 1960; Crosby & Bryson, 2018; Chimhowu, 2019). Yet, scholarly evidence abounds that emerging political elites have failed to appreciate the social actions of traditional authorities (Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2017; Wild, Jok, & Patel, 2018; Wilfahrt, 2018) and this has remained an age-long challenge limiting either active or popular participation in decision-making across the African continent.

In Nigeria, the most populous black nation world-wide, there are emerging debates that the traditional authority system in the country does not have the legitimacy to foster collective actions that promote grassroots social, economic, and political development. On the one hand, there is the 'modern governance' argument that even though both political elites and traditional authority can exist, the modern government set-up is superior to the traditional authority setting because the latter have limited capacity to promote inclusive participation at the grassroots. On the other hand, there is Drake's (1960) assertion that the support of traditional authority is a determinant of the successful participation and peacebuilding at the grassroots.

In South-West Nigeria, inclusive public participation structures and peacebuilding mechanisms across our traditional settings are underexplored. Specifically in Lagos State, one of the largest urban hubs on the African continent, systematic documentation of how the traditional Obas and Chiefs contribute to the extant peacebuilding mechanisms, which have ensured relatively low levels of communal clashes across the State remains relatively scarce. For that reason, the present study seeks to examine how the traditional authority system engages in peacebuilding through the Obas and Chiefs across the five traditional political divisions of Lagos state (i.e., Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos, and Epe). It presents evidence of cordial and harmonious relationships

between the Lagos State Council of Obas and Chiefs and the state government, specifically the Ministry of Local Governance and Community Affairs. In fact, the traditional authority system acts as an intermediary between the Lagos State Government and the grassroots (i.e., mobilising grassroots' supports, promoting communications and feedback, and ensuring harmonious resolutions of communal disputes).

10.2 Literature Review

10.2.1 *Traditional Authority*

Nigeria's traditional authority system, unlike today's modern system of government, is a carefully designed political process of administration and socialisation that is rooted in people's cultural beliefs and values. Its structural components vary among different groups of indigenous people who are closely connected either by customary or traditional beliefs. Yet, it comprises traditional institutions that are saddled with the primary responsibilities of protecting their respective customs and traditions. In Nigeria the multiple ethnic groups have varying traditional authority systems. But irrespective of the inherent cultural diversity, the perception of the roles and significance of traditional institutions quite similar across the regions. That is, the traditional authority system is the custodian of culture and traditions.

The Traditional Authority System in Lagos

That "Lagos is no man's land" has centuries of historical background. But the outcome of the case of Qba Rilwan Akinolu vs Messrs Adebisi and Modile proved otherwise. In specific terms, Prince Adebisi and Prince Modile approached the Court of Law to challenge the selection and the coronation of Qba Rilwan Akinolu, which took place in 2003. In this case, the claimants argued that the selection of Qba Akinolu was null and void on two notable grounds namely: (i) that he was not related to any of the prominent royal families in Lagos; and (ii) that the kingmakers violated the 90-Day Rule for the selection of a new Qba (i.e., King) of Lagos. This preliminary information has several implications for the practice of the traditional authority system in Lagos. More importantly, it defined the scope of the discussion of the traditional authority system of Lagos as presented in the remaining part of this section.

First, the traditional authority system in Lagos has been in existence since 1630 following the ascension of the first Qba of Lagos, named Ado, the son of Asipa (Mudasiru & Fatai, 2020). He ruled over Lagos from his place of residence in Iddo, but his demise in 1669 stopped him from achieving his dream of moving into a befitting palace at Isale Eko. In today's Lagos, the 5th largest economy in Africa, both *Iddo* and *Isale Eko* are notable areas for commercial and residential purposes.

Second, the traditional institutions embedded in the Lagos traditional authority system are well structured. This is similar to the structure of authority in a Yoruba society, where the title of the Qba (i.e., King) is seen as the second in command to the deity (i.e., *Alasẹ igba keji oriṣa*). As it is shown in Figure 10.1 below, the traditional authority system in a Yoruba society is structurally hierarchical flowing from the top (i.e., the *Baale*) to the middle (i.e., the *Iwarefa* and the *Oloyes*) and the bottom (i.e., the *Olori egbes*). The Qba is not only in-charge of the people in the society; he is also the intermediary between man and the deities, whom we refer to as the “servants of Eledumare,” the creator of man and the father of all humans. The *Baalẹs* are not as powerful as the Qba but they are a symbol of authority as well.

Third, the structure of the traditional authority system in a Yoruba society such as Lagos cannot be described as a democratic system, but at the same time it embodies inclusive processes and practices. For instance, in the case of Qba Rilwan Akinolu vs Messrs Adebisi and Modile (Omohinmin, 2017; Ojo, 2019), *Oloye Fatai Olumẹgbọn* (i.e., the *Olumẹgbọn of Lagos*) demonstrated that the process of selecting a new Qba of Lagos is inclusive and that the basis of selection is just and fair.

Specifically, the selection process of the Qba of Lagos has five basic steps. (i) First, each ruling house selects their preferred candidate who is to be considered for the throne of the Qba of Lagos. Thus far, there are two dominating

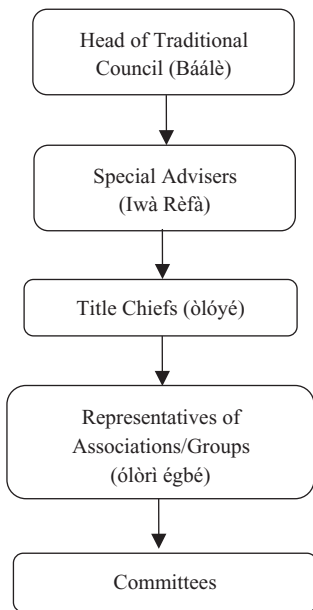


Figure 10.1 Traditional structure in Lagos State.

Source: Shittu and Musbaudeen (2015).

ruling houses within the context of the Qba of Lagos, namely the *Ologun Kutere* Ruling House and the *Akinsemoyin* Ruling House. Off course, there are other notable ruling houses, but the *Sokun Family* in particular cannot nominate a candidate for the throne of the Qba of Lagos. (ii) Second, each ruling house sends their respective nominees to the kingmakers through the *Olori Qmọ Qba* (i.e., Princes). (iii) Third, the kingmakers send all the names received to the *Ifa Priest* one-by-one for screening. (iv) Fourth, the preferred candidate for the seat of the Qba of Lagos is selected by the *Ifa Priest*. At this point, the *Ifa Priest* will shout “*Ejiogbe.*” (v) Finally, the kingmakers will cast a vote among themselves to obtain a reassurance of acceptance by the members.

Fourth, when a sitting Qba departs this world to join his ancestors, customary law failed to specify any number of days in favour of the selection of a new Qba of Lagos. Instead, the selection and the coronation of a King according to the Yoruba custom focuses more on the existing structured succession process and not the number of days involved. Thus, the Lagos High Court interpreted the claimants’ choice of focusing on number of days rather than the process of succession as “a burning desire to overturn succession disaster of over 239 years.” Generally, the Yoruba customs pay attention to the succession process, the selection, and the coronation of the Qba. In a similar manner, the selection and the coronation of the Qba of Lagos is process-based, irrespective of the number of days involved in the actualisation of the process.

States Undermining the Influence of the Traditional Authority System

Even though matters associated with the influence of the Qba of Lagos were not a subject in the referenced case, there is other evidence that the traditional authority system in Lagos has played several influential roles in the past. Notably, (i) Qba Akinsemoyin sowed the seed of slave trading in 1704 when he invited the Portuguese trade dealers and the slave trade flourished subsequently, until it was abolished under the reign of Qba Akintoye in 1953. (ii) Qba Dosunmu was also influential in the pronouncement of Lagos as a British Colony. He signed the Treaty, which whittled the authority of the Qba of Lagos and the seat subsequently became a subject of the British monarchy. The seat also lost the associated administrative powers and was restricted only to the matters of cultural and traditional importance. This was the genesis of the supremacy of the state over and above traditional rulers in Nigeria.

It’s little wonder why governors of States of the Federation resort to the removal of traditional authorities whom they consider rebellious. Historically, Qba Oyekan had a very cordial relationship with the British colonial government and was handsomely rewarded for his loyalty and good conduct (Danmole, 2017). Conversely, Qba Ovonramwen of the ancient Benin Kingdom was dethroned and banished for his bravery and audacity to challenge the British Government (van Zeiji, 2016). This desire to dethrone a

sitting traditional leader as a way of curbing their influence was not limited to the British Government. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was the leader of the old Western Region in Nigeria dethroned Qba Adeyemi Adeniran II, the Alaafin of Qyq over a political matter in 1955 (Lasisi, 1997). Qba Qlateru Qlagbegi II, the Qlqwq of Qwq, was also not spared (Kehinde, 2016). In the Northern Region of Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello also dethroned the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi I, in 1963, as a way of undermining his influence in the region (HistoryVille, 2023).

Fast forward to the fourth republic, the extant supremacy battle between modern state government and traditional rulers persists. The seat, whether in the North or South of Nigeria, remains an appendage of government officials and politicians at large. The 1999 constitution followed the path of earlier republican constitutions in the country, which assume that the Local Government (LG) authorities and LG Council Chairmen have control over traditional rulers. Additionally, there is the increasing trend of state governors exercising undue constitutional control over the seat (The Nation, 2022). HRH Mustapha Jokolo was dethroned in 2005 by the Governor of the State of Kebbi; Qba Adesina Adepoju was dethroned in 2010 by the Governor of Ekiti State; HRH Anslem Edenojie was dethroned by the Governor of Edo State; and the most shocking was the dethronement of the Emir of Kano by the Governor of Kano State in 2020. Thus, it is widely accepted that state governors across the country have constitutional powers to dethrone traditional rulers in their respective states.

Traditional Authority System – the Fourth Tier of Government?

Given the rising insecurity and the urgent demand for peaceful co-existence among innocent citizens across the country, there is an emerging view that the traditional authority system should be constitutionally empowered to function as the fourth tier of government (Oyebade, 2021). Among the traditional leaders in the country, HRM Igwe Spencer Ugwuoke was famous for his audacity, calling for the rethink of the role of traditional rulers across the country. Specifically, he canvassed that the role of the Local Government Councils cannot and should not be under-estimated. However, the place of the Nigerian traditional authority system needs to be upgraded to become the fourth-tier of government. While the fourth-tier agenda has remained a mere dream outside of Igboland, the body language of several state governors acknowledge the importance of according the traditional rulers their deserved respect and recognition.

For instance, in Ekiti State, Governor Fayemi has affirmed in several fora across the state that “traditional rulers have a stake in governance matters of the state.” HE Governor Fayemi had once queried no less than ten traditional rulers in the state for refusing to attend the state’s functions and the required statutory meetings of the State Council of Traditional Rulers (Nejo, 2020; Vanguard, 2020). This notwithstanding, he makes bold statements to say that

traditional rulers deserve respect and recognition because Qbas are diligent; they make sacrifices; they take initiatives tailored towards promoting good governance and stability at the grassroots; and more importantly, their perseverance is second to none (Ogunje, 2021). In Osun State, Governor Gboyega Oyetole is poised to review the State's Chiefs Law (Obarayese, 2022). Similar to Fayemi, he assured the people of the State of Osun that the Chiefs Law after the review would strengthen the traditional institutions' framework in the state.

In Ondo State, Governor Rotimi Akeredolu has canvassed for a rethink of the significance of traditional authority, especially around peacebuilding matters in the nation's growing informal settings (News Agency of Nigeria, 2021). He stressed that "the relevance of Royal Fathers in the traditional authority system cannot be easily eroded because their words are synonymous to laws among their subjects." Besides, he acknowledged the significance of traditional leaders in stemming insecurity and fostering the communication of government policies among their subjects, especially at the grassroots. Consequently, he is advocating that traditional rulers deserve a place in the country's constitution (Akinyemi, 2023). In Oyo State, the traditional rulers opined that if they are more responsible constitutionally, social menaces will be reduced proportionately because they are closer to the people than the Local Government Councils. The Governor of the State of Oyo admitted that "the task of state-building and repositioning same for sustained economic prosperity can be better achieved if the traditional rulers are positively engaged." (The Nation, 2019; Agboluaje & Salami, 2022)

In Ogun State, Governor Dapo Abiodun emphasised that the relevance of the traditional rulers cannot be undermined, despite signing into law the bill which seeks to infuse modern realities with the culture of the people of Ogun (The Nation, 2022; Ogunnaike, 2022). Even though the bill had generated some controversies, especially on the subject of Qbas' burial rites, HE Dapo Abiodun supported the reigning view that traditional institutions require constitutional backing because they are the closest to the people; they engender peacebuilding and improved security outcomes at the grassroots (Gyanfi, 2022; Akinfenwa, 2023).

10.2.2 Peacebuilding and its Associated Mechanisms

"... in the context of peacebuilding ..., community engagement is achieved through partnerships with a broad range of local actors and intermediaries"

United Nations (2020)

Boutros-Ghali's (1992) *Actions-Structures-Goals-Preservation* (ASGP) of peacebuilding sparked scholarly debates around the symbolic linkage between peace and public participation. He described peacebuilding as "an all-inclusive process of avoiding the collapse of peaceful condition" and argued that "it pays to resolve disputes earlier before they degenerate into

conflict” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). He cited seven important peacebuilding mechanisms namely agreement, disarmament, enforcement of human rights, participation, cooperative projects, etc. Even though these mechanisms apply to peacebuilding across borders, its implications for peace and participation nexus at the grassroots cannot be overlooked.

Within the African context, the African Union Commission (2015), through its Agenda 2063, prioritises peace and prescribes four peacebuilding mechanisms – tolerance, peace initiatives, dialogue, and peace education (TIDE). Tolerance symbolises relationship, cooperation, unity, and peaceful co-existence among people living together, irrespective of visible ethnic and religious differences (Reardon, 1994). Intolerance is inimical to peaceful co-existence at the grassroots. Peacebuilding initiatives foster respect, equality, solidarity, and tolerance (REST).

The perceived utility of peacebuilding mechanisms for local economic stability across Africa cannot be over-emphasised. In alliance with Linarelli (1996) new thinking paradigm and Murithi (2008) African approaches to peace and conflict, the significance of community solidarity, the discouragement of hate-based mobilisation, and the utilisation of moral suasion as peacebuilding mechanisms cannot be over-emphasised. Community solidarity fosters an environment of trust, understanding, and collaboration through shared goals and objectives (Karbo, 2008). Simultaneously, combating hate-based mobilisation is crucial to dismantle divisions, prejudice, and violence that hinder peace. Furthermore, moral suasion appeals to individuals’ intrinsic sense of morality, promoting dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation. Together, these mechanisms have become popular non-violent means of strengthening social cohesion and have improved peaceful coexistence at the grassroots.

10.3 Research Methodology

The study uses the mixed-method research design to examine the traditional authority system and grassroots peacebuilding mechanisms in Lagos State. Specifically, data extracted from a survey instrument designed to measure the dimensions of the traditional authority system was carefully analysed. Insights were also drawn from organised face-to-face interviews with selected traditional rulers across the study area, taking into consideration strict adherence to the COVID-19 Pandemic Protocols.

10.3.1 The Study Area

The study focuses on exploring the traditional authority system and peacebuilding mechanisms in Lagos State. Constitutionally, Lagos State is divided into 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) with a total population of at least 24,821,418 (2017 est.). This represents a 3.2 per cent average annual growth rate over the 2006 estimates (i.e., 17,552,942). The sample comprises 236 respondents from the five traditional political divisions of Lagos State, which each comprise multiple LGAs (see Figure 10.2). These respondents were

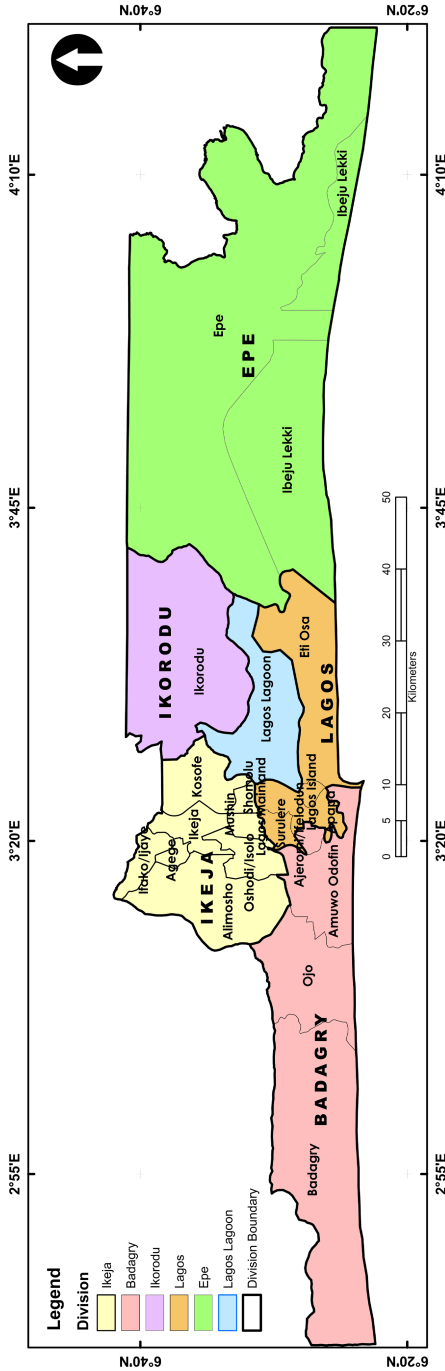


Figure 10.2 Map of Lagos and its LGAs.

Source: Author.

selected using a non-probability sampling technique to maximise response rates. Specifically, 35.2 per cent of the respondents (i.e., 83) were from Ikeja; 11.4 per cent from Badagry (i.e., 27); 9.7 per cent from Ikorodu (i.e., 23); 31.4 per cent from Lagos (i.e., 274); and 12.3 per cent from Epe (i.e., 29). These five traditional political divisions of Lagos state cover 18 of the 20 LGAs (see Figure 10.2).

The sample characteristics are summarised and presented in Table 10.1. In addition to the survey respondents, three (3) traditional leaders across Lagos State have been interviewed. These included the Alajede Chiefs in the Ijede Kingdom, the High Chiefs of the Iru land, and the High Chiefs of Epe. Both the survey respondents and the traditional leaders have been selected with the aid of the non-probability sampling procedure. The conduct of the interviews with the study participants have been largely unstructured, guided by: (i) the principles of open attitude during the interview; and (ii) openness to “descriptive” phenomenology. The interviews were analysed with the aid of a simple thematic approach. The study also conducted a textual analysis with a to understanding how the respondents feel about “peace.”

