

CHAPTER 10 NON-CENTRALIZED STATES

Objectives

At the end of the study, students will be able to:

- explain the concept of non-centralized states and outline their common features;
- compare and contrast the political systems of the non-centralized states in the South Eastern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria;
- describe the nature of inter-group relations among the major ethnic societies in Nigeria.

Introduction

Prior to the coming of the whitemen, which changed the historical landscape of the peoples of Nigeria, some states were stateless with no formalized structure of government. Yet the societies were devoid of as there were organized rules of behavior and line of actions were subject to control measures by a group of people who wielded enough influence.

10.1 Meaning of Non-Centralized States

Non-centralized states are societies where there are no constituted, centralized or over-riding authority or body with social and political powers to determine the course of activities or events in the lives of the people. Governmental powers are shared among the people, social units, social institutions and designated leaders.

In some instances, these societies without a classically defined system of administration and government or bureaucratic channels of authority, are described as stateless, acephalous, decentralized, segmentary, sedentary and autochthonous states. In truth, the states on their own operated governments which were highly republican, self-servicing and traditional. Most were like a confederacy or a union of entities with each confederating unit having quasi or complete autonomy yet following the general norms, traditions and belief system guiding the entire union. Every unit ensured that the “confederal union” or the Republican societies were kept while the union or central unit ensured that the autonomy of each confederating unit was respected and preserved.

In most of these states or societies, power was devolved starting from the family as a micro social unit to the village or clan at the largest level. Appointed or titled leaders do not have absolute powers. Decisions and adjudications are made by council of elders with the “leaders” having no special vote or extra power to veto or vet decisions reached. Enforcement of decisions and judgments were mostly left for age-grades, secret societies, women groups or even to divinities as the case may be. Custom and tradition were expected to prevail on individuals for compliance with the rules. While the leaders enjoy influence and respect, he was not expected to exert authority. These sedentary

societies were opposed to imposition of any kind. Leadership were either by law of primogeniture, salic law, religious confirmation, by merit or dint of hard work. Issues are treated by consultations and administrative powers transverse through all social units and institutions as no one unit or group had any claim to command authority.

Features of Non-Centralized States

These acephalous societies possessed certain common features which marked them out from the centralized or cephalous states. Some of these features include:

- i. The absence of a centralized government which commands general obedience. Here, authority is shared among federating families with the effect that a general consensus is reached to resolve a communal issue. The presiding head of the federating clans is only a titular figure whose duty remains to facilitate consensus opinions or agreements.
- ii. Due to the unavailability of a structured government, political activities which included execution of projects, adjudication, legislation and military activities were carried out by a set of organized bodies. Age-grades and youths were mainly used for project execution. Adult males or family heads adjudicated cases and also legislated. However, women groups, institutionalized groups, age grades and elders-in-council could, as situations permitted, enacted laws or made express adjudication of serious cases to entrench social justice.
- iii. On a regular basis, family heads or clan heads, as the case may be, usually gathered for day-to-day decision-making. These patriarchs ensured that the tradition was maintained. In most cases, they met periodically to discuss matters arising and to trash out civil cases that were trivial to maintain law and order for peaceful co-existence.
- iv. Military expeditions and police tasks were usually carried out by warriors and youths body. Most of these stateless societies depended on the age-grade, Esu and Ogboni societies, where they existed for proper policing. Military expedition must be approved by the elders-in-council and often supported by the deity priests.
- v. Most sedentary societies follow patrilineal economy and authority. In some areas in Igbo land, matrilineal tradition is observed.
- vi. In order to properly guide, preserve and checkmate social activities, diviners and deity priests were given some prominence. These remained the conscience of the society and no body would want to incur the wraths of the gods. Certain cases were settled by them through appeasing of the gods.
- vii. Unique recognition of every male adult. Every adult male participated in decision-making or were consulted before the clan heads took decisions to make the decision generally acceptable and abiding.

