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GETTING SMART AND SCALING THROUGH: NARCOTICS/PROSTITUTES' TRAFFICKING AS ORGANIZED CRIMES IN COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL WEST AFRICA, C.1920-C.1998

Walter GAM NKWI

Abstract. *Conflict analysis and management are not a new phenomenon to students of history and social sciences the world over. Conflicts either on organizational or international scale have received mediation and/or alternative dispute resolution in different parts of the world. This article focuses on West Africa as a zone where organised crime has been going on since the first decades of the 20th Century although much attention has been paid to terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram, AQIM and Janjaweed only recently. Using secondary and primary sources, the article examines more detail the way crimes have been organised in the region in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It examines the mobility of narcotics and prostitutes trafficking in the sub-region. More crucial to this article is the way regional and international organisations have attempted to mediate and bring to an end such conflict situation. From the sources gathered so far, the article maintains that narcotics and prostitution mobility have made West Africa the hub and the middle passage where drugs and prostitutes passed through to other parts of the world. Yet such a situation has received scant attention in a deeper historical perspective, a gap which this article sets out to fill. Conversely and more particularly, the drugs comes from as far as Latin America and South Africa and they are rooted back to Europe and United States while prostitutes have been migrating within the region and sometimes responsible for the movement of the drugs. What makes West Africa so unique in this trafficking? Which are the routes used in the organisation of the drug and prostitute trafficking? What constitutes the network of the traffickers? By confronting such questions, the article hopes to add to the budding literature and volume of knowledge that exists on drugs and prostitutes trafficking.*

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Introduction

This article examines the place of West Africa as *rite de passage* of organised crime. West Africa has been very topical in scholarship and for a very long time too. Recently,

terrorist activities like the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Mahgreb, (Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria and Janjaweed of Southern Sudan has attracted much international concerns). The region has also come under attack from international community and criminal networks that are using the sub-region as a key global hub for distribution, wholesale and increased production of prohibited drugs and trafficking in human beings especially in children and women (Brown, 2013: 1-23). Branded as the “Whiteman’s grave” until the discovery of quinine in the mid 1880s, West Africans were well known as hewers of wood and drawers of water. This generally kept the continent in the backyard of the entire world’s civilization. Such Eurocentric perspective further led to the sub-region to be besprinkled as a zone of organised crime although largely perpetuated by the Europeans themselves it was downplayed.

Much focus has been paid to West Africa as a zone of organised crime. This is however done by more contemporary historians, anthropologists and political scientists. The zone as a geographical transit region has played host to three major crimes. These include the slave trade, legitimate trade, prostitution and drugs. This has not been adequately handled by researchers. To appreciate historically, the role that West Africa has played we need to take into consideration the major stop gaps at any one time. The zone refer to as West Africa in this article will include Mauritania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guineas, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Ghana, The Gambia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Togo

While talking on the 20th February 2012 with regards to West Africa, the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Anan said:

Over the last decade, West Africa has made encouraging progress. Violent conflicts that had blighted the region for many years have been ended. There have been real advances in development, health and education. Economic growth is accelerating. Democratic practice although still not the norm everywhere in the region is taking roots. However, we need to take action now before the grip of the Criminal networks linked to the trafficking of illicit drugs tightens into a stranglehold on West African political and economic development

Put in its proper place one wonders whether the speech of the former UN Secretary General could be taken seriously given the fact that much conflict has been going on in the region. He emphasized on illicit drugs trafficking but left out even the historical part of it which saw prostitutes, slave trade as well as even what was called legitimate trade. All said and done the point is that the region has played host, in time and space to crimes of all sorts which needs to be properly historicized. That is the kernel of this article.

Conflict analysis and management are not a new phenomenon to students of history and social sciences the world over. Conflicts either on organizational or international scale have received mediation and/or alternative dispute resolution in different parts of

the world. This article focuses on West Africa as a zone where organised crime has been going on since the 1400 although much attention has been paid to terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram, AQIM and Janjaweed. Using mostly secondary sources the article examines in a more detail the way crimes have been organised in the region in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It examines narcotics and prostitutes trafficking and mobility in the sub-region. More crucial to this article is the way regional, and international organisations have attempted to mediate and bring to an end such conflict situation. From the sources gathered so far, the article maintains that narcotics and prostitution mobility have made West Africa the hub and the middle passage where drugs and prostitutes passed through to other ends of the world. Yet such a situation has received scant attention in a deeper historical perspective, a gap which this article sets out to fill. Conversely and more particularly, the drugs comes from as far as Latin America and South Africa and they are rooted back to Europe and United States while prostitutes have been migrating within the region and sometimes responsible for the movement of the drugs. What makes West Africa so unique in this trafficking? Which are the routes used in the organisation of the drug and prostitute trafficking? What constitutes the network of the traffickers? By confronting such questions, the article hopes to add to the budding literature and volume of knowledge which exists on drugs and prostitutes trafficking.

Understanding Organise Crime

The concept of organised crime needs further clarification. Organised crimes have received much attention, yet it is not quite clear what is. Onuaha (2013) drawing from his empirical works contends that there have been over 150 definitions proffer so far in the extant literature. Plywacewski (2000:99), attempted the definition of organised crime as the “activities of criminal groups set up out of desire for gain for the purpose of carrying out various offences...criminal or economic which would entail ...as intended by the organizers...would be to bring unlawful gains into the legal economy” Lebeya (2007:17-19) defines organised crime in the past tense and according to this scholar organised crime was any serious crime that was systematically and persistently committed on a continuous basis or in a determinate period by a consciously organised criminal group of two or more persons or a criminal enterprise, in pursuit of an undue financial or other material benefits.

Furthermore, a United Nations working paper (1975) lends a more profound definition. According to this paper “Organise Crime is the large scale and complex criminal activity carried on by a group of persons, however, loosely or tightly organised for the enrichment of those participating and at the expense of the community and its members”. A closer scrutiny of this kind of definition suggests that organised crime is frequently facilitated by political corruption. Although there are various and conceptual meanings

of organised crime extant literature further reveals that there are three main trajectories of understanding organised crime viz structuralist, network and market perspectives.

Historically, structuralists perspectives were fashionable in the academia between the 1970s and late 1980s and held that organised crime could be understood within hierarchical groups of individuals. These group/groups have clearly defined functions and authorities are collectively involved in illegal activities with the main purpose of attaining profits and power. Abandinsky (1994:6) went closer to this type of understanding organized crime when he stated that the structuralist perspective was “a non-ideological enterprise involving a number of persons in close social interaction, organised on a hierarchical basis for the purpose of securing profit and power by engaging in illegal and legal activities”. This classical perspective so to say has over time and space diminished within the academia and even so within the policy makers scenario

In contrast to the structuralist perspective is the network perspective which instead focuses its concerns with the network character of such a criminal enterprise. According to the apologetics of this school organised crime as a criminal enterprise involving a network of individuals or small organisations, rather than a clearly structured and easily understood pyramid (Oche, 2009:248). One example from such school presents it as “a set of activities spread in networks that have components of economic endeavour, that is, it needs repetitive activities (though without the discipline, regularity and rights of regular work), a goal of which is profit (easier, higher, and better at the wholesale networks), using variable methods and currencies for exchange typical of underground relationships” (Zaluar, 2001:377).The network-centric view however looks at the contemporary nature of organised crimes. It is no doubt useful in explaining the fluidity as well as a dynamic nature of different forms of organised crimes operating in different places at different times. Network perspectives suffer from one hallmark in that it fails to into account why such crimes persist even when part of the network is fractured or annihilated.

The market perspective appears to be neither the structuralist, hierarchical nor network perspective. In other words, it is neutral. It emphasizes on the nature of the market which is regarded to be unique and which is responsible for the sustainability of the crimes even when individuals and structures in the activity are intermittently disrupted. Ipso facto of the dynamic nature of different forms of organised crimes and the intricacies of connection and interconnectivity also known as globalisation, organised crime has been recently viewed less as a matter of a group of individuals involved in a range of illicit/illegal activities involving some individuals for the exchange of services or goods.

One of the greatest apologetic of the market perspective is the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Its main kernel of the argument is that “if these individuals are arrested and incarcerated the activities continue because the market and the incentives it generates remains” (UNODC, 2009:10). The UNODC, therefore, presents a new paradigm

shift in the entire understanding of organised crime. This is more plausible because it re-focuses on law enforcement and also intervention efforts at curbing organised crimes. The policy direction should be shifted away from the 'group' behind the illicit activity to a discrete containment and control strategy designed to fracture markets by making it structurally more difficult for organised crimes to flourish (UNODC, 2009).

The literature on organised crime suggest that scholars and researchers have over-concentrated in the present (Ellis, 2009:150-172; Champin, 2011 & 2012; Reyskens, 2012; Akyeampong, 2005; Wyler & Cook, 2009; de Andres, 2008). Amongst these scholars, Ellis and Akyeampong stood out as hardcore historians but have largely overlooked the historicity of organised crime in West Africa. Historical evidence informs us that organised crime to be better-understood predates the contemporary period. This article, therefore, takes up prostitution and drug trafficking to better understand the historical developments of organised crime in West Africa.

Significance and structure of the paper

The reemergence of the militant Islamist groups in West Africa such as Boko Haram and Al-QIM has been a cause for significant concern both within West Africa and the international community and above all to the academia. Since late 2010, the organizations have been responsible for a brutal crusade of attacks that have been targeting public officials and institutions and, increasingly, ordinary men, women, and children, reeking havoc across West Africa with its ramification spilling over to the international scenario. In terms of human casualty at least 5,550 people are said to have been killed in many separate attacks in by such organisations, a grisly toll that has been accelerating while scores of many were maimed and others rendered as widows and orphans. Meanwhile, the rhetoric and tactics of such organisations indicate that the organizations have expanded its reach well beyond West Africa. As a matter of fact its *modus operandi* indeed has evolved, and it is evolving into a transnational threat with links to other terrorist groups and violent extremists in North, West, and East Africa. The groups thus have constituted a wider threat to the political, economic, and security interests in Africa and more particularly to the sub-region.

In the last decades of the 20th Century and the first decades of the 21st Century, most West African countries came under attack as areas where prostitutes and drugs were passing through to Europe and United States. To better understand and appreciate these happenings, it will be imperative to place them in a historical perspective. Consequently in what follows I will sketch the mobility of prostitutes in the sub-region. The second section will focus on drugs showing the routes which these drugs take to enter West Africa. The third section examines the measures that had been taken by the national and international organisation to combat these crimes. The last section will be the conclusion.

The Mobility of Prostitutes in West Africa: A colonial Approach

Prostitution over the world is one of the oldest professions and has attracted quite interesting studies in recent times (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997; Lukman *et al.* 2011; Barritz, 2000; Barrera, 1996; Spaulding & Beswick, 1995; Aderinto, 2007, 2010; Naanen, 1999; Taylor-Brown, 2002; White, 1990). The subject has been handled by sociologists, anthropologists and to a lesser extend historians. According to Louis White, in prostitution is about women accumulating money and property; It is a strategy for survival a desire, a device against oblivion” This case study answers some of the questions regarding who, why, and what is involved in female migration in West and Central Africa. The prevalence of HIV infection is very high among Ghanaian prostitutes in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. As many as 80% of Ghanaian prostitutes in Abidjan are from Ghana. It is reported that almost 40% came from the Eastern region of Ghana, 24% from the Ashanti region, and 8% from the Central region. Data from this 1986-87 Abidjan survey indicated that most Ghanaian female migrants were younger than their male counterparts and mostly into prostitution recruited by using a complex network which involve pimps and relatives of the prostitutes. It is documented that structural adjustment programs have contributed to negative impacts on female prostitution. Almost all women surveyed reported that before departure, their incomes did not meet their needs, and their quality of life was deteriorating. Migrants emigrate with the help of relatives and friends, but decision making is an individual affair. Although Ghanaians speak English and migration is to a French speaking country, language is not considered a barrier to migration. Most female Ghanaian migrants are from urban areas. Conditions in the Ivory Coast are conducive to the sex trade. A hierarchy based on community, township, and women’s groups and ethnicity determines the social organization in Abidjan. Migration is circulatory, and most maintain family ties and send remittances home. These are recent trends in the mobility of prostitutes, but it is again what has been going on in the region during the colonial period.

Colonialism advertently /inadvertently created avenues to attract prostitutes. In fact, colonialism created an ambiguous situation. Yet the colonial administrators observed that prostitution was despicable and morally bad. Writing to the Resident in charge of, Calabar, Cameroons, Ogoja, Onitsha and Owerri, on 14 July 1943, the Secretary of the Eastern Provinces, Enugu, D.A.F. Shute, said *inter alia*: “...I am to add that the problem of child prostitution in Lagos is growing daily and more serious, and health and morals of more and more children are being ruined. His honor will therefore be very grateful if the widest publicity be given to the contents of this memorandum...”¹. It is no little wonder that colonialism saw such a profession as being immoral since colonial venture was out to moralize Africans as they claimed. ‘Spreading the glad tidings’ was one of

1 Sf (1943)2 Child Prostitution in Lagos (NAB).

the motives justify for colonizing Africa. As this paper will demonstrate the sooner or later between the 1930s and 1950s the British colonial administration and Native Administration code name Native Authorities worked 'day and night' to discourage prostitution but with little success.

In some parts of West Africa, the colonial administration placed quite lenient laws on prostitution in the 1940s. The colonial administrators argued that most Africans were so promiscuous that their sexual behaviour could only be regulated by prostitutes. In the Gold Coast (Ghana), the attorney general, H.W.D. Blackail implied that West African prostitutes safeguarded the European womanhood from the alleged sexual licentiousness of Africans.

Social Urbanisation and Prostitution

The causes of prostitution have been largely over exhausted in the literature. Naanen (1995) noted the economic factor and maintains that prostitution thrives and workable because there is a market for it. The author draws from the Victorian England to demonstrate that although it had all its modesty of civilized values it had 'had a soft underbelly as far as sexuality was concern...' while citing Hyam the author further holds that colonial administrators did not fail to take advantage of prostitutes to flirt with them as well and satisfy their carnal desires (Naanen, 1995:67).

Cities were important and relevant for the growth of prostitution. African cities born out of colonial policies became important joints for the growth of prostitution. In a very broad sense, Lagos became a magnet which attracted prostitutes from the hinterland and from thence they radiated to most parts of West Africa including, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Mali. The famous Nigerian novelist, Cyprain Ekwensi, touched on very relevant issues about the city of Lagos. Cyprain Ekwensi documented fairly well and accurately the attitude of women who reached Lagos from the hinterland. In *Jagua Nana* the protagonist of the novel is a devotee of the

... 'gay life of Lagos is deserted by her lover and falls on evil days. Returning to her own tribe up-country, she is offered security and a good home by an elderly admirer, but the city's hold over her is too strong. Better from her point of view, the squalor of a Lagos slum so long as there are sophisticated people around her, the bright lights of a night-spot, a 'light-life' band, and the chance of picking up a young and well-to-do patron (Ekwensi, 1961:109).

Ekwensi simple put is showing the sophisticated life of Lagos and modernity. The 'modernists' nature of Lagos attracted women. A life band in a night spot, street lights viewed by somebody just coming out from the rural setting was enough to lure women. These women who trooped into Lagos were most of the time, not with any intention

to get marry. They were out to enjoy the niceties of the city, exchange their bodies for few 'pieces of silver' after idling the whole day. Ekwensi (1954: 63) again captures the situation graphically. One of his heroines is the 'City' girl. According to him the city girl 'would be content to walk about a Mayfair-type of neon-lit shop all day, hang about the city hotels, the ice-cream bars with not a penny in her handbag, rather than marry a farmer with a thousand pounds, a year for his income, and no spice of life than the prospect of security and raising children" The city-girl is contrasted with a village husband in the village.