10.3.2 Measure of Peace and Peacebuilding Mechanisms

Peacebuilding mechanisms (PBM) measure the perceived utility of peacebuilding mechanisms at the grassroots, especially by the traditional leaders. This is specifically measured with four items – preaching community solidarity; discouraging hate-based mobilisation of group/people; engaging in

Table 10.1 Sample Characteristics

Variable	Items	Ikeja (n=83)	Badagry (n=27)	Ikorodu (n=23)	Lagos (n=74)	Epe (n=29)
Gender	Male	68.7	81.5	65.2	63.5	75.9
	Female	31.3	18.5	34.8	36.5	31.0
Education	Jnr. Sch	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Snr. Sch	0.0	0.0	4.3	5.4	0.0
	NCE/HND	2.4	22.2	4.3	0.0	13.8
	Bachelors	47.0	44.4	56.5	44.6	41.4
	Masters	39.8	22.2	21.7	36.5	37.9
	Mphil/Phd	9.6	11.1	13.0	13.5	6.9
Length of Stay	Less than 5 yrs	18.1	18.5	30.4	23.0	34.5
	6 - 10 yrs	21.7	11.1	21.7	23.0	41.4
	11 - 15 yrs	21.7	11.1	21.7	16.2	3.4
	More than 16 yrs	38.6	59.3	26.1	37.8	24.1

Source: Author's computation (2022)

Note

(i) Average age = 37 years (SD = 10.03)

dialogue; and promoting moral persuasion to calm down community factions – along 7-Likert scales (1 = very strongly disagree; 7 = very strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alpha for the four items is .914, which implies that these are very strong reliable measures of this variable.

10.4 Results

10.4.1 Common Definitions of Peace

textual analysis helps with the understanding of texts; seeks deeper insights into people’s messages as contained in the text under investigation.

– Allen (2017)

The utility of textual analysis is better appreciated when considering research questions such as what the meaning of a text is. For the purpose of the study, it is necessary to understand how respondents feel about “peace.” Thus, they were required to provide written words that describe their understanding of the word “peace.” An extract of the definitions provided by the first five (5) among the 236 respondents is provided in Table 10.2.

The Monkey Learn Text Analysis (*app.monkeylearn.com*) was used to build a model, which classified the definitions provided by the respondents along a level of confidence of the prediction of a particular label assigned to a text (Total Confidence Level, TCL) that ranges between zero (0) and one (1). This exercise produced 12 definitions that are considered “very common” among the 236 definitions extracted from the questionnaires. These definitions included common words/phrases such as: (i) no war; (ii) safe life; (iii) no unrest; (iv) no fear; (v) safe environment; (vi) agreement; (vii) satisfaction; (viii) tolerating differences; (ix) love; (x) no anomaly; (xi) safe property; and (xii) success. Then, Tableau Prep and Tableau Desktop Professional was used to prepare the data for analysis and the creation of interactive visuals (i.e., by general classification; age; and gender).

Table 10.2 Brief Extract from the Monkey Learn Text Analysis

<i>Resp</i>	<i>What is PEACE?</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Confidence (0 - 1)</i>
1	<i>To obtain a friendly and cool relationship/atmosphere</i>	Life	0.689
2	<i>Absence of war</i>	War; unrest	0.878; 0.786
3	<i>My definition of peace is harmonious coexistence without discrimination of tribe, religion and status.</i>	Differences; agreement	0.734; 0.593
4	<i>A situation of serenity and tranquility</i>	Fear; war	0.743; 0.573
5	<i>Tranquility</i>	War; unrest; fear	0.583; 0.58; 0.536

Source: Author’s computation (2022)

Classification of Peace

Figure 10.3 displays the twelve common definitions of peace based on the broad classification – as provided along the vertical axis and the total confidence level – as provided along the horizontal axis. This shows that 85 among the 236 respondents (i.e., 36 per cent) associate peace with “safety of life” (TCL = 61.35). One of the respondents described peace as “a condition where people exist and express their views without thinking about the safety of their lives.” This is followed by “no unrest” (TCL = 53.92) and in this case, 77 among the 236 respondents (i.e., 32 per cent) associate peace with phrases such as “tranquillity,” “absence of anarchy, commotion, or even war,” as well as “absence of hostility or violence” in a given community. Next, 68 of 236 respondents (i.e., 28 per cent) associate peace with “no fear” (TCL = 49.62). They define peace as “when people are happy going about their legitimate businesses without any fear, molestation, or harassment.” Notable keywords or phrases associated with peace among these respondents include “living without fear,” “rest of mind,” internal feeling of contentment,” etc.

While definitions such as safe environment, agreement, satisfaction, no war, tolerance for differences, and love have a total confidence level greater than 20, no anarchy, safe property, and success are rarely associated with peace. Table 10.3 provides an expanded view of the top 5 common definitions of “peace” and it shows that, overall, “safety of life” and “rest of mind” epitomises peace among the respondents.

10.4.2 Lagos Traditional Authorities and Peacebuilding

The present study specifically examined the traditional authority system and peacebuilding mechanisms at the grassroots in Lagos State.

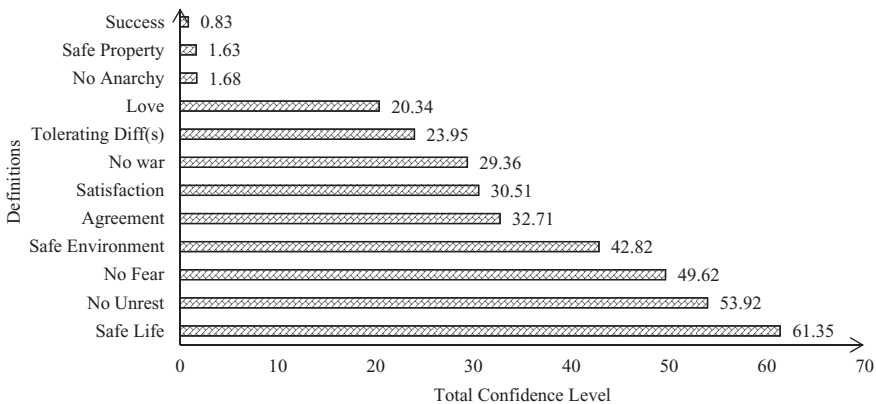


Figure 10.3 Textual analysis of peace by broad classifications.

Source: Author.

Table 10.3 Most Commonly Cited Definitions for Peace by Gender and Age

	1st most commonly cited	2nd most common	3rd most common	4th most common	5th most common
Overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of life ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Living without fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Satisfaction ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Safe environment ● Living without fear ● Living without fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living in agreement ● Living in agreement ● Rest of mind ● No war ● Living in agreement ● Safe environment ● Rest of mind ● Living in agreement ● Tolerance for differences
Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Safety of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Living without fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfaction ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living in agreement ● Rest of mind
Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of life ● Safety of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Safe environment ● No war 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Living without fear ● Living without fear ● Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No war ● Living in agreement ● Safe environment ● Rest of mind ● Living in agreement ● Tolerance for differences
<40 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of life ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● No war 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Living without fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living in agreement ● Safe environment
<40 (Male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Safety of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfaction ● Living without fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Living in agreement
<40 (Female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of life ● Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Safety of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Living in agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living in agreement ● Tolerance for differences
>40 (Male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of life ● Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Safety of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Living in agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living in agreement ● Tolerance for differences
>40 (Female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of life ● Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rest of mind ● Safety of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living without fear ● Rest of mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safe environment ● Living in agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living in agreement ● Tolerance for differences

Source: Author's compilation (2022)

Grassroots Leadership and Peacebuilding

Qualitative data obtained from the interview with the Chairman of the Akoka Community Development Association (CDA) corroborates the expectations that grassroots leadership appreciate the symbolic importance of peacebuilding at the grassroots. Notably, the Akoka CDA pays attention to: (i) community peaceful co-existence; (ii) community services; and (iii) grassroots' empowerment programmes. It is one of 4,325 CDAs across Lagos State and works together with local traditional authorities, since they are both supervised by the same Ministry – the Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs. Besides, Lagos State recognises the Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs), the CDAs, and the traditional institutions across the state as instruments for strengthening community engagement for inclusive governance. In that sense, the activities of the CDA Chairman overlap with those of traditional leaders in the area.

With a specific emphasis on peaceful co-existence, the Chairman of the Akoka CDA emphasised that one Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of any serious CDA is the measure of relative calm within its territory. According to him, the Akoka CDA does not joke with security matters given its proximity to Bariga. According to him,

the role of the CDA is so important because it is the 4th tier of government. A CDA that is serious appreciate that the security of its people rests on its shoulders. And that is what we have been doing for the past 6–7 years...this accounts for the relative calm in Akoka...you hardly hear of unbecoming riot, or boys facing each other...we make sure that there is peace.

He noted that he also pays very close attention to community services. He reiterated that the traffic congestion along the St. Finbarr's Road, a key road in his area, is a major source of worry for the residents within the CDA. He acknowledged that expansion of the road is a focal fiscal responsibility of the CDA, but something has to be done to ameliorate the sufferings of the road users who are the grassroots dwellers. In view of this, the CDA came up with a Traffic Sub-unit, with several youths of the community volunteering their time to serve the community between the hours of 6:30AM and 9:00AM daily, Mondays through Fridays. According to the Chairman:

community service is a way of promoting peace in our CDA...you can imagine in the last 5 years, if those boys are not there in the mornings – how chaotic the traffic would have been...that they are there between the hours of 6AM–9AM speaks a lot about our community and nobody is paying them...it is one thing that we have to do because we saw that there was a problem.

Finally, the CDA chairman underlined the significance of community empowerment programmes as an imminent strategy for peacebuilding at the grassroots. He is of the view that empowering the people of the community breeds peace because they will be exposed to employment opportunities. He noted that the CDA is fiscally constrained and has had to embark on a car-wash project for two reasons – to boost its finances, and to empower its people at the grassroots. He noted that the CDA rarely gets up to four million naira from the state annually and, as way of boosting its Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), establishing the car wash was a strong fiscal choice to make. According to the Chairman:

the essence of the car wash is to generate money...it is not every time we have to run to the government or the people...we can go the car-wash account for withdrawals in case of emergencies...we also use it to provide employment for our youth...there are six (6) boys working there...you multiply the effect of this employment...we have taken them out of unemployment and we still have plans to do more.

Given these dynamics, the Chairman expressed optimism that under his leadership, the CDA has performed creditably well. He noted that right from inception, his administration came up with a 10-Year Development Plan (2015–2025), which they have been implementing assiduously. He was very humble with assessment and acknowledged that the CDA has achieved approximately 60 per cent of the set target. Thus, he affirmed that “leadership” accounts for the success of peacebuilding at the grassroots.

Peacebuilding Mechanisms as the Grassroots

It is necessary to understand the common peacebuilding mechanisms that are particular to the leadership of traditional institutions in Lagos State. Consequently, we generated up to six peacebuilding mechanisms inclusive of political diplomacy, traditional diplomacy, preaching in support of community solidarity, discouraging hate-based solidarity, promoting dialogue, and moral suasion. Thus, respondents’ agree/disagree responses to the utility of the peacebuilding mechanisms in their respective locality is summarised and displayed in Figure 10.4.

Community Solidarity

There is a connection between peace and community solidarity. As displayed in Figure 10.4, 65.7 per cent of the respondents agree and applaud the practice of community solidarity as a peacebuilding mechanism in their locality. Community solidarity is an integral element of social solidarity, which seeks to reduce political tensions at the grassroots to the barest minimum. This includes demonstrating concern for all amidst dwindling fiscal resources.

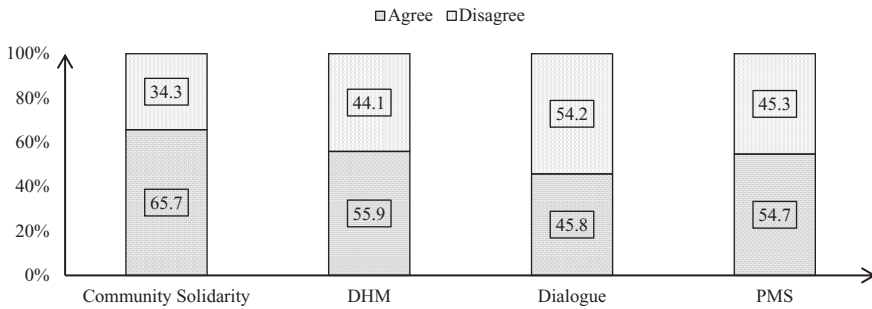


Figure 10.4 Peace-building mechanisms (percentage).

Source: Author.

When community solidarity is rich in open communication, transparency in governance, fairness, and equity in the distribution of scarce resources, the bond of interconnectedness among the people of the grassroots becomes stronger. Consequently, peace will reign supreme and inclusive public participation will be better achieved.

This was frankly explained by the Akoka CDA Chairman during his interview. His leadership demonstrated concern in the face of harrowing community pain due to the chaotic traffic situation along the St. Finbarr's Road in Akoka. This practice of community solidarity gave birth to the Traffic sub-unit that encourages men and women of the community to volunteer their time and energy, with a view to assisting the community to control the traffic. This is not to say that there are no men of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) on the ground. There are, but the chaotic traffic situation can be overwhelming. Thus, complimenting their effort with the services of volunteers increases the common welfare of the people on the road. This also helps to reduce the possibility of conflict within the Akoka CDA.

Discouraging Hate-based Mobilisation

Traditional institutions in Lagos State play a significant mobilisation role whether for the state, local, or community socio-political agenda. However, in the interest of peaceful co-existence at the grassroots, both the traditional and political leaders discourage hate-based mobilisation. A full 55.9 per cent of the respondents agree that their leaders use this peacebuilding mechanism (see Figure 10.4). The utility of mobilisation, either for political or socio-economic reasons, at the grassroots, has three notable benefits namely (i) development of local capacities, which help community people to overcome destructive attitudes; (ii) promotion of political participation, which helps community members to overcome voting apathy; and (iii) tangible and visible social change, which catalyse positive social interest. As long as mobilisation

is well managed by both traditional institutions and elected government officials, it breeds peaceful co-existence.

However, contrary to Robert Dahl's assertion that "conflict is healthy," mobilisation with in-built ethnic and religious dimensions as it is being done in Lagos and Nigeria at large is highly risky. A common feature of ethnic/religious-driven mobilisation for public participation is hate speeches and when it is adequately addressed can degenerate into communal/ethnic clashes. In Lagos State, elected and non-elected leaders at the grassroots try their best to discourage hate-based mobilisation. The traditional leaders are also trying their best by not leaving any stone unturned. This was acknowledged by the *Balogun of Iru Land* during the interview session. According to him:

Any government that aspires to be successful operational-wise must be very close to the traditional institutions within its jurisdiction...the traditional leaders know where the people are based...the Kabiyesi will encourage His High Chiefs to communicate openly with the subjects... He uses the Town Cryer to drive home the message of participation in elections...and He sets up monitoring committee to ensure that His subjects comply by coming out to cast their votes during the election.

While the mobilisation role of traditional institutions is acknowledged, the extent to which they discourage hate-speech is still a subject of debate. Hate-speech has become a menace in Nigeria's political landscape amidst a craving for freedom in public expression. However, the failure of the government to live up to the community's expectations limits their trust in the traditional leaders who have mobilised them for public participation. According to the *Balogun of Iru Land*,

the voters, and other community people, have expectations of quality development...in several cases, however, reverse is the case...leading to gross loss of trust in the traditional authority system, which unfortunately has no fiscal power to implement the people's social demands.

This affirms that while traditional authority system can promote public expression of conflicting interests for enhanced peacebuilding across the community, they lack the fiscal resources to implement the people's demand. Consequently, in case the elected and non-elected government officials fail to fulfil their bargains, the image of the traditional leaders is negatively impaired in the form of loss of trust.

Promoting Moral Suasion

Earlier in this study, suasion is described as ways of communicating with the people with a view toward convincing them to take desirable steps or

actions. Suasion is a multi-dimensional construct, which includes political and moral suasion. In particular, moral suasion seeks to influence people's attitude toward a philosophy, belief, or context. In the case of peacebuilding, traditional leaders attempt to morally persuade their subjects towards peaceful coexistence – but they do so amidst growing threat of dethronement or withdrawal of government recognition.

In the current study, 54.7 per cent of the respondents agree that the traditional authority use moral suasion as a peacebuilding mechanism (see Figure 10.4). While 45.3 per cent disagree, the margin between the agree/disagree continuum is very close. This speaks volumes about the ability of the traditional leaders to persuade community people on moral grounds. Sometime during 2020, at the 20th Coronation Ceremony of the *Qloja of Epe* – HRH Kamorudeen Ishola Animashaun, the Paramount Ruler of Epe Land – politicians alluded to the unique roles traditional leaders play in the society. First, the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Mr Hamzat said that:

traditional rulers are agents of peace in the society...they are closer to the people who have easy access to them.

At the same gathering, Hon. Abiodun Tobun acknowledged the innate potentials of traditional institutions in Lagos State and suggested that:

Qbas should be integrated into the policy thrust of governance in Lagos State and Nigeria at large.

Both politicians affirm the symbol of traditional institutions as custodians of culture and societal values where respect thrives. Unfortunately, there are growing beliefs among grassroots dwellers that the traditional institutions are tools of winning political legitimacy. While community people see their traditional leaders as opinion moulders on one hand, the perception of the authority of traditional leaders declines the more political office holders ridicule them in public. This, in particular, limits the ability of traditional leaders to use moral persuasion as a peacebuilding mechanism.

10.4.3 Implications for Practice

The findings from this study reveal that the traditional authority systems are custodians of peacebuilding mechanisms at the grassroots. They ensure sustainable peace and order through established customs and cultural norms. These findings align with extant views that peacebuilding mechanisms as a whole have the potency of increasing people's involvement in public decision-making, especially at the grassroots.

Overall, the study offers some significant contributions to knowledge underlying the role of traditional authority systems in peacebuilding processes at the grassroots. More specifically, the current study adds to the stock of

empirical contributions seeking to reinforce the significance of the traditional authority system in democratic settings across Africa (Shittu & Musbaudeen, 2015; Mbithi et al., 2019). In this respect, this study highlights the significant role of the traditional authority system in reinforcing people-centred and politically-engaged policies at the grassroots within the context of a developing country.

The study provides a quantitative analysis of peacebuilding mechanisms. Globally, peacebuilding is widely credited to Boutros Boutros-Ghali but the utility of peacebuilding mechanisms at the local levels is increasingly begging for systematic studies. This study operationalised peacebuilding mechanisms and identified four common mechanisms namely promoting community solidarity; discouraging hate-based mobilisation; fostering progressive dialogue; and deepening moral suasion. Ironically, the study found out that the traditional institutions have limitations using moral suasion as a way of avoiding the collapse of peace and increasing public participation at the grassroots. Although this may be attributed to several reasons, a notable factor drawn from the qualitative data is the continuous use of threat of deposition by the state government. There is an overarching belief among elected state governors that they have the power to nominate, give power to, and also withdraw both power and recognition from accorded traditional leaders, especially at the grassroots.

The desire to recognise the traditional authority system as the fourth-tier of government with specific constitutional backing is an important revelation in this study. The traditional leaders interviewed lamented that since independence, the traditional authority system lacks the constitutional recognition. Although they appreciate the fact that their people/subjects still respect them, the fact that they are subject to ridicule at the hands of state governors is a strong basis for worry. This, in turn, limits their desire to promote inclusive public participation and peace to the best of their ability. On the contrary, during the interview with the Chairman of the Akoka CDA, he acknowledged the CDAs as the fourth-tier of government. If the traditional leaders are acknowledged as the: (i) custodians of our cultural values; (ii) agents of peace; and (iii) opinion moulders in our societies, then they deserve to be constitutionally integrated into the policy thrust of governance.

