

Tiv People and the Provision of People-Oriented Security Services Before the Establishment of Chieftaincy Institution in Tiv, 1900 -1960

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Abstract.

Admittedly, most societies in the world were ruled by kings or queens during the 19th and early 20th century probably because it was believed that “strong” or dictatorial kings or queens would provide better protection against external aggressors than a group of “weak” or democratic people. But few societies including Tiv people in the present day central Nigeria, were ruled by their elders for reasons that scholars are yet to satisfactorily explain. In this paper, the writer explains that Tiv people preferred democratic administration with people-oriented security services to autocratic or dictatorial administration which over emphasizes security for state institution to the detriment of the common people. People –oriented security services denotes welfare package which the administration provides for the benefit of both the poor and the rich in the society. The writer has, however, observed that the British colonial administration compelled Tiv people to abandon the budding democratic culture with associated people –oriented security services for the Tor-Tiv chieftaincy institution with its emphasis on the provision of security services for the British colonial state in 1946. The writer explains that the British colonial administration destroyed the evolving democratic culture among Tiv people and established chieftaincy institution in order to facilitate the exploitation of human and natural resources and integrate Tiv economy into the global capitalist system. The paper criticizes the tricks and methods employed by the British colonialists to force the chieftaincy institution on Tiv people with consequent destruction of the evolving humane or people oriented security services. The writer suggested that the functionaries of the chieftaincy institution should provide people-oriented security services for Tiv people. The paper concludes that the provision of people-oriented security services will convince Tiv people and other Nigerians that the chieftaincy institution is not simply another exploitative colonial legacy left by the British to maintain socio-economic and political inequality as well as insecurity among Tiv people in the 21st century.

Introduction,

During the 19th and early 20th centuries many ethnic groups lived under the protection of kings and queens because it was believed that those leaders would provide adequate security against external aggressors. Unlike most ethnic groups in Nigeria, Tiv people had no king or Queen until the British colonial administration foisted on them in the person of Makir Dzakpe as the first paramount chief because the British authorities needed him to control and ensure peaceful coexistence and security which were necessary for the collection of taxes from Tiv people and protection of lives and property of British officials. This paper observes that the establishment of the paramount chieftaincy Institution with its emphasis on the provision of security for the state institution displaced the budding democratic practices which encouraged the provision of people –oriented security services for Tiv people .

It has been observed that before the appointment of the first paramount chief in Tiv, in 1946, the elders and youths joined efforts to provide security against security challenges such as external aggression, inter-ethnic wars, thieves, armed robbers burglars, hunger, poverty, sickness among others. Similarly, elders and youths provided solutions to misunderstanding, quarrellings, fighting among other issues that threatened peaceful coexistence among Tiv people.

Following the appointment of the paramount chief or Tor-Tiv in 1946, the responsibility of ensuring peaceful co-existence and security for life and security in Tiv land shifted from Council of Elders and youths to the paramount chief. It was therefore the responsibility of the Tor-Tiv to provide peace and security either for the interest of the British Colonial Administration which approved his appointment or provide peace and security for Tiv people who requested for the appointment of a paramount chief. The writer of this paper opines that the administrative abilities of the first paramount Chief, Makir Dzakpe and his successors have emphasized this provision of state security more than people –oriented security since the establishment of the chieftaincy Institution in 1946.

The writer criticizes the relevance of Chieftaincy Institution in the present presidential democracy, indicating that the Chieftaincy Institution would have been relevant in a parliamentary democracy. The writers, therefore, suggest that either the chieftaincy Institution should be restructured to work conveniently in the present presidential democracy or Nigeria should change to parliamentary democracy in order to accommodate chieftaincy Institution. But for the time being, the writer suggests that the functionaries of the chieftaincy

Institution should improve on their performance in order to provide the people –oriented security to Tiv people.

Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications

In order to ease the understanding of both the title and the contents of this paper, words or terms such as “people –oriented security service”, “State –security service” and “Chieftaincy Institution” were explained. These terms were explained to enable readers to understand why Tiv people were providing “people-oriented services” to secure lives and property of Tiv people before the British Colonial Administration approved the appointment of the paramount chief – Tor Tiv – in 1946 and encouraged the Tor-Tiv to pay more attention to the provision of “state security services” for the British colonial state than the provision of “people oriented security” for the lives and property of ordinary Tiv people.