In a broader perspective, prostitution in colonial West Africa was a consequence of the socio-economic and political dislocations affected by European colonization. As a matter of fact it flourished in cosmopolitan centers such as Lagos, Abijan, Cotonou and Accra (Ekpo-Out, 2013:72). Areas where European companies like United African Company, Miller Brothers and John Holt had opened factories also attracted migrant labour. The pool of Wage earning single males created new markets for sexual services that prostitution offered.

Nigeria took the lead in supplying prostitutes to such areas. The Cross River basin which straddles Cameroon and Nigeria became a major exporter of prostitutes. This was particular noted in the Upper Cross River which included the Ogoja province. The official statistics of the Odubra division in Ogoja Province show that 12 percent of the female population in the Nta clan was involved in the prostitution. In the Bahumunu clan about 15 percent had migrated for the purpose of prostitution. Consequently, the colonial era witnessed the proliferation of transnational prostitution along the West African coast-line to Gold Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast. Commercial centres sprouted in the Gold Coast such as Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi and Tamale. Ghana became the destination of most prostitutes. This was because following the Gold Coast Criminal Act Section 435 (1) only none west African prostitutes were persecuted. By implication, any West African including Nigerians could engage legally in sex trade. The rationale behind this was to protect white women from alleged depravities of African men (Ray, 2007:67). Prostitution especially in West African coast were implicitly criminals as the mobility of drugs in the sub-region came to be identified with them. The colonial administration spent her colossal energy attempting to stamp out the activity.

Combating prostitution

Because of the ills that were unleashed by prostitution both the colonial and post-colonial governments attempted to stamp it out of West Africa. As already discussed elsewhere in the paper, this was because human trafficking especially prostitutes took in almost the whole of West Africa. This was mainly around Benin, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso).

Colonial administration spent time passing ordinances to outlaw prostitution and sometimes using outright force with the exception of Ghana, which had become the *el dorado* of West African prostitutes. The campaign against prostitution was undertaken by both the native authorities and colonial administration. As early as 1928 the District Head for Victoria Division launched the campaign in the following words:

Sir,

I have the honour to report that I had a few village Heads in my last sitting in Court when I brought the subject of prostitution before them. It has been agreed that such loose women escaping from their villages and other countries could be ordered to go back to their own villages or countries. I was against the practice of many women coming from different villages and hiding themselves in New Town, then asking the sub chief Itutu to send for their husbands to refund dowry during which time they move about and living with different men. For the good and welfare of this place I agree with the proposal of the Divisional Officer and will order that such women vacate and go back to their homes².

Meanwhile the Native Administration which had become the pillar of British colonial administration in British West Africa, took the relay baton from the colonial administration and became more rigorous in the campaign against such undesirable acts. In 1933 the Native Authority Ordinance passed a series of measures against prostitution in the territory. The 'Ten Commandments' forbid such a profession. Amongst other things it stated the following:

1. No landlord is entitled to keep a prostitute into his house as a tenant. If he does, he will be guilty of an offense
2. No husband and wife are entitled to keep an unmarried woman who is a prostitute into their house. Anyone found transgressing this law would be guilty of the offence
3. No man is allowed to keep a prostitute with him into his house as a lover. If the parents of the woman find any such person one of them he or she should report to the Native Authority whereby the man and the woman would be guilty of the offence
4. Parents who will intentionally allow their daughters to go for prostitution and welcome lovers with little or more presents will be guilty of the offence
5. Prostitution is strictly forbidden and all women of such as offenders will be guilty of the offence and repatriation is allowed to their native homes and villages.³

This was a tacit way of showing their disenchantment with the women who had taken up prostitution as a profession. Advertently or inadvertently, the native authority as conservative as ever appeared not to have noticed the changing times and also the

2 File Sf (1938) 1 Measures Against Prostitutes (NAB).

3 File Sf (1933)2 Native Authorities Ordinances as a fight against prostitution (NAB).

women's' wish for political, economic and social autonomy. The amount of money which was to be paid as fines in times of faulty was a bit exaggerated. To make up a sum of £10 or 12 at the time was to milk a dead cow. The money was too much for any individual to pay when there were no jobs that could fetch such amounts. It is not clear in colonial reports whether such iron hand check yielded any dividends to the Native Authorities.

Despite the contrasting views between the Native Authorities and the colonial administration, the former did not relent in getting prostitutes put under control. In 1952, there was a general tour in most parts of British West Africa to discourage prostitution. During the post-colonial period which led to the formation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the fight against prostitution continued. Trafficking in persons was defined in Article 3 of the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially in prostitutes (Oche, 2009).

From Prostitutes to Drugs in West Africa

If there is any organised crime in West Africa in addition to prostitutes, it should be concerned with drugs. So many kinds of drugs have passed through this region to Europe and America brought in by various cartels. Large scale seizures of cocaine, heroin, cannabis, and methamphetamine was recorded in West Africa as far back as 1960, but the laying of Latin America-West Africa illicit trade in drug pipeline pre-dates 2004. West Africa has been well known to Latin America during the slave trade which lasted for at least 300 years (Manning, 1990; Austen and Derrick, 1999; Northrup, 1994; Klein, 1993; Iliffe, 1995). During this period, West Africa was quite strategic in the trade as West Africans were transported across the Atlantic ocean to work in the American plantations. It was because of such connections that Latin American traffickers recently relocated a share of their wholesale distribution from the Western Hemisphere to West Africa. During this relocation West African sub region moved from being merely a short-term transit point to becoming a storage and staging area for wholesale repackaging and re-routing drugs (Brown, 2013).

The importance of West Africa in organised crime needs to be well harnessed and analysed. Ellis (2009:190) maintains that "not only is West Africa conveniently situated for trade between South America and Europe, but above all it has a political and social environment that is generally suitable for drug trade. Smuggling is widely tolerated, law enforcement is fitful and inefficient and politicians are easily bribed or are even involved in the drug trade themselves...". Historically, South America, Europe and Africa have been linked through the triangular trade for a very long time. Smuggling could be explained from the fact that West Africa is made up of members of ECOWAS economic block. Members of ECOWAS hardly put on borders to restrict fellow members from entering.

The economic situation made West Africa more vulnerable for illegal trafficking in drugs. The 1980s witnessed a period of rapid economic decline in West Africa. Consequently,

West African countries were found in financial quagmire because of the world economic recession. West African countries were forced to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The Bretton Woods institution as they are known forced West African countries to undergo economic liberalization known as structural adjustment which required deep cuts in public expenditure and laying off of substantial public employees. Above all, there was to be drastic reductions in public budgets which, as a result, sent many people into financial difficulties. This forced many people especially the youth generation to seek for ways and means to make money.

West African role in the mobility of drugs is not a new phenomenon. The historical evidence shows that trade routes for illegal goods have existed for thousands of years in this region and are further ensconced in local traditions especially in the Sahel and Saharan areas. Pre-colonial and even colonial economies of West Africa were characterised by shallow economies and was also characterised by a multifarious variety of illicit goods.

One of the illicit goods which had crisscrossed West Africa stretching far back to the beginning of the 20th Century was cannabis. It is a drug which is made from the dried leaves and flowers of the plant that is smoked or chewed for its effects on the mind and body. The trafficking of this drug dates back to the 1920s, and it is still widespread today. Kelly (2012) maintains that cannabis production in West Africa totals 3,500 tons per annum. Quite recently, in 2011/12 a good quantity of cannabis was intercepted and seized in Northern Niger in Toyota en route to Europe (Champin, 2012).

The first documented use of West Africa as a staging post international drug smuggling dates back to 1952, This was when the US officials noted that to parcels of heroin drugs were transported by a Lebanese syndicate from Beirut New York. This was done via Kano, Nigeria and Accra, Ghana (Ellis, 2009:173). Just like heroin, the cocaine trade has also become recently, a focal point for international attention on West Africa. The total transformation of this region into major international illegal trade hub in drugs could conveniently trace to the 1960s when the first reports emerged of locally grown cannabis were being exported from Nigeria to Europe in significant proportions. From the 1980s the production, distribution and consumption of cannabis provided pathways for the incorporation of heroin and cocaine into West Africa. Nigeria and Ghana were taking the lead in the distribution and exportation of drugs in the entire West Africa.

Nigeria and Ghana and the Mobility of Drugs in West Africa

Nigeria is the hub on which the mobility of drugs in West Africa rotates. Not only is this country the super power of the region, it is also the most populated region. As early as 1982, records hold that the United States Embassy in Lagos confirmed the role which Nigeria was playing in drug mobility. It stated categorically that it was playing a very significant role in the marketability of narcotics and dangerous drugs in the United

States. This was coming at a time when the US authorities had arrested 21 Nigerians for narcotics and dangerous drugs in the US. It will appear that since then statistics were to rise exponentially.

In 1983, a ship from Nigerian port of Lagos carrying cocaine, heroin and marijuana docked at Hamburg and in 1984, the director of West Germany's customs service, the then George Wolt stated that Nigeria was one of the top six importers of cocaine to Germany, Nigerian smugglers had started sending courier from Pakistan to Nigeria where it was re-packaged and re-exported to the United States. Nigeria continues to play a significant role in the international heroin trade with the intercepted stocks amounting to about 70 kilograms seized per annum. Besides new networks have emerged involving Ivory Coast and Senegal (Wyler & Cook, 2012; Akyeamong, 2005; de Andres, 2008).

By the 1990s, Nigerian drug traders had largely finished the process of internationalising their illegal drug business. The drug traffickers had not only developed the means to make bulk shipments of narcotics but had also become fully global by having headquarters (home) country business association in both producing and consuming countries and facilities in countries outside Nigeria. Within the sub-region, Nigerians established operational centers in Cotonu, Benin and Abijan, Ivory Coast. Going beyond the continent, the illegal drug smugglers established sales networks in major US, European. And post-Soviet Union cities, including Geneva, Switzerland where they were active in cocaine trafficking and places as far as Moscow, Russia where they took over heroin raling (Champin, 2011; Ellis, 2005). In Asia large Nigerian networks have air couriered some bringing heroin transiting or stopping in West Africa and others transporting cocaine and methamphetamines, ecstasy and ketamine from West Africa towards Asia. These often transit via Malaysia or Indonesia to Japan, Korea, China, Thailand and Singapore. Since 2009 Nigerian and Ghanaian diversified into trafficking crystalline methamphetamine through links with other West African countries such as Benin, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Senegal (Champin, 2011).

Apart from Nigeria, Ghana too has been playing a significant role in drug mobility. In 1982, it was reported by a West German official of the Interior Ministry that Hamburg was importing significant quantities of drugs from West Africa including one and a half tonnes from Ghana. Ghana and Nigeria have played significant roles in the organised crime in West Africa. They have so much in common and also have many dissimilarities.

At the beginnings of 1970, the Ghanaian smugglers joined the Nigerians in the exportation of African grown cannabis to Europe on a scale that was large enough to attract and sustained official attention. By 1990, Accra the political and administrative capital of Ghana became a transit point for the international cocaine trade and it was public knowledge which houses were constructed with using cocaine money and which flashy cars were bought with cocaine money.

That notwithstanding, West Africa drug gangs have certain peculiar characteristics which facilitate their work. They are usually small, compartmentalised cells of between two and ten members. They are mostly kinsmen sometimes and not always from the same ethnic group or indigenous area. They possess the ability to communicate mostly in indigenous African languages. They are smart at making deals and then dispersing, regrouping at a later date as needed, they often adopt false identities for its members including changing their nationality. Finally, they refrain from the use of violence in order not to attract the attention of law enforcement officials (Williams & Haackle, 2008). It is relevant to note that the mobility of these narcotic drugs follow particular routes from their areas of origin, transit and ultimate destination. The table below shows the countries where the drugs originate, nodal points of transit in West Africa and destination in America, Europe and Asia.

Table I. The origin and destinations of Drugs

Drug	Country of Origin	Nodal Points in West Africa	Transit if at all	Destination
Heroin	Afghanistan Pakistan	Nigeria Ghana Ivory Coast		United States of America
Methamphetamine	South Africa	Nigeria Ghana Benin Ivory Coast Senegal		Japan USA Korea Malaysia Thailand Cambodia Vietnam
Cocaine	Colombia, Bolivia Peru Venezuela	Mauritania Nigeria Guinea-Bissau Guinea Benin Ghana Togo Cape Verde	Brazil	Europe

Source: Compiled by the author

A careful observation of the above table speaks volumes as far as the mobility of drugs and transiting in West Africa is concern, It first suggest that much of cocaine transiting via Venezuela and Bolivia move to east Africa through Brazil. Historically, slave trade and colonial discourses suggests that there are linguistic links as well as geographic for the Brazilian connections. Gunea-Bissau and Cape Verde, two of the most active transshipment hubs are Portuguese colonies like Brazil (Champin, 2011). The table also shows that West Africa have become an important and significant distribution centre

for the cocaine drug. Abderrahmane (2012) and Ellis (2009:193), suggests that traffickers have stockpiled cocaine before distribution in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Cape Verde and Mauritania. One of the routes involves cocaine entering Guinea Bissau that is then routed to Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia and Mali for onward transport. In all these airports have been known to play crucial roles. Leopold Sendat Senghors International airport has been well known to be a departure point in West Africa en route to Europe while the Bamako International Airport has also become another important transit point for drug traffickers especially Nigerians transporting drugs to Europe. Nine Latin American drug cartels have already established bases in at least 11 of the 16 West African states, The same Latin American drug trafficking organisations transporting cocaine via West Africa to Europe are also responsible for cocaine shipments via Mexico to the United States (Grassly, 2012; Regan, 2010; Harrigan, 2012).

This calls the role of West Africa again into question. Quite very recently, West Africa has grown exponentially from a minor drug trafficking route for drugs exports to a major significant hub; in 2004 large scale cocaine trafficking through West Africa was detected in Accra, Ghana. Before then there had been annual cocaine seizures in West Africa but had rarely exceeded one metric ton per year. By 2008 cocaine transshipment rivalled stolen crude oil for most valuable smuggled commodity in West Africa. 50 percent of non-US bound cocaine goes through West Africa and this makes up 13 percent of the total global flows. Containers which are shipped with provisional goods play important roles as well. Drugs are hid in containers and this has been a new strategy. In 2010 a container with 450 kilos of cocaine was seized in Lagos on a vessel arriving from Chile. In January 2011, two other vessels seized in Nigeria had a total of 275 kilos of cocaine, one of which contained 110 kilos arriving from Bolivia. Another tactic was to route an increasing number of containers through Argentina and Uruguay towards West Africa. In November 2012 authorities in Guyana seized 350 kg of cocaine hidden in a shipping container filled with soap powder destined for Nigeria (Grassly, 2012; Regan, 2010; Harrigan, 2012; Felbab-Brown, 2010; Feinstein, 2012; Champin, 2012, 2011a and b).

The role played by West Africa in the importation and exportation of illicit drugs cannot be over emphasised. Antonio Maria Costa, executive Director of the UNODC office accurately captured the situation when he said inter alia:

Drug planes do not have to fly below the radar because in most cases there is no radar (or electricity). Soldiers sometimes help smugglers by closing airports and unloading the cargo. Police cars run out of gas when giving chase or are left in the dust by smugglers. All season terrain vehicles. There are no local navies to intercept ships coming from Latin America or to chase 2000 horse power boats that speed drugs up the coast to Europe. Traffickers are seldom brought to trial in some cases there are no prisons to put them in. Even when they are charged they

are usually released because evidence is not collected or needed laws are not in place (Costa, 2008:45).