10.5 Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study has examined the role of the traditional authority system and the associated peacebuilding mechanisms at the grassroots in Lagos State. The mixed-method research approach was conducted, and this provided both quantitative and qualitative insights into the dynamics of peace, and peacebuilding mechanisms at the grassroots. The in-depth interactions with some High Chiefs in the *Iru Land*, *Ijede*, and *Epe* areas of Lagos State yielded notable findings that reinforce extant scholarly views that traditional leaders have significant influence on peaceful engagement and participation

at the grassroots (Shittu & Musbaudeen, 2015; Mbithi et al., 2019; Bidwell & Schweizer, 2021).

Just as Shittu and Musbaudeen (2015) observed, the practice of the traditional authority system in Lagos State and across Nigeria as a whole is entangled with power and legitimacy issues. No doubt, the structure of our traditional institutions and their respective roles at the grassroots are assumed to be captured in our customary laws. In practice, however, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is supreme. To date, none of the constitutions in Nigeria have accorded the traditional institutions any legislative rights and functions. Thus, how these traditional leaders will be integrated into the policy thrust of governance and for the effective facilitation of inclusive public participation at the grassroots has remained a statutory burden awaiting novel solutions.

The study has noticeable limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small compared to the overall population of Lagos State. While it was the desire of the author to cover more locations, time constraint was a significant factor. Thus, a non-probability sampling technique was used, and the survey instruments administered within the major towns across the five Administrative Regions across the State. Second, it was proposed at the outset of the study to interview at least twelve Obas across the State. Unfortunately, many were not disposed to being interviewed on the subject, given the reigning political atmosphere. In order to execute the project, however, the High Chiefs were considered the next alternative. Yet, the study successfully had four in-depth interviews that were not enough to carry out the planned comparative study of the indigenous peacebuilding mechanisms across the five administrative regions of Lagos State.

These notwithstanding, the findings of the study provide for the following policy recommendations:

1. The traditional authority system has remained a strong institution in our socio-economic and political development history. The influence of our traditional leaders, in particular, on inclusive public participation at the grassroots is of significant concern for local economic development. As such, traditional institutions in Lagos State and across the Federation deserve constitutionally-recognised rights and functions. Perhaps, this will motivate the traditional leaders to foster progressive inclusive public participation at the grassroots.
2. The influence of traditional institutions on local economic development is yet to leave an indelible print on the minds of people at the grassroots. Traditional leaders need to reignite their role as development agents and channel necessary community solidarity toward matters of local economic development. They should also learn to persuade both elected and non-elected grassroots representatives to prioritise local economic development for the purpose of enhanced inclusive public participation at the grassroots.

A long time ago, Ajayi (1992, p. 138) concluded that traditional chieftaincy institutions should be abolished for the purpose of enhanced socio-political progress. Yet, there are dissenting view that the lack of recognition of traditional authority system as the fourth tier of government is a disservice to Nigerians. Given the established roles of the traditional institutions as peace-builders, the questions of substitute or complementarity of functions between traditional leaders and elected grassroots representatives are begging for novel answers. This is an obvious knowledge gap future research can explore.

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11 Politicisation of the Appointment of Traditional Rulers and The Challenges Of Conflict And Security Management in Umuahia, Abia State

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11.1 Introduction

Traditional rulers are an enduring feature of Nigeria's political evolution. They play a critical role as the preservers of cultures, traditions, values, morals, and beliefs. Given their closeness to the grassroots, traditional rulers are also at a vantage position to understand the dynamics of their communities and contribute effectively to community safety, security, and development. As aptly recognised in Nigeria's National Security Strategy (2019, p. 50), traditional rulers

serve as first-line vanguards in handling communal conflicts and crises, thereby advancing peaceful coexistence amongst our diverse citizenry. They are also effective in ensuring inter-ethnic understanding and are better placed to handle inter-ethnic relations, as well as inter and intra-religious relations within their various domains.

In the aftermath of Nigeria's independence, the 1960 and 1963 constitutions created a Council of Chiefs for traditional rulers at the regional level. The council played an advisory role on customary matters, cultural affairs, and chieftaincy matters, as well as when requested to give advice on the maintenance of public order (Kalu, 2016). The role of traditional rulers was, however, expunged in the 1979 Constitution and it subsists to this day under the current 1999 constitution.

In recent times, Nigeria has been hit by multiple security challenges such as violent crimes and conflicts (Oshita et al., 2019). Amidst this growing insecurity, there are strident calls for the inclusion of traditional rulers' roles in the Nigerian constitution, especially in security management of their domains (Muhammad, 2019; Ewepu, 2020; Tabiowo, 2021). In January 2022, for instance, President Muhammadu Buhari remarked that "the role of traditional rulers must not be undermined, because in their areas they know who is who, even by families, not to even talk of individuals. So, we have to revert to that

system for us to have effective security in the localities” (cited in Vanguard, 2022, para. 11).

As implied in the President’s remark, the quest for an effective system of security provisioning continues with the ongoing efforts to amend the 1999 Constitution for greater devolution of authority and responsibilities from the Federal to state government level, local government level, and autonomous communities’ level (Hassan, 2021; Okpala, 2013). Since the traditional rulers are the closest to the citizens, it is believed that they can play an important role in security matters in their communities (Ewepu, 2020; Obarayese, 2021). But the present constitutional arrangement consigns traditional rulers and traditional institutions to enactment at the state government level only (Achebe, 2017). As a result, the traditional rulership system largely exists at the pleasure of the Governor, who wields enormous powers over the appointment, discipline, and removal of traditional rulers (Onochie, 2021).

This situation is very much in evidence in Abia state. Since Nigeria’s return to democracy in May 1999, the Abia State government has created several autonomous communities. It is one of the states in the South-East zone where the creation of autonomous communities has been largely abused, as contest over who becomes the traditional ruler of such communities has generated discord and communal tension in some places (Emereuwa, 2002). The proliferation of autonomous communities and the associated politics of appointing traditional rulers by the state government have, therefore, impacted the dynamics of peace and security in some communities. In addition, separatist agitation, communal clashes, land disputes, armed robbery, drug abuse, kidnapping, and violence attributed to unknown gunmen, among others, continuing to define the conflict and security landscape of Abia State (Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta [PIND], 2020).

This study interrogates the impact of the politics of appointment of traditional rulers on peace and security in Abia State, with a specific focus on the state capital – Umuahia. It is guided by two interrelated questions: Does the politicisation of the appointment of traditional rulers undermine conflict and security management processes at an autonomous community level? And how could the position of traditional rulers be strengthened to enhance their overall contribution to conflict and security management in their communities? The paper consists of eight sections. Following this introduction, the second section provides an overview of the research methodology. The third section offers a clarification of the key concepts – politicisation, traditional rulers, conflict management, and security management. In the fourth section, a brief overview of Umuahia is presented. The fifth section discusses the place of traditional rulers in Abia State, drawing key insights from Abia State Traditional Rulers and Autonomous Communities Law. An examination of the nature and extent of political interference or politicisation of the appointment of traditional rulers in the six autonomous communities is presented in the sixth section. While the seventh section highlights the key findings from the study, the last section concludes the study, proffering some actionable recommendations.

11.2 Methodology

A convergent parallel strand of mixed-method design was utilised to collect both primary and secondary data. This strand involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative data at the same time but the data was analysed separately. After both analyses were made, we compared the results to draw overall conclusions. Desk review was used to gather qualitative data on such issues as the security situation in Abia state, legislation relating to the appointment of traditional rulers, the governance process in the state, conflicts and crime incidents, the selection of traditional rulers, and conflict management initiatives, among others.

The collection of qualitative data through desk review was complemented with a survey involving key informant interviews (KII). The authors conducted the KII between 20 October and 21 November 2021, in six (6) autonomous communities purposively selected from the 48 autonomous communities (comprising 42 autonomous communities in Umuahia North LGA and 46 autonomous communities in Umuahia South) that make up Umuahia. Three (3) communities were selected from each of the two Local Government Areas (LGAs) that form Umuahia (see Table 11.1). The selection of the communities involved four (4) treatment groups and two (2) control groups. The treatment groups (two each from each LGA) were communities that have political problems, often around the *Ezeship* position in which the State government is implicated. The control groups (Ibeku in Umuahia North LGA and Elu-Elu Old Umuahia in Umuahia South LGA) were communities where there are no conflicts, which were used to assess the impact of the conflicts.

In conducting the KII, the researchers first developed stakeholder mapping that captured a representative sample of relevant intended key informants selected purposively for the study. In addition, an interview guide containing semi-structured questions for the key informants was generated. It guided the authors in obtaining data from top government officials, traditional rulers, women leaders, security agents, vigilante leaders, journalists, youth leaders, and businesspeople. A total of 68 key informants were interviewed by the researchers.

Quantitative data was generated through a structured questionnaire administered to residents of the communities in November 2021, through face-to-face interviews conducted by three trained enumerators. The questionnaire was uploaded as Google Form and the link was downloaded into the mobile phones of the trained enumerators, enabling them to input the responses instantaneously. A total of 169 valid questionnaires were returned, and the breakdown is as shown in Table 11.2.

The enumerators administered the questionnaire mainly in the English Language but sparingly complemented with the Igbo Language to facilitate comprehension for the rural residents. Qualitative data from the KII was analysed using logical deduction while quantitative data from the questionnaire were statistically analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Table 11.1 Case Studies of Autonomous Communities in Umuahia and Justification for Selection

<i>Umuahia North Local Government Area</i>		<i>Umuahia South Local Government Area</i>	
<i>S/No</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Justification</i>	<i>S/No Community Justification</i>
1	Ibeku	The remnant of the original autonomous community in existence from the creation of the Eastern House of Chiefs, which has remained relatively peaceful, and has the oldest Eze.	4 Amizi Epe The government created two autonomous communities (Amizi Epe and Uzii-Amizi) in one community that have the same villages and boundaries, leading to a crisis-prone situation
2	Mbaocha	The state government wants to impose an Eze on the community even when a court order has restrained it from doing so, leading to tension in the community.	5 Elu-Elu Old Umuahia A relatively peaceful community with functional traditional mechanisms of conflict resolutions and security management
3	Okwuta	Eze succession problems arose from the issuance of staff of office to an unpopular Eze, forcing the community to file a court case that lingered till the death of the Eze in 2020.	6 Old Umuahia Ongoing Eze succession tussle. The late Eze's (Nwogu) family want to perpetuate itself as a royal family which the community rejected and instituted a court case against them

* Eze (or Ezeship) as used in this study is the designation of a traditional ruler

Table 11.2 Distribution of Respondents by Autonomous Communities

<i>S/No.</i>	<i>Autonomous Communities</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents</i>
1	Amizi Epe	13.6%
2	Elu-Elu	14.2%
3	Ibeku	27.2%
4	Mbaocha	14.2%
5	Okwuta	17.2%
6	Old Umuahaia	13.6%

Source: Fieldwork November 2021.

By triangulating the various data sources – desk review, KII, and questionnaire – the researchers are confident of the validity of data generated and utilised for the analysis.

11.3 Conceptual Clarification

This study revolves around several concepts, but the terms politicisation, traditional rulers, conflict management, and security management are so pivotal that they merit clarification. The terms politicisation (Gheyle, 2019; Zürn, 2019; John, 2020; Monsees, 2020; and Ugwu and Okoli, 2021), traditional rulers (Nweke, 2012; Kalu, 2016; Igwubor, 2021), conflict management (Best, 2006; Wang, 2015; de Wit, 2018), and security management (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013; Robert-Okah, 2014; Oshita, Anumona and Onuoha, 2019) have been variously defined. For the purposes of this study, working definitions of the terms as presented in Table 11.3 is adopted.

11.4 Context of the Study: a Profile of Umuahia

Umuahia is the capital city of Abia State in southeastern Nigeria. It is located along the railroad that lies between Port Harcourt to its south and Enugu city to its north. Umuahia is bound by Ngwa, Bende, and Ikwu-ano in Abia State and Obowo in Imo State (Asiegbu, 1987a). The city had a population of 359,230 according to the 2006 Nigerian census; the projected population for 2022 was 527,499 (with 324,999 in Umuahia North and 202,500 in Umuahia South).

The history of its name is traced to colonial times (Asiegbu, 1987b). According to popular legend, the name Umuahia derives from the Igbo word AmaAhia or “Ama Ahia,” which means “market place or market centre,” respectively. The British, who arrived in the region and annexed it sometime around the mid-to late nineteenth century, upon learning the name, mistakenly pronounced and spelled it as “Umuahia.” Other legends exist regarding the origin of Umuahia, but the foregoing version seems most probable by consensus (Asiegbu, 1987; Ogbonna, 1995). In pre-colonial times, it served as one of the central marketplaces in the region for commerce. Given its serenity

Table 11.3 Working Definitions of Key Concepts

<i>Term</i>	<i>Working Definition</i>
Politicisation	The demand for, or the act of, transporting an issue or an institution into the sphere of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political” (Zürn, 2019, p.977). It captures how ideas, issues or collections of facts are given a political tone or character, leading to polarisation and contestation
Traditional rulers	Individuals by virtue of heredity or community selection process are nominated, appointed and installed in line with the provisions of their native laws, customary values and tradition to exercise the highest degree of traditional authority within a circumscribed domain (Authors’ framing). In essence, they serve as the custodian of their people’s norms, cultures and practices, and “heir office and power have been recognized by the government through the presentation of ‘staff of office’, which is an instrument of power” (Igwubor, 2021, p.202).
Conflict management	The “process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through several measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict” (Best, 2006, p.95).
Security management	Entails activities, measures, and mechanisms deployed by any entity to anticipate, respond, and address incidents or forces that have the potential to undermine the security and wellbeing of the people, safety and integrity of assets or property, and practice of cherished values of a people. Thus, the primary essence of security management in the context of a community is to ensure the protection of lives, assets, and values as well as safeguard peace, stability, and order.

Source: Author’s elaboration.

and proximity to other towns, such as Ohafia, Abiriba, Arochukwu, Obowo, Ngwa, Okigwe, Uzuakoli, Bende, Nnewi, Akwa Akpa (Old Calabar), and Kalabari. Merchants of produce, pottery, crafts, textile, traditional medicine, palm wine, and tools travelled from afar to trade at the busy market centre with many roads leading to it (Igbokwe, 2022).

The name Ama Ahia however was not the town’s name; rather it was located in a place called Afor Ibeji near Olokoro Town. With increasing British administrative and commercial activities in the region and yonder, Umuahia, as it came to be known and written, was relocated to Ibeku Town for better oversight by administrative offices and the convergence of roads at Ibeku (Ogbonna, 1995; Njoku, 2006). The new location became one of the major trading posts along the rail route built by the United African Company (UAC) for carting produce, raw materials, and minerals along the trade route from Sub-Sahara to the Atlantic Ocean, for onward exportation to Europe. The trading post was named Umuahia-Ibeku Station to reflect the new market square and domain. Over time, the area became known as Umuahia, while the original market town at Afor Ibeji was

renamed Old Umuahia (Igbokwe, 2022). The hyphenated Umuahia-Ibeku became a source of dispute, given that neighbouring towns such as Ohuhu, Umuopara, Afugiri, and Ofeme, among others, were constituted into the Umuahia administrative area, entitling them to be under Umuahia, not Umuahia-Ibeku, since Ibeku is on the same level as the constituent parts of Umuahia.

In post-colonial Nigeria, Umuahia was declared the second (and soon became the longest-serving) capital of the short-lived nation of the Republic of Biafra on 28 September 1967 after the first capital, Enugu, was captured by Nigerian troops. The Nigerian troops later captured Umuahia on 24 December 1969. Formerly known as Ikwuano/Umuahia Local Government Council until the Babangida-led government divided it into two LGAs – Ikwuano LGA and Umuahia LGA – in 1991 and then later in 1996, the former Umuahia LGA was split by Abacha-led government into two LGAs: Umuahia North and Umuahia South. These LGAs are also composed of five clans, namely: Ibeku, Ohuhu, Olokoru, Ubakala, and Umuopara communities (Aniga, 2017). Umuahia is indigenously Igbo, and composed of five sister clans, socially and phonologically homogenous at most, with each clan having its version of autonomy and social evolution (Igbokwe, 2022). Umuahia people have a common culture with regards to conducting marriage rites and burial rites, farming traditions, music, attires and grooming, and conflict management, especially at the community level.

Before proceeding to a discourse on the nature and consequences of politicisation of the process of appointing traditional rulers in Abia state, it is imperative to understand the place and enabling legal provision for traditional rulers in Abia state.

11.5 The Place of Traditional Rulers (Ezes) in Abia State

Abia state is part of Eastern Nigeria which had a highly sophisticated acephalous system where myriad agencies were involved in the maintenance of law and order. However, there were also established Ezeship before colonialism, like the Eze Nri, Obi of Onitsha, Eze Aro, Enachioke of Abiriba, and others. This old traditional Ezeship, with two in Abia state, have Royal Families that ascend to the throne at the demise of the Eze. However, others like the ones in Umuahia were the offshoot of the Warrant Chief Era and the creation of the House of Chiefs in Eastern Nigeria in 1946.

Following the return to democracy on 29 May 1999, many autonomous communities have been created by successive Abia State governments. At the outset of the Fourth Republic (1999), Umuahia had ten (10) autonomous communities: Ibeku clan, Umuokpara clan, and Ubakala clan; each was an autonomous community; Ohuhu had five (Isingwu, Nkwoachara, Nkwoegwu, Umuhu, and Umuegwu); whilst Olokoru clan had two (Old Umuahia and Olokoru) (Abia State Traditional Rulers and Autonomous Communities Law, Section 32).

To be sure, the creation of autonomous communities and the appointment of traditional rulers (Eze) fall within the legal powers of Abia state government. Section 13 of *Abia State Traditional Rulers and Autonomous Communities Law* provides that “any community desiring to be granted the status of an autonomous community shall apply to [the] Governor through the Commissioner.” Given this provision, successive Governors of the state have embarked on the creation of autonomous communities and the installation of traditional rulers (Eze). There has been an explosion in the number of autonomous communities created by successive Abia state governments. Before May 1999, a total of 108 communities were in existence in the State. The number has increased to 692 as of October 2021, given the creation of an additional 587 autonomous communities by the three successive administrations in the state (see Table 11.4).

Evidently, the administration of Governor Orji Uzor Kalu created the highest number of autonomous communities in the state. His administration has been criticised for creating “not fewer than 33 autonomous communities in Umuahia South, thus making the funding of Ndi Eze cumbersome, a situation where the present administration could not fund effectively” (Okafor, 2019, para.4). While the government contends that the creation of new autonomous communities will foster peace and development, such action in some cases has polarized the people or exacerbated animosity between communities. In Umahia North LGA, for instance, Ohuhu clan increased from five autonomous communities in 1999 to 26 autonomous communities currently. Mindful of the real and potential dangers of the proliferation of autonomous communities, the Abia State government in November 2009 threatened to foreclose the creation of new autonomous communities in the state (Okoli, 2009).