- viii. Owing to the non-existence of an organized government, there tended to be no subject-master or ruled-ruler relationship, levies and taxes were not common and there were no kings to pay tributaries to.
- ix. In fairness to these societies, they thrived better as agrarian communities. People made use of the land and its resources to feather their nests. They paid more attention to their farm business since their destiny was tied to it.
There are quasi-government organs called traditional institutions. In the Igbo land for instance, the *Nze-na-ozo* traditional institution was revered. These title holders influenced the people and was regarded as custodians of history and tradition. They are however denied governmental or administrative powers.
- x. Under this social system, individuals and families were expected to be economically-enterprising, viable, self-sustaining and by every standard, independent. This encouraged industry and the promotion of social equality. In the stateless society, egalitarianism remained an essential social policy. Families and individuals specialized in occupations of interests and there was this spirit of competing to excel.
- xii. Sequel to this, no one individual could easily rise to influence, dominate or dictate for others. The incident of ‘boss man’ or powerful individual(s) never arose as acephalous societies rebuffed autocracy, oligarchy or any form of established overwhelming authority.
- xiii. In some cases, cases are first tried from the family to the clan level. In situations of misapplied judgments, the elders-in-council or the gathering of the entire community could serve as appellate court and indeed “the supreme court”.

10.2 The Igbo

The Igbo occupy the present day South-East areas of Nigeria made up of Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Abia states. They are also found in Ikah North, Ikah South and Asaba in Delta State, some parts of Benue state, Ikwerre in Rivers State, and in some parts of Bayelsa and Akwa-Ibom states. They claim Jewish origin and are among the earliest settlers in Nigeria spanning over five thousand years. They remain one of the three largest and populous ethnic groups in Nigeria having a populated estimation to about 40 million people.

Unlike the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba tribes, the Igbo had no centralized authority rather political authority was shared among the social institutions and the people. The social institutions include: the title holders such as the Oji-ofo (holders of village staff), Ozo, Nze, Lolo, Ichie, Mazi, Onye-isi-ala, Ezenwanyi and lately the chiefs introduced by the British colonialists. There were also the age-grades, religious institutions made up of the diviners, priests and priestesses with their shrines. From the political and administrative institution, the Igbo land had the Eze whose council was made up of Onowu (Traditional Prime Minister), village heads and *Onye-isi-ala*. There were also Diokpara (patrilineal head of a family and hamlets) following the primogeniture and Salic laws. Every Diokpara (first born male) is said to carry an Ofo (a staff of authority and leadership) which is not transferrable

except in certain circumstances. For instance, where the Diokpara, by error or commission, becomes an Osu (outcast); dies before his biological father or is ostracized and driven away as a result of heinous crime or taboo. Finally, there was the Umunna, a unit made up of all male adults within a related circle of families, kindred and village which is usually chaired or headed by the head of the eldest family or eldest village as the case may be.

In Igboland, the village remains the largest and the highest political unit. Each village (which is today known as a town or autonomous community) is autonomous or independent. If a man infringes on the law of a neighbouring village with impunity and was able to return to his village, he was held as a hero. Should there be any threat to his life, his own village would rise to his defense.

A village is made up of kindreds which, in turn, is made up of families. A village is often associated with one patriarchal origin, commercial ties, common ancestral shrine, social ties and inter-marriages. Every family has a head: the Ofo title holder. The council of elders in the village and the kindred are made up of all Ofo title holders within its domain. These share the village political power. The council is headed by Oji-ofo-ukwu (the holder of the big Ofo title), who is usually a male descendant of the most senior family in the most senior kindred in the entire village. The position, notwithstanding, does not give him a political edge over the others and cannot enforce his views or opinions. He only chairs the gathering and contributes his own opinion. The council's decisions were not final as each family, ably represented in the council, has the freedom to reject or accept such decisions reached at the village council.