It is not certain how Maria Costa arrived at such conclusion but it can also be speculated that there are some reasons why West Africa has been much linked to illicit drug trade. It has been suggested that most of the illicit drug business find its way through West Africa because of the fragility of some of its states. The UN has maintained that all but three of the 16 West African states are on their list of least developed countries including the five countries with the lowest levels of human development. Ten of the top forty one country in the 2012 failed states index was from West Africa. As a matter of fact the 2012 Failed States Index Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine lists the following West African States along with their ranking with Ivory Coast being the worst example of a failed state. Others included Guinea, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mauretania, Togo and Burkina Faso.

Combating Organised Crime in West Africa

Organised crimes have not gone on *sine die*. Its activities in West African region have met with stiff resistance from international organisations. The international organisations include Economic Organisation of West African States (ECOWAS) which appears to have played one of the most significant contributions in this direction

ECOWAS

This section of the article focuses on ECOWAS one of the largest regional organization which is made up of the former British and French colonies of West Africa. One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political chemistry is its many protracted social and political conflicts and always attempts to mediate and stamped out the organised crime so that security, peace and development could be establish in the region.

For the readers who might not be familiar with West African politics in the post independent period and economic blocs it will be relevant to recapitulate a brief history of ECOWAS. ECOWAS was formed on 28 May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria. There were fifteen members initially which included amongst others: Benin, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe. Cape Verde later on joined to make the sixteenth state. The main aim for which this organisation was established was to promote the development of the region through economic, social and economic cultural cooperation. The headquarters of ECOWAS is in Lagos while that of the fund is in Lome, the capital of Togo.

The organization has the following aims: to eliminate duties on imports from member countries; removing quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade between mem-

ber states, establishing common external tariffs, removing all restrictions on the free movement capital, services and persons among member states, harmonizing agricultural policies and the promotion of common projects in the member states, harmonizing the economic, social and cultural policies of member states; creating a fund for cooperation, compensation and development and evolving a common policy in, and the joint development of transport, communication, energy and infrastructural facilities. These objectives did not remain static. They were constantly revised by the member states. During the crisis that raged Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s the organisation tug under their objectives another objective which was to intervene in member countries during the periods of conflict and crisis. It was also during those crises that ECOWAS formed a military wing known as ECOMOG. This was because ECOWAS group had felt the effects of the civil war to a much greater extent than did countries outside of the region. In response to both regional instability and a heavy refugee flow, ECOWAS created the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a force aimed at resolving the conflict, restoring order and establishing a democratically-elected government (O'Neill, 1993). The ECOMOG force was the first African sub-regional peacekeeping body to mediate in another state. ECOWAS has since the Boko Haram crisis intervened in several ways to bring the insurgency to an end and to give Nigeria the stability it deserves.

Condemnation and resolution in meetings on organised crime

In a broader spectrum, ECOWAS have adapted several mechanisms as well as instruments. Some of these instruments were aimed at collective suppression of these challenges include the protocol on non Aggression and mutual Assistance in Defence which came into operation in 1978 and 1981 respectively. In 1999, ECOWAS also adopted the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Crime Prevention, Management Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. This was carried out for a greater efficiency in its approach to check terrorist activities in the region. Three years ago (2011) ECOWAS went ahead to adopt the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to ensure the development of law and consolidation of democracy thereby outlawing the circulation of drugs and prostitutes in the region (Onuoha, 2013:107). What appeared quite crucial recently, was that ECOWAS adopted the Political Declaration and Common Position against organised crimes. Such a declaration provided for a regional Counter Crimes Strategy and Implementation Plan to help member states fight terrorism. Besides, such a strategy ECOWAS also adapted strategies to smooth the progress of the implementation of regional, continental and international instruments in combating terrorism. It further provided a common operational framework a community-wide action to prevent and exterminate all terrorists' related acts (Onuoha, 2013:108; Bolaji, 2010). It is still not very clear in research circles whether the efforts at combating and suppressing organised crimes have achieved or reached its desired effects. It might be a subject of further research.

In Conclusion

Conflict analysis and management are not a new phenomenon to students of history and social sciences the world over. Conflicts either on organizational or international scale have received mediation and/or alternative dispute resolution in different parts of the world..This article focuses on West Africa as a zone where organised crime has been going on since the first decades of the 20th Century although much attention has been paid to terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram, AQIM and Janjaweed only recently. Using secondary and primary sources the article examines more detail the way crimes have been organised in the region in the colonial and post colonial periods. It examines the mobility of narcotics and prostitutes trafficking and y in the sub-region. More crucial to this article is the way regional and international organisations have attempted to mediate and bring to an end such conflict situation. From the sources gathered so far, the article maintains that narcotics and prostitution mobility have made West Africa the hub and the middle passage where drugs and prostitutes passed through to other parts of the world. This article while adding to the budding of literature of organised crimes has concluded that in order to better appreciate such a phenomenon. It is relevant to historicize it. The interconnectedness of West to the rest of world goes far beyond a thousand years. Within this period the region has been vulnerable for the mobility of drugs and prostitutes. This article has examined why and how this region became quite topical in mobility of drugs from other parts of the world.

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DESPERATE GUESTS, UNWILLING HOSTS: CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED MIGRATION AND FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract. *Discourses on the relationship between climate change and violent conflict have created two opposing views of the enthusiasts and the skeptics, with the former arguing that there is a strong connection and the latter doubting it. This paper combines elements from the two lines of thought to assess the phenomenon of incessant farmer-herder conflicts in southwestern Nigeria. Presenting evidence collected from a town in southwestern Nigeria, the paper demonstrates not only the saliency of climate change but also its instigating influence in human migration and the associated violent conflicts in southwestern Nigeria. It argues that acute shortage in rainfalls, increasing dryness and scorching heat have resulted in depletion of water, flora, and fauna resources on the land. This has triggered forced migration of many cattle herders of the region to the lush wetter parts of the south in desperate search of grazing spaces. More often than not, however, the desperate guests (the grazers) have often been met by unwilling hosts (the farmers) in the wetter destinations, thereby setting in motion violent conflicts, which have increased and intensified since the late 1990s. However, the paper concludes that, on its own, climate change-induced migration seldom causes conflict unless enmeshed with the struggle for economic ascendancy, intolerance, ethnicity, insensitivity, an integration problem, and state incapacity.*

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Introduction

Violent clashes between farmers and herders have become almost a daily occurrence in Nigeria since the early 2000s, with grave consequences on peace, orderliness, and peaceful coexistence. Several studies have emerged linking the phenomenon to climate change. Roger Blench (2005) noted that although the phenomenon is as old as the beginning of agriculture, its intensity

since the late 1980s is a function of the increasing war over resources, mostly grass and water, which is occasioned by climate change. In a well-articulated report on the impact of climate change in Nigeria, Aaron Sayne (2012) pays particular attention to the creeping desertification of northern Nigeria and weak state capability as responsible for the phenomenon of herders' migration leading to violent conflicts. Olakunle Folami and Olubimpe Folami (2013:104-110) established a linkage between climate change and inter-ethnic conflict, concluding (with various examples) that there is an escalation of conflicts between ethnic groups (and within communities) over access to dwindling resources. Samuel Odo and Francis Chilaka (2012:110-124) linked the perennial violent clashes in northern Nigeria with climate change and, therefore, enjoined researchers to look beyond religion and politics in explaining causal bases of violence in the north. Idowu Oladele (2011:616-621) have not only examined, but also linked the debilitating consequences on food production in the savannah area of the Oyo State to the pastoralist-farmer conflicts over access to resources in the area. Also, in their study on farmer-herder conflicts in north central Nigeria, Oluwasegun and Solagberu's (2010:1-27) identified the primary causal factor as climate change-induced depletion of soil fertility. Freedom Onuoha and Gerard Ezirim (2010:248) are also clear in their study on human insecurity in Nigeria that climate change is one of its causal factors.

The reality of growing aridity of several parts of northern Nigeria has been universally acknowledged. It has been argued that about 35 percent of land areas that were cultivable before the 1960s are increasingly getting arid in 11 of Nigeria's northernmost states of Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi. As a result, "the livelihoods of some 15 million pastoralists in northern Nigeria are threatened by decreasing access to water and pasture – shortages linked to climate change" (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999:11). The fallout from the dire situation is the migration of grazers away from the areas towards the southern region that is much lush. But the obsession of scholars with the climate change issues in analyzing farmer-herder crises in Nigeria raises some pertinent questions. For instance: is there a consensus yet on the link between climate change and violent conflict? Are violent encounters between grazers and farmers in Nigeria explainable only from the prism of climate change? Apart from climate change, are there other intervening variables for such incessant farmer-herder clashes? Using fieldwork conducted in Saki, a border town in south-western Nigeria, as case study, this paper interrogates the phenomenon of farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria. It argues that climate change alone seldom results in conflict until combined with other variables. The study is also situated within the context of the arguments by Blench (2005:x) and Strauss (2012:16) calling for more case study research on the phenomenon of farmer-herder conflicts in Africa. Thus, following this introduction, we will explore the following issue-areas respectively: the debates on the climate-conflict question and setting of a theoretical framework for the study; the study methodology, result findings, discussion of major findings, and conclusion.

Climate change and conflict: enthusiasts vs. skeptics

The idea of climate change instigating violent conflict is a subject of considerable debate in expert literature and a consensus is yet to be reached. Opinions are therefore divided into two opposing camps, whose members we would describe as enthusiasts and skeptics. One important reality of the climate change discourse is its changing political economy of meaning, perception, and interpretation. According to Oli Brown, Anne Hammill, and Robert McLeman (2007), climate change initially emerged as an environmental issue. However, it became an energy problem before becoming recast as a security threat; and then lifted to the level of the United Nations Security Council. In his work dated in 1994, Robert Kaplan envisaged such environmental issues as soil erosion, water shortage, air pollution, and an increase in sea level as capable of producing mass migration which could trigger violent conflicts in West Africa (Kaplan, 1994, cited in Brown & McLeman, 2009:289). Hendrix and Glaser (2007:695-715) examined the impact of both long term triggers and short term trends in rainfall predictability with respect to the propensity towards conflict in Africa. Their conclusion was that climatic variations in both long and short terms are capable of leading to violent conflict. Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddan (1999:397-418) saw increasing evidence of farmer-herder conflicts as a result of climate change driving pastoralists from their natural setting to wetter lands in search of pasture. Buhaug, Gleditsch, and Theisen (2008) identify three potential environmentally-induced events -- resource scarcity, a rise in sea level and natural disasters such as drought, floods, and desertification -- as capable of influencing security implications.

Barnett and Adger (2007:640) identified the growing possibility of climate change undermining human security by reducing access to important natural resources, and undermining the capacity of the state to act in ways that could promote human security. Linking climate change with acute violence, Dixon (1991) identified such events as population displacement and drop in agricultural outputs as capable of breeding insurgencies, guerilla warfare, and terrorist attacks. Blench, (2005), Ufuoku and Isife (2009:047-054) warned about the prospects of inclement climate-induced violent consequences due to itinerant herder migrations to lush green territories of sedentary farmers in Nigeria. Burke *et al.* (2009) produced a study that established a strong historical connection between civil war incidents and temperature changes in Africa. Using the Malian crisis as a case study, Cole (2013) identified the severe drought of the 1970s as the main responsible for the migration of ethnic Tuareg to Libya, where they were organized into a mercenary group by Qaddafi; he also described how their disbandment in the late 1980s prompted a massive return to Mali -- fuelling subsequent secession bids and the emergence of Ansare Dine terrorist group in the country.

However, the claims of climate-conflict enthusiasts have been subject to severe criticisms. For instance, Salehyan (2008:315-326) agreed that climate change posed a prob-

lem but doubted a direct linkage with conflict. To him, proponents of a climate-conflict nexus suffered from environmental deterministic tendencies and offered ready-made tools for NGOs prone to apocalyptic predictions. He insisted that conflicts seldom occurred without the conjunction of several social factors. For their part, Fjeddle and Uexkull (2012:444) argued that after several years of research, academics were yet to come up with concrete evidence to buttress the assertion of climate-conflict linkage. Rather, what was obtained was an avalanche of variegated N-studies that offered, at best, speculative support for direct linkage between environmental stress and armed conflict. Gleditsch and Nordas (2012:627-638) described most of the present ranges of work on security dimensions of climate change as unconvincing, mostly speculative, and of questionable orientations. In another work, Gleditsch (2012:3-9) faulted most works justifying climate change-driven conflict as based on case studies of conflict areas only.

In the same vein, Adano et al (2012:65-80), using a case study from Kenya as a reference point, discovered more killings during wetter periods than during dry ones, thereby disproving a strong linkage between drought and violent conflicts. Using an empirical evaluation which combined “high resolution meteorological data with geo-referenced data”, Theisen, Holtermann, and Buhang (2011:79-106) found no strong link between drought and the occurrence of civil wars in Africa. While countering proponents of the climate-conflict thesis, Gartzke (2012:177-192) (pointing to the absence of convincing evidence of climate change-inducing conflict) initiated a debate on the possibility of climate change reducing the frequency of inter-state conflicts. For him, the phenomenon of climate change did not need to be associated with conflicts, no matter the appearance of a relationship. In the opinion of Schoch (2011), proponents of the climate-conflict thesis were yet to provide credible examples of violent conflict triggered by climate change; rather, what resulted were numerable questionable works, full of mere and unsubstantiated extrapolations. For his part, Bettini (2013:63-72) contended that most enthusiasts of climate change and conflict thesis were alarmists, projecting nothing but apocalyptic narratives.

Two points are fundamental to the position of the climate-conflict skeptics and, by extension, to any research in the climate change-conflict discourse. The first is the need for concrete evidence to support climate-conflict claims. The second is the denial of conceptions of conflict on the basis of environmental determinism. Conflict, in this context, should be seen as a combination of sociopolitical, economic, and environmental factors. Therefore, while this paper operates from the premise of climate change contributions to violent conflicts in southern Nigeria, it strongly acknowledges other variables contributing to the emergence or intensification of such conflicts. These variables include, particularly in the case of migrating herders, such factors as the condition at the destination point, including the attitudinal disposition of the hosts, particularly any discriminatory practices against the migrants (Sirkeci, 2009:10; Okeke-Uzodike,

Idoniboye-Obu, and Whetho, 2012: 193-195), the conduct of the migrants on encountering their hosts, state capacity (Reuveny, 2007), and the level of local economic opportunities and competition (Blench, 2005). In essence, therefore, farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria will be analyzed in the context of climate change and the interplay of these intervening variables.

Climate change and migration

Beyond the traditional conception of migration as a combination of economic, socio-political, and cultural factors, some studies also identified climate change as a major driver of migration (UNCHR, 2001; Reuveny, 2007:656-673; Black *et al.*, 2011:3-11; Kniverton, Smith and Wood, 2011:34-40; Warner 2010:402-403; Scheffram, Marmar & Sow, 2012:119-127). However, Mortreux & Barnet (2009:105-112), Williams and Pradhan (2009:3), and Warner (2011:403) added that decisions leading to migration are seldom mono-causal; they are often products of the interplay of factors such as fear about personal safety, individual circumstances, experiences, anticipated risk, cost-benefit assessment of migration and other variables like religion, culture and expected access to target spaces. This was demonstrated in the study of Mortreux and Barnet (2009:105-112) which revealed how religious values and culture worked together to prevent mass migration from Funafuti, Tuvalu in the face of apocalyptic climate change predictions. All this notwithstanding, studies by Brown (2007), Blench (2005), and UNEP (2011) showed evidence of growing migration of herders from arid regions to lush green areas in Africa as a result of severe climatic conditions.