Each autonomous community has a traditional head, the Eze, who was selected by the people according to their tradition and presented to the government for recognition and appointment. The mode of selection of the Eze varies slightly across Abia state but is largely uniform in Umuahia. Selection may be hereditary, elective, or rotatory (Government of Abia State, 2021). Sections seven and eight of Abia State Law provide that an autonomous

Table 11.4 Creation of Autonomous Communities by Abia State Government, 1999–2021

<i>Executive Governor</i>	<i>Tenure</i>	<i>No of Autonomous Communities Created</i>
Orji Uzor Kalu	29 May 1999–29 May 2007	576
Theodore A. Orji	29 May 2007–29 May 2015	6
Okezie Ikpeazu	29 May 2015–Date	5
Total Number of Autonomous communities created		692

Source: Adapted from the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Umuahia

community select an Eze-designate and present same to the LGA Chairman. The Chairman shall then present same to the Governor for recognition. There is no limit to the number of Eze designates that shall be presented to the Chairman. In the recent past, some autonomous communities have presented up to four, but the minimum stipulated is two candidates. While the law reserves the responsibility of selection of the Eze on the autonomous community, it confers the power of appointment on the Executive Governor. The “Eze also has to be presented by the autonomous community at an appointed date and time to the governor or his representative, for recognition” (Government of Abia State, 2021, para.4).

Section four provides that it is “unlawful for any person not identified, selected, appointed, installed, and recognised by the Governor in accordance with this Law as a ruler of any autonomous community within the state to assume, adopt, use, arrogate to himself or another, take up, call, answer, possesses or secure for himself or another the title or designation of ‘Eze’ merely because the person believes that he has become important, influential and wealthy in the community.” Furthermore, Section nine: where the Eze of an autonomous community is presented to the Governor, the *Governor may* recognise such a person as the Eze of the autonomous community. Section ten further empowers the Governor to recognise and withdraw the recognition. And Section 27 provides that “where the Governor has accorded recognition to any person as an Eze, such recognition shall be final.”

The Eze is charged with several responsibilities that are key to ensuring peace, security, stability, and development at the community level. Data in Table 11.5 illustrates the provisions of Section 19(a–j) of the Abia State Traditional Rulers and Autonomous Communities Law, which stipulates the functions of the Eze.

An election is usually conducted amongst recognized Ndi Ezes for each LGA to select members to serve at the council of Ndi Eze at the state level. About half of the members of the council are selected while half are appointed. Every member of the council of Ndi Eze is required to serve for three years unless prevented from doing so by death or resignation. The council of Ndi Eze in Abia State is made up of 36 Ezes with one chairman and two deputy chairmen (Government of Abia State, 2021, para.4).

11.6 Traditional Rulership, Conflict, and Security Management in Umuahia

At best, interference in the activities of traditional rulers, and at worst, their politicisation, is nothing fundamentally new in Nigeria. Scholars have argued that the history of such intervention by state actors can be traced to the colonial era’s indirect rule system when the colonial government directly interfered with native authority affairs (Afigbo, 1967). Such interventions undermined the authorities of the rulers as they lost their previous autonomy

Table 11.5 The Responsibilities of a Traditional Ruler (Eze) in the Autonomous Community

<i>Section 19 (a-j) of the Law</i>	<i>Stipulated Functions of the Eze</i>	<i>Author's Extrapolation</i>
a)	Representing his community on ceremonial occasions;	Ceremonial
b)	Receiving important visitors to the community on ceremonial occasions;	Ceremonial
c)	Presiding at cultural festivals in the community;	Cultural
d)	Acting as the custodian of culture, custom, and tradition and advising the community;	Cultural
e)	Assisting in the maintenance of law and order in the community;	Peace and Security
f)	Taking steps to reconcile disputing parties in civil matters whether or not such matters which the disputing parties bring to him for reconciliation are matters governed by any law of the community	Conflict management
g)	Encouraging development projects of the community;	Developmental
h)	Assisting the state and local government in charge of community in the collection of taxes and rates;	Economic
i)	Promoting stability and peace in the community; and	Security management
j)	Attending meetings summoned by the Chairman of the Local Government Area from time to time, for purposes of consultation and advice.	Political

Source: Authors' elaboration from Abia State Traditional Rulers and Autonomous Communities Law

and sovereign powers since they were largely subjected to the dictates of regulatory roles of the colonial state (Nweke, 2012, p. 211).

The abuses by the British appointed Warrant Chiefs – who were imposed as representatives of the local people in defiance of the republican ethos of the Umuahia people – alienated them from members of their communities and caused several conflicts during the colonial period in the Eastern region. One such violent incident was the two month rebellion by Igbo women from the Bende District (Umuahia) and other places in eastern Nigeria, who travelled in their thousands to the town of Oloko (Ikwoano LGA, Abia State) to protest against the Warrant Chiefs and the policies imposed by the British colonial administration in South-eastern Nigeria. Over 50 women lost their lives in these Aba Women's Riots, as they would be called, and many others were injured (Obienusi, 2017). Experiences such as the imposition of Warrant Chiefs by colonial masters were precedential to the politicisation of the process of appointing traditional rulers in the South-East, with implications for peace, conflict, and security management.

The analysis in subsequent paragraphs examines the experiences of six autonomous communities concerning the nature and extent of political

influence in the appointment of the Eze. This is to glean insights on their possible implications for peace, conflict resolution, and security management.

11.6.1 Traditional Rulership and Conflict and Security Management in Amizi-Epe

Amizi-Epe autonomous community in Umuahia South LGA was formerly one of the villages under Olokoro autonomous community. It was later part of the Azuiyi Epe autonomous community, which was created out of Olokoro in 2000. The Azuiyi Epe comprises of Amizi, Umuajata, Umudere, Amangwu, Umuntu, and Umuobia. Late HRH Eze CJ Ukeka was selected as the Eze (Oha 1) of Azuiyi Epe autonomous community. On the verge of his coronation, the other villages pulled out to form their respective autonomous communities leaving Amizi to be called Amizi-Epe autonomous community. This was how the Amizi that produced the Eze CJ Ukeka, became an autonomous community of its own known as Amizi-Epe. It is composed of ten villages: Amaimo, Amizi Okahia, Umuchukwu, Umuokike Achara, Umunkaruba, Umuogba I, Umuogba II, Umuifeze, Umualanchara, and Umuwara.

Its Ezeship crisis could be traced to developments that occurred around 2001 following the release of the official gazette for the creation of autonomous communities by the administration of Governor Orji Uzor Kalu. The gazette stated that any community desiring to be granted the status of an autonomous community must have a certain number of villages. In a bid to meet this requirement, several hamlets were turned into villages in some communities. As noted by a former President General of Amizi autonomous community, "it was based on this that those hamlets were turned to villages to enable us to get the autonomous community called Amizi-Epe autonomous community."¹

The crisis allegedly began "when Chief Cyril O. Ogbenna who supposedly is a Chief from Umuogba I started agitating to be crowned the *Uzi III* in Amizi, which is a kind of Chieftaincy position of very high level. As at then, Amizi has had *Uzi I* and *Uzi II*."² Eze CJ Ukeka and some other people objected to his demand, insisting that with the pulling out of some other villages to form their autonomous community, the villages that now make up the Amizi should have their chiefs. It was noted that "since he came from Umuogba I, he is supposed to be a Chief in Umuogba I because Amizi already has an Eze [Eze CJ Ukeka]."³ Dissatisfied with this position, Chief Cyril O. Ogbenna and his supporters allegedly worked through his elder brother, Reverend Father Ogbenna, who was the then Abia State Government House Chaplain, to apply for a separate autonomous community (Uzi-Amizi) using the same group of villages and boundaries that make up Amizi-Epe. When Eze Ukeka died, HRM Lawrence Eluwa emerged as the Eze of the Amizi-Epe autonomous community.

In 2002, the Abia State government approved the Uzi-Amizi autonomous community, and Chief Cyril Ogbenna was issued a staff of office as Eze.⁴ A respondent noted, however, that:

When they applied, the government did not verify, they were granted autonomous community and the Amizi-Epe people petitioned and drew the attention of the government to that effect that the map and requisitions were falsified; that it was the same thing with what is obtainable in Amizi. So, the government cancelled the Uzi autonomous community. However, two weeks later, probably because of bribe, the autonomous community [status] was reinstated.⁵

The consequence as noted by a respondent “is that one community, Amizi, is divided into two autonomous communities (Amizi-Epe and Uzi-Amizi) which has no boundary demarcation separating the two. We share the same Market, Church, and School.”⁶ One of the Ezes corroborated this challenging situation: “I became the Eze in 2002 and since then we have been having problems in this communities. As Jesus Christ said, two captains cannot be in a ship. We are two Ezes without defined boundaries and therefore our case is cancerous.”⁷ Data in Figure 11.1 indeed reveal that maps of the two communities are the same in geographic constituents (villages and boundaries).

In July 2017, Abia State government, vide a letter (MLGCA/CH/S.46/VOL.V/296), delisted Uzi-Amizi as an autonomous community in Abia State in furtherance of the Abia State of Nigeria Traditional Rulers and Autonomous Communities (Amendment No. 1) Law, which came into effect on 29 May 2015. The communication equally directed the retrieval of staff of office from the former Eze, Cyril Ogbenna, while Uzi community should “as a matter of urgency collapse to its parent Autonomous Community, Amizi Epe with

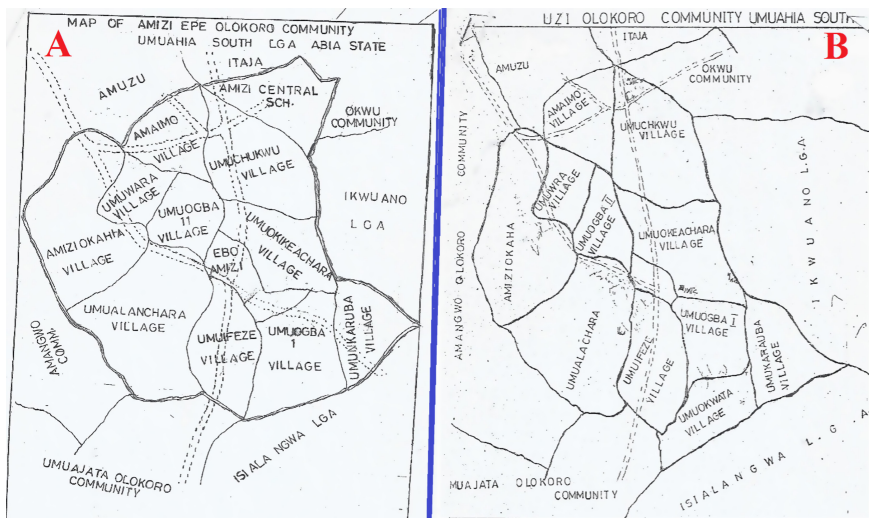


Figure 11.1 Comparison of Maps of Amizi-Epe [A] and Uzi-Amizi [B] Autonomous Communities

immediate effect.” Notwithstanding this development, the Eze of Uzi Amizi is alleged to parade himself as an Eze and is still being received in the Local Government meetings when he ought not to attend such meetings in that capacity.⁸ It is pertinent to note that Eze Cyril Ogbenna did organise the 2021 Uzi Day celebration and his 20th anniversary on the throne on 28 December 2021, at Eboh Square Uzi-Amizi (TCNews, 2021).

The crisis portends serious negative implications for peaceful coexistence in the community. As a Committee of Abia State House of Assembly highlighted in one of its observations: “the imposition of Uzi on Amizi-Epe has created a lot of bad blood in the area as this has divided many families leading to situations where a husband belongs to one community and the wife and children belong to another community.”⁹ The problem has equally undermined women’s socio-cultural activities in Amizi community. As a woman leader puts it:

This has been a major problem for us. I have been trying my possible best to reunite the women as Amizi-Epe autonomous women. Though there is unity for Amizi women as they are still doing their regular meetings. There is no more general meeting comprising of Uzi and Amizi together. It is a problem we are having as it is usually only the Amizi-Epe women that attend such meetings. Due to these lapses, the general meeting between the Amizi and Uzi was suspended until a form of understanding is established.¹⁰

The crisis equally hampers effective security management. As noted by one respondent, “the implications are enormous. Security-wise, we cannot come together as one because once someone commits an offence in Uzi, he or she runs to Amizi for protection but when committed in Amizi he will say that he is not from Amizi that he is from Uzi.”¹¹ Another respondent agrees that it is affecting security provisioning, “because the vigilante does not work together. There are different people from different villages making up this group but the major challenge is they are not unified.”¹² The result is that the different vigilante groups are either loyal to the HRM Lawrence Eluwa of Amizi-Epe or Eze Cyril Ogbenna of Uzi Community, whereas in the real sense of it the offence was committed in the same autonomous community.

Data in Figure 11.2 indicate that herdsmen attacks, land disputes, drug abuse, and car theft are some of the security challenges that are considered to be of high prevalence rate by community residents. In particular, drug peddling is rated as very serious, which lays credence to the widespread concern over rising drug abuse in the entire southeast, especially among the youth. During the 2021 Uzi Day celebration, the President-General of the community equally harped on “the urgent need for the two communities of Uzi-Amizi and Amizi Epe to come together to fight youth restiveness which include: cultism, drug abuse and the new wave in town called ‘Mkpuru mmiri’”¹³ (TCNews, 2021, para.9).

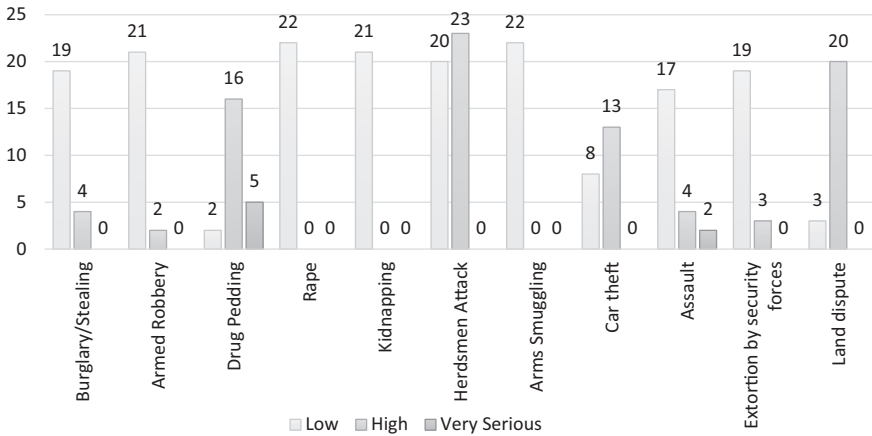


Figure 11.2 Residents' View on the Prevalence of Security Threats in Amizi-Epe Autonomous Community.

Source: fieldwork November 2021.

Besides the lack of a unified front for the various vigilante groups, there is also concern over the attitude of the police in complementing the efforts of the vigilante outfits. As a traditional ruler puts it: “when one commits an offence and is caught and brought to the police, the police will start asking for money. So, in order to avoid such, little or nothing is done when a rogue is seen or caught.”¹⁴

It is quite commendable that the crisis that has lasted for over a decade has not resulted in any major violent confrontation. However, the situation where there are two captains (one Eze for Amizi-Epe and another for Uzi-Amizi) in one ship (Amizi community Olokoro) is a potentially explosive one. This is because an unforeseen development in the future, such as a serious disagreement between supporters of the different Ezes over resources or facilities (village square or market), could result in violent conflict. In addition, the existence of two Ezes in the same community has budgetary implications for the state government.

11.6.2 Traditional Rulership and Conflict and Security Management in Elu-Elu

Elu-Elu Old Umuahia autonomous community in Umuahia South LGA was created out of Old-Umuahia Ama-Asa which comprised seven villages before, namely: Umuezeala, Umuobutu, Umueledi, Umuovo, Okwu, Umuechukwu, and Amuzuta. Its status as an autonomous community was officially gazetted on 14 February 2002 by the administration of Governor Orji Uzor Kalu. However, its recent history dates back to the 1980s.

In 1982, the then traditional ruler of Old-Umuahia Ama-Asa, His Royal Majesty (HRM) Eze McDonald Wogu (Ohanyere Ugo 1) set up a Constitution Drafting Committee to work on the constitution of the community. On completion of the task, the Committee handed it over to Eze Wogu. It was alleged that he doctored the draft constitution and published it several months after. When Old-Umuahia eventually became an autonomous community, the stakeholders then agreed on how they will be governed, including the mode of selection and rotation of some key traditional positions in the community.

In 1993, Eze Wogu appointed his cousin, Chief GIG Wogu, the premier/traditional Prime Minister. This act was in breach of the constitution which provides that the traditional Prime Minister is not supposed to be of the same place and family as the Eze. Dissatisfied with his action, most of the people from Umueledi village, which made a significant contribution towards making Old Umuahia an autonomous community, pulled out with other villages to form Elu Elu community in 2002. The five villages that were curved out are: Amuzuta, Okwu, Umuechukwu, Umueledi, and Umuovo villages. They agreed to rotate the Ezeship according to the village leadership starting from Umueledi, leading to the crowning of Eze Onwuchekwu as Eze 'Amara I' of Elu Elu autonomous community.¹⁵ The community has crowned two other Ezes, with the current Eze, HRM Dr. Sir John Onuzurike, as the Eze 'Amara III'.

The process of the emergence of the current Eze was described as being transparent and peaceful. As posited by a titleholder in the community:

It was democratic, occasioned by the type of Constitution we have. The Constitution is well-written to the extent that in turns people know who is supposed to be the Eze. For instance, we have five villages and it did not start from the present Eze. It started from Umueledi village, then to Umuechukwu, and now the turn of Umuero. It moves hierarchically. If this village produces the Eze, the following village will produce the traditional Prime Minister. In case of the demise of the Eze, the village that produced the traditional Prime Minister will bring out who will be the Eze while the Prime Minister will be shifted to the next village hierarchically.¹⁶

The constitutional provision that stipulates the rotatory order for the selection of the Eze and the traditional Prime Minister was mentioned by several respondents as one of the factors that may have prevented a possible succession crisis in the community. This is hardly surprising given that all respondents thought that the process that led to the emergence of the Eze was peaceful and transparent (Fieldwork, November 2021). The Elu-Elu experience contrasts sharply with the experience of its neighbouring community, Old Umuahia, where claims that the Eze's position is hereditary has caused a succession crisis.

To promote peace and conflict resolution, the Eze works by, with, and through some community structures such as the Eze-in-Council, *Ndi Nze*,

Age-Grade, women's group, and vigilante outfits. For instance, if there is an emergency or pressing issue in the community, an emergency meeting of the Eze-in-Council is fixed to discuss and respond to the situation accordingly. In addition, each village has its Councils, headed by a Nze. The Nze and the Village Chairman are also part of the Eze-in-Council. As noted by the traditional Prime Minister, "the arrangement makes for easy dissemination of information and resolution of conflict if any. We work in synergy with the youth, the women's organization, and the *Okonko* society¹⁷, too. However, in a case that was not satisfactorily resolved at the village level, the aggrieved party has the right to appeal to the Eze-in-Council."¹⁸

To resolve such conflict or dispute, the Eze-in-Council summons a meeting involving the parties to the dispute, members of his cabinet and other critical stakeholders such as the Nze and the Village Chairman. Parties to the dispute are given opportunities to present their positions and evidence, after which the Council will interview the parties and conduct its own independent investigation, if necessary, to ascertain the truth. The parties will be invited for a meeting during which the final decision or judgement will be made known, usually by the Eze.

