

Contending Issues Along the Benue – Taraba Boundary From 1990 2015

BY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is predicated on the border factor in the unending brawls along the borderlands of Benue / Taraba States. The paper interrogates the contending issue along the Benue – Taraba boundary since 1990-2015. The paper, considers some operational terminologies and a description of the Benue – Taraba boundary. Generic issues surrounding boundary and basic characteristics of boundary and borderland are discussed. The paper adopts the qualitative content analysis method of research based on the use of primary and secondary sources of data collection for its analysis and presentation of findings. Some of the contending issues found along the Benue – Taraba boundary in the study includes but not limited to land ownership and control question, indigene / citizen question, population control, market administration and revenue control as well as water and other mineral deposits control questions. The paper established that, some of these

contending issues along the Benue – Taraba boundary are slightly peculiar. It established that, these conflicts are more of a clash of ethnic, cultural and historical forces. The paper recommends that, the two governments should step up their educational commitment along the area to combat the sheer ignorance as most of what has propelled the unrest to linger for long is as a result of ignorance. Also, the two governments should step up their commitment in the provision of social amenities to the people in order to open up the terrain for an intensive interaction with other Nigerians, by that, it will boost the economy of the borderlands beyond agriculture, divert the attention on land as other people will engage themselves in other sectors of the economy and the paper recommended the equal recognition with the status of citizenship and equal access to indigene certificate.

Keywords: Boundary, Border, Indigene, Settler, Citizen

Introduction

The Benue – Taraba boundary has gained notoriety for endless conflicts that appears to have defied all efforts towards achieving peace along the axis. Accusations and counter accusations of who is responsible for the persistent conflicts have always been the tendency of the major inhabitants of these borderlands. The major ethnic groups constituting this borderlands are the Tiv, the *Jukun* and the *Kuteb* people.¹ Prominent among some of the ever contending issues are some issues surrounding land ownership and control, territorial claims, denial of rights, cultural conflict, battle for control of resources, battle for control of revenue and revenue collection spots, fear of domination leading to the controversy of indigene / citizenship question². This study has thus examine in detail the contending issues that have lingered for long with consequential effects along the Benue/Taraba Border with a view of finding lasting solutions for peaceful co-existence in the area.

Definition of Key Concepts

For the purpose of clarity, some operational concepts are properly conceptualized especially as it relates to this work. This is to avoid ambiguity as it is the tendency of some words to possess more than a single meaning.

Boundary: It should first of all be noted here at the beginning that, these two words (boundary and border) are used interchangeably to mean the same thing in common parlance. However, for academic purpose, the study treats these two concepts individually though, they have a watertight relationship. In specific terms, a boundary is the dividing line of two political entities, it usually mark the end of one political entity and the beginning of another political entity. M.A Ajomo, in his article titled; *Legal perspectives on Border issues*, sheds more light on the concept of boundary when he define boundary as an alignment or an imaginary line which marks the legal termination of the territory of one state or political unit which has an international status and role, and the commencement of the territory of another state or political unit. In the case of sea and airspace boundaries, the termination of a state territory adjacent to internal waters or the upper atmosphere delineates the boundaries.³ He added thus, that a boundary is a line not a zone, it has no notional or actual width. In this case, there is no difference as well because in the remote edges of the boundary, only the inhabitants can tell or point to their demarcation. One is thus at liberty to state that, the borderlines exist more in their hearts than on the physical ground. That however, does not take away the fact that the borderline basically separates areas of administration or sovereignty⁴. Discerning from the above definitions, a boundary is basically a mere line, however, it has an extraordinary value because of the position or where it is drawn. Been a line that separates two political units, when drawn on a fertile land, a place where there is a mineral deposit and any other resource of value, the meaning of

the border becomes critical to both the political units with each political unit aspiring to annex it. The areas around the boundary are known as *frontiers* or *borderlands*. These frontiers are mostly far from the main headquarters of their political units, consequently, they are notorious for poor infrastructure.⁵ The Benue- Taraba boundary is therefore, the areas along the Benue - Taraba Boundary, essentially the communities, land and resources.