The Ozo title holders commanded political influence. They were essentially wealthy men who, by their wealth, became influential and respectable. They were consulted for advice, settling of disputes among families, kindred or villages. The title is not hereditary. It is conferred on anyone who could afford it as it was the preserve of the super rich. The Ozo was so influential that he could not be insulted or attacked; any offender who took refuge in his house could not be arrested. However, they attended the regular village meetings like any other adult male.

The village assembly is the highest legislative and judicial body where laws are made and cases tried in an open court. Also, the age-grade, elders, title-holders, association of married women and the Umuada group (daughters of the land married outside and within) can make laws to; guide behaviors; maintain peace and harmony; deter conflict and aggression; or even; to check social vices. Age-grades are usually men of given age brackets in a union. Each group chooses its own leaders. Being made up of young and able bodied men, they maintain law and order, maintain roads and markets, enforce well meaning laws and judgment of the elders and perform military services.

Some offences or crimes, such as incest and murder, seen as taboos against the land and gods were handled by priests of Ala who appease the aia (earth goddess). The entire village could be involved in a dispute the resolution of which the elders could handle. The Kin daughters (Umuada), titleholders, married women group and age-grades could on their own settle cases. The age-grade usually served as the police to enforce most agreements, laws and judicial decisions. Traditional rulers (Chiefs) together with most traditional title holders operated at a passive and low level. They had no

capacity to make rules and to enforce them. The colonial government, which misunderstood the system, empowered them so as to help them operate the indirect rule system. Instead, this led to mass action, total breakdown of law and order in Igboland.

The colonial authorities felt that since there were no central authority, a large governmental structure or an established organ of programme execution like they saw in the Hausa/Fulani emirates, that the Igbo had no leadership. They therefore, sought to create one. Unknown to them, the people had a sedentary and republican system where power devolved and revolved among the people and their social institutions. In terms of project execution, the age grade could initiate to construct a bridge, a road and house for its member. The women usually weeded the main village squares and markets. They cooked at public occasions, like during marriages and burial ceremonies. The male adults could construct a square, market or shrine. They cut aged or improperly placed trees, cleared bushes on the main roads and in the farms and often helped in road construction works. In Igbo land, leadership was not hereditary and governance not a paid job. It was an egalitarian society as anyone could become influential on the dint of hard work. Taxation was unknown as no one was the subject of the other.

Although the people appeared solitary and independent, they were highly unified by some common factors like age-grade units, inter-village or inter-kindred marriages, oracle systems, negotiated covenants, assembly squares, markets, language, culture and economic activities. As an agrarian community, they depended on the cultivation of yam, cocoyam, palm produce, raffia palm, cassava, animal husbandry, hunting, etc. Everyone had something to do, no one was an idler. Often families specialized in a given trade such as palm wine tapping, hunting, divination, herbal medicine, fishing, cloth making, blacksmithing, salt production or even merchandizing.

The Igbos had many traditional crafts with the raffia palm they produce local mats, thatches, local sifters, fish traps and ropes. From palm tree came the baskets, brooms, rafters and local trays. They also produced clay pots and dishes, etc (twine used in climbing the palm tree), carved mortars and pestles, metal yam-harvesters etc. They had carvers and sculptors mainly for religious purposes.



broom



baskets



Carved image of an idol



hoe

Fig 10.1 Crafts found in Igbo land

Their neighbors supplied them with fish, salt and some food items not grown in the land. The palm produce was a major source of inter-tribal exchange until the advent of the Whiteman which introduced human trafficking (slave trade).

10.3 The Tiv

The Tiv people are geographically located in the east of the Benue valley very close to the Niger-Benue confluence. There are conflicting stories of their origin. It is widely believed that Takaruku migrated to Tiv land with some other people with him from the foothills of the southern Cameroons, being the leader of the group that settled in Tiv land, he was regarded as the father of the Tiv.

Tiv land had the most extreme stateless or segmentary society in Nigeria. It never cared much about government, administration and defense but rather concentrated on agriculture. Its best political unit was the compound headed by the eldest male folk who provided the leadership and structure that kept the people united. Each compound or lineage appeared independent and opposed to one another.