Regarding safety and security provisioning, the community relies much on its vigilante outfit. A respondent noted that the Eze was central to its formation, arguing that "you cannot just kickstart a vigilante group. First, you will apply to the Nigerian police for recognition. And you cannot apply to the Nigerian Police without the consent of the Eze and Town Union."¹⁹ Like in other communities, the vigilante group maintains a working relationship with the police in the fight against crime and insecurity. It normally refers cases beyond their jurisdiction to the police, especially criminal offences such as rape, robbery, and drug trafficking. However, their operations are sometimes hampered by logistical challenges and the attitude of the police. As noted by a respondent, "the retrieval of guns from our vigilantes by the government disarmed our local vigilantes. Even those that have arms may not have the liberty to bring them out because of fear...the vigilante is more or less not having anything to protect the community. Hence, one with Machete cannot chase one with AK47."²⁰ The obvious result is that most are unable or unwilling to confront armed criminals who deploy sophisticated weapons in their operations.

As data in Figure 11.3 indicates, the community is confronted with some security threats, particularly violent crimes. Crimes such as burglary, armed robbery, and extortion by security forces were ranked high by respondents in the community. The issues of drug peddling and land dispute are viewed as being very serious in the community. A resident revealed that "in our community, we have people that sell these substances (hard drugs). But we have tried our best to deal with those selling it. You may find it difficult to see a seller in the community but they sell in their hideouts. So, when we get a tip of where they operate in their hideouts, we plan and raid them with the Nigerian police."²¹

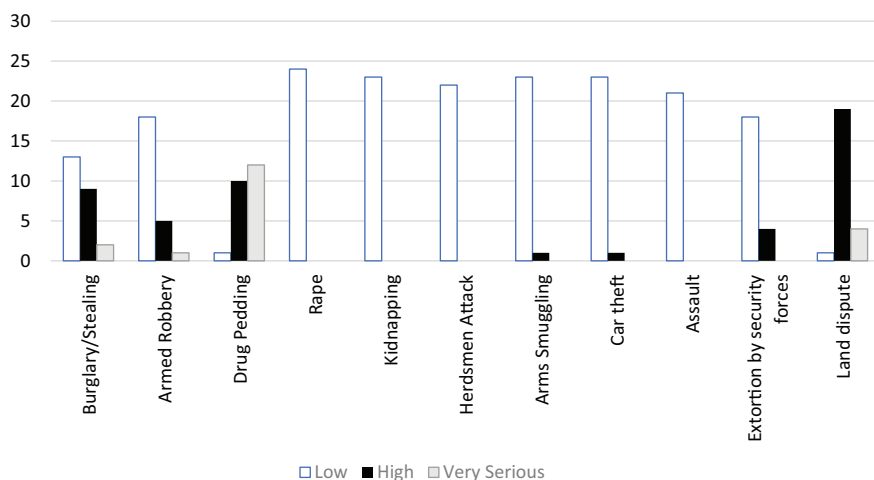


Figure 11.3 Residents' View on the Prevalence of Security Threats in Elu -Elu Autonomous Community.

Source: fieldwork November 2021.

Particularly recurrent is the incidence of phone and bag snatching along Amauba Road by armed gangs who operate on a tricycle. As remarked by a community resident, “we have not been able to apprehend them. Maybe because we are not armed, because the government confiscated some of the weapons we use to safeguard the community.”²² In addition to the logistical deficit is the challenge of police corruption and inefficiency. This was pointedly articulated by a member of the vigilante group:

I must be frank with you; I am not confident in them from what we have been through. Sometimes you will hand over a culprit to the Nigerian police with the evidence of the crime they committed, in a little period, you will see the same culprit living and moving freely in the community. The police will reveal to the culprit the statement made against him/her and who made the statement. Again, these said culprits will rise against you that made such a statement. Therefore, sometimes you may have something to tell the Nigerian police, you will hide the information.²³

The above expression reveals not only the frustration members of the community encounter while working with the police, but also the risk of retributive attacks they could face in the course of providing for the safety and security needs of their community. Yet the roles of these non-state security outfits are crucial in complementing the efforts of other security agencies in building a more secure society.

11.6.3 *Traditional Rulership and Conflict and Security Management in Ibeku*

Ibeku is a chiefdom consisting of seven clans nestled in the hilly terrain of Umuahia North LGA (Encyclopedia Britannica, nd). These seven sub-clans, or Egwus, are Isieke, Afarata, Emede, Ossah, Afaraukwu, Ndume, and Amaforo. Each used to have an Egwu or sub-clan Head at the Ogurube Ibeku cabinet before the state government recreated them as autonomous communities and some were further divided as autonomous communities.

Like in other parts of the Eastern Region before the arrival of the colonial masters, Ibeku Clan was acephalous like other clans in Umuahia. However, with the introduction of Warrant Chiefs by the colonial rulers, it had many Warrant Chiefs. The autonomous community was created in 1959, second to the institutionalisation of the Eastern Region House of Chief. The history of Ezeship in the community is traced to December 1960, when Eze JI Onuoha emerged as the first Eze of the community. He won the Electoral College of Sub-Clans, or Egwus of Ibeku, held on 4 January 1960, by securing five votes out of seven to become the *Ogurube I* of Ibeku. He was subsequently voted by his fellow in Bende Division to represent them at the Eastern House of Chiefs (Ugwueje, 2001, p. 91).

Eze JI Onuoha, however, was later dethroned on account of his support for his kinsman, Dr. JOJ Okezie, who was an independent candidate that ran for and won the 1964 election for the Seat at the Eastern House of Assembly against the candidate of NCNC supported by Rt. Hon. Dr. MI Okpara (Ugwueje, 2001, pp. 87–108). Eze JI Onuoha eventually re-contested for the position with his kinsman from Ossah, Chief GCN Akomas. Chief Akomas won with four votes against three votes secured by Eze JI Onuoha. However, the people of Ibeku refused to accept the results. The tussle lasted until 1976 when Chief Akomas was formally recognised as the Eze of Ibeku. He occupied the seat until he died in 1983. He was succeeded by Eze JI Ukaegbu (*Ogurube III*) in 1984, who later died in 1992.

Later in November 1994, the current Eze of Ibeku, Eze Samuel Iheonye Onuoha (*Ogurube VI*), succeeded the late Eze JI Ukaegu. Eze SI Onuoha contested the seat with Chief Onwukamuiche, and he emerged victorious through a plebiscite conducted by the clan council convened to select a new Eze.²⁴ He has been on the throne for 27 years. Reputed as a peace-loving Eze, he was known to have given the “the consent for fifteen other autonomous communities to be carved out of his domain (the original Ibeku AC) since 1999 to enable development in Ibeku Land.”²⁵

The surviving Ibeku autonomous community has six villages. Under the reign of the current Eze, the community has remained largely peaceful though not without some security challenges. As data in Figure 11.4 show, the community is faced with security threats, of which burglary, assault, herdsman attacks, land disputes, and drug abuse were rated to be high.

The prevalence of relative peace in the community was partly attributed to the way the Eze emerged. As noted by the leader of a cultural union:

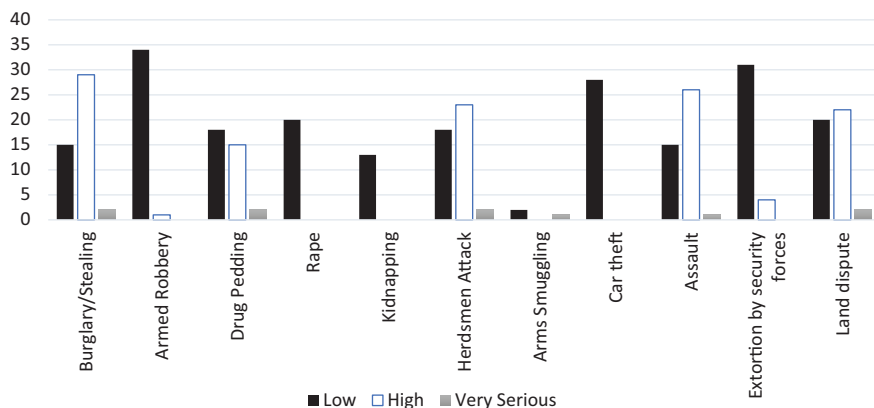


Figure 11.4 Residents' View on the Prevalence of Security Threats in Ibeku Autonomous Community.

Source: Fieldwork November 2021

“they were two candidates for the position: Chief Onwukamuche and Chief S. I Onuoha before he was installed. The community created a panel that screened and interviewed both candidates, and Chief S. I Onuoha emerged as the popular candidate and subsequently installed as the traditional ruler.”²⁶ Another respondent was even more confident: “We [Ibeku people] decided who rules us and immediately that decision was taken, nobody ever contested it.”²⁷ The fact that the outcome was not contested by the other candidate or indeed any other individual in the community attests to the fact that the process reflected the wishes of the people. An overwhelming majority (93 per cent) of the respondents say the process that led to his emergence was very peaceful and transparent.

To promote peace, security, and stability in his domain, the Eze works by, with, and through some traditional structures of conflict and security management such as the Eze’s Cabinet, Village Heads, Eze in-Council, *Umuada*, Age grade, Vigilantes, and *Okonko*. In one instance, a longstanding crisis in the community instigated by a Chief who was regarded as being overbearing and troublesome was successfully resolved by *Umuada* after all other peace-making structures could not resolve the matter.²⁸ The Eze had requested the *Umuada* to leverage its good position in the community to see to the end of the crisis.

Indeed, as posited by the traditional ruler, “our community has remained largely peaceful due to the various positive roles played by these structures.”²⁹ Regarding any land dispute that proves very difficult, the Eze sometimes invites the *Okonko* to assist in resolving it. Nonetheless, the Eze “struggles at times to address some challenges such as resolving land disputes due to

paucity of funds. If we want to invite *Okonko* to resolve a land dispute, for instance, it costs some money."³⁰ A respondent posited that the little money the State Government pays to the Ezes does not come regularly, forcing them to rely on funds generated from the conferment of chieftaincy titles on deserving sons of the community or other donations from philanthropic individuals from the community.

11.6.4 Traditional Rulership and Conflict and Security Management in Mbaocha

Mbaocha autonomous community is located in Umuahia North LGA. It was created out of Ndume autonomous community in April 2001. Mbaocha is composed of four villages: Ohokobe, Umueze-Ala, Umuohu, and Umuafia. Its first traditional ruler, HRH Eze RN Ohaeri was crowned in the same year, 2001, but later died in 2017. His emergence as the traditional ruler of Mbaocha was not without some controversy. He contested for the seat with a prominent Umuahia based lawyer, Chief (Barrister) JN Obonna. It was believed that he was issued the staff of office because of the influences of then Chairman of Umuahia North LGA, Chief CU Nwakodo.

Following the demise of the previous Eze, the community has been embroiled in the Ezeship succession struggle, involving two Eze-elects: Chief Rex Ohaeri and Chief Vincent Nwankwo. In the aftermath of the death of the former Eze, the President General leveraged his authority to summon the process of selection of a new Eze. However, the succession crisis emerged during the selection and presentation stages of choosing the rightful and popular candidate.

According to a member of the Screening Committee, the Committee held a screening exercise for both candidates for the Ezeship (Chief Rex Ohaeri and Chief Vincent Nwankwo) after which they were to appear before the Cabinet for proper documentation and presentation. The Cabinet is made up of President-General, the Onowu who is the traditional Prime Minister, and all the communities and village heads. The day the Cabinet was going through the process, Chief Vincent Nwankwo and his supporters were alleged to have walked out on the Cabinet, threatening to present Chief Nwankwo as their candidate to the State government.

Amidst this situation, the President-General summoned the Cabinet and the elders of the community who concluded the normal process. Chief Rex Ohaeri was screened and eventually presented to the local government as the rightful Eze-elect. The process tended to conform with the provisions of the Constitution of the community which stipulates that only the cabinet, Council of Elders, and the President General have the right to present an Eze-elect to the government. However, those supporting Chief Vincent were alleged to be using their influence and contacts with the Abia state government to present and position him as the Eze-elect. As a community resident puts it: "some persons here [Mbaocha] presently think they have connection and

they want to use that connection to select someone who obviously does not even qualify and does not even merit the position."³¹

Fearing the possibility of Abia State government imposing an unpopular candidate on them, some people from the community filed a lawsuit against the State Government to restrain it from issuing staff of office to any person other than the popular candidate. As the presumed popular candidate himself confidently stated:

I emerged victoriously and I was presented and some people were still contending and we had to go to court to resolve the matter so that there will be arbitration and the court in its wisdom recognised me as the Eze-elect. But the litigation has not ended because the other parties are still pursuing the case. They went to the appellate court and suddenly withdrew and instituted a fresh matter in court. As we speak, the matter is waiting to be resolved in court, but the pronouncement recognises that I am the Eze-elect. Until otherwise proven in the court, I am still the substantive Eze-elect.³²

In the absence of a substantive Eze, the autonomous community relies on other existing traditional structures to promote peace, security, and conflict resolution. As with other parts of the State in general and Umuahia in particular, land disputes are one of the major conflicts that are recurrent in local communities. Regarding conflict resolution, especially land disputes, the various villages rely on the different *Okonko* groups – *Okonko* Ibeku, *Okonko* Umuafia, and *Okonko* Imeze, of which *Okonko* Imeze is the head of these different *Okonkos*.

In terms of security provisioning, the four villages operate their respective vigilante outfits. These vigilante groups are registered with the Police; however, there is no one central body that coordinates them at the community level. The President-General was of the view that the absence of a substantive Eze accounts for the lack of such a critical coordinating organ.³³ The importance of such a coordinating framework can hardly be overstated given the speed and scale with which criminals change locations or transport weapons in Nigeria.

As a community situated in an urban area, it experiences security challenges such as drug peddling, violent cultism, and burglary, among others. As noted by a resident, "cultism and drugs are rampant. Every uncompleted building in the community has become their houses, especially at night."³⁴ Data in Figure 11.5 reveals that drug abuse is one of the crimes that is very prevalent (rated as high) in the community. Many communities in the South-East are currently facing a dangerous rise in the consumption of mind-altering substances, especially Methamphetamine, which youth in the region nicknamed *Mkpuru Mmiri* (Ojiego, 2021; Ogaziechi, 2021). Conceivably, Methamphetamine will feature in the list of hard drugs being (ab)used by youths in Mbaocha.

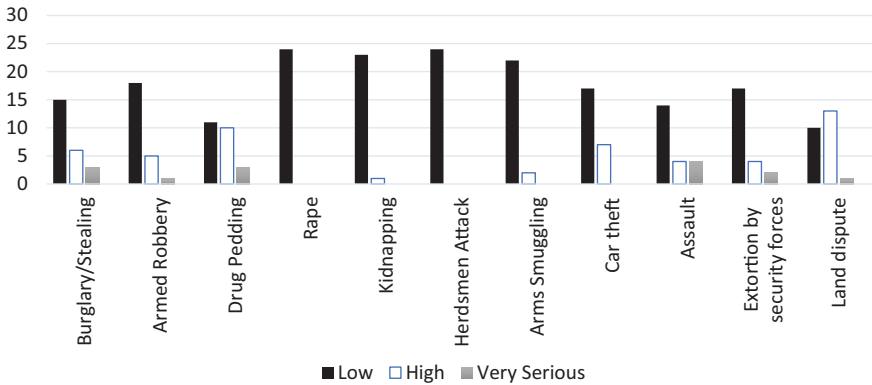


Figure 11.5 Residents' View on the Prevalence of Security Threats in Mbaocha Autonomous Community.

Source: Fieldwork November 2021.

Efforts by the various villages to effectively combat these security challenges have been hampered by certain factors, such as the lack of a central body at the community level to coordinate the security measures of the various villages' vigilantes. Another factor of prominent significance is the corrupt nature of the police. This was acknowledged by a prominent person in the community: "the police are also our problem. They help criminals and when you report crimes to them, they won't come. Most of the boys in our community are spies for criminals. Also, when you report thieves and they are arrested, before twenty-four hours, the police will release them."³⁵

This view is not entirely different from the widely held perception of the Nigerian Police, as being corrupt and largely ineffective. It has been noted that "the Nigerian Police is the first line of security interface with the public. However, low levels of public trust in the police inhibit the cooperation needed to be effective against these societally based threats" (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2021, p. 20). Besides this, the succession crisis has also impacted the prospect of peaceful co-existence in the community. For instance, the Eze is the rightful authority that makes a pronouncement on when and how the annual *Iri ji* (New Yam Festival) will take place. It was noted that in the absence of a substantive Eze,

there was an incident where some group of persons would decide how to carry out the Festivals contrary to laid down customs. This creates conflict. Like in the last [2021] festival, some people hijacked the process where the President-General would give an order and some other persons would gang up and give counter order. So, there were frictions but we have tried to manage them well because we have tried to calm our youths down to exercise restraint.³⁶

There was equally an incident where fracas nearly broke out between supporters of the two contestants to the seat, over access and use of the community hall for a meeting. While the succession struggle has not resulted in any major violent confrontation in the community, it has impacted the prospects of dispute resolution and effective security provisioning.

11.6.5 Traditional Rulership and Conflict and Security Management in Okwuta

Okwuta autonomous community of Isieke Ibeku, in Umuahia North LGA, was created in 2001. It is composed of nine villages: Umuekegbe, Umuorie, Umuogele, Umueba, Umundere, Ohuhuta, Umuege, Umuosiam, and Obiemume. Its first traditional ruler, HRH Eze Dominic A. Onyemereneche, was issued staff of office on 15 February 2004. The presentation of the staff of office was delayed from 2001 to 2004, because of the fierce struggle for the seat between Chief Tobias Ehurie Ndumele and HRH Eze Dominic A. Onyemereneche. However, when Eze Dominic A. Onyemereneche eventually received the staff of office from Abia state government, he embarked on a reconciliation process by convening a peace meeting where he mended fences with all those who felt aggrieved with the process that brought him to the position. He died in 2009.

A succession crisis over the Ezeship broke out around 2010 when the community commenced the process of selecting a new Eze. Three candidates from the same community ward – Chief Ndubuka Ikerieonwu, Chief Tobias Ehurie Ndumele, and Danial Egbogu – presented themselves and were found to be qualified. Meanwhile, the Constitution of the community provides for the conduct of a plebiscite to determine the most popular candidate in a situation where there is no consensus candidate. The three candidates were presented to the then Umuahia North LGA Chairman who, in line with his official duties, forwarded the three names to the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, with a recommendation that the Local Government should conduct a plebiscite to ascertain the popular candidate. But the Local Government did not conduct the plebiscite despite repeated letters sent to that effect by the community.

In the intervening years, the succession struggle intensified among the contestants, further polarising the community. In 2018, the Abia State government issued Daniel Egbogu staff of office as Eze of Okwuta, even when the plebiscite is yet to be conducted and all petitions of the other contestants lie before the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs unresolved. A respondent believes that “the Governor was probably deceived by influential people supporting Mr. Daniel Egbogu, since he merely signs what was brought to him and may not have the benefit of knowing the provisions of the Constitution of the community.”³⁷

His appointment was therefore seen as an imposition on the community against the wishes of the people. The reasons were that the constitutional

provisions of the community were not adhered to in his appointment. First, the Constitution provides that in the event of no consensus candidate for the Eze, a plebiscite should be conducted. This did not happen, but the staff of office was issued to one of the claimants. There was equally a contention about his age before the contest and his age when he eventually got the staff of office. The Constitution stipulates that a candidate for the Eze position in the community should not be below 45 years or above 65 years of age.