In the case of Nigeria, herder migration is a historical practice with fairly recent rapid escalation in intensity. For a long time, a climatic demarcation existed between north and south. While in the northern region, there is a savannah forest area, conducive for cattle rearing, the thick forests of the south are suitable for crop farming but out of the reach of grazers because of serious tsetse fly infestation. This climatic dichotomy was intact until it was shattered by the veterinary revolution of the late 1950s (Blench, 2005) and the precipitation plunge of the 1960s (Balinger, 2000:41, Ekpo and Nsah, 2011:51). The development of *trypanocides* not only allowed mass breeding of cattle far beyond the grazing capacity of the area, but also constituted a major break in the tsetse fly imposed access barrier to the south, thereby giving opportunity for transhumance. The precipitation plunge of the 1960s resulted in the Sahel drought, which intensified in the 1970s, with great ecological tragedy in the region. These factors, more than any others, have played a major role in the migration of cattle herders to the southern part of the country, first on annual transhumance and later on a permanent basis (Blench, 2005). What happened then was a massive migration of grazers down from northern Nigeria to the southern part in search not only of grazing opportunities but also of more lucrative markets for their herds.

Rafael Reuveny's three-choice theoretical argument holds that people facing acute climate change problems have one of three options: (i) remain where they are and do nothing; (ii) remain where they are and try to mitigate the effects; and (iii), leave the affected area entirely. The final decision is often a combination of the nature of the state and its intervention capabilities. Thus, while developed countries often strive to mitigate such problems through technological and institutional competencies, less developed countries, with poor technological and institutional facilities, are often unable to stem effectively migration from areas prone to the harsh effects of climate change (Reuveny, 2007:657). Even though Kniverton, Smith, and Wood (2011) saw migration as one of the strategies used by humanity to cope with the challenges of climate change, Reuveny (2007: 657) pointed out the possibility of migration bringing benefits to the absorbing areas. Indeed, although there is a possibility that migration could result in conflict (Warner, 2010:403, Oliver-Smith, 2009), such propensity, argued Reuveny (2007:657), depends on the flow and size of such migration. Thus, a small and slow flow of migrants has a high possibility of easy and smooth absorption by the host communities.

As established in the theoretical section, there are other salient intervening variables such as the attitudinal disposition of the host community to the migrating herders, the conduct of the migrating herders, the capacity of the state, the level of economic competition, and the available opportunities. Using this theoretical statement as a fulcrum, we argue that many members of the cattle rearing ethnic groups of northern Nigeria facing dwindling rainfall, growing desertification, high and increasing temperatures (with serious consequences on grazing opportunities), and poor and ineffectual state intervention often chose to migrate southward to secure their means of livelihood. In some instances, such migration tended to trigger violent conflicts in the course of encounters with the crop farmers in the southern part of the country. In fact, although the root cause of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria appears to be climate change-driven migration, it is the combination and aggregation of several intervening variables (serving as buoys) that are responsible for recourse to conflict.

Methodology

Data for this paper was collected in Saki, Oyo state in southwestern Nigeria. Saki lies approximately on $3^{\circ}24'$ east of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude $8^{\circ}4'$ north of the Equator. It is about 184 and 320 kilometers north of Ibadan and Lagos respectively (Ajadi, 2004). Saki shares borders with Benin Republic to the west, Ago Are to the south, Ogboro to the East and Ilesha Ibaruba to the north (Lekan, 2008:19). Also, Saki sits at the intersection of the northern savannah forest and the southern forest zone, thereby combining the elements of grassland with rainforest, making the town ever-green round the year. The climatic condition of Saki sets it up as the preferred destination for pastoralists who are fleeing the uncertainty of rainfall in the Sahel/Savannah and wary of the far south that has not been totally rid of tsetse fly. The town is noted for its grazing

environment and serves as a livestock station for the Oyo state government. Apart from the border location that makes the town a thriving place for trans-border business, it is also important for its historical role as local administrative headquarters dating back to the colonial times. Largely, the town houses many of Nigeria's different ethnic groups.

Saki was purposefully selected for two crucial reasons. First, the town hosts a large number of Fulani herders. Secondly, it has experienced the highest number of cases of farmer-herder conflicts in southern Nigeria. Therefore, the location fits ideally with the basic idea behind the research. The data collected was supported by observations made during the interviews. Specifically, short duration semi-structured personal interview sessions were conducted with 48 respondents, which were split among Fulani herdsmen (the migrants from the north) and Yoruba respondents (local hosts), legal personnel and security officers. Those who consented to be interviewed included 17 Fulani herders and 21 farmers. There were two legal officers, one representative of the traditional ruler, three women from the market women's association, and the Divisional Crime Officer of the town. Of the Fulani respondents, eleven referred to themselves as Bororo and six claimed to be *Ibile*. The *Ibile* are the group Olasoji (2011) referred to as the agro-pastoralists who engaged in crop farming alongside cattle rearing. The group has also been described by Blench as the *sedentarized* Fulani herders who had migrated long ago, settled, intermarried and integrated with the locals (Blench, 2005). The *Ibile* speak the Yoruba language fluently, unlike the Bororo (newcomer Fulani herders).

Only the male herders agreed to be interviewed. Due to religious and cultural values, the wives and female children of the herders refused to speak with the researchers. By contrast, there were five women participants among the thirty-one Yoruba respondents. Of the twenty-six male respondents among the Yoruba speaking respondents, there were sixteen farmers, two saw-millers, two commercial road transport workers, two local teachers, two traditional chiefs, and two police officers. The session was conducted in Yoruba and Hausa languages, with the former being the language of the host communities and the latter, that of the herdsmen. A large number of the herdsmen also speak the language of the hosts fluently. The Fulani respondents were asked to address a set number of questions on: why they chose to relocate to Saki; their relationship with the local host communities; and the causes of conflict between themselves and their Saki hosts. The Yoruba respondents were asked questions related to: their impression on the migrant herders and the nature of their interactions with them; and the perceived consequences of the Fulani grazers' arrival in Saki. Generally, the questions were structured to discern the level of the respondents' knowledge on the issues of climate change, migration, peace, and conflict in their areas of location. Expectedly, there were differences in the general disposition of the respondents to the questions posed. The researchers observed much greater levels of enthusiasm amongst the local indigenes compared to the Fulani communities. The locals alluded to the interview being the first time researchers visited their community to see what they were passing through.

The Fulani *Ibile* did not mind being interviewed, but the Bororo were reluctant in their responses and it took extended explanations and persuasion to get them to participate.

Results

Migration triggered by the climatic factor

All the respondents agreed that the Fulani herders migrated to Saki at different times and periods. Of the 48 personal interviews conducted, responses on reasons for migration amounted to 39 as reflected in Table 1. Reasons related to climate change – worsening weather condition, erratic rainfall, dwindling grazing resources – were the most cited at 62%; as for relegating economic motives (17%) and crop farming (8%), they were considered background factors. Herders frequently pointed to environmental challenges as the primary reasons for migrating. The head of the Fulani Bororo commented pointedly: “I left home (Sokoto) in 1983 with few animals because there were no green fields for my cattle and many of them died, particularly during the dry season due to shortage of water”. Another respondent noted:

Table 1 (Respondents on Migration)
The main reasons for migration to Saki

Reasons for migration	No. of responses
Worsening weather condition	8
Erratic rainfall	7
Dwindling grazing opportunity in places of origin	9
To engage in crop farming	3
Need for market	7
Natural inclination to migrate	6
Migration deliberate to cause trouble	2
Total	39

My migration from the northern part was never borne out of love of the people of Saki, but nature has placed us under the terrible weather condition in the northern part of this country where we came from and we have no option than to look for a better place where our animals can be well fed

One respondent who came from Niger Republic added that he had to move when he “almost lost everything in terms of human and material resources to the drought in the Niger Republic”. In the view of another interviewee,

Water is the major factor that led to my migration from Maiduguri to Saki about 15 years ago because unlike here, where rain falls regularly, the reverse is now the case in Maiduguri. Even people in the local communities don’t have access to water; let alone animals.

When the question of “why did you come from far away to settle in Saki” was posed to a respondent, his answer captured the environmental concerns:

As Fulani, what we know as occupation is to look for greener pasture for our cattle and breed them more. Besides, there was a poor grazing opportunity where I

came from (Kebbi State) due to erratic rainfall. Before I left, the dry season could stretch for six months.

Some of the locals also share the same feeling that the herders came to their territory because of the environmental condition they were facing in the northern Nigeria. One of them underscored the point sympathetically:

I know that the rainfall problem in the north brought these people here. I once lived in the north and I know the place is very hot. There are months without rain to wet the grass for them. So, I won't blame them for finding their ways out. If I were in their shoes I would do the same. They have to survive. It is only those who have not gone to the north that will question why they left their territories for another land.

These quotes are indicative of the general attitude of those interviewed. There was an overwhelming reference to climate-related issues as the main drivers for the herders' migration to Saki. In this context, therefore, we can say that the migration to Saki by the herders has been largely triggered by environmental factors. This conforms to the theoretical analysis citing climate change as a major cause of migration in the contemporary world. This has been particularly crucial in understanding Fulani-herder encounter in Africa.

The economic considerations – which were sometimes linked to environmental concerns – were second to environmental issues in the herder responses (17%). That complexity is captured in the response of one herder who underscored the point: “we came here because our cattle are not doing well in my former place – Kano. There was shortage of green field and water to feed our cattle. Also, we must sell our cattle”. Another respondent further reinforced the same point:

I left home some years ago to Birni Gwari in Kaduna area. From there, I came to Saki land because there was no water for my cattle. Even getting green land was becoming difficult. There is also the need to sell my cattle in southwest. That is why I find this place (Saki) very appealing to stay.

The economic dimension to the migration process, though less emphasized in the respondents' views, represents a major trigger of conflict in the area. Clearly, the herders rear cattle as a livelihood. As such, they need both grazing spaces for their cattle and accessible and lucrative markets to dispose of them. As shall be explained in the next section, it is around the livelihood issues that inter-communal conflicts are often triggered.

Beyond those who linked the migrants' presence to environmental and economic factors, some locals saw the herders' migration from an ethnic perspective. According to one of them,

What is climate change? Who told you climate is changing? Forget about all those book things. Climate is not changing. The north is always like that. Besides, whether

climate changes or not, these Fulani Bororo will always want to move with cattle. In their movement, they bring trouble to other people.

Ethnicity becomes more evident in the dichotomy between members of the two Fulani herder communities in Saki- *Ibile* and Bororo. The responding Fulani *ibiles* were quick to distinguish themselves from the Bororo. According to a 76 year-old chief of the Fulani settlers in Saki:

We are the Fulani *ibile* – the settlers. My great-grand father was here for a long time...my grandparents and parents stayed here for so long that I was born here. So, I have been here since my childhood. Look at my age now!

A similar opinion was expressed by another Fulani *Ibile* respondent:

I was born here as Fulani *Ibile*. My parents died some years ago and were buried here. I was told we came from Yobe, but I have never been to that place (Yobe) at all. All I know is that we originated from the Yobe state because my father said so before he died. But we are now part of Saki. There is no other home that I know other than this place.

This supports Blench’s (2005) argument that a branch of Borgu Fulani had migrated to the Saki area during the colonial period. However, unofficial evidence shows that the Bororo Fulani in Saki are more in population than the Fulani *Ibile*.¹ The settlers, however, have integrated into the Saki society to the extent that they regard the comparatively recent Bororo migrants as threats (as reflected in their interview responses). Not surprisingly, the locals and the settlers lived peacefully together in Saki until January 23 1999 when violence broke out between them and the new settlers – the Fulani Bororo – which resulted in the deaths of about ten people and the loss of farm crops, livestock and other valuable properties².

The violent conflict

Since 1999, there have been several other cases of violent clashes in Saki between the two contesting groups. For example, on February 20, 2013, during the period of the Saki interviews, a violent clash erupted in the town, which left five people dead³. Also on March 13, 2013, shortly after the interviews, four people, (father, mother and two children)⁴, were confirmed

Table 2 (Respondents on Conflict)
The main reasons for conflict

Reasons for conflict	No. of responses
The migration of Bororo herders with large herds and people	21
Destruction of farmlands by cattle	20
Indiscriminate grazing activities	15
Locals killing cattle	11
Unwillingness to pay compensation by herders	12
Economic competition	20
Lack of trust in the security outfit	11
Total	110

killed in a clash between the two groups. All respondents agreed that there have been conflicts in the town, particularly since 1999. They also agreed that although the conflict started between some farmers and herders, subsequent ones had assumed a communal dimension. However, as reflected in Table 2, there are differences of opinion regarding not only the roles played by the opposing parties in the crisis but also on the magnitude of the conflicts. There were multiple responses to questions, but the overwhelming responses by the farmers, Fulani *Ibile*, the law enforcement officers and members of the community identified the Bororo as the main perpetrator of the crisis. One of the respondents, the representative of the traditional ruler of the town, argued that:

At present, we have two types of Fulani here, the *ibile* and Bororo. We have been living peacefully with the *Ibile* long ago before the arrival of Bororo group of herders. The Bororo have been a cog in the wheel of progress in this land and that is responsible for the incessant clashes between the two parties (farmers and herders).

The president of the Saki Farmers Association was equally direct:

What I have in mind concerning Fulani is too sad because they have destroyed the social fabrics of this land. Since 1999, the Bororo have been terrorizing this land with a series of nefarious activities. They do kill us, beat, and rape our women at will. It is pathetic. They lead their cattle to our farms to destroy them. When we react, they start killing with dangerous weapons.

The head of Fulani *Ibile* was also unsparing:

You know their Seriki (head of the Bororo) will not tell you the truth about the whole thing because you (the interviewer) are not part of them. They are the problem in this land. Cases of conflicts with farmers have been rising on a daily basis. They (Bororo) came across us here living peacefully. But since they came, they have caused several conflicts with the farmers to the extent that the king of this town does not want them any more.

One respondent, a law enforcement officer, explained the nature and basis of the conflicts

The crux of the matter is that the cattle would enter and destroy crops in the farms. The farmers retaliate by attacking or killing the animals. This would lead to clashes and in most cases, resulting in loss of human lives and properties. It is a frequent problem. It happens regularly.

The Bororo herders do not take lightly the claims that they are responsible for the conflict in Saki. An overwhelming number of Bororo respondents laid the blame for the conflicts on the killing of cattle by the locals. One Bororo respondent was emphatic

about those responsible:

Our host communities started it all. They are wicked and inhuman. They believe they are the owners of everything. Any time they see us on the grazing field they abuse and curse us for no reason. They also have traditional ways of killing our animals, and when we react, they will say we are fighting them. What about the fact that they are killing our animals?

When the question of “what accounts for incessant conflict between herders and farmers” was posed to the leader of the Bororo group, his answer reflected his belief that there were deep feelings of intolerance on the part of the locals:

We have seen cases where conflicts erupt between us, which result in loss of cattle and human lives. When animals destroy farmlands, though not deliberately, farmers have always reacted violently. When there is an attack by farmers, my people will also attack them in their farms. Farmers don't believe Fulani are human beings. As I am speaking, we have cases in court against the farmers⁵.

In essence then, two major issues emerge from the foregoing comments. The first is evidence of climate change driving migration. The second is evidence of conflict between the migrants and their hosts. The linkage between the two is that the unfavorable climatic changes in the northern part of Nigeria trigger mass migration of herders towards the wetter south where their need for grazing land put them in conflict with the sedentary farmers, whose livelihoods are sometimes threatened by grazing cattle. The net outcome sometimes is violent clashes between the two groups. Clearly, without significant migration of herders to Saki, there would not have been any reason for violent clashes between herders and their Saki hosts. However, the clashes have been escalated by intervening variables.