The paper argues that Tiv people had democratic ideals and were successfully, providing the people with “people oriented security services” to secure lives and property until the British colonial administration approved the appointment of the first paramount chief or Tor-Tiv in 1946 and encouraged the Tor-Tiv with the trappings of chieftaincy title to control Tiv people and ensure peaceful condition that was necessary for the exploitation of human and natural resources in Tiv Land. The phrase “people-oriented security services” denotes social services that are given primarily to secure lives and property of common members of any given society.¹

The paper argues that before the establishment of chieftaincy Institution in Tiv land, Elders and youths joined efforts to provide “people-oriented security- services” against sicknesses, poverty, hunger, internal and external aggression, theft, armed robbery, burglary and other security challenges.² But when the British Colonial Administration approved the appointment of the first paramount chief among Tiv people in 1946, the colonial authorities security services” to solve the issues that challenged the colonial state Institution more than the security issues that challenged the lives and property of the common people in Tiv society.

The phrase “state security services” as used in this context implies the services provided to secure the lives and property of the British Colonial state officials rather than Tiv people.³ The paper further argues that the attempt by the Tor – Tiv to provide “state security services” discouraged the pre-existing “people – oriented security services, and thus, intensified poverty, hunger, sickness, theft, armed robbery, internal and external aggression among other security challenge during the 1950^s.⁴ Mvendaga Jibo observes that these security challenges threatened colonial state Institution and the lives and property of Tiv people generally but the first Tor-Tiv, Makir Dzakpa, Managed the crisis till he died in 1956.⁵

According to Tesemchi Makar, the office of Tor-Tiv changed when Mallam Gondo Aluor took over as Tor-Tiv II in 1957.⁶ Although Makar also observes that social issues challenged the security of Tiv people, he points out that economic and political issues combined with the autocratic rule of Gondo Aluor to intensify security challenges up to the 1960^s.⁷ As those socio-economic and political issues threatened the peaceful co-existence of Tiv people and the colonial state Institution excessively, Gondo Aluor provided state security services but failed to save the British Colonial Administration from collapsing in 1960.

The Nature of security challenges and the provision of people – oriented security services in the pre-colonial Tiv Land, 1850 – 1900

Although Tesemchi Makar observes that many issues challenged the security of life and property in Tiv land during the colonial period, he emphasizes that external aggression, communal clashes, inter-ethnic conflicts, armed robbery theft, burglary, hunger, poverty and sickness remained the outstanding security challenges during the pre-colonial Tiv Land.⁸ Before the establishment of chieftaincy Institution and its functionaries, Tiv elders and youths jointly tackled these security challenges, especially when these issues threatened the security of lives and property of the people. Tesemchi Makar opines that of all these security challenges, wars were the most threatening security challenge which compelled the elders and youths to tackle it in different places at different times.⁹ These challenges were tackled separately by four (4) councils namely (ya), Ingyor, Ityo and Tar councils as each council performs its functions.

1. The compound or Ya council and its functions

This is the family or compound assembly headed by the compound head called orya.¹⁰ The compound or Ya council handled political, social, economic and religious matters. The decisions of the compound or Ya council must be taken in the presence and consent of the compound head or else he could veto the decision.¹¹ With the support from all members of his compound, the compound head determined new construction sites the admission and entertainment, expulsion of strangers marriage affairs, the payment or recovery of dowry, run away married women and recovery of debts.¹² Although most of these duties were delegated to subordinates, the compound head was responsible for the smooth running of his compound. He was also responsible for taking care of the sick members of his compound.

Politically, the compound head settled domestic problems, enforced decisions, punishment and expulsion of all stubborn people. He also settled criminal matters including thefts, adultery, farm disputes among other criminal issues.¹³

Admittedly, the role of the compound head was so vital that he was usually fair, kind, impartial and

sympathetic in dealing with his compound members. Any compound head that proved wicked was usually abandoned by his compound members to sit alone.¹⁴ On the other hand, any compound which continued to exist and flourish even after the death of the compound confirm that the successive Mbayaav (plural of Orya) had been good rulers. Admittedly, the compound or ya was the lowest level of the society where social, economic and political security challenges were tackled in the pre-colonial Tivland.¹⁵ But any socio – economic, political, cultural and religious threat that could not be tackled by the compound Head was handled by Ingyor council.