Amidst the struggle among the three contestants, Mr. Daniel Egbogu was appointed the Chairman of the Local Government Service Commission, Abia State, where he served for five years. By the time his tenure elapsed, and he succeeded in getting the staff of office, he had clocked 71 years. This was against the constitutional provision of not being more than 65 Years, although when he and other contestants presented themselves to the Local Government, he was 63 years. Notwithstanding, a candidate becomes an Eze not when he or she was presented to the Local Government but when the individual is issued a certificate and staff of office by the Governor.

Besides the issue of non-adherence to constitutional provisions in his appointment, there was the challenge of his rejection by a majority of the people in the community. He equally had issues with the youth, who accused him of selling community lands.³⁸ Amidst this tense situation, it was argued that Eze Daniel Egbogu “exploited his access to the Governor to obtain the staff of office.”³⁹ Consequently, the community refused to recognise him as their Eze and instead filed a lawsuit seeking his removal. As noted by a prominent community resident:

We were in court because the process that brought him was not in accordance with the Constitution and traditions of the Community. The matter was being handled by the Chief Judge of Abia State even though he raised a preliminary objection on the ground that even though the Governor gave him the staff of office, that the Governor being a public officer, his actions ought to be protected by the Public Officer Protection Act which states that any act done by a public officer in pursuance or execution or intended execution of any Act or Law or any public duty or authority if not challenged within 3 months is seen to be invalid. We replied because this was a matter of the Constitution and that has no limitation in law because even the Constitution is still a living document and cannot be overtaken by time.⁴⁰

The court had slated 30 July 2020 for ruling on the motion before Eze Daniel Egbogu died on 8 July 2020 (Emeruwa, 2020). The news of his death was met with jubilation.⁴¹ The level of “loathing was such that the community not only did not participate in his burial, they also used palm fronds to put up barricades around the community square and other places where the corpse was supposed to be received.”⁴² The autonomous community has been without a

substantive Eze since 2020, although they were considering setting in motion the process for the selection of a new Eze.

While alive, the discord impacted the prospect of peaceful co-existence. Eze Daniel Egbogu was accused of conniving with members of the former Executive of the Okwuta Development Union (ODU) to sell some plots of land belonging to the community after it was returned to them by the then Governor, Theodore Orji. The Abia State government also paid the community 20 million Naira as monetary compensation for the land and equally returned about 35 plots. They allegedly sold some of the plots at three million each, while the project embarked upon with the proceeds was not completed. This brought serious tension in the community, as he was seen as working with the then ODU against the general interest of the community.⁴³ The crisis equally hampered the celebration of a popular community festival: Okwuta Day.⁴⁴ For instance, the Eze was accused of using the police to scuttle plans for the celebration of Okwuta day in 2019.

Despite the tension during Eze Egbogu's reign and the vacuum created by his demise, the community has remained largely peaceful. Like in other autonomous communities, the existence of some community structures has helped to foster peace and conflict resolution. The Umuada was mentioned as one of the key traditional structures that played an important role in promoting peace in the community, including spearheading the effort at a point to reconcile Eze Egbogu and aggrieved members of the community. Other structures that contributed to the maintenance of peace were the Age-Grades, Elders Council (comprising people that are 80 years and above), and the new executive of ODU.⁴⁵ But a structure of notable significance is the community's innovative peace architecture is built on four adjudicatory levels or bodies: The Family, Village (Compound), Peace Committee, and Community assembly.

As a rule, the adjudication of any dispute in the community must start first at the Family level. If it is not satisfactorily resolved, the dispute proceeds to the Village level. If any of the parties are not satisfied with the outcome at the village level, the individual can then appeal to the Peace Committee through the President-General of the ODU. If the matter was not resolved at the level of the Peace Committee, an aggrieved party can then request the President General to escalate it to the Community level. This body serves as the supreme authority of the community which comprises the Elders Council, the Peace Committee, *Owaohia* (People that go to the site of disputed land) Committee, and Eze's Council. It is only when a community member is not satisfied with the decision of this final authority that he or she could proceed to a court. This robust peace infrastructure proved crucial to the promotion of peace and mitigation of crisis in the community, including during the period of heightened tension generated by the Ezeship succession crisis.

As with most autonomous communities in Umuahia, Okwuta operates a vigilante outfit tasked with providing security for the community. The vigilante group operates in partnership with the police to combat crimes and other security challenges. Even without a substantive Eze, the vigilante outfits

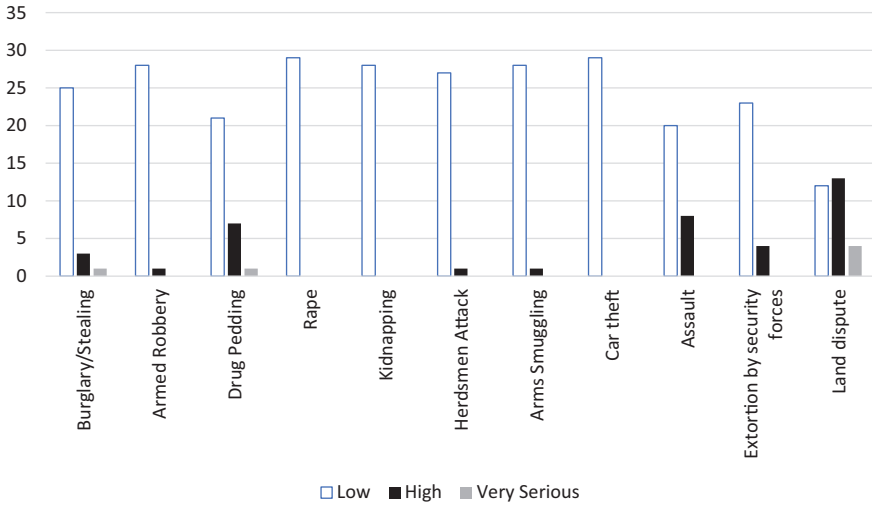


Figure 11.6 Residents' View on the Prevalence of Security Threats in Okwuta Autonomous Community.

Source: Fieldwork November 2021.

continue to perform, relying on community funding for their operation. As presented in Figure 11.6 some of the notable security threats facing the community include burglary, assault, and drug peddling. However, land dispute is considered a very serious challenge in the community.

11.6.6 *Traditional Rulership and Conflict and Security Management in Old Umuahia*

Old-Umuahia autonomous community in Umuahia South LGA was created in 1976 from Olokoro clan, eventually becoming one of the earliest communities created from the then Imo State. The early Ezes emerged from the lineage of a man who was once a Warrant Chief during the colonial era. The Old-Umuahia autonomous community was formerly made up of seven villages, but in 2002 it was divided into two separate autonomous communities: Elu-Elu and Old Umuahia. While five villages formed the Elu-Elu autonomous community, the remaining two villages formed the current Old Umuahia autonomous community.⁴⁶ The two villages that now made up the current Old Umuahia autonomous community are Umezeala and Umobutu, which comprises of six kindreds, namely: Umuhioko, Umuarochukwu, Umuokwu, Umuoparata, Umuoma, and Umuchurie.

The first Eze of the community was His Royal Majesty Eze McDonald Wogu (Ohanyere Ugo 1), who died in 2019. Since his death, the community is yet to select his successor. The succession crisis could be traced to an

allegedly doctored Constitution of the then Old Umuahia (comprising of the seven villages). The Constitution had been a subject of contention, as it was claimed: "that the seven villages never accepted and accented to it."⁴⁷ With the creation of Elu-Elu out of the original Old Umuahia, it was presumed by many that the old Constitution has been rendered invalid and obsolete for the 'new' Old Umuahia autonomous community.

As of the time of fieldwork in November 2021, the community did not have an Eze due to disagreement between Wogu's family and members of the six kindred. The Wogu family that produced the late Eze is insistent on producing his successor, claiming that the Eze's position is hereditary in the community. They trace this to the history of the man that was made a Warrant Chief by the British and whose progenitor became the Eze in 1976.⁴⁸ But other kindreds from Umuobutu and Umuezeala claimed otherwise, maintaining that the seat is rotatory or should be rotatory. Hence, serious disagreement broke out in the community regarding the selection of a new Eze. As noted by one of the respondents:

The remaining two villages (Umuezeala and Umuobutu) are what is now known as the Old Umuahia autonomous community. The other five villages are known as Elu-Elu Old Umuahia autonomous community. For the remaining two, we felt and still feel that we should sit down and fashion out a Constitution that would govern this place and thereafter elect our own Eze. But unfortunately, a family in one of the villages said, no, it is their birthright to produce Eze. And we said no; that we have to determine who our Eze would be. That is why we are here and up till now; we have not had an Eze. We are challenging that Constitution which they claim they have in court.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, a popular woman in the community argued that "the man they are fronting to become the new Eze now is not even the son of the late Eze. The late Eze's son is not interested in the throne, and in our community, the throne is not hereditary. The person causing the problem now is even from another family, only that the family bears the same surname with the late Eze's family."⁵⁰

As noted earlier, the problem is traceable to a constitution that was said to be doctored during the reign of Eze Ohanyereugo I of the then Old Umuahia. Sometime in 1982, a Constitution Drafting Committee was set up, comprising people appointed from the seven villages. The Committee produced a draft Constitution which was supposed to be signed after the public hearing. However, the then Eze Ohanyereugo handed the draft Constitution to someone to make an input. At this stage, it was alleged that:

some persons went and doctored it. And when Eze Ohanyereugo died, the Eze-in-Council signed it in proxy and said we all signed the Constitution and they presented it in court. They even put the name of our own Nze as among those that signed it while they have not installed our Nze by the time they did this Constitution. They put his name and

signed claiming that he signed, while that signature does not match the signature of our own Nze.⁵¹

This development was cited as one of the reasons the five communities that now constitute Elu-Elu autonomous community pulled out of the former Old Umuahia. As noted by one of the respondents, the Constitution stated that the Prime Ministership is not supposed to come from the same place and family as the Eze. When he (Eze Ohanyereugo) took that Constitution, he doctored it. His senior brother now became the Prime Minister and that was why the five other villages left.⁵²

While the Wogu family lay claims to hereditary based on the contentious Constitution, the other members of the community went forward to draft a new Constitution in 2019. Given that the matter is still pending in the court, the community has been without an Eze.⁵³ The Abia state government is said to have abstained from interfering in the crisis since the matter was in court. It prefers that the community peacefully resolve the matter, although many would support the conduct of a plebiscite to end the tussle.⁵⁴

In the absence of a substantive traditional ruler, the community has relied on other traditional structures to maintain peace and security. As noted by a respondent, they include “the Nze, who is the head of the village, followed by the Ofor (the oldest man in the village), followed by the President-General who is the administrative head, followed by the chairman and the youth president and the women league.” These structures have been used to resolve disputes or conflicts in the community.

In addition, the community operates a vigilante group, headed by a youth, who is the chairman of security. As noted by a respondent, “if any unknown person enters the village, the youths always locate them and interrogate them and communicate the chairman.”⁵⁵ Hunters’ association also supports security provisioning in the community. Despite the presence of these informal security providers that work alongside the police, the community is still confronted with some security threats (see Figure 11.7).

While the prevalence of burglary, armed robbery, and extortion by security forces was rated as being high, drug peddling and land dispute were rated as being very serious. Of course, the prevalence of these threats is not limited to this autonomous community. The prevalence of violent crimes is a major security challenge across all of the communities and in Nigeria at large.

11.7 Key Findings of the Study

Based on insights gleaned from the fieldwork and extant literature, the following findings are worth noting.

- 1. Proliferation of autonomous communities tend to hamper peace:** The creation of autonomous communities is an exercise that has divided some communities in the South-East, in general, and Abia state in particular

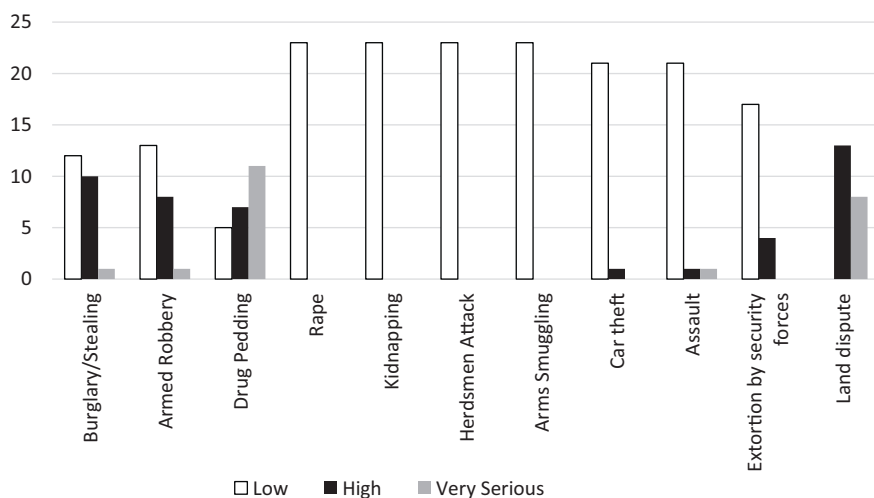


Figure 11.7 Residents’ View on the Prevalence of Security Threats in Old Umuahia Autonomous Community.

Source: Fieldwork November 2021.

(Uzoigwe, 2009; Francis, Eke & Wosu, 2018; Okafor, 2019). While proponents of the practice contend that it is a means of achieving accelerated socio-economic development for the benefit of people at the grassroots level, opponents posit it generates conflicts and disunity. The result of our field survey reveals this divide. While 46 per cent of the respondents think that the creation of several autonomous communities is not responsible for conflicts in some communities, some 42 per cent believe that it is responsible for conflicts in their communities, and 12 per cent are unsure if it is responsible for conflicts in some communities regarding the Ezeship position. The fact that not all six communities have experienced crisis over the Ezeship position mainly accounts for the divergence of opinion.

However, most of the key informants share the view that the creation of autonomous communities has done more harm than good in terms of community peace. This is consistent with Ezennaya’s (2009, para.9) apt contention that “creation of unnecessary and unviable autonomous communities is the creation of aggressive communities.” Uzoigwe (2009) equally agrees that the clamour for the creation of more autonomous communities that ceremoniously rule by Ezes or *Igwes* has resulted in the fragmentation and destabilisation of many communities in contemporary Igboland. This partly explain why the majority of the respondents (65 per cent) were against the creation of more autonomous communities, 24 per cent were in support of it, while 12 per cent were neither for nor against the practice (Authors’ fieldwork, November 2021). Those who

object to the creation of more autonomous communities contend that the proliferation of autonomous communities has led to a decline of respect for traditional rulers or fierce contestation for Ezeship, as was evident in the case of Amizi.

2. **Enduring influence of state government over traditional rulers:** The state government controls traditional rulers (Ezes) majorly through political and financial levers. In terms of political lever, the governor uses his powers of issuance and withdrawal of staff of office to ensure that traditional rulers promote his political or party's interest even when it is against the wishes of the community. Concerning financial lever, the Governor determines what is given to them as a monthly stipend, the payment of which is not even regular. Azu (2018) equally recognised the manipulation of traditional rulers in Abia state by the state government, remarking thus:

Instead of a traditional ruler working with his Council of Elders, Chiefs, Youths, Village Assembly and other arms of traditional institutions, he works for the state government and rule his people according to the whims and caprices of the state government. The Abia state government under the leadership of Chief Theodore Orji, gave each traditional ruler in Abia state a gift of Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) as a strategy to solicit their continued support for any illegitimate practices. (p. 93)

Manipulation by state government vitiates the legitimacy, reverence, and the integrity of traditional rulers. On account of this, an overwhelming majority (85 per cent) of residents of the six communities were against the appointment of traditional rulers by the state government,. Most of the key informants were of the view that the government's role should be limited to only the recognition of the candidate presented by the community or to conduct plebiscite for the community when there is no consensus candidate.

3. **The nature of a traditional ruler's emergence has implications for peace and security:** In communities where the government did not influence the emergence of their traditional ruler/Eze, they tended to be largely peaceful (Elu-Elu and Ibeku) compared to where government influence is implicated in the emergence of the traditional ruler, which tended to experience community tension (Amizi and Okwuta). Where government interference or preference is implicated in the selection of an Eze, it has tended to reduce the respect accorded to the benefactor by the people, as was the case of Okwuta. In places where Government chose to remain neutral and allow the court to adjudicate (Old Umuahia and Mbaocha), the situation has remained relatively peaceful. Key informants hold the view that a traditional ruler that emerged through an unpopular process usually causes division and distrust in the community, thus complicating efforts at ensuring peace, unity, and security in such communities. This lays credence to the argument of Lemchi (2010) that the quality of the process of selecting a traditional ruler is key to good governance. It is pertinent to further

note that the existence of robust traditional community structures help to manage conflict and security challenges even where the traditional seat is being contested or an unpopular candidate was issued the staff of office by the government. The Okwuta Peace Committee is one novel element of peace infrastructure in this regard.

4. **Proliferation of non-state security outfits an indication of state failure in Nigeria:** Across the six autonomous communities studied, traditional rulers enabled the establishment of vigilante outfits for the provision of security and community protection. These non-state security outfits are largely sustained through community levy and donations from philanthropic individuals. This finding is consistent with the argument of Igwubor (2020, p. 208) that “the traditional rulers in the maintenance of security in their areas has setup local vigilante which is made up of able-bodied men and local hunters in the area. They are funded by the community and in some cases, they are on voluntary mission.” On the surface, the proliferation of vigilantes underscores the growing sense of insecurity in local communities and perceived inadequacies of the heavily centralized federal policing system in Nigeria in providing safety and security to citizens (Onuoha, 2017; Felbab-Brown, 2021). Looking deeper, it reflects the failure of the Nigerian state. As noted by Campell and Rotberg (2021, para.1), “if a state’s first obligation is to provide security and maintain a monopoly on the use of violence, then Nigeria has failed, even if some other aspects of the state still function.” As the analysis in this discourse reveals, central to state failure is the corruption and ineptitude of Nigeria’s core security organ – the police.
5. **Distrust of the police in security management in local communities:** Most of the interviewees, especially vigilante members, disclosed that they do not trust the police much because some of them divulged information shared with them to the suspects. The ease with which the police release such apprehended suspects, even before the vigilante officials who took them to police station would return to their communities, adds to their suspicion that the Police are hand in glove with the criminals. As one vigilante leader bluntly puts it: “Even the Nigerian police do not even trust one another.” This level of distrust is consistent with the findings of a 2018 Afrobarometer survey which indicates that the Police are seen as the most corrupt and least trusted public institution in Nigeria (Ojewale & Appiah-Nyamekye, 2018). The police are the weakest link in the chain of security management in the local community.