Assessment of Findings

A deeper assessment of the findings from the fieldwork reveals the variety of issues that underpin the crisis in Saki. First is the sudden increase in the flow and size of Bororo migrants. Migration patterns to Saki can be categorized into two phases: old and new migrants. While those that arrived in the 1960s (and before that period) fall under the first category, the set of herders who arrived thereafter, especially starting with the 1990s onward, belong to the new migrant category. While the old migrants came in trickles, the new set arrived basically en-masse. Because of their relatively small size, the old Fulani migrants were easily and smoothly absorbed. Largely integrated with the locals, they speak the Yoruba language fluently, and (like their hosts) they engage in crop farming alongside their cattle rearing, and they intermarry with the locals and are *sedentarized*. However, the new migrants remain generally itinerant, separated from the host communities and largely *un-integrated*. Thus, while the old migrants consider

the place their home, the new migrants do not share the same feelings. Not surprisingly, the arrival of large numbers of herders who refuse to integrate or mix with the locals is a cause of tension amongst the people of the Saki town.

Second is the perception of locals that the herders are highly insensitive to their customs and values. The tension created by the cattle invasion was heightened by the conduct of the migrating herders. Responses from farmer interviewees alluded to cases of unrestrained grazing, encroachment in crop farms, and lack of respect for land ownership. Indeed, in response to a question on how they acquire grassland for grazing purposes, the head of the Bororo argued that "land is a free gift by God. We don't buy it and nobody gives it to us. We only feel it is good for our animals as grazing zone". Another herder responded to the same question by saying that "land is not given by man but by God. Why should we buy a free gift of God? Who owns it?" In contrast, the settler herders (*Ibile*) did not display disdain for the land ownership values of their host community. In contrast to the Bororo, they keep their cattle to the pens and also acquire grazing areas for what can be described as guided grazing⁶.

A number of factors are responsible for the practice of the settler herders. First of all, unlike the Bororo, they possess a fewer number of cattle,⁷ which enables them to restrict the movements and grazing activities of their herds. Secondly, they are engaged in crop farming alongside their herding practice – making it imperative for them to control their herds from straying into farmlands. Thirdly, they are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural life of the Saki community; they possess their own lands and are emotionally attached to the place. The Bororo, on the other hand, owned large cattle herds that must be fed, possess neither land nor farms on which to keep and feed them, and entertained little or no sentiments towards their hosts and their customs⁸. In contrast, the settler herders (*Ibile*) share with the locals a profound desire to prevent cattle from destroying farmlands. And, as with the locals, the *Ibile* share an attitude that regards and treats the Bororo as the "other" in the socio-political and cultural spheres of the town⁹.

Third is the perceived economic supremacy of the herders and the attendant envy by some members of their host community. The struggle for economic ascendancy between the two groups acts as a major instigator of violence given the pattern of inter-group economic relations existing in the town, which puts the Fulani ahead of the locals (given the high value fetched by each cow). The farmers attribute their low economic status to perennial loss of huge income when Bororo herders invade their farmlands and destroy their crops at the peak of readiness for harvest, thereby depriving them of bountiful crops and profit. They cited the example of the leader of the Bororo group driving a "big jeep" while the locals could hardly afford a motorcycle. The mental picture of 'strangers' living a full life in their land makes violent reaction against the herders a constant event in the town. Therefore, we can locate the recourse to cattle killing by the locals within the context of the economic factor.

The fourth factor is what we would describe as a poor response of authoritative structures of the state. As evident in the informant responses, the study shows the incapacity of the Nigerian state manifesting in two forms. The first is the migration of the herders from the problem area due to the inability of the state to effectively address the challenges posed by climatic change. The second is the inability of the state to handle the security situation in Saki town. Both parties accuse the law enforcement officers of inefficiency and partiality in dealing with the tensions. For instance, one of the local respondents from Saki suspected the involvement of the police:

On 23 January, 1999, I sent two children to the farm. They (Bororo) shot at them. but they did not die. I rose up angrily, rushed to the police station to report the matter but the police didn't do anything. It was as if they (police) connived with them

In a petition to the Inspector General of the Police, the Bororo group, under the auspices of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA), hinted at the inefficiency of the Commissioner of Police in Oyo State, hence the need to draw the attention of the national headquarters of the police. Similar accusations were made in the petitions of the Saki Farmers Association. Respondents also cited inefficiency of the police in handling the crises in the town.

In essence then, four key factors that have played out in Saki – the sudden increase in the flow and size of Bororo migrants, the insensitivity of the herders towards their hosts, ineffective policing by state authorities, and the comparatively better financial circumstances of the herders when compared to their hosts – combine to create an emotional and tension-ridden environment. The net effect of this aggregation and combination of issues is the steady gravitation towards violent conflicts between the recent migrants and their host community. As such, although deteriorating climatic conditions were the triggering factors for the southward migration of the Bororo herders to Saki, the conflict between them and their host community was not the direct result of climate change. Rather, the violent conflicts have been fuelled by unmediated cultural differences, attitudinal conduct, and their disparate modes of production and lifestyles.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates a meaningful linkage between climate change and herder migration, using Saki in southwestern Nigeria as a case study. Virtually all respondents agreed that climate change was the driving factor for the migration of herders from various parts of northern Nigeria to Saki town. Clearly, the possibility of internal conflict occurring in Saki would have been quite remote without the climate-induced migration of the Bororo Fulani. Therefore, we can say that a link certainly exists (at least indirectly) between climate and conflict.

However, the study has also borrowed from the argument of the skeptics by providing a more complex and nuanced explanation of the crisis in Saki rather than the mono-

causal or deterministic prism that informs some climate-conflict assessments. It identified intervening variables fuelling the crisis in the forms of the sudden flow and large sizes of Bororo migrants, economic competition between the locals and the herders, poor state responses, and the disrespectful attitude of the migrants. The position here is that climate change could be a contributory factor to the propensity towards violent conflict (by pushing herders out of their natural territories and into Saki). After all, the Fulani have been living peacefully in Saki for a long time. Indeed, the first set of Fulani migrants who came on their own volition, rather than as a result of inclement weather, adjusted and integrated into the Saki community without difficulties, which demonstrates that not all Fulani herders are violent and that the Saki community is not unreceptive to strangers. Violence emerged because of the unwillingness of the new migrants not only to integrate with their local hosts but also to identify with some of their key cultural values. The study reveals that climate change alone does not result in conflict until enmeshed with factors such as intolerance, economic competition, insensitivity, ethnicity, and poor state response.

Notes

- 1 This was confirmed by the head of the Fulani settlers. He argues that the Bororo has been migrating in large numbers in recent years.
- 2 Figure given by Police officers and also the respondents during fieldwork.
- 3 This occurred in the course of the interview. We confirmed the actual number of the casualties with the Police station.
- 4 The researchers visited Saki once again to confirm with the Police after being alerted to this occurrence.
- 5 Both farmers and herders instituted cases in court against one another. Each accusing one another of aggression and also demanding compensation.
- 6 Interview with the settler herders indicate this practice. The researchers also saw a few ranches.
- 7 Where we conducted the interview, the population of cattle belonging to the Bororo far outnumbered the settlers. According to the head of the settler herders, in Saki West, where the interview was conducted, the population of settlers was less than 100 while the Bororo were over 200 people. In addition, a single Bororo could own between 100 to 200 heads of cattle at a time.
- 8 Constantly referring to their hosts as wicked and hostile reflect this perception. Also, while the Bororo instituted several cases against the locals, the settlers have none in court. In essence, the Bororo treat the settlers as part of the local hosts. The settlers also see themselves as part of the local community.
- 9 The locals constantly refer to the Bororo as strangers. They do not use the expression settler-herders.

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ON THE EDGE OF SCARCITY: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY CONFLICTS IN ODISHA, INDIA

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Abstract. *The contemporary state of Odisha, India, has been experiencing a series of ethnic, caste, religious, resource-based, and political conflicts. These conflicts are the product of different magnitudes of deprivation, marginalization, and exploitation, which have created unrest among different communities and dissatisfaction with the state authorities. These experiences simply highlight antagonism, aggression, and resistance in a context in which the policy making process and administration respond through violent means. It presents a complex picture of contemporary violent community conflicts in Odisha by considering conflicts of Kandhamal and Narayanpatna within the broader framework of competition to gain control over, or access to, natural resources. The competition to control or access natural resources leads to the emergence of community conflict between the Adivasis (indigenous people) and non-Adivasis in Odisha. The growing insecurity among the Adivasis due to the gradual alienation of their resources to the non-Adivasis compel them to engage in a conflictual relationship with the non-Adivasis, thereby threatening and creating insecurity for the latter.*

Keywords: *community, assertion, conflict, Maoist, Odisha state, India.*

Introduction

The resurgence of community conflicts over resources in the contemporary world has provoked renewed debate among social scientists about the nature and significance of community conflict in contemporary societies. Such conflicts are conspicuous in South Asia in general and India in particular. Conflicts over resources are apparently linked to the nature of Indian society that is seen as the complete grid of inequality, discrimination, deprivation, exploitation, marginalization and social exclusion. The experience of different magnitudes and

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levels of impoverishment and the attainment of different stages of social, economic, and political developments by different communities lead to the emergence of conflicts.

Conflict generally occurs due to the diverse nature of the society, to a precipitous decline of mediating institutions (David and Gange, 2006-2007:12-16; Bardhan, 2005:185) and to the failure of the modern welfare state to provide equal opportunities to all communities (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2005:108).

Different communities compete for scarce natural resources they need or want to ensure their livelihood. Such competition for use and access to resources result in violent conflicts.

Since the previous decade, there is a growing body of literature, which has studied the changing relationship between different communities. The probable reason for such outgrowth is the greater visibility of community conflicts in contemporary societies within the broader framework of assertive identities and material survival. Large numbers of scholars have been engaged in understanding contemporary community conflicts in the context of ethnicity defined in terms of religion (Varshney, 2002; Brass, 2003); social scientists, however, have paid little attention to the study of contemporary community conflicts between the Adivasis (officially recognized as Scheduled Tribes [STs]) and non-Adivasis in India in general, and Odisha in particular. A fundamental distinction between this paper and the existing literature lies in the type of actors and contexts under consideration.

The central theme of the paper is to explore the nature and dynamics of community conflicts over resources in contemporary Odisha. Within this backdrop, the paper is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the relationship between resources and conflicts. The second part discusses the conflicts over resources between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis in Odisha, by considering two cases, namely Kandhamal and Narayanpatna. The third part explores the role of the Maoists in these conflicts. And the fourth part deals with the role/response of the state to these conflicts, followed by the conclusion.

Resources and Conflict

Natural resources, such as land and forest, have occupied a central position in Adivasi life. Natural resources have fundamental spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and political significance (Northcott, 2012:74) to the Adivasi society. Land is not only the source of livelihood for the Adivasi communities; it is also connected with their sense of history and it is a symbol of social prestige (Elwin, 1963:50). Livelihood, wealth, and power are often established by the ability to access, use, and own land. Similarly, there is a symbiotic relationship between the Adivasis and the forest. The forest plays an extremely significant role in contributing to the subsistence economic system of Adivasi communities. The Adivasi society heavily depends upon two major sources

of production, that is, land and forest, which are described as 'twin pillars of Adivasi economy'. Their relationship with the two, especially with the former, is something like their 'philosophy of life' (Ambagudia, 2010:61). The Adivasis have, therefore, an inherent and inalienable right over land and forest. Denial of such rights to natural resources or any attempt to dilute their profound relationship with land and forest certainly leads to the generation of inter-community tensions and violent conflicts.

Access to natural resources has become the site for competition and conflict. Different communities compete for scarce natural resources they need or want to ensure their livelihood. Such competition creates inter-group inequalities and generates the feeling of 'relative deprivation', thereby leading to the occurrence of potential conflicts among different communities in India. Competition for use and access to resources results in violent conflicts. Conflict gets accentuated particularly if the resource is scarce and the claimants to the resource are many. Homer Dixon linked the idea of resource conflict with environmental degradation. He argued that environmental degradation generates simple scarcity conflicts, group identity conflicts, and relative deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1991:104-116). Natural resources can play a direct or indirect role in inter-community conflicts. The former is attributed to the direct interface between different communities for control over or access to natural resources. The latter can be accounted to the process through which the extraction of natural resources has located various groups at different levels of power relations, which invariably lead to the emergence of inter-community conflicts. To put it differently, conflicts emerge in relation to who should manage, use, and benefit from scarce natural resources. In this context, given the scarce political power and economic resources, it is inevitable that conflict will emerge on the basis of competition to control or access these resources between different communities in contemporary societies.

Community Conflicts over Resources in Odisha

The recent history of Odisha provides several cases showing that conflict is not an isolated phenomenon. The state has been experiencing a series of ethnic, class, religious, resource, and political conflicts which have beset the state, vitiating its potential for development and on various occasions questioning the credibility of the state. These conflicts are increasingly threatening peace in different parts of Odisha with the government remaining more or less a mute spectator. During the last couple of years, there have been major clashes between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis in relation to competition for control over or access to natural resources in the Kandhamal and Koraput districts Odisha.

Kandhamal

The Kandhamal district is one of the Adivasi districts of Odisha, consisting of a total population of 648,201, out of which 109,506 (16.89 percent) and 336,809 (51.96 per-

cent) are Dalit (the former untouchables, officially recognized as Scheduled Castes [SCs] and Adivasi respectively. Although the existing literature considers the conflicts between the Adivasis and Dalits as the manifestation of communal violence (Kanungo, 2008; Kanungo, 2014), the present study looks at the conflict by going beyond the religious dimension and links it with resource utilization, argues that the socio-economic competition came to be transformed, over time, into communal conflicts between the Hindu and the Christian communities, and that it has much to do with the increasing influence of the right wing Hindu forces such as Bajrang Dal and Sangh Parivar.¹ The Kandhamal conflict emerged between Kandhas (Adivasis) and Panas (non-Adivasis/Dalits). The historical anecdote will provide the contested ground of the emergence of community conflicts between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis in Kandhamal.

Exploring the historical relationship, it is worthwhile to note that both Kandhas and Panas were living together before the debut of British and missionaries in the district. Their entry led to the discovery of the *meriah*, (human sacrifice) practiced by the Kandhas. In this practice, Panas acted as the broker of supplying *meriah* children to the Kandha community. This is due to the fact that the Adivasi communities never use their progeny as *meriah*. The Kandhas believed that the goddess (Earth-Taru Pennu) would only accept the *meriahs* if they were brought with a price. They also emphasized that victims from their own community were not procurable. In this context, Swaro states that “the agents, mainly Panas – a cleaver and business like people – lived with the Kandhas and cheated them in all possible ways, sometimes purchased but more frequently kidnapped the children (from outside plains) whom they sold to the Kandhas. They occasionally (even) sold their own offspring without any hesitation” (Swaro, 1990:131).

In short, there are two basic prerequisites for the Kandhas: (i) that the *meriah* must have been bought with a full price by the free will of the seller, whether middle men or parents; and (ii) that the sacrifice must be voluntary, that is, with the victim neither bound nor offering the least resistance (Boal, 1984:53). So, the process of exploiting Kandhas by the Panas started long before the British rule in India. After the British made their debut to the district, they started rescuing *meriahs* from the houses of the Panas as well as Adivasi villages, and they initiated the conversion process with the rescued *meriahs*. Simultaneously, the Panas faced numerous challenges regarding the supply of *meriahs*. When it became impossible to supply *meriahs* to Adivasi villages, they came closer to Christianity and embraced the Christian religion. Subsequently, the dynamics of the conversion process started among the Panas. Meanwhile, this process contributed to the initiation of hating the Christian Panas by the Kandhas as they discarded their

1 The similar role of the Hindu forces has been comprehensively explored by Froerer in the context of Ratiya Kanwars and Oraons conflict in Chattisgarh (Froerer, 2010).

old religion. After becoming Christians, they started exploiting the Adivasis in the form of grabbing their land with the help of the British administration. This was one of the instrumental reasons of conflict between them because the Kandhas had been seeing the total landscape as their own and they had given some land to the Panas to live and supply *meriah* as per requirements. This kind of relationship took the shape of what Kanungo called a 'king-subject relationship' (Kanungo, 2008:17) between Kandhas and Panas because the Kandhas, the original inhabitants of Kandhamal, due to their control over land, perceived themselves as rajas (kings) and the migrant Panas from the plains as their prajas (subjects) (Ibid).