Border : It is the immediate vicinity along the boundary, more often than not, because of its closeness to boundary and the tiny nature of boundary line, people conveniently take them to be the same the concept is commonly used in international boundaries. The Oxford English dictionary sees border as, the line or frontier area, separating political or geographical regions.⁶

Indigene : Literally, indigene simply refers to a state of being a native in a place; it simply means aborigines⁷. Indigenous people, also referred to as first people, aboriginal people, native people, or autochthonous people, are culturally distinct ethnic groups who are native to a place which has been colonized and settled by another ethnic group⁸. The term *indigenous* was first used in its modern context, by Europeans who used it to differentiate the peoples of the Americas from the African peoples who were enslaved by the Europeans and forced to work for them in the Americas. It may have first been used in this context by Sir Thomas Browne in 1646, who stated "and although in many parts thereof, there be at present swarms of *Negroes* serving under the *Spaniard*, yet were they all transported from *Africa*, since the discovery of *Columbus*; and are not indigenous or proper natives of *America*." Peoples are usually described as "indigenous" when they maintain traditions or other aspects of an early culture that is associated with a given region. Not all Indigenous peoples share this characteristic, as many have adopted substantial elements of a colonizing culture, such as dress, religion or language. Indigenous peoples may be settled in a given region (sedentary) or

exhibit a nomadic lifestyle across a large territory, but they are generally historically associated with a specific territory on which they depend. Indigenous societies are found in every inhabited climate zone and continent of the world except Antarctica.⁹ It is estimated that there are approximately five thousand Indigenous nations throughout the world.

From the analysis above, the Tiv people have all it takes to be called **Indigenes** as such can be said to be full indigenes. Having lived there for long before the advent of colonialism that started referring to them as *Aku'sguest*¹⁰

Settler : A **settler** is a person who has migrated to an area and established a permanent residence there, often to colonize the area. A settler who migrates to an area previously uninhabited or sparsely inhabited may be described as a pioneer¹¹.

Settlers are generally from a sedentary culture, as opposed to nomadic peoples who may move settlements seasonally, within traditional territories. Settlement usually relies on dispossession of already established populations within the contested area, and because of this it can be a very violent process. Many times settlers are backed by governments or large countries. Settlements can prevent native people from continuing their work.¹² Needless to argue anymore at this point, one could see from the above discussion on who a settler is and decide according to his/her level of comprehension and conscience, next mission is the concept of a citizen

Citizenship: Citizenship is a relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection.¹³ Each state determines the conditions under which it will recognize persons as its citizens, and the conditions under which that status will be withdrawn. Recognition by a state as a citizen generally carries with it recognition of civil, political, and social rights which are not afforded to non-citizens.

In general, the basic rights normally regarded as arising from citizenship are the right to a passport, the right to leave and return to the country/ies of citizenship, the right to live in that country and to work there. Some countries permit their citizens to have multiple citizenships, while others insist on exclusive allegiance. A person who does not have citizenship of any state is said to be stateless, while one who lives on state borders whose territorial status is uncertain is a border-lander.¹⁴

In the Nigerian context, the constitution clearly specified who a ***citizen*** is. The constitution outlined the following types and means by which a person can be recognized as a citizen. These are; *citizenship by birth, by registration, and by naturalization*. The constitution specified that: *Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria*, such a person is a citizen. Provided that, a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria;

Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen: and

Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents are is a citizen of Nigeria. In this section, the date of Independence means 1st day of October 1960.¹⁵

Some Characteristics of Boundary

The characteristics of borderlands may be examined in terms of location, interaction pattern and transitional features.