11.8 Conclusion and Recommendations

Traditional rulers are positioned at the grassroots, enabling them to understand the challenges of the people and community. In contemporary Nigerian society, it has been recognised that peace, security, development, and stability are more interconnected than ever, placing a premium on nipping acts

propitious to insecurity in the bud as early as possible. Effective response to evolving threats to peace and security in Nigeria requires a robust repositioning of traditional rulers as critical actors in conflict management and security provision. To enhance the role of traditional rulers in fostering peace, security, and development in Abia state, the study proffers the following actionable recommendations:

1. **Exercise due diligence in creating autonomous communities:** The creation of autonomous communities and the issuance of staff of office by the government have sometimes been executed without proper diligence. Abia state government should strongly resist the clamour for the creation of autonomous communities which has resulted in Ezeship tussles and other attendant conflicts. Experience has shown that such an exercise performed without due diligence has created crisis and tension, as was the case in Amizi-Epe. Abia State government should ensure that a fact-finding mission visits and verifies the claims of communities seeking to be granted the status of autonomous communities. Such a verification team or exercise would have helped forestall the situation in Amizi, where two autonomous communities existed in the same geographical space without any known boundaries.
2. **Constitutionalise the position and roles of traditional rulers:** The Abia state government should interface with the Federal government to amend the relevant sections of the Constitution to accord traditional rulers specific responsibilities for conflict and security management in their domains.
3. **Proper resourcing of traditional rulers:** The state government needs to properly resource traditional rulers through a secure budgetary envelope to enhance their effectiveness in promoting peace and security in their communities. The state government should increase the allowance it pays to traditional rulers to reduce their vulnerability to material and financial inducements and enable them to sustain other traditional structures that promote peace and security at the grass-root level. This will also reduce the tendency of some Ezes to exploit their position by indulging in land grabbing.
4. **Strengthen the advisory office to the governor:** There is need for the Governor to exercise due diligence both in the creation and approving of autonomous communities, and the issuing of staff of office to Eze-elect when the position is still being contested by several claimants. In this regard, those working for and with the Governor in administrative or advisory capacities should show commitment and due diligence in studying the constitutional provisions of

autonomous communities and pending petitions, to be able to advise the Governor accordingly and properly on such issues.

5. **Conduct plebiscite to resolve Ezeship succession crises:** In the event of an Ezeship tussle or the absence of a consensus candidate for the position, the State Government, through the LGA, should establish an independent body to thoroughly investigate the facts of the matter, as well as to conduct a transparent plebiscite to determine the popular candidate for the seat. This measure should be taken regardless of whether a provision for a plebiscite is provided for or not in the community's Constitution.
6. **Tinkering with the influence of state government:** There is need to reduce the undue influence of the state government over traditional rulers. The power of appointment and payment of salaries or subventions are the two principal instruments with which Governors have influenced or controlled traditional rulers. There is need to amend Section seven, sub-section four that stipulates that the minimum number of Eze-designated to be sent to the Governor should be two candidates. It should allow for the submission of even one candidate if a community so decides. In addition, a true certified copy of the Constitution of the community should be attached when such names are brought forward, with a clear briefing showing how the process conforms with all necessary provisions regarding the selection of the Eze.

Notes

- 1 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #1, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 2 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #2, Amizi, Umuahia, January 20, 2021.
- 3 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #3, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 4 The Uzi autonomous community was later cancelled by a letter dated March 05, 2002, and referenced (MLGCA/CH/S.41/11/9/8 from the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Umuahia, Abia State.
- 5 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #3, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 6 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #4, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 7 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #5, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 8 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #6, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 9 Abia State House of Assembly, June 26, 2017
- 10 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #7, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.

- 11 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #8, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 12 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #9, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 13 *Mkpuru mmiri* is the slang coined from the Igbo language, which is loosely translated as 'seed of water' but actually a nickname for Methamphetamine or Crystal Meth (a hard drug).
- 14 Authors' interview anonymous informant #5, Amizi, Umuahia, November 26, 2021.
- 15 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #10, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 16 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #11, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 17 *Okonko* is a kind of secret society in Igboland with executive and judiciary powers usually called upon during communal clash and land dispute to settle clashes between individuals, families or communities, including for enforcing verdicts in the village assembly.
- 18 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #11, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 19 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #12, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 20 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #11, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 21 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #12, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 22 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #13, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 23 Authors' interview anonymous informant #14, Elu Elu Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 24 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #15, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 14, 2021.
- 25 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #16, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 14, 2021.
- 26 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #16, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 14, 2021.
- 27 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #17, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 14, 2021.
- 28 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #18, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 14, 2021.
- 29 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #19, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 30 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #19, Ibeku, Umuahia, November 15, 2021.
- 31 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #20, Mbaocha, Umuahia, November 16 2021.
- 32 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #22, Mbaocha, Umuahia, November 16 2021.
- 33 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #22, Mbaocha, Umuahia, November 16 2021.
- 34 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #23, Mbaocha, Umuahia, November 16 2021.
- 35 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #24, Mbaocha, Umuahia, November 16 2021.
- 36 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #21, Mbaocha, Umuahia, November 16 2021.

- 37 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #25, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 38 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #26, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 39 He was a former member of the Abia State House of Assembly, former Board Chairman of the Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State (BCA), and was until the time of his appointment the immediate past Chairman of the Local Government Service Commission, Abia State.
- 40 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #27, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 41 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #30, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 42 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #28, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 43 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #29, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 44 Okwuta Day is an annual event usually held on 26 December to evaluate the community's activities in the passing year and plan for the next year. There is merriment and if there is any Age Grade due for acceptance by the community, it will be done on this day.
- 45 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #31, Okwuta, Umuahia, November 27, 2021.
- 46 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #33, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 47 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #33, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 48 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #34, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 49 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #35, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 50 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #36, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 51 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #33, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 52 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #37, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 53 In November 2021, however, the community finally selected Chief Rev. Ufandu Madumere as the Eze-elect after lots of disagreement. But the new Eze is yet to be crowned.
- 54 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #32, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.
- 55 Authors' interview with anonymous informant #38, Old Umuahia, Umuahia, November 13, 2021.

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Conclusion



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12 Creative Genius in Postcolonial Nigeria

Re-imagining Traditional Rulership at a Safe Distance from Politics

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12.1 Introduction¹

Very few traditional rulers have lived through the fundamental, though gradual, process of abridgement of the powers they exercised at the time of their appointment. Emir Ado Bayero [of Kano] is one of the few. At the time he ascended the throne of Kano in 1963, [he] presided over the most powerful Native Authority (NA), in Nigeria. [...] But now, thirty-six years later, the Kano NA has been fragmented into fifty-three independent administrative units called local governments. The NA Police Force has been dismantled and in its stead is the Nigeria Police Force. Also the courts have been taken over by the federal and state governments, while the prisons now belong to the federal government. In spite of the diminishing of the constitutional powers of the Emir, Alhaji Ado Bayero has continued to loom even larger in the eyes of his subjects and indeed Nigerians. It is a paradox that the seeming impotence of the institution that the series of reforms have brought about, also contain the very strength that has helped the Emir survive all the vicissitudes [of the post-colonial period].

(Ibrahim, 2001, pp. xvi–xvii)

Emir Ado Bayero of Kano died in 2014 after 51 years on the throne. He personally witnessed, and directed, the process of adjustment and reinvention that was required of traditional authorities after Nigerian independence, if they were to survive in the new Nigerian polity. The preceding chapters in this book have described this process in different parts of Nigeria – from Sokoto and the northern Emirates, to Lagos, Abia, and Benin all the way in the south. Whatever your normative position on the legitimacy of traditional authority in a democracy, all chapters in this book contain a strong sense of inventive, creative genius (Táíwò, 2021) in this process. And the chapters resonate strongly with Ibrahim’s (2001) paradox: that the “seeming impotence” of traditional authorities after independence has also been the driving force behind their persistence and creativity.

This concluding chapter brings together key findings from this book, organised around the questions outlined in the introduction: in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, who are traditional rulers, how have their roles in security governance changed, and what might explain their suitability for their new roles?

But underlying these specific questions lies a deeper one, about the nature of the process that we are analysing here. Are traditional rulers anachronistic products of colonialism, whose “ascription-based authority cannot sit well in the politics of a state based on liberal-democratic foundations” (Táiwò, 2021, p. 95), and who are struggling to keep hold of power that is slipping through their fingers? Or are they expressions of indigenous knowledge and custom, returning to the fore as Nigeria eradicates its colonial experience and returns to its own, precolonial ideological and institutional base?

We see neither of these extreme positions as representative of the processes described in this book. As we have argued in the introduction, what we see is the “usual” creative political genius that lies behind every instance of state formation: the creation of something new from the building blocks provided by the past (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021). In Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, these building blocks include memories of precolonial kingdoms, empires, and other forms of political organisation; but they also include remnants of colonial ideas and institutions, and those of other powerful examples in the postcolonial world. Kano Emirate today is no longer the political species it was when Emir Ado Bayero ascended the throne in 1963; nor is it a revived version of the Emirate as it existed before British conquest in 1903. It has changed and evolved fundamentally, from an organisation that *was* the heart of state power to one that flourishes precisely because of its *distance* from the state and its patronage-driven politics.

We will now highlight some of the features of these new and evolving political creatures, focusing on their roles in security governance and what might explain them. We will end by highlighting our key lessons and their implications.

12.2 Who Are Traditional Authorities?

As we noted in the introduction to this book, we have used the term “traditional authorities” in a way that is consistent with the way Nigerians use the term in everyday parlance; that is, we have used an emic definition. It is therefore interesting to briefly note the kinds of leaders that the chapters have brought out as “traditional,” and the extent to which this differs from earlier conceptions, such as Crowder and Ikime (1970). Many traditional leaders in this volume would have been recognised as such in earlier studies as well: Emirs and Obas, and the extensive royals families and clans around them; the Gbong Gwom Jos and other Middle Belt ethnic community leaders; and Ekiti’s princesses, market leaders, and other traditional female authorities. While the specifics of their traditional titles, domains, status (“grading”) and responsibilities may have changed, the leaders themselves are still recognisably “traditional” from earlier historical eras.

But there are changes to the picture as well. Foremost is Igboland, represented by Umahia in Abia State in this volume. Here, traditional authority has experienced great transformations since independence, as it became

attached to the newly formed autonomous communities. As these communities proliferated, so did traditional authorities, with hundreds of new Ezes as a result. Their position in an official fourth tier of government is unique in Nigeria, as far as we know, although other states also have also tried to get traditional leaders under local government control.

In addition to these new Igbo leaders, there has also been a proliferation of traditional titles in other traditional systems throughout Nigeria. Many of these are ceremonial and non-hereditary, without strict ties to territory or governance responsibilities. But all the same, these newly titled elites are part of the new landscape of traditional leadership. In similar vein, several of the chapters hint at changes in the selection procedures and the backgrounds of people eligible for traditional leadership. For example, elections are increasingly used as a way to select traditional candidates; and there are indications that more and more “modern” professionals move into traditional leadership positions after a successful, more conventional, career. We warmly recommend further research into these dynamics, not least because selection procedures are likely to have impacts on accountability and governance outcomes.

A final dimension worth highlighting here is gender. As Agbaje (Chapter Four) describes in wonderful detail for Ekiti, women have many ways of preventing and reducing violence, which often connect to traditional forms of authority. This is likely true in many other parts of Nigeria outside Ekiti (cf. Ani & Opara, 2017), despite the dominance of men in official, titled positions of leadership in these parts. But more research should be done to confirm this and describe the ways in which these, often more informal, forms of engagement are changing in contemporary times. So, although the other chapters talk little about the roles of women specifically, this is not meant to imply that they have no roles; rather, we urge that further research is needed to spell out in detail what they are.

12.3 What Roles do Traditional Authorities Take in Security Governance?

This book has shown that traditional authority in Nigeria today captures a rich tapestry of political institutions and organisations. Their leaders engage in an increasing range of governance activities, including those around security. Importantly, many of them have also retained, or invented, more symbolic or spiritual functions, such as the sighting of the moon for Ramadan or engaging in traditional (spirit-based) medicine. These symbolic and spiritual functions are often vital parts of their claim to power and authority.

Although there are major differences in the roles traditional leaders take up to reduce violence, we can draw three general conclusions. First, throughout the chapters, the trend seems to be one in which traditional authorities are *increasingly involved* in security governance since 1999 – even if the scope and impact of their involvement is curtailed by logistical and institutional constraints. In some cases, this is a matter of developing new roles, for example in security committees and the coordination of vigilante groups,

most notably in *Amotekun* in the South-West; in others it is related to rising numbers of traditional leaders, such as in the South-East. But it can also be a response to rising insecurity and the failures of the police and other government security actors – take, for example, the decision of the Oba of Benin to use traditional curses to restrain organised crime. Note that we are not claiming that, overall in Nigeria, the impact of traditional rulers on security is increasing; this requires more systematic measurement of the outcomes of the roles traditional rulers play across the country.

Our second conclusion is that in most of their roles, traditional authorities work closely together with other actors, including government, as well as religious groups and even international organisations. This confirms their ability to function as brokers, connecting previously unconnected actors and communities in pursuit of effective governance (cf. De Jong et al., 2023). Traditional authorities have a perhaps unique ability to speak different languages to different audiences, including those of custom, ethnicity, religion, and the spirit world as well as the legal and bureaucratic language of government. We suggest that fostering this ability constitutes one of the creative ways in which traditional leaders have addressed their “seeming impotence” in official terms, and one that helps to explain their increasing prominence. At the same time, the inherent vulnerability of being a broker resonates strongly with the precariousness of the position that many traditional authorities find themselves in, subject to the whims of politicians and other fickle elites.

Third, focusing mores specifically on the roles traditional authorities play in security governance, we can distil six general categories: dispute settlement, persuasion, relief, administration, consultation, and community policing. We will discuss each in turn, illustrating some of the dimensions of each using examples from the case studies and highlighting questions our book raises for further research.

12.3.1 Dispute Settlement and Conflict Resolution

In line with existing literature on traditional authorities in Nigeria and Africa more generally, all chapters highlight some form of dispute settlement or conflict resolution as part of the roles traditional authorities take. This includes, for example, the Ekiti princesses described by Agbaje in Chapter Four, who can adjudicate cases of cheating or street fighting, or the market leaders who can regulate market prices and settle any disputes that arise in Ekiti markets. This type of dispute settlement can involve mediation, where the leader facilitates the parties resolving their dispute peacefully; but it can also include more formal types of arbitration or adjudication, where traditional leaders use their personal wisdom, customary law, or religion to resolve matters between conflicting parties. As we will discuss in the next section, many resolution mechanisms involve religious or spiritual dimensions, which are an important part of their perceived efficacy.

Traditional leaders often constitute the first point of call for disputes that cannot be resolved within or between families. Onuoha and Enyiazu's Chapter Eleven describes this most explicitly, when they analyse the way in which a dispute can escalate from the family, to the village level, to the community's Peace Committee, and finally to the level of the Eze, the community's traditional ruler. For those cases, the Eze works together with other stakeholders – such as the Eze-in-Council, *Ndi Nze*, Age-Grade, *Okonko* secret society, women's groups, and vigilantes – to settle whatever disputes are brought before them. Only if they are unable to resolve the dispute at this community level, can it be brought to the police or the courts.

While not all traditional systems are as formally organised as some of the Igbo communities described by Onuoha and Enyiazu, the position of the traditional leader in between the family and the formal court system is common throughout Nigeria. Especially in diverse urban settings, this can allow for "forum shopping" (von Benda-Beckmann, 1981) as individuals are able to choose the dispute-settlement forum that suits their needs best. But it can also lead to interesting hat-switching situations for traditional authorities, as they have to move between informally settling a dispute in their capacity as chief and, perhaps even on the same case, advising official customary courts on the finer points of customary law. More research would be needed to explore these dynamics, as well as the legitimacy and impact of informal dispute settlement on preventing violence.

Finally, this category of governance activity can also include town hall meetings or peace gatherings. These other types of conflict resolution are often larger in scale than dispute settlement meetings, and aimed at bringing together groups or communities to address grievances or prevent violence. Traditional leaders often collaborate with other leaders and organisations in the organisation of such meetings, including religious leaders and government officials. Omotola's Chapter Eight describes examples in relation to the farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt, where they aim to bring together conflicting communities in an attempt to familiarise them with each other. These meetings can be preventative, when tensions are running high and early-warning signals for conflict come up; but they can also occur in response to (violent) conflicts as a way to prevent further escalation and begin reconciliation.

12.3.2 Persuasion, Preaching, and Advocacy

Persuasion – through preaching, speeches, or other forms of advocacy – is another way in which traditional leaders try to reduce violence in their societies. They do so using any type of legitimacy they can call upon, including personal charisma, customs, religious discourse, and spiritual resources. It can happen in the context of dispute settlement as discussed above, for example in town halls or other peace meetings; but it can also happen in other public fora, or (social) media. Here, Osaghae's (Chapter Three) example of

the Oba of Benin is illustrative, when he publicly cursed the illegal migration and human trafficking that occurred from Benin City, or when he banned the controversial Community Development Associations. The attempts by Lagos traditional rulers to promote community solidarity and discourage hate speech (Shittu, Chapter 10) provide another example of the same mechanism.

Although the use of persuasion is not new to traditional authorities, its mechanics in relation to contemporary security issues suggest interesting and important avenues for further research. For example, we have seen many different examples throughout the book, from the application of spirits or Islamic knowledge to the discretionary application of customary wisdom. What forms of persuasion do traditional rulers use in different contexts, and what are the implications for their efficacy? Another question relates to the sites of persuasion. Social media use is growing rapidly in Nigeria and may offer new avenues for public participation in governance; but can traditional leaders use this ultra-modern medium without risking their image of custodians of custom and tradition? And finally, how do the persuasive activities of traditional leaders interact with those of other Nigerian elites, such as pastors or imams, ethnic community leaders, government officials, or civil society representatives? Do they complement each other, or compete, and what are the consequences?

12.3.3 Relief and Reintegration

In many parts of the country traditional leaders are also involved in providing assistance to the poor and vulnerable of their communities. This includes generating funds or support for generic public services, such as education or health care. But as conflicts and other forms of insecurity persist and grow, it can also extend specifically to reintegrating and supporting people who have been involved in violent conflicts. In Benin City, for example, the Oba Ewuare Foundation attempts to provide youths with training programmes and support the rehabilitation of trafficking victims, including through paying them stipends (Chapter Three). And in Nasarawa state (Chapter Eight), Omotola similarly highlights how traditional rulers provide relief materials to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and support reintegration of victims and combatants through their management of residency permits. Traditional authorities can function independently in this role, as focal points for community collective action. But often they collaborate with other actors, such as hometown associations, local civil society groups, government agencies, and even international aid organisations. Further research could focus on describing the specific constellations of relief provision and their impacts on security and the livelihoods of recipients and the communities they reside in.

12.3.4 Administration and Certification

Providing relief materials and facilitating reintegration also relates to a broader role that traditional rulers are involved in throughout Nigeria: the

administration of residence and the certification of various rights and benefits, including land rights, residency permits, scholarships, and indigeneship certificates (cf. Umar, Chapter Two). In the absence of effective local government administration, traditional leaders are called upon for answering key administrative questions, not only to facilitate the provision of government services but also private-sector activities (e.g. verification of residence for acquiring a SIM-card from a mobile phone operator). This administrative role is crucial for many aspects of life in Nigeria and, for that reason alone, an important subject for further study. But it is connected to security governance because, on the one hand, certification has been a serious source of conflict and violence while, on the other, effective administration can also reduce tensions and prevent violence (e.g. by facilitating intelligence gathering). Improving our understanding of administration and certification procedures, including the role of traditional leaders in them, is therefore key to enhancing security governance.