However, at the kindred level, there is an established secret society called ‘Mba Tsav’ whose members in most cases provided the two main leaders in the kindred. The one was the Tee (spokesman) who controlled the legislative and spiritual matters, the other was the Shagba or (man of

means). The Shagba or and the Tee were both elective offices. The council or members of the Mba Tsav did the elections. A rich man outside the Mba Tsav membership could be elected by a Shagba. The council advised the Shagba on security matters, dispute resolution or on other functions. The Shagba administered the law enacted by the Tee, and with the assistance of Mba Tsav members (council), he could pass judgment or convict criminals.

Later, the Jukun influenced the Tiv socio political system and the diarchy of the Tee and Shagba or gave way to a new class of chiefs called the Tor Agbande (Drum Chiefs) who received staff of office, authority and regalia from the Jukun King. The chief or Tor Agbande were by necessity members of the Mba Tsav. This brought Tiv into the process of transition to kingdom which she could not accomplish before it was also influenced by the Jihadist of the 19th century though they were never conquered by them. The Hausa/Fulani who infiltrated Tiv land referred to them as Munshi.

Tiv people engaged in farming of crops. They produced grains and root crops. Intensive farming was usually organized by the village or family group.

10.4 The Ibibio

Like the Igbo, the history of the origin of the Ibibio is still in contention. They belong to the Kwa language family of the Niger-Congo group of language like the Igbo. The view of many is that the Ibibio came from a place called Ibom or that their ancestor is called Ibom. George Enebe noted that quite early, the Ibibio appeared to have settled in the lands between; Arochukwu to the North; Eka to the West; and Oron to the south. A second dispersal then appears to have taken place from a center around Abak and Uyo when the Ibibio separated into the Annang (Western) and Ibibio (Eastern) peoples. It is likely that the people who eventually became the Efik or old Calabar originated from this second wave of migration.

Presently, the bulk of the Ibibio-speaking people share boundaries in the South West with the Ijaw of Rivers State, in the West and North West with Ebonyi state; in the North and North East with the Ekoi, in the East with Southern Cameroons and in the Southern border with the Bight of Bonny. It has two vegetation belts namely the mangrove swamp forest and the rain forest belts. Ibibio is surrounded with rivers such as Ikang, Calabar, the Cross, Kwa Iboe, Adoni and Imo rivers with numerous creeks.

The Efik sub-group of the Ibibio-land had good geographical location, good harbor, which enabled them to play the role of a middleman in the overseas trade in slaves and palm produce. The Europeans first established Christianity in Efik in Ibibio land. By 1505, the Portuguese had dealing with Duke town port which anchored ships. Africans in the interior together with Western Europeans traded with Efik people. Duke town became known as old Calabar distinguished from the Kalabari (new Calabar in Rivers State). In 1698, Dutch slave traders arrived old Calabar; by 1846, United Presbyterian Church of Scotland arrived Duke Town (old Calabar) to begin education, social services and missionary activities. In 1856, the court of equity was established and in 1885 the British

government set a consulate at old Calabar and made it the headquarters of the Niger Coast protectorate in 1891. Between 1900 and 1906 Calabar became the capital of the Southern protectorate. It was retained as the headquarters of the colonial Calabar province from 1914 to 1959. The most prominent group of the Ibibio is the Efik.