The process of land grabbing and exploitation of the Adivasis accentuated even after independence, through different processes. This uneasy relationship became even worse in independent India, when there was a bloody clash between Adivasis and Dalits during February-June 1994. This conflict occurred due to the need to gain control over and access to political, economic, and cultural resources, and to fight against indignities. These two competitive social groups found themselves locked in a battle over scarce resources. The Adivasis saw Dalits' participation and increased power in the larger politics as a potential threat to their 'moral economy' (Mohapatra and Bhattacharyya, 1996:162). The Adivasis perceived that by producing fake Adivasi certificates, the Panas were diminishing the benefits of state resources, and they felt 'relatively deprived' of using the state resources. In other words, this conflict emerged to avail the benefits of different types of affirmative policies meant for the Adivasi communities.

The conflict between the Kandhas and Panas is reinforced by the increasing socio-economic gap between these communities. Considering the socio-economic problem the main reason for the recent Kandhamal violence, the Justice Sarat Chandra Mohapatra Commission² stated that the violence in Kandhamal was the result of concentrated discontentment prevailing among people since long ago. It pointed out that conversion, re-conversion, land grabbing, lack of maintenance of land records, and issuing of *fake certificates* were mainly responsible for the outbreak of the conflict (emphasis added). The interim report stated that the perception, threat, and reality of marginalization and deprivation have engendered a conflict situation in Kandhamal, which has facilitated feelings and expression of mistrust, division and resentment between the Kandhas and the Panas. This has led to the existence of social conflicts because the Kandhas have the feeling that the state, as appropriated by the Panas, has shortchanged or deprived them of desired or accruing social benefits, rights, and entitlement (Migdal, 2001:114,128).

2 Justice Sarat Chandra Mohapatra, the former Lok pal, was appointed to judicially probe the recent violence between the Kandha and Pana communities in Kandhamal district. Expressing his inability to submit the final report within the given time limit, he submitted the interim report to the Home Department, GOO, on July 1, 2009.

The Kandhas always saw the Panas as traitors, exploiters, and grabbers of benefits meant for the Adivasi communities (Mohapatra and Bhattacharyya, 1996:162). Though the Odisha land legislations prohibit the transfer of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis, a large amount of land has been grabbed by the Panas by producing fake Adivasi certificates. Laws have been enacted, repealed, amended, and enforced, but all failed miserably to check the transfer of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis in Odisha (Ambagudia, 2010:60-67).

Nevertheless, it must be recorded that the Justice Mohapatra Commission's interim report did not mention anything about the role of the much debated Hindu groups in the entire process of the recent conflict. Different political parties also maintained a similar position. For instance, speaking at the National Integration Council meeting on October 13, 2008, in New Delhi, the Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik stated that the Kandhamal violence is a manifestation of the 'conflict of interest' between Dalits and Adivasis. A high level team of the Odisha Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who visited the affected area, linked the tensions with the land disputes and credit system, and ruled out any connection with the Hindu forces (*The Hindu*, January 9, 2001). But we must admit that the Hindu forces have succeeded in exploiting the tense situation and mobilizing the Kandhas against the Christian Pana community. They have played an important role in transforming the resource competition into inter-communal conflicts between the Kandhas and the Panas. The 2008 unrest in the state of Odisha started on August 23 after the murder of the rightwing Hindu nationalist leader Laxmananda Saraswati in his Chakapada Jalespata Ashram in Kandhamal district, who was working to unite the Kandha Adivasis to challenge the conversion activities of the Christian missionaries in addition to numerous developmental activities meant for empowerment of the marginalized groups such as Adivasis in the district (Kanungo, 2003). The Christian missionaries and the Chakapada Jalespata Ashram were engaged in mobilizing the Adivasis by imparting education and providing much needed medical facilities and gain legitimacy in rural areas (Kanungo 2003:150-156; Froerer, 2010:13-14).

The religious dimension of the argument in the context of the Kandhamal conflict can be strengthened by examining different statements of Hindu forces. Laxmannaanda Saraswati stated that "you are just burning tires. How many Isai houses and Churches have you burnt? Without kranti (revolution) there will be no shanti (peace). Narendra Modi³ has done kranti in Gujarat, that's the reason why shanti's there" (Prasad, 2008). On 6 September 2008, Apurvananda Maharaj at the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) Shradhhanjali Sabha announced that "Attack on Swamiji is the same as attacking Hindu religion. All saints and sadhus need to counter attack unitedly otherwise India will be converted into a Christian nation" (Ibid). Again the supporters of the VHP at the

3 Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat and is the current Prime Minister of India.

Shhradhanjali Sabha of Laxmanananda Saraswati in Chakapada, Phulbani, promised to wipe out Christians from Kandhamal districts. In short, the Hindu forces are working as what Brass terms as 'conversion specialists' (Brass, 2003:32-33; Froerer, 2006:54), *converting* these complex socio-economic tensions at the local level into the simpler, broader, and more potent language of inter-communal conflict (Froerer, 2006:54). Mahapatra argued that the agitated Hindu forces did not even touch the Odiya *Sahi* (street) of Bastingia village where mostly non-Adivasi/non-Dalit Odiya people used to live (Mahapatra, 2008). This was because these non-targeted outsiders worked as informers to the rioters in many cases. This was also demonstrated in the case of 1994 conflict between the Kandhas and Panas where the upper caste Hindus were entailed in further fuelling the already tensed area by telling the Adivasis that 'Dalits loot the illiterate Adivasis and disrupt the moral order of the village' (Mahapatra and Bhattacharyya, 1996:162). No doubt the Kandha-Pana ethnic divide may be partially responsible for the 2008 violent conflict, as it was in February-June 1994 and December 2007, but it is not a good enough reason to explain the dynamics of the recent community conflict in Odisha. It is an active involvement of the Hindu forces that resource conflicts have recently assumed an ethnic and communal orientation.

Narayanpatna

Narayanpatna is one of the most backward and Adivasi dominated blocks of the Koraput district in south Odisha. According to the 2001 Census, it consists of a total population of 38,276, out of which 31,132 (81.33%), 2,714 (7.09%) and 4,430 (11.57%) are Adivasis, Dalits, and others respectively. The seed of the Narayanpatna conflict was scattered in the mid-1990s. During this period, the tension over resources among Adivasis and non-Adivasis emerged. The emergence of land tensions enabled the Adivasis to form the Chasi Mulia Rayat Kuli Sangh (CMRKS) in 1995 in this area. This organization re-emerged in 2009 under a different name, i.e., Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh (CMAS). The aims and activities of both these *sanghs* (organizations) are similar. The main objective of the CMAS is to protect Adivasi rights over natural resources, such as land, water, and forest, and address other grievances of Adivasis. The Narayanpatna conflict emerged in relation to these grievances. The Adivasis have two distinct but inter-related grievances: sale of liquor and growing land alienation.

Regarding the sale of liquor, we must admit that the using of intoxication is a part of Adivasi social life. Besides consuming liquor in different festivals, Adivasis use liquor to make the marriage ceremony more enjoyable. Country wines called *Mahula* and *Salapa* are in use among them. Within this perspective, Elwin stated that 'there must be dance and feast with plenty of liquor for everyone to get some pleasure out of the marriage event' (Elwin, 1954:532). An important ritual, a medicinal and social necessity, local liquor distilled from the flower of the *mahua* tree occupies a central position in the

daily lives of Adivasi society.⁴ The drinking of wine is so much a part of Adivasi social and religious life that the Government of Odisha (GOO), when introducing prohibition, excluded the districts with a large Adivasi population out of its scope (Dash, 1997:80).

Taking the advantage of Adivasis' weakness towards liquor, selling liquor has become not only a profitable business for the non-Adivasis but a significant source of different forms of exploitation for Adivasis. This aspect greatly contributes to the transfer of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis in the southern part of Odisha (Bagchi, 1999:99).

Regarding the sale of liquor, the Narayanpatna block comes under the scheduled areas where the different provisions of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996 can be operationalized. PESA has empowered the gram sabha (village council) to prohibit or control the sale of liquor [4(m)(1)]. The effective implementation of the PESA would be able to ban the liquor trade and that would resolve the first issue. Regarding the second, the Adivasi communities of the area feel that both at the time of settlement, an operation which was concluded in Narayanpatna area in the early 1960s (Behuria, 1963; Upadhyaya, 2014:292), and thereafter, a large amount of Adivasi land was transferred to the non-Adivasis, both through illegal and seemingly legal means. Consequently, the Adivasis have been marginalized, dispossessed and deprived of their entitlement to land. The 'politics of entitlement' (Horowitz, 1985; Froerer, 2010), therefore, leads to the emergence of community conflicts in Odisha. It must be noted that the issue of deprivation is not only restricted to the protest of those excluded or sidelined in the struggle for, or control of resources, it is also an important factor in the quest by Adivasis for greater control of the means of their livelihood such as land and forest.

In addition, there are also other important reasons behind this conflict, such as the government's indifference towards providing basic facilities, i.e., a below poverty line (BPL) card, job card, primary health care center, drinking water, roads etc.; deliberate and false cases registered against the Adivasis; and sexual abuse and assaults of Adivasi girls and women by non-Adivasis. To put it differently, their struggle was against moneylenders, liquor traders, contractors and corrupt government officers and non-Adivasis who were indulged in exploiting and marginalizing Adivasi communities in different ways.

Since the 8th of May, 2009, the Narayanpatna conflict was fueled-up under the auspices of the CMAS. The CMAS formed the *Lal Bahini* (Red Army) with the aim to collect information regarding the activities of police and to protect the Adivasis. According to the available information, they formed around 35 groups in 35 villages in Padapadar, Tentulipadar, and Balipeta panchayats of Narayanpatna block, and the membership strength of these groups runs between 15 and 20, armed with different types of tradi-

4 The use of local liquor in the Adivasi society in India has been thoroughly examined by Froerer in the context of Chhattisgarhi Adivasi communities (Froerer, 2006:46-53).

tional weapons. On the 22nd of June, 2009, the deployed Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) arrested some of the members of the *Lal Bahini*. In reaction, more than 3,000 Adivasis with traditional weapons protested against this arrest and, consequently, the police apologized for their activities and freed them. This circumstance was described by Aditya Prasad Padhi, the then Home Secretary, as a 'war situation' (*Draritri*, 25 June, 2009).

The community conflicts between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis forced a large number of non-Adivasi families to leave their villages in the Narayanpatna block and created the fear of insecurity among the latter. All non-Adivasis, including the Dalits, were attacked and deemed as anti-Adivasis and exploiting groups. During the months of May-June, out of 127 villages in the Narayanpatna block, 500 families from 25 villages, which were Dalits and Shundis, had to leave their home and land to save their lives. Carrying their mission further, the CMAS was indulged in restoring the alienated Adivasi land by force. On the 15th of June, 2009, they forcefully occupied more than 1,000 acres of land in Narayanpatna block. On that day, the CMAS forcefully cultivated 500 acres of land in Narayanpatna headquarter, 100 acres in Bikrampur, 70 acres in Balipeta, 40 acres in Tentulipadar, 20 acres in Harikudia, 4 acres in Kanika etc. (*Dharitri*, 17 June 2009).

The women were also growingly involved in the entire process of the struggle for control over resources by participating in large numbers in different protests and rallies called by the CMAS. After occupying land on 15 June 2009, the CMAS organized a meeting in the Dumusil village of the Balipeta panchayat, where the collector and the superintendent of police of Koraput district rushed to the spot and talked to the Adivasi leaders Nachika Linga and Pendruka Singana. During their dialogue, the Adivasis demanded their full rights on water, land, and forest. The government authorities assured them of delivering justice. In spite of the government assurance, on 6 July 2009, the CMAS started its next phase of restoring alienated land on the very next day, i.e., 7 July, 2009, and occupied more than 400 acres. The reason was that the marginalized Adivasi communities had been listening to all types of rhetoric promises from the government for too long; reality, however, seems to tell a different story.

Exploring the relationship between the CMAS and the course of land restoration further, one may wonder about the process of distribution of restored land. In this context, it is important to cite the interview of Gananath Patra, the adviser of the CMAS, who stressed on the process of land distribution. The CMAS gave utmost importance to three important principles of distribution of restored land (Upadhyaya, 2015:294). First, the priority was given to those who had lost their land through illegal transfers. The second priority was given to those Adivasis who did not have any land in their name. Third, those Dalits who were interested in cultivation and were landless. While restoring the land and distribution among the landless, the CMAS ensured that they were not dispossessed again.

What do conflicts of Kandhamal and Narayanpatna suggest concerning the larger questions of mobilization and struggle for material well-being? The community consciousness has become a feature of the day and their scale of assertion has expanded to a great extent and the diverse communities are involved in more and more confrontations among themselves. The Adivasis and Dalits were increasingly placed in a position of marginalization and exploitation, constant threats to their existing position and social status and value system. This position, a sense of social deprivation and a constant fear of losing their identity and status, often created an atmosphere of apprehension by the concerned communities. They were at the same time more self-conscious, and were very much aware of the differences between themselves and others, the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Such assertions aim to transform the very sense of 'dominant community' of the higher caste and redefine it at every level.

The Role of Maoists

Various levels of marginalization, deprivation and exploitation have created unrest among the Adivasi and Dalit communities and disappointment with the state. The growing negligence of the state leads to unrest, sometimes of a violent nature, in Odisha (Ambagudia, 2011:41). It creates the impression that the policy making process and administration respond to violent means quite effectively (Government of India, 2008:44). This situation has tactically been cultivated by the Maoists in Odisha. So, the existing literature claims that the extremist groups are securing support from marginalized groups such as Adivasis and Dalits. This is due to their long experience of the modern welfare state, its inability to address the structural problems and lack of effective implementation of different welfare projects since its independence (Chakrabarty and Kujur, 2010:112-117). Within this backdrop, it is essential to look at the link between the Maoists and these conflicts.

Exploring the Kandhamal episode, there is a clear visibility of Maoists' connection in the entire process of carrying out the strategy to kill the controversial VHP leader Laxmanananda Saraswati along with his four associates. The Maoist claimed responsibility for the killing (Ibid, 145) because the sadhu had been involved in mixing religion with politics and pursuing a fascist and divisive communal agenda in the country (Kanungo, 2008:16). Although the Maoists claimed responsibility for this murder, the Hindu groups blamed the Christians for the murder and reacted by rampage killing several people and destroying several missionary schools, churches and buildings (Grim and Finke, 2010:149).

On the contrary, in the case of Narayanpatna conflict, though the members of the CMAS deny any connection to Maoists, their techniques and methods of activities come under close scrutiny. Taking the advantage of the government's negligence to address the rights of the Adivasis, Maoists started their own organization in the region of Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon in 1995 and in the same year, the CMRKS had emerged and now this

organization is known as CMAS. The activities of both the Maoists and the CMAS are quite similar. The members of the *Lal Bahini* wear red color garments, sleepers and are tagged with red ribbon on their head, which symbolizes the color of Maoists. The CMAS followed the similar method by blocking the roads by trees when they organized meetings. This is invariably to check the interference of police in their meetings. During their attempt to restore the alienated land they carried the red flag carrying the Maoists symbol (hammer and sickle) as a sign of restoration. The CMAS's affiliation would be clearer if we emphasized the fact that after the release of its leader Nachika Linga, he addressed the press conference called by the state committee of the Communist Party of India (Maoist-Lenin) (Upadhyaya, 2004:295).