Location

The most evident feature of borderlands is location, with respect to the rest of their political units. The borderlands are usually the farthest from the core areas and the

capitals in any particular direction except in the rare situation where the capital or core area is located at the boundary. This locational characteristic has important implications for borderlands.. The implications are largely due to the way government function. The governments and other administrative machineries of a political unit exist to cater for the interest of the population. For this reason, government activities are concentrated in the areas where there will be of benefit to the greatest number of people. In particular, less ubiquitous facilities are concentrated in regional headquarters which are expected to service people in a number of local government areas. Such regional headquarters are located in centers of population influence (CPI), of the area they are to service. Usually, such Centers of Population Influences are not at the extreme, this then, means that, usually, borderlands areas do not have regional facilities or the non ubiquitous goods and services. Consequently, borderlands population has to travel to other units of their political units to enjoy or have advantage of such services and facilities.¹⁶

Interaction Patterns

There may be peaceful or conflicting interactions in borderland areas. The peaceful interaction characteristics of borderlands may be examined in two folds, first; The interaction with the core of their respective political units and secondly; The interaction between the two borderlands on either side of a particular boundary.¹⁷

The Borderlands – Core Interactions; It is a product of the locational characteristics. As the most distant part of their political units, borderland areas, tend to have less interaction with the core areas. In some cases where communications are difficult, interaction between borderland population and the core may be highly restricted. In particular, visits by government officials maybe virtually non existent because, such visits are made

to every regional headquarters. Government functionaries do not visit borderlands with any regularity. Even when visits are made to every Local Government Areas including those in the borderlands, places in the real borderlands are not visited. Consequently, people, in the borderlands who cannot travel to local government headquarters or regional headquarters, cannot meet or get to know government functionaries¹⁸.

The restricted nature of borderland – core interaction means that, borderlands are usually the last to be affected cultural or technological innovations originating in the core of the political units. Thus, borderlands are usually regarded as conservative or backward by the other parts of political units. Such an attitude may lead to feelings of alienation from the scheme of things by borderlands people. On the other hand, the two borderlands on either side of a political unit are neighbors; hence there is a considerable interaction between them. To appreciate this, it has to be remembered that, boundary itself is a line with no appreciable width; moreover, the boundary is not marked in every section. Consequently, people who are operating close to it will always be aware of it's existence even though, they may recognized that, they belong to different political units. In effects, such people will interact like any two neighbors. They will jointly patronize some social facilities like markets and members of the communities will jointly visit each other like neighbors. Even at the official levels, the neighboring functionaries will cooperate for certain purposes like maintenance of law and order or the like. This relationship will include intermarriages and developments such as bilingualism of some people in the borderland areas¹⁹.

The effect of the inter borderland relationship described in the preceding paragraphs is that, it may even be difficult to determine the political identity of individuals and even whole communities in borderlands. This in itself may affect the administration of such areas

and may lead to conflict over territories between the two political units concerned²⁰.

Borderlands are areas of potential political conflict over territories between adjacent political. There are two possible sources of such conflicts; the local and the central sources. Conflicts may arise because of disputes between individuals over specific parcels of land. Each individual would turn to his government for support and defense of their claims. The settlement of any such disputes would have to be at the level of central government of the two political units concerned. Therefore, if not carefully settled, such local inter personal disputes may involve international arbitration or the like. It is to be noted that, if the disputes had been between two citizens of the same political units, the settlement might have gone to the court or other internal arbitration panels.²¹

Transitional Characteristics

Borderlands are transitional zones, territorially, culturally and economically. The transition or change from one political unit to the other takes place at the boundary. However, territorial claims and land use interest of citizens of the different political units may cut across the boundary. The unsettled disputes over territorial claims between citizens of adjacent political units are to be found in the borderlands. For this reason, the borderlands are Section of a political unit which have the potentials of been transferred from one area of jurisdiction to the other. Borderlands are also, cultural transition zones. The interactions of people and different cultures at the borderlands leads to a mutual adoption of cultures. Individuals may speak the languages of the two cultures. Housing styles, religious ideas and another cultural traits maybe mutually adopted. This cultural transition characteristic is to be expected since the borderlands were preciously frontiers.

Borderlands are also economic transition zones. The products of the adjacent political units are exchanged

at official and non official exchange points (Markets) in the borderlands. This is a product of the inter borderland interaction patterns. At the level of a the sovereign States, either by recognition of the borderlands as economic or trading zones where citizens of adjacent States may freely engage in economic activities or by creating special exchange or transfer posts. However, it is generally realized that, not all, seen to or resign themselves to small scale transactions through unofficial routes but make determined efforts to prevent large scale movements and transactions through such channels²².

