



Political Phenomenology of Tiv Relationship with Eggon, Alago and Fulani in Nasarawa State

Uhembe Ahar Clement

Department of Political Science, Federal University Lafia, Lafia

Abstract

This paper seeks to proffer a political phenomenology of Tiv relationship with a view to underscore its organic composition, nature and character as well as an analytical assessment in search of partners in Nasarawa State. Drawing from the Marxist perspective in his famous generalization that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle,” (79), the Tiv, Eggon, Alago and Fulani relationship is lens in terms of binary relation, with one party as oppressor, the other as oppressed. By way of an empirical narrative, predicated on the phenomenological approach, the paper posits that the relationship has been a simplification of class antagonism, intra-class conflicts, increasingly splitting into classes around “indigene/settler” issues. The paper submits that, the methodology of laying claims and contestation to authoritative allocation of values holds critical implications for Tiv Tripod relationship in searching for partners in Nasarawa State in a high occupational hazed. The paper concludes that the increase mutual fear of effective occupation and domination by any other group is central to the kind of relationship in the social relation of production. It recommends that there are more benefits in staying together than the current imaginary peace.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Claims, Contestation and Relationship

Introduction

The Tiv, Eggon and Alago are all aboriginal tribes in Nasarawa State, North Central Nigeria; who often time allow precedence in arrival rather than aboriginality, dialectics and historical materialism to determine their relationship (Uhembe 2010). Their relationship has always revolved around the context for citizenship, identity and politics of inclusion and exclusion cantered on centrifugal forces.

Some analyst have attributed this phenomenology of the Tiv, Eggon and Alago relationship to the unrelenting economic adversity and the keener contests for access to political and material advantages as major determinates (Egwu, 2001:2; Maier 2000; Mustapha1998). This has often produce religious, ethnic and political conflicts but as a mere appendix. For (Ibrahim 2006; Aluba 2008), there is basically a division of Nigerian citizens into indigenes and settlers and such claims are

used as bases for access to, or denial of opportunities. Aluba 2011 argues that the increase identity as bases of these relationships is not limited to Nasarawa State. Some analysts have linked the increase in the sword relationship with the end of the cold war which has turned the *Ehamp de beteille* from ideology to some form of identity contestation. According to Sandra Joireman, the cold war ended and wars of ethnic nationalism began..... It appears as if people stopped killing each other for ideological reasons, as they did during the cold war, and started killing each other because of primal deeply embedded hatreds (Joireman, 2013:1).

In this paper, attempt is made to locate quest of the Tiv in it search for partners in the Nigerian nation. The essence of the discussion is to find out who the friends of the Tiv are, how they have been able to sustain their relationship with these friends.

The Tiv are also the largest ethnic group in Benue State and in the entire Middle Belt (Abati 2001; Jibo 1993; James 2000). This explains why search for who their friends are is of essence to this paper. As the largest ethnic group in the region clashes or their relationship with other ethnic group is bound to have ripple throughout the State. Secondly, there is growing domination by the Tiv over other groups in the State (Abati 2001; Philips 2001; Aluba 2000).

This paper posits that as part of this uneasy relationship between the Tiv, Eggon and Alago clashes have been recorded amongst them the Tiv and virtually all their neighbors (Adamu 2002; Adda 1993). However, the relationship between the Tiv and their neighbor is not always characterized by

suspicion and violence. (Aluba 2011) asserts that, while there might be grievances on both sides, these are usually dormant and give way to cooperation and collaboration. Thus labour is regularly hired and purchased between the Tiv, Eggon and Alago. Secondly, there is a mutual reliance on food and other crops, and in this sense, contribution to the local economy by both (Iyo, 2002). One aspect of these relationships is that both, the Tiv, Eggon/Alago invite the other to attend and participate in festivities. The expansionism and fear of domination by Tiv came to its climax between February 2001 and March 2002 with a spilled over effect to adjoining Plateau State (Bako 2001; Aboki 2004; Aluba 2004) compelling the Tiv to seek sanctuary in Benue State and any other safe place outside Nasarawa State. The situation is still very fragile with the phenomenon of pastoral sedentarisation, sedentism and sedentariness of pastoralist in Nasarawa state that negates the tension and conflict which hitherto was shaped by clear cut occupational and ethno-cultural differentiation between crop farmer and grazers. The former lay permanent claims and contestation over scarce resources of land and water while the later lay seasonal claims and contestation over cross section of the same land and water as sedentariness paradigm that has assumed a political and religion contiguities.