2. This Ingor council and its functions:

The Ingor council was made up of the elders of different compounds or Uya (plural of ya).¹⁶ The heads of these compounds were close family relations. The Ingor council meeting was presided over by the most senior elder, orvesen. Although the Ingor council handled many socio, economic and religious issues, it lacked powers to tackle problems involving deaths of adults, murder, gaining mastery of important akombo like Ibamegh, twel, swem and the possession of Indyer Drum.¹⁷ These issues were therefore referred to the next council the Ityo with more powers to tackle.

3. The Ityo council and its functions.

The council of Ityo was made up of the most prominent elders from the various angor groups. Ityo was the largest and the most effective and important quasi Government body in any Tar during the 19th century.¹⁸ Although Tar council was in numerical and jurisdictional terms, the largest and most important, but the Tar council met only on rare occasions to tackle very serious security challenges such as wars, epidemics, drought, famine and do on. It was the Ityo council which handled day to day problems of Tiv society.

At the Ityo council meeting, the most influential and respected elder was allowed to preside. Normally, the most influential and important elder had both political and religious powers.¹⁹ If a man of political weight lacked religious powers, he was assisted by a man with religious prowess- *orsornitar* or *orakombobiam*.

The *Ityo* had powers to tackle almost all major crimes, including murder. Accidental homicide attracted no punishment but the murderer paid compensation with goats, fowls and cows.²⁰

Apart from the above Judicial functions, the Ityo council discussed the location of markets sites.²¹ Ityo intervene in disputes involving age-mates where their adviser makes mistakes. Ityo was also responsible for stopping any fight between age mates because such fighting would disrupt cooperative and collective farming, dancing, compulsory communal labour for construction of roads and bridges.²² Ityo also determined the status and residence rights of refugees from ‘*atoatiev*’ or other parts of Nigeria. Admittedly, the Ityo does not wield power today like before, it still function today in Tivland.²³

The Tar council and its functions

The Tar council was the highest council of elders. Tar council alone took care of warfare matters internally and externally. If interfered in the inter-Ityo disputes by apportioning blame and punishment to the guilty party.²⁴ The Tar – council settled farm disputes. The Tar also determined the qualification and suitability of candidates for initiation into the highest akombo in the Land, such as Ibamegh or poor and the acquisition of the mystery of these akombo. The Tar council also tackled calamities such as small pox, yellow fever, drought, famine among others.²⁵ The Tar council constitutes Tiv Land today.

As the above councils performed their functions, most of the security challenges were tackled until the British colonial administration approved the establishment of the chieftaincy Institution in Tiv Land.

The Establishment of chieftaincy Institution and the functions of Tor-Tiv in the colonial Tiv Land, 1946-1960

The British colonial administration approved the request by Tiv people for a paramount ruler and appointed Makir Dzakpe as the first Tor-Tiv in 1946. The appointment of Makir Dzakpe as the first Tor-Tiv was aimed at ensuring a peaceful atmosphere which was necessary for the exploitation of human and natural resources in TivLand.²⁶ In order to achieve the colonial objectives, the British colonial authorities provided the first Tor-Tiv with The following functions to test the Tor-Tiv’s performance as a qualified colonial chief ready to be functionalized.