The Ibibio community had political and judicial systems that could be compared in terms of workability with the centralized states. Every Ibibio sub-group never deviated much from the judicial and political systems. These are Efik, Oron, Eket, Ibuno, Eastern Adoni, central Ibibio and Annang. The political structure of the Ibibio stems from the social organization arranged under six administrative units. These units assisted greatly in organizing the people. These six units are:

- i. Idip Ete: This is the nuclear or polygamous family regarded also as a political and social unit. The man, his senior wife (Atai Anwan), first sons and other outstanding members of the extended family (Otung), compound (Ekwere) or Hamlet (Ebiet) constituted an ad hoc council that tried family cases. They meted out sanctions and fines to erring family members but lacked the power to enforce it. In a situation where the defaulter became recalcitrant, they either ex-communicate such a person or arrange to have him sold into slavery if he becomes too notorious.
- ii. Ufok (division of extended family): Many extended family groups make up the Ufok. This is headed by the Obong Ufok, the eldest man among the group of extended family. Together with other senior members they form a council known as Esop Ufok which occasionally meets at Obong Ufok's compound. They adjudicate over civil matters such as land disputes, stealing and fighting involving family (Ufok) members from different Idip. Litigants are expected to comply with the council's decision or face the consequence of being sold to slavery or from being ostracized.
- iii. Ekpuk (extended family or lineage group): This is the highest political or administrative unit of each extended family or lineage unit. It is lower in rank only to the village, village group and the clan council. The lineage head was Obong Ekpuk. As the oldest man in the lineage, he is incharge of the political religious, economic and social matters. The Esop Ekpuk council comprised of the Obong Ekpuk as the head and other heads of related Idip Ete and outstanding members. The council met occasionally as the needs arose. They settled or tried all manner of cases within the Ekpuk Unit. No case was taken to the Esop Obio (village council) without first passing through the Esop Ekpuk. The council was responsible for the sharing of farmland to all adult males of the Ekpuk and for the coordination of religious practices including building sheds at the graves of members of Ekong secret society and ensuring that all adult males part-took in the offering of sacrifices to their ancestors.

iv. Obio or Idung (village unit): This is the fourth political unit in Ibibio land. The Idung or Obio is made up of a group of related and geographically compact Ekpuk (lineages). One of the Ekpuk stands as the eldest in regard to their descent or genealogy. The oldest man in the most senior Ekpuk remained the head of his Obio (village) and is regarded as the Obong Obio or Obong Idung. He was coronated with the insignia of office either by their clan head, Obong Ikpaisong, or by the entire village heads. He had a council called Esop Obio (village council) which was made up of over eight council officials. Each council member was in-charge of a ministry of public affair.

The Esop Idung or Obio exercised some administrative functions. They decided the time to commence farming, they mapped out the piece of land to be cultivated annually, they fixed the time to collect palm fruits, fixed the commencement of the eating of new yam, regulated the cutting of yam stakes and confinement of livestock to prevent them eating up farm crops.

On judicial matters, they served as an appellate court. They adjudicated appeals arising from the Esop Ekpuk. The decision of the Esop Idung was final. They could look into disputes emanating from debt, bride price, defamation of character, murder, witchcraft, coitus between a man and a mother of twins, adultery with the wife the village head or an Ekpuk head, coitus between a man and a mourning woman, harvesting new yams before the ban was lifted, arson, attempted suicide, kleptomania and impetuous breach of customs, traditions and serious village laws.

v. Oduk: This is the village group or sub-clan. Two or more oduk (sub-clan) make up an Ibibio clan (Ikpaisong). The Obong Oduk, the oldest man in the foundational sub-clan headed the Esop Oduk (village group council). They heard cases involving member villages especially on inter-village conflicts. They organized and supervised Ekpe and Ekpo secret societies.

vi. Ikpaisong (clan): It is a collection of village groups. The Me Ikpaisong (clans) lay claim to common ancestry, ndem (gods) and common religious codes of ethics. Ikpaisong consists of villages which in turn are made up of Ekpuk composed of matrilineal and patrilineal relatives. Before the advent of the colonial rule, there were some 86 clans in Ibibio land. Each Ikpaisong was headed by the Okuku or Obong Ikpaisong. He had his council: the Esop Ikpaisong. They met on war threats, murder cases, theft of high magnitude and arson. The approved inter-tribal clashes. Only the Obong Ikpaisong orders for armistice.