Methodological Foundation: The Phenomenological Approach

This paper is a product of a phenomenological research. A phenomenological research is a qualitative study that essentially seeks to describe rather than explain (Huser, I. 1970). According to

Lester, the purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In human situation, this normally translate into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation and representing it from the perspective of research participant(s) (1991:1).

Simply put, the phenomenological approach is an investigative method that interrogates phenomena based on human perception and experience. In tandem with the foregoing, the paper predicates its discussions, on widespread fear of mutual suspicion of dominance in the authority allocation of values of scarce resources as a major determinate on how to relate and extension of their social classification either as friends or enemies.

Dialectic of Tiv, Eggon, Alago Relationship

There is no doubt that Alago arrived the Benue valley before the arrival of the Tiv's and that they fought wars. However, times have past well over and above such animosities. Politics have united Tiv and Alago more than any tribe particularly in the Southern senatorial district of Nasarawa State e.g the southern senatorial district comparative of the following local government areas, Awe, obi, Keana, Doma and Lafia. The Tiv have a huge demographic voting population that have produced a three time senator in the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the person of Senator Suliman Adokwe

It has been widely discussed and misunderstood to suggest that the Tiv are not aboriginal of Nasarawa State even amongst some uninformed Tiv sons and daughters until recent as the Eggon/Nasarawa coremet, cum Hausa/Fulani when the Eggon were faced with similar misconception as propaganda tools in 2014 clashes which Uhembe (2015) described as "the crash of ombatseditism". The concept of ombatseditism is derived from the word ombatse which according to Uhembe (2015) "is a nature trado-spiritual organization for the Eggon people of Nasarawa state North central Nigeria." It came to the public domain in November 17th, 2013, when a group of more than 20 personnel of the state security service in Nigeria (SSS) invaded a shrine belonging to the cult at Alakyo village in Lafia local Government area of Nasarawa state with a view to arresting the worshipers and their leader. The above scenario put the Eggon on the same pastoral. They had course to look for who their friends are. This development (if a development it must be called) has actually demonstrated a true search for who the friends of the Tiv are. Are they Alago or Eggon or both? And that raises the ontology and epistemology questions. In other words, how and why are the Alago and Eggon Tiv relationship?

Very historic is the submission of the Tiv memorandum 2002: 5 captured below

Table 1. List of Tiv Representatives of Various Constituencies in Nasarawa State

1947: Hon. Emmanuel Dewua was elected into Lafia Native Authority

1957: Hon. Tachia Bai represented Assakio District into Lafia Native Authority

1958: Hon. Gera Akuntu represented Assakio

1961: Hon. Aondo Gbev was elected to represent Obi District

1976: Hon. Aondo Gbev was re-elected to represent Agwatashi

1983: Hon. AthnaiusItyo was elected to represent Doma, Awe and Keana Federal Constituency

2000: Hon. Micheal Koko was elected to represent Doma South Constituency

Source: Tiv memorandum 2002: 5

This situation is further evidence according to this memo in the following appointment as at then, this position included;

1. Special Adviser to the Governor on Political and Legislative Matters; Gabriel Akaaka, Obi LGA.
2. Permanent Secretary for Works and Urban Development Solomon Ihuman, Azara LGA.
3. Secretary, Teachers Service Commission, Cletus Uver, Lafia LGA.
4. Civil Commissioner, State Independence Electoral Commission, Mr, Thomas Gaar, Awe LGA.
5. Secretary, Nasarawa State Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Philip Audu.
6. Chairman, Governing Council, College of Arts, Science and Technology Keffi, Professor Emmanuel Kucha.
7. Member, Nasarawa State Sports Council, Mr. Felix Atsua, Lafia LGA

8. Member, Nasarawa State Relevant Technology Board, Fidelis Baaki, Obi LGA (Aboki 2004:205-6).

Organic Composition

The organic composition of Tiv, Eggon and Alago relationship is suggestive of this fact expressed in the exactitude in the words of the Governor of Nasarawa State Governor Abudullahi Adamu when he said, *Nasarawa State is not an immigrant state and there will always be native indigenes in particular areas as there are Tiv mostly in the southern senatorial zone (Awe, Obi, Keana, Doma and Lafia constitute these senatorial district). This is not an accident of history.* These were the exactitude of the words of Governor Abudullahi Adamu the 1st executive governor of Nasarawa State.

In Nasarawa State, the Tiv are the largest in terms of population but 99% of them are non-Muslim. They constitute 49.2% of what is today called Nasarawa State *source:* (1963) population census figure which showed tribes in demography. These facts are not from discriminatory application of ingenuity as recent immigrants from Borno State (from where the Kanuris who are 99% Muslim come to meet with their ethnic kin and kindred in Nasarawa) and are accepted as indigenes without question.