1. He was regarded by the colonial regime as the legitimate spokesman.
2. The custodian of the cultures of his subjects.
3. Collection of taxes
4. The maintenance of law and order, in his domain
5. The Recruitment of labour from time to time as directed by the colonial authorities
6. Adjudication of cases within his subjects to the colonial authorities, even in the face of administrative excess by the colonialists.
7. Secure the loyalty of his subjects to the colonial authorities, even in the face of administrative excess by the colonialists.
8. Supply of basic social amenities to the people.²⁷

Mvendaga Jibo observes that the first Tor-Tiv, Makir Dzakpe, performed the above functions so well that the British authorities praised him for performing his functions creditably well.²⁸ The writer, however, opines

that even though the first Tor-Tiv collected taxes, recruited labour from Tiv people, he used the police force to maintain law and peaceful coexistence till he died in 1956. Although the first Tor-Tiv, Makir Dzakpe was very skilful at managing the security challenges by the effects of colonialism and chieftaincy Institution, his successor of Gondu Aluor was so autocratic that he failed to control those security challenges till the colonial. Administration handed over the mantle of leadership to Nigerians in 1960. The impact of the security challenges on the socio-economic and political activities of Tiv people was debilitating.

The Impact of security challenges on the socio-economic and political activities of Tiv people

According to Dyson, the activities of war Lords, community fighters, inter-ethnic warriors thieves, armed robbers, burglars, rapists as well as hunger, poverty and sickness brought negative impact on social co-existence in different parts of Nigeria including Tiv Land.²⁹ Actually, the most sensitive impact of these security challenges on the society was the decline in productive activities in offices, schools, hospitals, markets, family houses among other social Institution. Although these security challenges threatened life and property, and thus, compelled Tiv people to shun productive activities, the British authorities alleged that production declined because Tiv People were lazy.³⁰ Despite the fact that Tiv people were, and are still hardworking, the British authorities levied taxes probably to encourage Tiv people to work harder. Interestingly, the British administrative authorities used the Nigerian police force to beat and compel anyone who did not pay the taxes to do so.

Admittedly, the impact of these security challenges on the economic activities of Tiv people was devastating because producers abandoned their productive activities such as farming, trading, transportation, fishing, hunting, rearing schools among others, hence the production of goods and services declined.³¹ Although the level of production or productivity declined mainly because colonial education system did not provide producers with appropriate technological education, the British authority alleged that workers lacked work discipline and consequently promulgated labour laws to increase productivity and production among Tiv people.³² Actually, the British colonial administration used the Nigerian Police Force to enforce labour laws on reluctant Tiv people who responded with series of strikes that aggravated the problem of low productivity and production in the economies of Tiv Land in the 1950^s.

Similarly, the impact of security challenges on the political activities of Tiv people was debilitating because the political thugs, assassins abducted and killed political enemies and terrorized Tiv people and thus, heated the polity because the thugs and assassins had no job.³³ Although thugs, assassins and other criminals abducted and killed people because the British Colonial Administration foisted the Tor-Tiv Institution on them and did not offer them Jobs, the British authorities viewed those thugs as murderer and invited the Nigerian Police to arrest and prosecute the thugs for murder offences instead of offering job opportunities to the Jobless people in order to change their life styles and improve their living standard. Dissatisfied with forceful implementation of exploitative laws under the British colonial administration, Nationalists demanded for political independence and the British authorities handed over the mantle of leadership to Nigerian leaders who have been trying to improve administration of Tiv Land since 1960.

Conclusion.

The British colonial administration played a dominant role in the establishment of the chieftaincy institution in Tiv land purposely to enhance security of lives and property in Tiv land between 1900 and 1960. Although the British colonial administration established the chieftaincy institution and appointed Makir Dzakpe as the first Tor-Tiv chieftaincy institution primarily to facilitate peaceful atmosphere in Tiv land for the exploitation of resources, the British authorities claimed that the chieftaincy was established to provide good leadership for Tiv people.

The writer has, however, disagreed with this claim, arguing that the chieftaincy institution was established primarily to facilitate the exploitation of human and natural resources and protect the lives and property of the British in Nigeria. The writer however, observes that the British administration did not achieve its colonial interests satisfactorily because the functionaries were too autocratic.

The writer observes that the chieftaincy institution is more suitable in a parliamentary democracy. The paper suggests that chieftaincy institution should be restructured to enable it work efficiently. The paper further suggests that the functionaries of chieftaincy institution should be democratic enough to convince us that the chieftaincy institution is not a mere symbol of colonialism. The paper concludes that democratization of chieftaincy institution will improve the relationship between the Tor-Tiv and his people, and thus ensure good administration of government policies in Tiv land particularly and Nigeria generally.

Endnotes.

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