12.3.5 Consultation, Security Committees, and Intelligence

Archambault and Ehrhardt (2022) have recently argued that we need to pay more attention to the “committeefication” of African collective action, that is, the increasing spread of committees as institutional vehicles. Security governance is a prime example of this trend, as several chapters highlight the existence of security committees, in which state security actors collaborate with traditional leaders and other stakeholders. These security committees are generally convened by government agencies, such as the police or other security forces, and are designed with inclusivity in mind, for information sharing and coordination of security activities. While security committees exist in most states of the federation, the chapters by Tade (Nine) and Alao (Five) illustrate the kinds of security governance that such committees can generate, in the form of the *Amotekun* security network. This network was created at a security summit in 2019, organised by traditional leaders in collaboration with other stakeholders, and traditional leaders took an important role in the Board of the network as well as mobilising security organisations to join the network. It has now become a regional security force in the South-West and has triggered the development of similar initiatives elsewhere, most notably in the South-East (the *Ebubeagu* network).

The prominence of traditional leaders in security committees underlines, again, their ability to connect with other actors in governance activities – in other words, their role as brokers. At the same time, the lack of transparency of these committee’s activities also raises questions. For example, whose interests are traditional leaders serving with their committee membership? How do traditional leaders manage their loyalties, and (how) do communities ensure accountability? Does intelligence only flow “upwards,” into the committee, or do the leaders also disseminate useful information “downwards,” into their communities? And how effective are these security committees, and

especially the more elaborate regional security outfits like *Amotekun*, actually in preventing or addressing violence? These are all important questions for further investigation.

12.3.6 Community Policing and Vigilantism

The case of *Amotekun* also relates to what is arguably the most striking and controversial form of security governance described in this book: the increasing involvement of traditional authorities in community policing and vigilante activity. This connection is not new, historically; but it is becoming increasingly important as vigilantism continues to grow in response to rising insecurity (cf. Iloh & Nwokedi, 2019; Lar, 2019; Agbibo, 2020; Tiwa, 2022). Many different kinds of security outfits can be included under this umbrella, from traditional hunters to semi-official policing groups and even criminal outfits or political thugs. What this book has highlighted is that when these kinds of security outfits engage in forms of community policing, traditional leaders are often involved in setting them up, recruiting or vetting members, or coordinating their activities. This is not only true in Igboland, where Onuoha and Enyiazu show the central role of traditional leaders in community vigilante groups (Chapter Eleven), but for example also in *Amotekun* (Chapter Nine), Nassarawa's farmer-herder conflicts (Chapter Eight), and Sokoto's *Lakurawa* (Chapter Seven).

The rise of vigilante groups, as well as the involvement of both state and traditional authorities in these organisations, raises all kinds of urgent questions. Perhaps the most important relates to the longer-term trajectories of these vigilantes: how can traditional leaders, without effective government backing, prevent them from becoming security threats, either as bandits or political thugs (Meagher, 2012)? And how can traditional leaders help vigilantes to become a source of strength for state security services, in particular the police, rather than further corrode their – already weak – capacity? These are questions that may not have an (easy) answer, but need to be addressed if vigilantism is to be a source of security, rather than a threat in its own right. This book has highlighted some of the tactics that traditional leaders are employing at the moment; further research is needed to find out whether these will suffice.

12.4 Why are Traditional Leaders Able (or Not) to Engage in Security Governance?

We have described how, throughout Nigeria, traditional authorities have created different roles in security governance that extend from public persuasion to participation in security committees and coordinating vigilante activities. Despite their constitutional marginalisation, therefore, it seems Nigeria's traditional rulers have adjusted and found new ways to remain relevant, even in the policy domain that is at the heart of dominant notions of state power. What has allowed traditional rulers to reinvent themselves like this? We now

return to the three answers to this question that we introduced in Chapter One, highlighting some of the key findings of this book pertaining to them.

12.4.1 Embeddedness

Are Nigerian traditional rulers embedded in their communities and, if so, does this embeddedness create incentives for these leaders to engage in security governance? Although difficult to quantify, the chapters in this book support the notion that traditional leaders have strong connections to their communities. Their lowest-level representatives, such as ward heads, Ezes, or elders, live close to their followers and often share an interest in the general welfare of the community – they are part and parcel of their communities and have “skin in the game.” Most of the chapters also highlight that this embeddedness gives traditional leaders access to good information about their community, which they leverage to improve their position and contribute more effectively to security governance (e.g. in security committees). Even in the case where traditional rulers actually made the security situation worse, in the Sokoto-Niger border areas, this was a result of the unintended consequences of traditional leaders’ attempts to provide security for their community.

This book thus presents evidence that Nigerian traditional rulers are indeed often embedded in their communities. This alone is remarkable, given their lack of popularity around independence; it suggests that their “seeming impotence” (Ibrahim, 2001) and removal from government indeed pushed traditional leaders to reconnect with their communities. As we hypothesised in the introduction, this helps to explain why they have been able to reinvent roles in security governance. But at the same time, the chapters also highlight important qualifications to this mechanism.

First, as Umar explains for the Middle Belt in Chapter Two, there is a difference between being embedded in a community defined by ‘territory’ and in one defined by ‘ethnicity’. The Emir of Kano, from the beginning of this chapter, is a typical example of a territorial traditional leader: his community encompasses everyone who resides in Kano Emirate, including a wide range of ethnic and religious groups. Institutionally, the Emirate realises this cross-ethnic representativeness by, for example, recognising diaspora chiefs – representative chiefs from non-Hausa ethnic groups in the predominantly Hausa community (Ehrhardt, 2023). Other territorial traditional rulers from this book include the Oba of Benin, the Obas and other kings of Yoruba land, and to a large extent the Igbo Ezes. The simple fact that they represent a territorial, cross-ethnic community incentivises these leaders to reduce competition and conflict between different ethnic groups and, in that way, promote peace.

Other traditional leaders, however, are embedded in communities bounded by ethnicity rather than territory, without institutional integration into a territorial system like the Emirate. This is clearest in the Middle Belt cases in this book, as described by both Umar (Two) and Omotola’s (Eight) chapters. These ethnic leaders can support security governance in some respects,

mostly within their own ethnic group. But in ethnically diverse cities, these leaders often face competition from leaders from other ethnic groups, about relative status, government recognition, or access to resources. Moreover, as Umar highlights eloquently, these ethnic leaders often propagate narratives of historical grievances as well, for example to legitimise their contemporary claims on territorial control or (improved) government recognition. Interethnic competition can thus translate into competition between ethnic traditional leaders, reducing their efficacy at resolving interethnic problems and even sometimes making them contributors to conflict rather than security.

Selection procedures also affect the embeddedness of traditional leaders in their communities. Onuoha and Enyiazu's Chapter Eleven most explicitly addresses the issue, when they describe how the legitimacy of selection procedures of traditional leaders affects the security situation in different communities in Umahia. A key factor in this regard is simply the transparency and consistent implementation of selection procedures: where they are unclear, or imperfectly implemented, conflict is likely to result. Another factor is the involvement of politicians and the state in the selection of leaders. Onuoha and Enyiazu are unequivocal: where the state is actively involved in the selection, the embeddedness of the leader will suffer. Consequently, they call for elections instead, reasoning that this will improve legitimacy and efficacy; but we want to underline that in other contexts, such elections may risk feeding counterproductive competition (Baldwin & Raffler, 2019). Depending on the context, therefore, we suggest that non-electoral customary forms of selection that do not involve the state may also be effective (e.g. through kingmaker councils, cf. William-Mbata, 2001).

While the authors in this book thus support the notion that traditional leaders are generally embedded in their community and that this strengthens their roles in security governance, they also recognise that these are not the only incentives on which leaders act. The wider political-economic context in which traditional rulers operate is equally important for their incentive structure, and here many factors push *against* productive security governance. These factors incentivise traditional leaders to engage in patronage and rent-seeking politics –behaviour that detracts from their status and legitimacy (Alao, Chapter Five). In particular, issues around resource control and rent-seeking are pertinent for traditional rulers, given their roles in administering land and providing certification needed for access to services and state-controlled resources (e.g. indigeneship, cf. Ehrhardt, 2017). While embeddedness thus plays an important role, it can become subordinate to other interests, depending on the rest of the context in which the traditional ruler operates.

12.4.2 Indigenous Knowledge

Perhaps surprisingly, given the widespread cynicism that often pervades discussions around traditional rulership, many of the chapters describe a deep and rich engagement of traditional leaders with indigenous forms of

knowledge, including of religion and the spirit world that will be quite foreign to non-Nigerian readers. The chapters on Benin City (Osaghae, Chapter Three) and Ekiti (Agbaje, Chapter Four) are most explicit in this regard, when they discuss praise poems, songs, oath-taking, ordeal placements, the invocation of spirits, and cursing as common strategies of reducing crime and conflict. But also in the Sokoto case, Islamic preaching is brought forward as part of the repertoire of traditional rulers in security governance; and other cases, similarly, highlight other ways in which indigenous knowledge (including customary law) allows traditional leaders to effectively engage with the communities.

If such indigenous solutions can be applied to promote security, they are often seen as “instantly” effective – especially if they are spiritual in nature. But, given that they are often solutions of “last resort” (Chapter Three), when can they effectively be applied? This is obviously a complex question that requires further investigation, but the chapters provide some hypothetical answers that could form starting points. First, there appear to be substantial differences across Nigeria in the extent to which indigenous knowledge forms part of the repertoire of traditional authorities. Second, as Zartman (2000) and Osaghae (2000) already suggested decades ago, some security issues are more susceptible to indigenous solutions than others. Osaghae’s chapter suggests, for example, that oath-taking and cursing can be more effective against Bini indigenes than outsiders; also, it may well be more effective on organisations whose operations rely spiritual or other indigenous principles than ones that do not. The efficacy of these solutions, in other words, hinges on “a strong belief in the efficacy of spiritual mechanisms or juju.” In the case of Benin, this means that it may be more effective against trafficking than farmer-herder clashes, for example.

Third, the impact of solutions like oath-taking or cursing is amplified if they occur in tandem with other solutions. This is important in two distinct ways. On the one hand, traditional leaders are uniquely positioned to utilise different repertoires and discourses, depending on their context and interlocutors. They may use the language of oaths and curses in their public speeches about an issue, and at the same time use their position in a security committee to negotiate firmer law enforcement on the same issue. Whether they can use this chameleon-like quality effectively is, in our view, a major explanation for the efficacy of traditional leaders’ indigenous knowledge. On the other hand, the efficacy of indigenous knowledge for security governance also depends, as Osaghae’s chapter emphasises, on the extent to which the state works to support them. This relationship is the subject we turn to now.

12.4.3 Traditional Authorities and the Nigerian State

All chapters agree that the state is key for the efficacy of traditional rulers in security governance. But the impact goes in different directions. In Benin City, the influence of the Oba depends on the continued cordial and harmonious

relations with the Edo state government. In the South-West more generally, *Amotekun's* efficacy depends as much on the government as it does on traditional authorities; and the treatment of traditional rulers as “glorified civil servants” has diminished their influence (Alao, Chapter Five). In Umahia, and perhaps Igboland more broadly, the efficacy of *igwes* relies on government support but also on the space to operate autonomously in the interests of community members, away from political interests. Moreover, the politically-driven proliferation of autonomous communities, and hence traditional titles, weakens existing Ezes and causes conflict in its own right. In Katagum and Misau Emirates, the traditional rulers suffer from a lack of consistent government funding and from clashes between their people and security forces. And in the Sokoto borderlands, traditional leaders are unable to provide security because of the complete absence of government activity.

Despite these differences in the way that the state matters for traditional leaders, we would submit that all chapters show that the relationship between the state and traditional leaders has deepened over the last 20 years, rather than weakened. If we review the roles outlined in the previous section, only the first three categories (dispute settlement, persuasion, and relief) do not explicitly involve the state. Even in those, as we have seen above, the efficacy of indigenous solutions is boosted if the state supports them. And if we combine this trend with others – such as the growing reliance of politicians on traditional legitimacy, the increasing control of state governors over traditional leaders, the overt calls for involvement of traditional leaders in governance, and the never-ceasing demand for traditional titles among politicians and officials – we would argue that the Fourth Republic may well be witnessing a re-integration of traditional systems of authority into the Nigerian state.

While this new, hybrid Nigerian state is still in formation, in a process that may still change course fundamentally, it is interesting to outline three features that it currently appears to be developing, based on the findings of the case studies in this book. First, the lack of constitutional legislation has put traditional authorities in a position that is legislated and controlled by state, and sometimes local, governments. This has allowed for fundamentally different systems to emerge in different parts of the country. Second, the emerging relationship between state and traditional rulers is one of considerable rhetorical distance and autonomy, in which (patchy) funding by government is exchanged for targeted support in governance activities by traditional leaders. Third, traditional rulers execute their governance roles in different ways, as outlined in the previous section, which emerge depending on the needs and features of each local context. In these roles, traditional authorities can act as “shadow states” or as co-producers with state actors (Osaghae, 1998; Ehrhardt, 2023); we have seen examples of both, and it is not clear yet which of these relationships traditional leaders are moving towards.

Of course, we recognise that this model is incomplete, based on an unsystematic snapshot of ten traditional authority systems and their roles in security governance. Even within these case studies, much is uncertain and strongly

contingent on political decisions still to be taken over the next few years. But at the same time, the trends identified in this book do suggest that the question of traditional authority is not trivial to the security of Nigerians, or to the development of the Nigerian state, and may in fact be quite central to both. With that in mind, we will end the book with some speculative reflections on the future of this question.

12.5 The Future of Traditional Authority in Nigeria

“Writers don’t give prescriptions,” Ikem, the journalist in Chinua Achebe’s (1987) *Anhills of the Savannah*, shouts to a large hall full of boisterous students, “they give headaches!” While we do not wish such harm on our readers, we do hope, much like Achebe, that this book has raised questions that will keep your minds occupied. Our aim was to document some of the remarkable creativity that is occurring, largely under the radar of international scholarship, in the reimagination of the Nigerian state and its traditional rulers. We have also made some claims, for example, about the limits to colonialism as an explanation for Nigeria’s current trajectory, or that traditional leaders may already be part of a newly emerging, hybrid Nigerian state. But we will not go so far as to end with prescriptions, or policy recommendations. Instead, we will share what we think of as the main lessons from the case studies in this book and what they might mean for the future of traditional authority in Nigeria.

12.5.1 Lessons Learned

First, we return to the paradox Ibrahim (2001) laid out at the start of this chapter: that the “seeming impotence” of traditional authority due to government reforms actually brought out the strength of the institutional system. In other words, traditional authority flourished precisely *because* it lost the official backing from the state that it had relied on since colonial times. Kings and queens were forced to find other ways of retaining their positions; and many chose to (re)connect with their people for support and legitimacy, embedding their organisation more strongly in their communities. In a context where the official state continues to be seen as an amoral, “prebendal” organisation (Ekeh, 1975; Adebaniwi et al., 2015), traditional authorities were able to exploit their newfound legitimacy to enter into a range of new administrative and governance functions, many of which have been described in this volume. It allows them to be brokers for their people, rather than merely instruments of the state or self-interested, rent-seeking elites.

What will happen to their legitimacy and governance roles if their apparent distance to the state is dissolved, and they no longer seem legally impotent? In the worst case, the increasing integration into the state system will crowd out the legitimacy traditional leaders have gained through community embeddedness. Their incentives will shift from catering for their community, to working for the interests of politicians and state officials – and in Nigeria, like many other places, these do not necessarily mean the same thing. This

volume has highlighted instances where this dynamic is already at play. For instance, Onuoha and Enyiazu describe how in Umahia, government control over selection procedures is reducing the legitimacy of traditional rulers. Similarly, in the South-West, Alao's Chapter Five notes that "when the positions of those who are supposed to be stakeholders in security matters are threatened by politics, little can be expected of them."

Our first lesson, therefore, is to recognise the value of the 'distance from the state' for the current legitimacy and governance contributions of traditional authorities. Our second lesson is related, and it is about the value of variation between the nature and position of traditional authorities across Nigeria. As the Nigerian government abolished all federal-level regulation regarding traditional leadership, it created space for experimentation and variation at the state and local government levels. While this has created problems, not least due to the opaque and politicised nature of state-level legislation in most states, it has also allowed traditional authorities to adapt to the specific requirements of their context.

The role of the Igbo Ezes, for example, is fundamentally different from the role played by the Oba of Benin, the Emir of Misau, or the Gbong Gwom Jos. We posit, as our second lesson, that this variation is key to understanding the legitimacy and relative efficacy of traditional institutions. It may, like northern Nigeria's state-level *sharia* legislation, serve as an example of how Nigeria's "judicious combination of centrist and autonomy mechanisms has been remarkably effective in managing religious conflict and cauterising potentially disintegrative centrifugal challenges to national stability" (Suberu, 2009).

Our third lesson is to recognise that the different roles that Nigerian traditional authorities have developed in security governance make fundamentally different demands on the state. On the one hand, local-level dispute settlement, public persuasion, and the provision of relief materials can all be organised outside the purview of the state. These are tasks that, in many contexts, are conducted by actors in the private sphere or civil society and, as such, do not necessarily require legislative backing. On the other hand, however, their other roles seem to require closer, legal oversight and accountability: think of their participation in security committees, intelligence gathering and processing, administration of residency rights and other certifications, and, in particular, the coordination of vigilante activities. The *Lakurawa* case from Sokoto has illustrated the risks of leaving vigilante activities to traditional leaders; and as vigilante groups emerge around the country, often with very little effective oversight or accountability, cases such as this are likely to increase.

12.5.2 The Impact of Traditional Leaders on Security

We would like to end with some reflections on the impact of traditional rulers on security in Nigeria. This book has consistently asked a qualitative, descriptive question about the changing role of traditional authorities in security governance; it has not intended to evaluate the quantitative impact they have

through these roles. Of course, the question of impact comes up in virtually all of the chapters, and each of the authors gives their own assessment. Although there is variation, two trends are worth mentioning here as plausible hypotheses for further investigation.

First, if we consider the direction of the impact – positive or negative – most chapters suggest that traditional leaders have a positive impact on security governance; that is, their activities reduce violence in their societies. Several authors also highlight that people prefer to take their problems to the traditional leaders or their vigilante groups, because they feel that these are more likely to help them than the police or courts. The major exception here is Rufa'i's chapter about Sokoto, where the engagement of the *Lakurawa* as security personnel has backfired in the longer run.

Second, however, if we look at the size of the impact traditional authorities have on security, the authors are much more reserved – and some, like Alao and Garba, are clear in their assessment that despite their engagement in different roles within security governance, the impact of traditional authorities on security is actually diminishing. This reservation partly stems from the difficulties of quantifying the impacts of some leadership activities, such as public cursing or involvement in security committees. But there is also a sense that despite the wide range of ways in which traditional rulers engage with security issues, this engagement is insufficient to stem the tide of insecurity.

As we wrote in the opening paragraphs of this book, Nigeria's security challenges may well be unprecedented in their scope and diversity. This book suggests that traditional rulers are developing roles and capabilities that address key aspects of these challenges. But in the end, they require complementary roles taken up by government. To be more explicit: the chapters are united in their assessment that the rise of traditional authorities in security governance needs to be related to the failure of the Nigerian government to protect the lives and properties of its citizens. The persistent creativity of traditional authorities should not obscure this fact, or lead anyone to believe that they can make Nigeria secure without more effective government action (Mustapha et al., 2020). The real promise – and true potential genius – of Nigeria's traditional authorities does not lie in them replacing government, but in the possibility that they can enhance it.

Note

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