This paper seeks to establish an explanation that the Alago's preoccupation was fishing, done by the riverside. They were satisfied with this position and it created clear demarcation in terms of pre-conditional operational mechanism of social relation in the relation of production.

On the other hand, the Tiv were agriculturalists farming on land and that created clear separation of conflict in the operational mechanism.

The Eggon at this pre-colonial time did not even have the opportunity of seeing the colonial masters because they were on the mountain top; all the same it created a clear separation in the operational mechanism in the social relation of production. Conflict zone were avoided completely and their relationship remained very cordial. This was the condition that existed and determined their relationship.

Theoretical Framework: The Eco-Violence Theory

The paper adopts the theory of eco-violence as its analytical framework. The theory of eco-violence is an emerging theoretical construct seeking to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts (Onuoha, nd). Developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), the theory holds thus: Decreased in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999:30). Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders

violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007). American International Journal of Contemporary Research Vol. 4 No. 2; February 2014:80. In effect, ecological scarcity raises the competitive stakes and premium that the various societal groups may place on available ecological resources. This condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts. Applied to the purpose of the present discourse, the theory of eco-violence offers insights into the nature and dynamics of inter group relations in Nigeria. In this regard, it is to be observed that the relationship have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource-scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition (Cinjel & Kachi, 2015). In the case of Nasarawa State, which is by design the focus of this paper, the situation has been accentuated by the climate change-induced migration of pastoralists from the far North to the North-Central region of Nigeria in search of grazing fields (Cinjel & Kachi, 2015). This trend has been succinctly captured thus: As the population is increasing, definitely there will be as well increase in demand for land, water, forest products and grazing land within the territories inhabited by Fulani and farmers; these groups are forced to find new ways to cope with different types of conflict at once because of competition over marginal resources (Adogi, 2013: para7). The outcome of this scenario in Nasarawa State has been the prevailing internecine

herder/farmer conflict, which has so far tends to have defied all remedies. An extrapolation of the foregoing theoretical position has been nicely articulated in the analytical notion of 'eco-survivalism (Okoli, 2013 and Uhembe 2015). The crux of the theory of eco-violence is that the desperate quest for survival by groups in a competitive and resource-scarce ecological sphere (ecosurvivalism) is likely to precipitate violent conflict. The eco-violence theory derives its epistemological foundation from the political ecology perspective. In effect, the bulk of its assumptions are organically related thereto. In any case, the theory takes as a point of departure the mainstream political ecology premise in an attempt to evolve a robust analytical tradition amenable to analysing micro issues pertaining to resource-conflict problematique.

Politicisation and Bastardisation of Tiv, Eggon, Alago Relationship

Over time the Alago became dissatisfied with fishing as it was no longer visible to sustain their growing population. They too wanted to go into agriculture and to do this they started appropriating Tiv land as the Tiv involved into shifting cultivation. The shifting cultivation demanded that, you have three or more years on a piece of land to go fallow so that by the time you have return to it, it has become manured or fertilized naturally. The Tiv found out that there were growing cases of other people (the Alago) occupying their farm lands.

This situation according to Uhembe (2009) laid fertile grounds for conflicts over claims and contestations of such lands. This paper posits that this phenomenon was the beginning of the physical visible creaks in the relationship between Tiv and Alago.

Some scholars argued that the Alago's dissatisfaction over fishing forced them into commerce and politics while the Tiv transferred the benefit of their farm produce into sending their children to school. These Tiv educated elites are the ones contesting elections in Awe, Obi, Keana, Lafia and Doma federal constituency. The argument provides weighty evidence as it is only when election is approaching that the relationship goes bad and conflict is ensued.

When civilization cut up with the Eggon who were called off from the mountains where they were staying, they too came back to look for plain and fertile land for farming. The operational conflict zone in their relationship became obvious. The trajectory of Tiv, Eggon /Alago relationship can be periodized up to the current centrifugal forces. The groupings of Eggon generally in market places particularly within Hausa/Fulani enclave is (Mada Kasa and Mada Dutsh) that is the Eggon who live on the mountain top and those who lived below the mountain. The earlier conflict was between the Mada below the mountain and on top of the mountain. Very little is associated to their fighting ventures because it was mostly internal.

The argument of this paper is that the Eggons were on mountain and other variance below the mountain. The Alago were by the riverside fishing. The Tiv were on the land farming. All of these determine their relationship from their pre-occupational aboriginality.