Pointing out the land problem, as well as the social, economic, education and health problems of the Narayanpatna area, the Maoists started gaining Adivasi support since the mid-1990s. By naming themselves the People's Guerrilla Liberation Army, the Maoists incorporated the Adivasis and trained people for violent activities by sending them to various Maoists training centers in Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It has been observed that presently three committees are actively involved in violent activities in the undivided Koraput district,⁵ namely the Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee, the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee and the Odisha Rajya Committee, which was formed by the erstwhile People's War Group (now CPI-Maoist) in 2001. All these three committees are working under the direction of the Odisha-Andhra Joint Committee. The Maoists function through their *dalams* (squads). In the Narayanpatna region, the Jhanjhabati *Dalam* and the Machhkund *Dalam* are involved in violent operations.

The violent activities of Maoists have become more visible since 1998, when the Andhra Pradesh police attacked the camp of Maoists/naxals in the Kapadang village of the Bandhugaon block in the Koraput district and killed the Maoist leader Gantha Ramesh. Since 1998, they have engaged in a series of violent attacks in different parts of the undivided Koraput district. They attacked the Damanjodi National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) on 12 April, 2009, and looted two tons of explosives, used in Narayanpatna, and killed nine policemen while clearing the Narayanpatna-Laxmipur roadblocks. Seven blocks of the Koraput districts have been completely captured by Maoists namely Bandhugaon, Narayanpatna, Laxmipur, Nandpur, Lamtaput, Patangi and Baipariguda. More recently, raising the similar issues as the Adivasis, the Maoists have warned to stop the liquor business in the Narayanpatna block. Looking at these

5 Undivided Koraput district of Odisha includes all the present four districts, such as Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada. For the sake of administrative convenience and for a more effective implementation of different developmental programmes, the Koraput district was divided into four districts on October 2, 1992, as per the notification no. 4913/R, dated October 1, 1992 of the Revenue Excise Department, GOO.

issues of the Maoists, the marginalized Adivasis and Dalits are extending support to them. So, it is not an embellishment to argue that the main support for Maoists/naxals comes from the Adivasis and Dalits (Government of India, 2008:3; Borooah, 2008:325). Meanwhile, the Maoists have created paradoxical space in Odisha. Sometimes they misrepresent the land question as well as other aspirations of Adivasi communities to increase conflicts between Adivasis and Dalits in Odisha (Chakrabarty and Kujur, 2010:124). Citing all these incidents, there is clear visibility of increasing involvement of Maoists in these conflicts.

The Role of the State

The Adivasi communities of Odisha show their disappointment with the state through rallies, dharnas, protest meetings, and road blockades. Within this perspective, the impact of the state responses is complex and somewhat unpredictable. All these conflicts among different communities are the product of the gross negligence of state machineries. In all these conflicts, the state is not showing its affirmation to explore root causes. For instance, starting with the 1994 conflict, both Adivasis of Kandhamal are repeatedly making similar demands but the response of the state is not clearly visible. Subsequently, the Justice Mohapatra Commission is set up to probe the recent conflict in Kandhamal and the Commission in its interim report urged the state to explore the root cause and the effective implementation of different affirmative policies. It is crucial for the state to understand the history of conflicts and develop policies for peaceful solutions of the problems. The state, therefore, has succeeded in setting up different commissions to probe the conflicts but failed to follow any specific approach to settling the disputes. The state is apparently delaying justice to the victims by setting up judicial commissions and even if the commissions submit reports on time (which is very rare), there is an apprehension that the state will not take any strong actions against the culprits especially where there is an indulgence of political leaders.

Tracking the positive side of the story, the state has taken some initiatives to address the issues raised by marginalized communities in different conflicts. The state government has formed the 'Peace Committee' comprising the representatives of Congress, BJP and BJD, Adivasi village heads, Dalits and non-Adivasis to restore normalcy in the Narayanpatna block. The Naveen Patnaik government also formed the Nagarika Suraksha Samiti (Citizen's Protection Committee) in all blocks of the Koraput district. It is closely examining different provisions related to Adivasi land alienation and taking necessary steps for their restoration. Due to the emergence of land conflicts in different parts of the state, the BJD-BJP coalition government amended the Orissa⁶

6 The name of the state has changed from 'Orissa' to 'Odisha' with the passing of the Orissa (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2010 and the Constitution (113th Amendment) Bill by the Parliament, with effect from November 1, 2011.

Scheduled Area Transfer of the Immovable Property (by Scheduled Tribes) (OSATIP) Regulation, 1956, in 2002 and completely banned the transfer of *patta* (entitlement) Adivasi land to non-Adivasis; and laid down the provisions that all non-Adivasis owning land originally owned by Adivasis have to submit the record of rights within a year that they had acquired the land by legal means, otherwise such land would revert back to the original Adivasi owner and the illegal land grabber would be fined and imprisoned (Ambagudia, 2010:64).

With the emergence of the Narayanpatna conflict, the government has issued instruction to all concerned authorities to check the detail procedure of land transfer from Adivasis to non-Adivasis since 1956. In this context, the then Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC), Satyabrata Sahu, instructed all the four collectors of the Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, and Rayagada districts of South Odisha to study legal implications within three months. The state government is also worried to distribute *patta* to Adivasis under the Forest Rights Act of 2006. Under this Act, the data from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Department, the GOO, shows that by April 9, 2010, 19,131 claims had been approved by the District Level Committee (DLC) for titles, out of which 17,801 were distributed among the landless Adivasi communities in the Koraput district. As the CMAS promised to continue their struggle till problems get solved, the Chief Minister, during his visit to Koraput to evaluate the situation, ordered to distribute *patta* to Adivasis as soon as possible. So, the effective and meaningful implementation of different legal provisions, which are primarily designed to protect the Adivasi rights over natural resources, would somehow calm down the already highly tensed Adivasi communities who have been consistently resisting different forms of exploitation and deprivation in Odisha in order to live with dignity.

Conclusion

The recent history of Odisha provides several cases showing that conflict is not an isolated phenomenon. Community conflicts represent a complex picture in Odisha. The Kandhamal and Narayanpatna conflicts have created the feeling of insecurity for both Adivasis and non-Adivasis in relation to the issue of material survival in terms of assertion of ancestral rights of entitlement to natural resources within the parameters of justice and livelihood of Adivasi communities. The gradual alienation of the Adivasi resources has created the regime of marginalization, deprivation and dispossession, thereby creating insecurity among the Adivasis. This notion of insecurity led to the initiation of violent attacks by the Adivasis, thereby leading to the emergence of insecurity among the non-Adivasis in Odisha as well. The Adivasis are gradually losing their faith in the CMAS as well as in the Maoists due to the fact that the state has consistently been hunting them; the Adivasis are also showing their disappointment with the activities of the Maoists due to their failure to fulfill the objectives they had set. There is, therefore, a need to deal with the Adivasi issues with the sensitivity and seriousness they deserve.

While addressing the question of resources in the context of Adivasi society in Odisha, their issues and concerns have to be given utmost importance. The struggle of Adivasi communities for justice and livelihood must be respected.

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ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AMONG THE OSONI OF NIGERIA

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Abstract. *Continuing their study of traditional practices in conflict management, the authors examine specific indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms developed by the Osoni of Nigeria, with particular references to Igirebu, Neefenee, Aaba and Tua-gba-ken truth hearing assemblies. The paper reveals that the various approaches use in dealing with conflict, within traditional Osoni society, provide unique opportunities for disputing parties to interact and reach an agreement through peaceful dialogue. It further takes into account some interesting aspects of Osoni value systems, including the Sira-Culture, Yaa and Borgor.*

Keywords: *Osoni, Nigeria, traditional practices, conflict management, indigenous conflict resolution, value system, Igirebu, Neefenee, Aaba, Tua-gba-ken, Yaa, Sira, Borgor.*

Overview

Like any other community in Africa and indeed in Nigeria, the Osoni are bound to experience various forms of conflicts, for which they have, over time, developed appropriate indigenous mechanisms of conflict management. Conflict arising in traditional African society has been defined by Onigun & Albert (2001), as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals”. With regards to conflict resolution in traditional African settings, Chereji and Wratto (2013) noted that “the ancestors of Africans may have perceived conflict as an unwelcomed evil which was a part of their daily lives, and perhaps, if they

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could do little or nothing about drought and other natural disasters, when a dispute appeared and threatened their unity, there was a need to approach it in one accord". Unlike the European idea of justice, which was and still largely based on evidence, with a view to determine right from wrong as a means to penalize the guilty party, traditional African societies implored the accused to confess in order to start a healing process of reconciliation (Fred-Mensah, 2008; Murithi, 2007).

Being an element of social interaction, different scholars have defined conflict in various dimensions. As observed by Albert, conflict is a "critical mechanism by which goals and aspirations of individuals and groups are articulated". He argues that it is a channel for creative solutions to human problems, but added that, human perception of reality is very important in understanding a conflict situation. According to him, "when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, they express hostilities or pursue interests that could damage the other parties. These include but not limited to individuals, small or large groups (Albert, 2001).

Located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, there are a total of one hundred and eleven villages that are made up of six kingdoms within Ogoniland. These kingdoms are, Babbe Kingdom, Gokhana, Ken, Nyokhana, Eleme and Tai Kingdom. Although the Warifes or Wsissues community was once part of Ogoniland, it has recently been politically grouped with the Annang area thus still maintaining its linguistic, social and cultural roots. The Ogoni believed and worship a Supreme Deity commonly known as Waa Bari or the Female Creator and within these six kingdoms, the Earth is held in the highest esteemed for two reasons. The first and most important is the view that Earth is the dwelling place of Waa Bari; the second is the belief that all things including plants, humans and animals are from the earth (interview with Chief Babep Monday Joseph JP, historian and the traditional ruler of Babbe Kingdom, 2014). For these two reasons the libations to Waa Bari are poured on the earth, the Ogoni believing she receives them as the water or gin sinks into the earth. Similarly, Bishop Solomon, a distinguished son of Ogoniland noted that, "the plants and trees belong to the gods. Therefore, libations must be poured (on behalf of the community) by the town authorities in an effort to appease the gods before any tree is cut or harvests are made." (interview with Bishop Gberegbara S. Solomon, JP AMP, the chairman of Ogoni Church Leaders and a lecturer of Religious Studies at the Rivers State University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 2014). The land is also home to several environmental treasures, including the third-largest mangrove forest in the world and one of the largest surviving rainforests in Nigeria.

Although Nigeria came under British rule after the 1885 Berlin Conference, the imperialist met resistance from the Ogoni who deemed the land so holy for exploitation. It was not until 1901 that the colonizers penetrated the land, a penetration which increased after 1914, when the Ogoni became too weak to resist. Regardless of foreign imported religions, colonization and globalization, many indigenous aspects of the culture and

religious beliefs of the people are still unchanged. Although Rev. Paul Kingston of the Methodist Church first introduced Christianity to the Ogoni in 1926, Bishop Solomon revealed that the indigenous practices made it almost impossible for the church to take complete control of hearts and minds of the people.

The Ogoni largely kept their traditional beliefs, such as the fact that the soul of a human has the unique ability to transform from its human form to that of an animal. Also, they see their rivers and lands not only as natural providers of their daily needs – food, medicines, building materials – but, according to Mr. Freedom, they are also viewed as gods and are worshiped by the people (Mr. Nwidodo K.L. Freedom is the Chairman/CEO of Ogoni Energy Limited). The Ogoni strongly believe in life after death and that people carry in their next lives the consequences of their deeds done in the present one.

Any immersion into the practices of the Ogoni regarding conflict management cannot be properly understood without at least a brief overview of the most important rites related to the Ogoni value system. These rites are *yaa*, *sira* and *borgor*.

Yaa or initiation into manhood is a passage rite without which, an Ogoni man, regardless of his age:

- Isn't regarded as a complete man,
- Cannot sit or debate with members of the *yaa*,
- Unfit for leadership positions and chieftaincy titles,
- Buried at the back of his house, not the front,
- Cannot reside over major disputes.

Because of the involvement of every Ogoni son and the degree to which parents are willing to support their children go through the initiation process, *yaa* is considered the most prestigious of cultural values in every Ogoni kingdom.

As narrated by Chief Monday, these rites involved staying late at night in sacred shrines of deities where many rituals are performed to ensure longevity by drinking consecrated water and going stark naked at some point. During this period of initiation that last between two to three months, it's forbidden for participants to appear in daylight. Here, they are taught how to play *geregere* and *massokpo* (xylophone & vigilante masquerades) including warrior songs and dances. Apart from initiated members, the speechless secrets learnt here are to be shared with no soul. On the last day, they are paraded around various communities for final initiation rites. Once completed, they are considered socially, mentally, physically, emotionally and intellectually fit to lead and protect their people and heritage (interview with Chief Monday).

By definition, *sira* means first daughter or trusted female child. The concept originated from rich farming and finishing communities who entrusted their first daughters or daughters they considered most loved and trustworthy with the responsibility of pro-

tecting and managing the family's property. These daughters were expected to resume such responsibilities after the death of their parents or during their old age.

It is however important to note that, on the one hand, these practices were mostly common among families looking for male children. As narrated by Bishop Solomon, the idea was for the girl to meet with any man of her choice in order to produce a male child for the continuity of the family line. Adding that, "In Ogoni, we do not believe that the family line of a man should come to an end." (interview with Bishop Gberegbara S. Solomon). Though in other cases, he stressed, she was just expected to take on the family responsibility." To become a *sira*, the girl most first and foremost be initiated into the 'sira'-culture.

As described by Loolo (1981) and Egonwa (1994), these daughters are not given out in marriage for which bride price would be paid. Rather, a man who is interested in a *sira* would carry out the customary rites (with her parent's approval) and live with her in her father's house. On no account is she allowed to leave her parents' home. As laid down by tradition, the children from this union cannot identify with their biological father or his family. Instead, they are members of the mother's family who would take on her father's name and inherit his property after the death of their mother (Loolo, 1981; Andah, 1982 and 1988). Emphasizing on the benefits of this value system among Ogoni females, Nwideduh (1975, 1998) notes that 'to change an Ogoni woman's mind from 'sira'-culture would mean erasing Ogoni female folk from Ogoni tribe.'

The third fundamental rite is *borgor* or initiation into womanhood. This is a process whereby a married man sends his wife into what is translated as the "fatten room" for three months. In Nigeria and much of Africa, a fat woman is considered outstandingly beautiful and pleasing to most if not every men. During this period, she is not allowed to meet with her husband, work or appear in daylight, her visitors are limited to a special few and she is well fed on the best of meals. Twice a day, camwood and palm oil are applied on her skin to smoothen it. Here, she is taught the deep secrets of womanhood that are disclosed to initiated members only. It's only after a successfully completion of this process that she is considered a real woman and when she dies, she will be buried at the front of her house and not the back.

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms Among the Ogoni of Nigeria

Igirebu

The first and most common approach of resolving any conflict by an Ogoni is through *igirebu*. *Igirebu* entails demonstration of patience, perseverance and accommodation. In this way, according to Chief Lincoln, an Ogoni must overlook the gravity of any offence as a source of conflict. She/he is expected to accommodate the offence of others because it is an act of great virtue that breeds self-respect and mutual understanding

(interview with chief Koate Poni Lincoln, who is the spokesman of Deken Community Council of Chiefs, a distinguished Elder and a member of Gokana Council of Chiefs). No matter the level of provocation, one is encouraged to abide by *igirebu*. Despite the long history of social, economic and political degradation by the Nigerian state, as well as environmental degeneration by multinational companies, that has led to the deaths of many sons and draughts of Ogoniland, this unique practice, that distinguishes a person as a true Ogoni, is still being demonstrated in uphold.