Some Generic Issues Surrounding Boundary Conflicts

Boundaries of political units constituted under the territoriality principle as expected is to separate the territories of the different groups constituting the political units. If all the political units are separated on the principle of territoriality, borderland issues and problems will relate to the following;

- i. Allocation of territories where there is conflict as to the first occupant and hence as to ownership.
- ii. Rights over conquered people and territories especially where the land owners were not conquered by the conquering forces
- iii. People occupying territories which do not belong to their own political units and conditions such occupation
- iv. Territorial enclave
- v. Where one political unit adopts the territoriality principle whilst it is neighborhood adopts cultural affinity, there may be serious borderland problem, particularly where members of the political unit insisting on cultural affinity occupy land belonging to citizens adopting the principle of territoriality. Even if, the political units agree on the adoption of the cultural affinity principle, borderlands problems may still arise due to any of the following;

- A. The allocation of transitional areas where individuals have characteristics of the culture of the core areas of the political units.
- B. Unoccupied areas
- C. Cultural enclaves
- D. Right of victors over defeated people who remained dominance in the area
- E. Where citizens of a political unit continue to expand after a boundary has been agreed and such migrants become dominant in a part of the adjacent political unit where there were not present or substantial before boundary delimitation²³.

Some of the borderland problems enumerated above are related to boundary delimitation and demarcation. Ideally, such problems ought to be resolved by the time the boundary is demarcated. In reality this does not happen with the result that many of such problems remain unsolved during demarcation hence they become problems in the borderlands are mostly evident in the form of boundary disputes.²⁴

The Benue – Taraba Boundary

Created on 3rd February, 1976 under General Murtala military administration, it was formerly part of Benue/ Plateau, Benue state is geopolitically placed in the North Central Nigeria. The state borders Nasarawa State to the North; Taraba State to the East; Kogi State to the West; Enugu State to the South-West; Ebonyi and Cross-Rivers States to the South; and has an international border with Cameroon to the South-East. Taraba Taraba state on the other hand was created from *Gongola* on 27th August 1991 under the General Ibrahim *Babangida* administration, Taraba state is geopolitically placed in Northeast. Taraba State is bounded in the west by *Nasarawa* state and Benue State, Northwest by Plateau State and North by Baluchi state and Gombe state

Northeast by Adamawa state and South by Nord –Ouest Province in Cameroon²⁵.

Now, the Benue – Taraba boundary is the frontier areas along the extreme edges of Benue Northeast and the extreme edges of Western Taraba state. Essentially, in Benue state, three local governments constitute this place in question, namely; *Katsina – Ala, Ukum, and Logo*. On the other hand, in Taraba state, two local governments constitute our study area, namely; *Takum and Wukari*. As a matter of record, three major ethnic groups constitute the study area of this work, namely; *Tiv, Jukun and Kuteb*. It is not exaggeration that the Tiv people accounts for the largest number of the settlements as well as population, followed by the *Jukun* and lastly the *Kuteb* people.²⁶

Geographically, upon the creation of Taraba state in 1991 during the General *Babangida* administration, the state retained its southern boundaries right from when it was in *Gongola* state. Initially, *Yawe Aondovenda*, observed that, the most notable features of demarcation between the two was the presence of thick trees, as the vegetation of Taraba state was more of forest while, Benue on the other hand, was characterized by thick grasses mixed with trees, with the trees being visibly less than that of Taraba state. Pointing at the *U – Agha* River located at the suburbs of *Jootar* town in *Ukum*, and the *Gawa* bridge in *Katsina – Ala* demarcated between Benue and Taraba, the bridge is standing on each side of the two States.²⁰ In some areas, the feudal roads acted as boundary lines, these hitherto feudal roads now, transform into major economic and important link routes cutting across places like, *Anyiin, Vaase, kente, Peva, and Ugande*²⁷.