Ibibio generally had a number of ways to enforce laws. They did this through the Ekpo, Ekpe, Onyoho, Ekong and Ataat secret societies; Mbiam (juju), Ebre club (married women), Iban Isong Esit club (women government), Idiong (divination); nka (age-grades) and others.

Generally, the Ibibio had a strong culture not easily influenced by those of other neighbouring tribes. They were farmers and yam was their chief crop. Many were also fishermen and carvers who promoted the cause of deities. The coming of the whitemen disrupted their political system as the colonial power sought to centralize political authority in disregard to their segmentary system. The Ibibio people had so many things in common with their Igbo neighbours. There were similarities in the worship of deities, headship of units, judicial and administrative systems, moral codes, religious observances and, to some extent, in political organization.

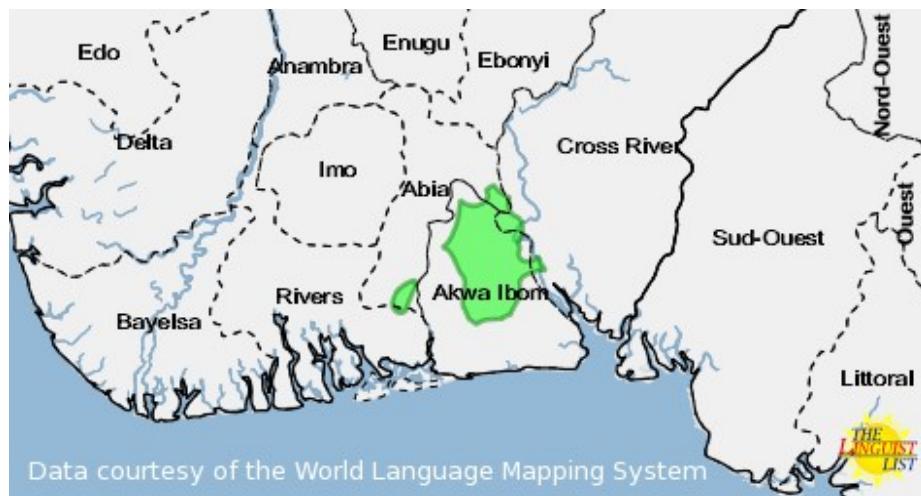


Fig. 10.2: Map showing the Ibibio – speaking areas

10.5 The Idoma

Idoma land spans through nine local government areas in the present West of Benue state. These include Agatu, Apa, Ado, Oju, Ohimini, Obi, Okpokwu and Otukpo local government areas. Idoma people can also be found in some parts of Cross Rivers and Nassarawa states. Idoma language remains a unifying factor though with some varied dialects. The Idoma of Benue extraction has an estimated population of 2.5million people. It shares borders with the Doma and Keena in the North, the Igbos in the South, Idah in the West and Wukari in the East. It is believed that the Idoma people have occupied their present territory for over five thousand years ago just at the same time their neighbours North, Yoruba, Bini and Igbo forebears did in their present domains.

Being warriors and hunters, they had the culture of being hospitable and peace-loving. By oral tradition, Idoma people traced their common ancestor to Iduh the father of Idoma generally regarded as “father” although some traditions believe that he was a leader of a migrant group who first settled in Idoma but not the father of Idoma. Those who contend that he was the patriarch of Idoma believed that he begot Aanawoogewo who in turn begot Ugboju. Ugboju fathered Adoka who begat Agabi, who in turn was the father of Otukpo. Otukpo begat Eje and Eje begat Olegwu, Olegwu fathered Ebeibi who also begat Unuogidi in Adoka which begat Ode. Ode gave birth to Yala in present day

Cross Rivers State. The conflicting stories are indications that Idoma have no unitary origin. However, the acceptance of “Iduh the father of idoma” has gained more popularity originating from the tradition which insists that Iduh, the father of the Idoma had several children who individually founded different Idoma clans.

Idoma people claim Apa, North-east of the present day Idoma land as their ancestral homeland. Apa was believed to be a confederal part of the Kwararafa kingdom, otherwise called the Okolofa kingdom, who migrated to their present day homestead about 15th century (some 300 years ago).