A proof of this practice resides with the case of the famous Ogoni Nine. Following long years of exploitation and environmental destruction perpetrated by the oil companies (starting with Royal Dutch Shell in 1956) in connivance first with the British colonial authorities, then with the Nigerian federal government, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People was established, under the leadership of dr. Ken Saro-Wiwa. In 1990, it started its fight against the degradation of their land by issuing the Ogoni Bill of Rights, addressed to the Nigerian government. The document expressed the will of the Ogonis to receive autonomy, environmental protection, control of a fair share of the revenues from their resources and cultural rights (such as the use of their local languages). By December 1992, the conflict escalated to violence, due to intimidating tactics used by the federal government, who banned public gatherings and declared actions to disturb oil extraction as acts of treason. Despite these abuses, the MOSOP called for a massive mobilization by January 4, 1993, which was extremely successful, being responded by 300,000 people. As a consequence, Shell withdrew its employees from the Delta, giving the federal government reason to “restore order”.

In May 21, 1994, four elders of the Ogoni were murdered. They all belonged to a dissident party within MOSOP that disputed with the leaders the tactics used by them. The occupying force intervened in order to search for those responsible. It arrested nine leaders of the MOSOP, including dr. Ken Saro-Wiwa, together with destroying 30 villages and killing an estimate of 2,000 civilians. In November 10, 1995, the Ogoni Nine, as they were now known, were hanged by the Nigerian federal government, on charges of incitement to murder. Oha (1999) states that, regardless of all human sufferings and their brutal treatment by the Nigerian government, the Ogoni Nine were peaceful till the very end. For Chief Lincoln, Dr. Ken Saro-wiwa (one of the Ogoni Nine) wasn't just an activist who drew the world's attentions to their struggle. To him, Dr. Ken is a father figure who displayed Ogoni virtue to the new generation of Ogoni and indeed to the world.

Neefenee – Murder

Like people all over the world, the Ogoni places a high value on human life and as such, *neefenee* or murder is viewed not only as a crime but also a disturbing situation that could divide the entire community. In this regard, their traditional justice system in the

case of premeditated or accidental murder, after the truth has been established and all religious rights performed, requires the murderer to offer two of his/her children or servants to the family of the deceased as a replacement for the life that was taken. The two individuals must be a man and a woman. In the event that the perpetrator does not have children or servants, he/she is expected to take an oath and promise to provide the two individuals at a later time.

Although murder is religious and culturally forbidden among the Ogoni, unlike other regions of the world, a murderer does not receive death penalty. This is partly because their worldview of mankind can be interpreted as a single tree with various families (that make up the community) playing the roles of branches. To them, death penalty means doing even more harm to the tree. Therefore, the chiefs and elders who would “suggest” such a decision are considered murderers and unfit to lead or preserve their heritage. Additionally, in most parts of Africa and indeed in Nigeria, children are view as wealth and blessings from the Divine Creator. The more children you have the wealthier you are. To this end, the guilty giving two of his children to the victim’s family, after all incantations has been made to appease the gods and to cleanse the land, signifies:

- The accused loosing double portion of his wealth,
- The accused sharing in the painful experience of loosing a family or household member,
- Reminding others that Neefenee is a taboo and a punishable crime to all regardless or age and status.

Traditional Ogoni society had (and still has) what Nader (1997) described as “controlling processes” however; the patterns in which these processes operates are significantly different from those introduced by the British colonial administration in Nigeria. While the British acknowledged the existences of these processes on the one hand, they argued that they had to be changed due to civilization. Nevertheless, the introduction of this new civilized legal system led to the criminalization of native lives and this gave birth to substantive marginalization of African approaches to conflict resolution (Hynd, 2011).

Commenting on the issue of death penalty in British colonial Africa, Hynd recounted that “many officials argued that the death penalty was an effective method of restoring order and imposing British law on African populations, others argued that lethal violence was unsuitable for the punishment of Africans whose attitudes towards justice and the taking of human life were markedly different from European views on the subject”.

Tua-gba-ken – the Sacred Town Square

According to Chief Monday, the forefathers of their land sacrificed and kept aside these sacred places where the spirit of their ancestors can be invoked to ascertain the invisible and spiritual presence at the scheme of conflict situation. By definition, *tua-gba-ken*

means sacred town square or a place of truth. For the Ogoni, truth is the only language of their ancestors and the instrument of facilitating peace and harmony among them. Therefore, in cases such as murder, rape or theft, the traditional priest, chiefs and elders summons the accused to hear his side of the story.

The process involves establishing the truth and it takes up to thirty-five days before the accused can take an oath to prove his/her innocence or guilt. However, the accused is summoned only seven times after every five days interval. During this period, he/she is made to sit on plantain leaf without clothes on. At the end of each day's discussion, family members take the accused home where he/she is persuaded to speak the truth in an effort to avoid being put to shame if found guilty. Speaking of truth, Bishop Tutu stressed that, "the purpose of hearing a case in an African village was simply to establish where the truth rested in order to help the community restore peace and harmony" (Tutu, 1999).

On the thirty-fifth day, after ever attempt to convince the accused in telling the truth has failed, the entire community is invited to bear witness to the oath-taking rite. In many traditional African societies, the ritual as observed by Chereji and Wratto (2013), involves the mixture and drinking of bitter indigenous plants. In Ogoniland however, these processes beings with the pouring of libations and incantations to call upon the spirits of their ancestors whom they believed will:

- Oversee the spiritual dimension of the process,
- Protect the accused against every harm if innocent,
- Withdraw their protection from the accused if found guilty.

The pouring of libations and incantations are immediately followed by the accused drinking the mixture, which is giving by the chief priest. Once the oath is taken, the accused is required to go home directly, shut the door and wait for the spiritual judgment to manifest. If guilty, the Ogoni believed that the juju would strike the wrongdoer dead within a set period of time and at such; the corpse of the guilty is taken into an evil forest for burial. If innocent, the person is summoned at *tua-gba-ken* again, but this time, on the finest of traditional costume, scraped his/her hair and go on bare feet to receive blessings and prayers from the elders and chief priest. The ceremony includes playing of cultural drums, masquerade dances and celebration by the entire community around the sacred town square.

Ogoni Rites on Family Disputes

To help our readers better understand the practices regarding solving family matters, especially divorce, we will briefly begin the discussion by exploring the processes of marriage among the Ogoni. Marriage in Ogoniland, as it is in most parts of Nigeria and indeed in Africa, is a creation of deep union between two families and communities.

In Ogoniland, a man who wishes to marry first discusses the intension with his father. If the father feels for some reasons the marriage will not be possible, he would discourage his son. If he agrees, an immediate enquiries mission will begin into the family background and conduct of the girl by the kinsmen of the groom to be. There is no dating as is known in the Western cultures. Although some couples might be meeting behind the scenes, their parents and the community at large do not officially recognize such relationships. The investigations include but not limited to, virginity, witchcraft, insanity, violent behaviors, incurable or contagious diseases, immorality, divorced and theft.

After all enquiries are completed and the groom's parents satisfied, the father, through a small delegation, informs the girl's parents about his son's intention. Usually, this announcement is made with a pot of palm wine (a traditional drink made from palm tree) or a gin. Next, the girl's parents asking the delegation to return at a later time for an answer. This move enables them to find out if their daughter is interested. If she does, her family will start an enquiry on the boy's conduct and family background. These rites performed by families in traditional Ogoni society are required because:

- Marriage is an alliance between two families or clans. Therefore, these enquires are necessary in protecting and maintaining a family moral status.
- In traditional African societies and indeed in Ogoniland, virginity is held in high esteem. In most cases, the parent of such a girl receives special tribute (from the groom's family) for a successful upbringing of the girl. In addition, it would be a matter of public knowledge, which would earn her unique respect from her in-laws.
- Properties and things of value were insured to deities to prevent them being stolen. So, in an event where a person goes on to marry from a family who's member may have stolen something that was insured to a deity, that person would unknowingly invite the anger of the deity.
- It's important for both families to know more about themselves before forming an alliance through their son and daughter.

After all enquiries and both families are pleased with the results, the next step is the payment of dowry. Here, on behalf of their son, the groom's family is expected to present seven tubers of yams, a she-goat, palm wine, palm oil, fish and other valuable items as compensation to the girl's parents. They're being compensated because their daughter, who is of value, will be taken away for life, the helping hands in their home and on their farm will reduce, and finally, the girl has met all requirements for marriage. Acceptances of these items constitute approval of the marriage by her family, and this is follow by the pouring of libation and blessings of the couples by both families.

Once this is done, they are considered officially married. If the man was from another tribe, the Ogoni culture will take preeminence over his culture. This signifies the man paying respect to the culture of the lady, as after then, she belongs to his own cultural domain. Failure to do so, it could be said she was a harlot.

Aaba – Divorce

As in many traditional African societies, *aaba* or divorce is viewed as a shameful occurrence that ruins and drags a family's image into the mud. Therefore in Ogoniland, families play significant roles in the sustenance of their son's and daughter's relationships. For instance, they intervene in an effort to save a marriage in crucial cases of quarrels or crisis between the spouses that could threaten their marriage with sudden collapse or failure. The process starts by the wife's parents, or a respected elder from the community, speaking with her to result to *Igirebu* (the demonstration of patience and perseverance), or allow a peaceful settlement, while relatives or kinsmen of the husband also do the same. Once they agree, in most cases, there are intertribal or clans meetings that are focus on de-escalating the situation between them.

In other cases, the wife receives the full support of her in-laws and is invited to stay in their home until the situation is calm. Traditionally, marriage in Ogoniland is considered a lifelong contract because it is looked upon as an eternal, social, and spiritual bond between a woman, her husband, and their respective families. However, regardless of their efforts to keep marriages alive, there are three major factors that can influence an automatic divorce in Ogoniland. In an unfortunate event where one of the three occurs, there are no interventions from family members, elders or even the community as to the survival of the marriage, instead, they all advocate for a termination of the marriage or the provision of possible alternatives to their objectives.

Causes of Aaba in Ogoniland

The first we shall begin with is childlessness: among the Ogoni there is a deep conviction that children are a blessing. Therefore, lack of children is considered a misfortune, or a sign of a curse. They believed a marriage without children has not yet achieved its objectives. As Okunola (2002) expressed, procreation takes priority in marriage for an African man because a child is considered instrumental to establishing a lasting family (Osiki, 2000; Salami & Bakare, 2001).

The desire for children still remains the major element inspiring most Ogoni spouses into marriage. Also supporting this position, Harden (2004) noted that, in an event of childlessness, within an African marriage, both husband and wife might be crushed by a sense of shame, fear, and hatred. Therefore, it becomes almost impossible for them to live a happy or pleasant life. With so much emphasis placed on childbirth, one would wonder to what extent could a childless marriage survive?

Commenting on this view, Bishop Solomon stressed that not all cases of childlessness leads to *aaba* or divorce in traditional Ogoni society. As he noted, a barren wife isn't always rejected, rather her husband could seek a second wife with her approval or she could do so for him. The Bishop also added that, if the current wives were barren, there

could be a third or even a fourth wife, and if the man dies before these women, as laid down by tradition, they are permitted to cohabit with other men in an effort to produce a child that will continue the family lineage of their dead husband.

Similarly, the wife could seek a divorce if she finds out that her husband is impotent, but this is not until she returns his bride prize. Failure to do so, there might be no knowledge of her after she dies, as there will be no member of her immediate blood to remember her. Childlessness is totally unacceptable to an Ogoni. As previously mentioned, it is a fundamental principal in preserving their line of genealogy. In other words, a childless man or woman is considered dead even to him or herself, and the spouse is regarded as a disgrace to the families involved. Next to be discussed is adultery.

By definition, adultery is an act of sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman not his wife or between a married woman and a man not her husband (Miller 1991). However, for purposes of emphasis, it's important to note that sex outside marriage with the knowledge and approval of one's spouse is not regarded as adultery in traditional Nigerian society. In some parts of Benue state (mid-belt region of Nigeria), the Tiv men give out their wives to a guest as an act of kindness. They believed one should share everything with his guest and these include one's spouse. The Tiv regard strangers as gods, and in some cases, protect their visitors with their lives. In other places such as Ogoniland, the lack of children could warrant such approvals. Moving on, sex and marriage are sacred realities in most traditional African societies, and it's a taboo to discuss matters relating to sexuality in public. In many, if not all-African homes, parents are extremely reserved in their behavior before their children. In Ogoniland, sex outside marriage is considered a sin. Therefore, any one found in the act of adultery is regarded as a worthless person who has betrayed a core value of his tradition for personal pleasure. To this end, the parties involved are strongly rebuked because adultery is viewed as a direct insult to the men and women of the community.

The birth of twins is the third factor responsible for divorce in traditional Ogoniland. Though this practice has long been forgotten, it is however important to note that, despite the destructive nature of colonization, there were some unique aspects of one colonial institution (Christianity), which helped many Ogonis to have a cultural and religious rethink. As laid down by the forefathers, it was the duty of first-born males to continue the pouring of libation as well as the offering of sacrifices to the gods after the deaths of their fathers. Hence, there were guidelines for purification and one of such was the total avoidance of twin. According to Mercy, the fact that there were first-born males in most, if not every Ogoni home, made it easier for twins' mothers to be rejected by their husbands. She added that, while a woman was allowed to remarry in the cases of childlessness and adultery after the religious rites were performed; twins mothers and their babies were sent into an evil forest. They and their babies were viewed as curse and at such, unworthy of living among purified people.

The practice of Aaba

Although *aaba* practice is now extremely rare in traditional Ogoni society, the process implies a man sending his estranged wife (alongside a bottle of wine) back to her family through a respected elder of the community. Upon presenting the woman and the drink, the elder would cite the husband's reasons for starting a divorce process. He would in addition, ask for a date to be set for what is literally translated as "dowry calculation". The period before this process is known as *aaloozii* or separation, and the act of dowry calculation simply means the return of everything given by the man's family, to the family of the woman when seeking her hand in marriage.

Once a date is fixed, the parents of both parties send food and drinks through a respected elder of their choice, to the aforementioned elder's house, which is now a neutral ground for the discussions. When a deal is reached after calculation, the woman parents are told (by the elders) to return the agreed amount of items to an elder of their choice, who then returns the items to the husband and his family. The final and most important step according to our respondents is what is known as the "touching of ground".

As described by Chief Lincoln and Chief Monday, for *aaba* to be instituted, there are certain rights that must be performed:

- The woman must return to the erstwhile husband's house with a life goat, tubers of yam, plantains and so on,
- Libation will be poured and incantations would be made for the husband to perform the final rites by mixing palm oil with ash and rubbing the mixture on the woman's body,
- The husband must give her his blessings and openly state that, "as from today, the air you breathed and the food you ate, while you were here, do not count against you. When you die, you can now be buried in your father's compound, and from now on, you're free to remarry."

This same process is applied even if it was the woman seeking a divorce. The difference is that she would leave on her free will and not be sent out by her estranged husband. Until these rites are performed, they are not allowed by custom to remarry. The community dimension in Ogoniland is such that, the spouses receive strong support in moments of happiness as well as difficulties. Therefore, no one would marry either of them until the process is completed.

Our brief incursion into the traditional conflict management practices of the Ogoni ends here, without any pretense of exhausting the subject. It is only important to note, together with Thomas Spears, that the "European attempt to erase African customs, beliefs and cultures, had their own limitations. For a start, imposing the European legal system on Africans with brute force presented more difficulties than persuading them. Second, the Europeans took a long time to realize that Africans had autonomous percep-

tions of themselves, and their cultures.” (Spear, 2003). African customs, especially in the field of conflict management, hold important lessons for all modern and post-modern societies and their impact should not be marginalized for lack of knowledge.

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Field Interviews

23. Interview (2014) with Bishop Gberegbara S. Solomon, JP AMP, the chairman of Ogoni Church Leaders and a lecturer of Religious Studies at the Rivers State University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
24. Interview (2014) with Chief Babep Monday Joseph JP, historian and the traditional ruler of Babbe Kingdom.
25. Interview (2014) with Mr. Nwidodo K.L. Freedom is the Chairman/CEO of Ogoni Energy Ltd.