The Major settlements along the Benue – Taraba Boundary (Borderlands)

We shall start the identification of these settlements along the border beginning from *Katsina – Ala*, through *Ukum*, down to *Logo* local governments; we shall be mentioning the settlements in Taraba state concomitantly. On the side

of Taraba state, the pendulum begins to swing from *Akum*, to Wukari local governments²⁸.

Katsina – Ala / Takum Borderlands settlements

The *Gawa* bridge at *Gawa* settlement, demarcated the Benue / Taraba boundary, it stand on each sides of the two States. The bridge is located on the edge of *Takum* and *Katsina – Ala*, next to the bridge is a settlement named *Vingir* in Taraba state, with *Anyom*, her Benue neighbor, next to *Anyom*, is *Chanchanji* in *Takum* and *Mbakyer* Settlement in Benue state.²⁹

Ukum / Wukari Borderlands settlements.

The line continues from *Mbakyer* settlement to *Tse – Ugande*. Here, the main borderline and physical feature is the tarred road dividing the two states. The Benue side is occupied by *Tor Zoughul* settlement, progressively, the line entered *Iguundu* in Benue, opposing *Genyi* in Taraba state, through *IorzuaMbawuan* settlement in Benue state, through *Atsakalkyo* in Taraba, with *Akondokpe* River being the physical feature. There is a wooden constructed bridge on the *Akondokpe* River.³⁰ The line continue through *Ikpur*, in Benue state facing *Tina* settlement in Taraba state, through, *Tse – Shanjo* in Benue state, with *Ahwadi* settlement in Taraba state through *Jootar Town* in Benue state and *Chonko* in Taraba state, through *Jande – Ikyura* settlement in Taraba state with the *Te* River been the border line, through *Nenshi* settlement in Taraba state here the demarcation is the tarred road, through *Vaase*, in Benue down to *Tse - Serki* in Taraba state also demarcated by the tarred road, through *Gbeji*, in Benue state and *New Marked* in Taraba state with the border line been the tarred road.³¹

Logo / Wukari Borderlands settlements

Progressively, the line moves from *Ukum* to *Logo* local government area piercing and passing through *Iorja* settlement in Taraba with the tarred road dividing the two

States, through *ChembeAju* to *Akwana* settlement in Taraba state, through *Anyiin* town spreading on both sides of the two states with the tarred road again dividing the two States.²⁴ The tarred road that takes off from *Kwatan – Sule* to Wukari continue to act as the main borderline, it continue from *Anyiin* town to *Ayilamo* town through *Arufu* settlement in Taraba, marking the end the boundary point between Benue and Taraba state.³²

Land Ownership and Control Question along the Benue – Taraba Boundary

Land is a very essential resource not just to the borderland communities of Benue – Taraba boundary but to everyone anywhere in the world. In the apartheid South Africa, the apartheid regime enacted a land act that regulates land usage, ownership and transfer. The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act was such a draconian land policy that allocated only 13.5% of the lands of South Africa to 87% Blacks.³³ So it is in many places around the world. Basically, there are rules governing land in all human societies, some of these rules are constitutional while some are conventional. Along the Benue – Taraba boundary, land is so such an important asset to the people of the borderland communities due to the fact that all of them are agrarian communities whose major existence is tied to land, the philosophy towards land has been very aggressive, each party claiming ownership. Some groups like the Jukun for instance, claim this ownership on the basis of first occupation therefore claiming ownership the whole land within the borderland vicinity. This aggressive tendency of claiming ownership of land within the whole vicinity can be seen in the actions of the Jukun people who after the 1991 crisis, renamed some Tiv settlements in their dialect and claimed both the farmlands, and asserted dominance and control over all socio and economic activities in those newly claimed territories. The case that readily comes to mind is the popular *Peva* market which was renamed, *Chanchanji*.³⁴

The Tiv people on the other hand have continued to tactically make steady advances and expansion by leaving the quasi urban settlements to settle in the interior. Being farmers they prefer to live close to their farms. This desire to live close to the farm has unintentionally become a potent strategy of the Tiv people to acquire land thereby expanding their territories. These acquired territories, the Tiv people guard jealously and are willing to sacrifice everything protection to protect it.³⁵