Traditionally, Idoma people had a government which tried to balance power and authority, service and accountability. They never ran any centralized government as leaders were not allowed ultimate powers. The people had the power and office and leadership were predicated on proven integrity and merit. Powers were fused and not separated as in centralized states.

The basic social unit remains the extended family system (a man, his wives, children and wives, and children of his sons) they enjoy patrilineal system with clans emerging from larger lineages. Owing to this, the Idoma practiced the ancestor cult. The clans make up villages that may be found in dispersed family homesteads or compact villages. The villages are led by a headman or chief whose position is patrilineal and hereditary. Royal succession most often rotated between two patrilineal lines, a situation which weakens the power of the ruler. The leader or chief could only rule by consulting the council of elders. They were assisted in the leadership and administrative duties by the masking and age-grade societies.

Idoma people practiced an ancestral cult system. They believed in honouring lineage ancestors and warriors. Through the Alekwunafia, also referred to as the Ejia-alekwu, festivals were tied around yam celebrations, they worshiped ancestral spirits. They believed in the omnipotent God (Owoicho) which they believed could be reached through the Alekwunafia (the ancestral spirit). The ancestral spirits were believed to perform security functions for families. The Alekwu cults and the Onyonkpo cults were used to check social and moral vices making people to adhere to rules and customs. While the aiuta secret society maintained order, the Oglinye grouped together the royal lineage which had the right to own masks.

Idoma people in Benue are predominantly farmers and traders. They cultivate millet, sorghum and yams. There are some who practice gaming during the dry-season. Small and large market days are rotated among the various districts. In the area of craft, they engage in weaving, blacksmithing and dyeing of cotton cloth.

10.6 Inter-Group Relations

The entity called Nigeria has over 250 tribes and over 359 languages. Some of these still retain their customs and traditions and are involved in inter-ethnic intercourse. Vividly, distinctive groups include the Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Igala, Efik, Ibibio, Idoma, Itsekiri, Fulani, Anang, Hausa, Igbira, Ikwerre, Ijaw, Gwari, Kanuri, Nupe, Edo, Urhobo, Ogoni, etc. these ethnic groups engaged in inter-tribal

commercial and social exchanges. From Kano others got leather, dye, iron works and weaving. From the Ijaw tribe came fish, salt and canoes. The Igbo produced iron works, pottery materials, weaving, carving and palm produce. The Yoruba had weaving, pottery, bronze, iron smithing, soap and cocoa. Nupe people produced glass, beads, ivory carving, weaving and metal works.

The absence of physical barriers made movement between the North and West very easy. This facilitated exchanges. Some of these groups had some close common ancestral origin which assisted in inter-territorial movement and inter-group relationship. Most of them had blood pacts and engaged in inter-tribal marriages. There were markets that hosted inter-tribal products. Some of these markets existed in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Borno, Raba, Kiri, Korme, Funda, Egga, etc. These long distant trade routes were made possible through caravans.

Most of these ethnic nationalities achieved flourishing interactions through some notable rivers such as rivers Yobe, Gongola, Kaduna, Sokoto, Benue, and Niger. Those who live around the riverine areas developed and used canoes as means of transportation. The Urhobo, Ibibio, Efik and the Kanuri people around Lake Chad depended heavily on water transport to reach out to upland or hinterland to market their wares usually pottery, fish foods and salt. Their artisans made local canoes to aid trade and commerce. Footpaths were also profusely used by traders and journey men. There were such routes linking the east through Arochukwu to Nike, Ibagwa down to Igala. In the West, we had footpaths going through Oyo to Kwara, Nupe down to Borgu.