As earlier emphasized, the contention about land ownership and control along the Benue – Taraba boundary is born out of the fact that, all the ethnic groups occupying the terrain are farmers and as population continue to increase, the need for land continue, this, inevitably translates or leads to unhealthy competition among the ethnic groups. This condition is aggravated with the adventurous herdsmen who also need an arable land to graze their large cattle. In feeding their cattle, these Fulani herdsmen sometimes don't only feed or graze their cattle on the grasses alone but sometimes graze indiscriminately both the grasses and on the farms of these farmers, whether out of mistake or out of deliberate sabotage, it is still not known at least for now. In a nutshell, land is one of the contentious issues along the Benue – Taraba boundary³⁶.

Citizenship / Indigene/ Settler Question

In the Nigerian context, the constitution clearly specifies who a ***citizen*** is and even specified the following criteria by which a person can be recognized as a citizen. First of all is *citizenship by birth, by registration, and by naturalization*. The constitution specified that: *Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria, such a person is a citizen, Provided that, a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was*

born in Nigeria; Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is is a citizen of Nigeria. In this section, the date of Independence means 1st day of October 1960.³⁷

Commenting on the question of who is an indigene in the Nigerian context, Godwin asserted that; defining who is an indigene in Nigeria is tasking, considering the fact that, traditions of migrations of different Nigerian ethnic groups shows that, these groups had moved at one time or the other. Considering population displacements from the pre-colonial times, an indigenous group could be said to have arrived and lived in a place for a very long time. Whether such a group met people or not, what is important is its ability to suppress and dominate the group met on arrival³⁸. Similarly, Mahmoud Mandeni has closely examined the concept of Indigenes / settlers and has enumerated a number of principles that can be derived from his numerous publications on the subject matter:

- I. The two categories – Indigenes / settlers are interdependent as one defined the other. Settlers exist because, some people have succeeded in defining themselves as indigenes in order to seclude others who they have defined as settlers.
- II. Settlers are not defined by immigration, as virtually, all African groups and peoples have migrated overtime. The concept of settlers is a political definition attributed on the basis of conquest, state power and law – customary and modern.
- III. The settler can never become an indigene because, the basis of the differentiation is the denial of civil citizenship through a political imposition of a permanent and exclusionary tribal or religious label.³⁹

From the foregoing paragraphs, no single group have the express locus standi to refer to another group as a settler, while looking at themselves as indigenes. Similarly, no group can expressly assert that it has conquered another one and so it has some extraordinary privileges over another group, so in essence, there is actually no point for the bully and bitterness⁴⁰. Regrettably, on daily basis, there is always the attempt by one group or the other to dominate or antagonize the other. Coser maintains that, conflict arises as a result of the struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aim of the conflicting are not only to gain desired values, but also neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals.⁴¹

Along the Benue – Taraba boundary, the Jukun are found of claiming ownership and Indigenes on the basis of first occupation. This, they almost exclusively allocate to themselves the status of citizens while looking at their neighbors as settlers.⁴² The efforts and attempt by other ethnic groups occupying the terrain to resist this claim and proof their citizenship often result to full fledged conflicts. Mr. *Useh*, a Tiv man at Tse Tor *Iorshagher* confirmed this exclusive claim of ownership and right to the status of citizenship when he recounted the affront he received from a Jukun man on the ground that he presented an original Indigene certificate of Wukari local government. He informed me that, the Jukun have made it a mutually deliberate policy not to issue indigene letter to other ethnic groups at least within Wukari local government.⁴³

Market Administration And Revenue Control Question

There exist a number of markets along the Benue – Taraba boundary. In these markets, the trading articles are agricultural produce which the Tiv people producing largest quantity of these agricultural produce. Some of these markets include; Peva,/ Chanchanji, kente, Genyi,

Akwana, Vaase, Anyiin, and Joortar. Of all these markets, there exist a great deal of regard and understanding of who controls the revenue except at Peva⁴⁴. Peva market is located on the edges of Takum local government close to Katsina Ala local Government in Benue state. It has the Tiv people as the majority with the Jukun having one settlement Chanchanji. Peva Emmanuel, the grandson of Peva whom the market was named after told the researcher that; after the 2001 Tiv – Jukun crisis, the Jukun people renamed the town as Chanchanji.⁴⁵ After the change of name, they embarked on several efforts to take over the administration of the market and its revenue. The Tiv people on the other hand, violently resist such attempt to usurp the market administration by the Jukun people, this struggle to establish control on the market and revenue by the Jukun and the struggle to retain control on the market administration and revenue by the Tiv people often result to brawls that sometimes linger for a while⁴⁶.

To balance this struggle for power, the market administration is group into A,B, and C, in each of these groups, positions are shared among the two ethnic groups. For example, in group A, the Jukun will be given the chairman while the Tiv will be given secretary, group B, the Tiv will be given the chairman while the Jukun will be given the secretary, group C the Tiv would be given the chairman while the Jukun will be given the secretary and the trend continue to rotate.²⁸ However, it still remain one of the contentious issues along the Benue – Taraba boundary. Because, any slight provocation by any party at all, doesn't go without a counter attack⁴⁷

Resource Control (Water and Other Mineral Deposits)

There are no special mineral deposits found in this terrain except for the salt that is mined at *Akwana*, a Jukun settlement in Wukari Local Government close to Logo Local Government in Benue State. Aside from this, water constitutes the major resource of contention. Water is naturally essential to all humans⁴⁸. The essence of water in

this case is not just the value of the liquid substance of it but other water animals like fish, frog and other minor but useful aquatic creatures. On the suburb of *Jootar* town, there lies a small stream called "*U - Agha*," a Jukun word meaning; the king has refused. According to Obadiah, the Tiv people were so fond of going for fishing in the stream, so the Jukun people were always spying the stream, each time the Tiv people went to fish, the Jukun messengers would stop them telling them *U - Agha!* Meaning, the king has refused. As a result of this constant encounter the Tiv people named the stream *U - Agha*.⁴⁹

This exclusive claim of ownership and control of water and the game there is found in many streams, while the Tiv people because of their love for meat, they can't afford to watch their neighbors take charge of everything. In a nutshell, the question of who is entitled to water resources is also a contentious issue along the Benue - Taraba boundary. Another mineral is the salt deposits at *Akwana*, and the quartzite mining site also at *Akwana*, however, this mining site has never been a source of contention between the inhabitants of the Benue - Taraba borderlands⁵⁰.

Population and Fear of Domination.

One of the major concerns of the Jukun people has always been the growing population of the Tiv people. Being conscious of this, they entertained so much fear that the Tiv people would dominate them if their population is not checked. In the words of Hon. *Gambo*, if the Tiv are allowed to settle without distractions, in twenty years time, their population will double and they will entrench themselves and take over our land.⁵¹ Similarly, the Tiv people always consider their population and see no reason to be afraid of anybody. There is no doubt that their tendency to expand is high considering their pattern of farming. This fear of domination by the growing population is also a contentious issue along the Benue -

Taraba borderlands as each party braces up for full retaliation in the event of any attempt⁵².

Conclusion

In the paragraphs above, we have made efforts to consider some contending issues along the Benue – Taraba boundary. The paper outlined some of the contending issues at the Benue/Taraba Border to include, the land ownership and control question, the indigene / citizenship question, the market administration and revenue control question, water resources and mineral deposits control question, and population. The study established the fact that, the contending issues along this border are slightly different from the hypothetical issues at the Border. Thus it is more of a clash of ethnic, cultural and historical forces. The study recommends that indigeneship status should not be determined on the basis of who migrates to where and when because all the ethnic groups had migrated from one point to another. Furthermore, more educational institutions should be opened up along the borderlands so as to combat the high level of ignorance prevalent among the people. The Federal government should set up some security outfits particularly military garrisons with a specific mandate to manage the security of the area. The two state governments who improve their provision of the basic amenities like road, electricity, and health care so that the people can engage themselves alternatively, by that, the keen contest on land will relaxed a bit.

Endnotes

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