On the issue of religion, these ethnic groups had similar religious rites, codes and taboos. Some tribes had their gods established for them through the assistance of neighbouring tribes. Some powerful gods were consulted by members of other ethnic groups. These encouraged inter-ethnic marriages, cultural affinities and social changes. In-laws and neighbours were invited during cultural and religious festivals which cemented relationships. The introduction of Islam by Almaghili in Hausaland around 15th century and the Islamic Jihad championed by Usman Dan Fodio beginning from 1804 improved both the pattern and volume of inter-tribal relationships particularly among the Northern, Middle Belt and Western ethnic groups. Since Islam is both a religion and way of life, converts and adherents see themselves as brothers. They interacted with one another and protected each other interest.

Movements from one locality to another were not prohibited except by some natural forces or reliefs. However, there were inter-tribal skirmishes, confrontations, slave raids and wars which, at times, restricted free and social exchanges. Some powerful tribes, during their religious festivals, moved into weak neighborhoods for head-hunts, wife-catching and slave raids. There were records of inter-group warfare and slave raids which escalated with the advent of and deep-rooted interest by the European slave traders starting from the 19th century. This aspect was the only mode captured most enormously by the European as constituting the pre-colonial inter-tribal relationship.



Fig. 10.3 Map showing the ethnic groups in Nigeria

Summary

- Non-centralized states were states erroneously regarded as stateless or leader-less states. These were states run on highly liberalized political structure where imposition, coercion and autocracy from an individual or groups were not tolerated.
- These acephalous states practiced rudimentary republicanism and liberal democracy where either directly or indirectly every adult is involved in governance. The Igbo, Tiv, Ibibio and Idoma practice the non-centralized system.
- However, just like the present global system with socialism and capitalism which had not stopped interrelationships among states, there were inter-group relations between the centralized states in the North and west and the non-centralized states in the east and middle belt which brought about healthy social exchanges.

Revision Questions

Objectives

- A marked difference between centralized and non-centralized states lies on the emergence of _____ of centralized states.
 - government
 - leaders
 - oligarchy
 - political system
- The age-grades and the secret societies acted as _____ in the traditional societies.
 - the police
 - arbiters

- C. wife catchers
 - D. oracles
3. The circumstances could deny the Diokpara his entitlements in Igboland include:
- A. If he died while his father was alive
 - B. If he killed twins
 - C. If he married so early
 - D. If he never got married
4. The system of taxation was well established in _____.
- A. Igalaland
 - B. Ibibioland
 - C. Idoma
 - D. Kano
5. Religion was main activity of _____.
- A. caravan traders
 - B. slave raiders
 - C. traditional hunters
 - D. carvers
6. The new class of chiefs in Tivland who received their staff of office from the king of the Jukun the king was called _____.
- A. Tee
 - B. Drum chiefs
 - C. Mba Tsav
 - D. Shagba
7. The most prominent part of Ibibioland has remained _____.
- A. Calabari
 - B. Eket
 - C. Efik
 - D. Efiat
8. The Esop Idung was usually regarded as _____.
- A. an appellate court
 - B. a court of first instance
 - C. a tribunal
 - D. a commission of inquiry
9. While Iduh was generally regarded as the father of the Idoma people, _____ was regarded as its ancestral origin.
- A. Apa
 - B. Kanuri

- C. Cross rivers
 - D. Idoma
10. Before the Islamic Jihad inter-group, relations in the North was mainly sustained through _____.
- A. Inter-tribal wars
 - B. Common religious worship
 - C. Inter-tribal marriages
 - D. Hunting activities

Essay Questions

- 1a. What do you understand by non-centralized states?
 - b. Mention and explain any five features of non-centralized states.
 - c. What factors accounted for inter-group relationship?
- 2a. Identify the political structure of the Igbo society.
- b. How did (a) women (b) title holders (c) age grades and (d) elders participate in the governance of the land.
3. How did the Jukun influence the socio-political lives of the Tiv people?
- 4a. Who are the Ibibio?
- b. Briefly explain the six administrative units that existed in Ibibio land.
- 5a. “Iduh was the father of Idoma. Discuss.
- b. What was the relevance of the village in the governance of Idoma people?