Event of 2000/2001

The question of aboriginality is not our subject matter in this paper. But it is of

material essence in the determination of who gets what, when and how and how the event have shape the relationship. The tables below have attempted to provide

some insight particularly on the issues of claims and contestation that sour the relationship.

Table 1. Contestation of Tiv Ethnic Group

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political marginalization in spite of high population 2. Provocative utterances by Alago elites 3. Reject any conditions for returning 4. Tiv are indigenes and should not be discriminated against 5. Want the establishment of their own traditional institutions. 6. Tiv people are disenfranchised politically and traditionall 7. Tiv language is not spoken on the state radi 8. Salaries of displaced Tiv people are withheld by government. 9. Government and other ethnic groups should accept Tiv village pattern. 10. Under representation of Tiv people in the civil service. 11. Arbitrary arrest, detention and torture of Tiv people 12. Early return as a solution to the crisis. 13. Continuous attack on Tiv people on the farms. 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are the original owners of the land, the indigenes; the Tiv came later and are settlers. 2. Tiv are welcome to stay but must live within existing communities. 3. Tiv should explain why they killed the Chief of Azara 4. Fear of continued attack by the Tiv 5. The Tiv should respect existing traditional institutions. 6. Government should make it finding on the crisis public. 7. Traditional institutions should be democratized. 8. Inflammatory statements and write ups should stop. 9. Other settler groups have equal rights. 10. Boundary between Nasarawa and Benue states should be clearly defined 11. After the above conditions are met, the Tiv can return. 12. The true history and causes of the crises should be known. 	

Source; NAPECO Report 2002

Unresolved Unthinkable

The Alago whose occupation was fishing became dissatisfied with fishing and wanted to become agriculturalist. The Eggon moved out of the mountains, they too wanted land. The Tiv who had effectively occupied the land wanted more to expand their farm lands. This development became one major factor that determined the Tiv relationship with Eggon and Alago.

This was not all, (Alubo 2011) puts it very clearly when he said, “irrespective of numerical superiority, the Tiv face obstacles in realizing full citizenship rights in Nasarawa State and elsewhere they can vote but they cannot fire candidate field contestants for political office often leads to conflicts, a situation which subscribes their full citizen). Best, Idyrough and Shehu 2001, Av.av 2002 provided suggestive

evident that the Tiv are usually disperse before any major election.

Assessing the Tiv, Eggon, Alago Relationship

The relationship is of essence because is a gateway between the North and the southern part of Nigeria for three reasons. First, the larger parts of the Tiv are in Benue states who are predominantly Christians. Secondly, the geographical location of Nasarawa state and Benue state is a hybrid of the socio economic and political dynamics in North Central Nigeria.

It is the submission of this paper that there are more inherent benefits to be enjoyed than the current imaginary peace between these groups.

This paper evaluate that the Alago cannot go back to their fishing culture, tradition and preoccupation therefore they are bound to have a failure in maintaining the old co-odial relationship with the Tiv as was the case. The relationship between the Tiv and Eggon is not to be non-conflictual because the only way to get back to land is to continue to lay claim that the Tiv are not aboriginal people of Nassarawa State. Their established effort to join Hausa/Fulani Eggon and other tribes against the Tiv in 2001 is not an accident.

It is further evident in all attempts to join the Tiv in the current 2014 crisis between the Alago and Eggon. The unfolding scenario portends dangerously for sustainable cordial relationship between the Tiv and Alago.

The political economic history of how the Alagos were humiliated at various wars or

conflicts with the Tiv on their attempt to return from fishing business to commerce and politics are still fresh and capable of fuelling a bad relationship While the military assistance and cooperation provided by the Tiv against the Keffi people when they attack Doma (Alago) is often a forgetting story.

Another aspect which this paper investigates is that 75% of Eggon are Christian and one would expect that they find friendship with the Tiv in the best manner in which Kanuris from Borno do with their Muslim brothers in Nassarawa State. Christianity failed/refused or neglected to do its job of favouring and purifying a better social relationship among its followers. The (Tiv and Eggon inclusive). They join forces with the Alago against the Tiv in 2001 because the Alago promise them land owned by the Tiv should they help them up rooting the Tiv. The Eggon went to burn churches on account of material conditions; where they did not, they enjoyed staying to see empty spaces in which were hitherto occupied by their Tiv "Christian brother". When the Governor of Nasarawa State Tanko Almakura presented a paper at the SSS headquarter Abuja, 2nd October, 2013 and alleged that his major problem is Eggon and Tiv and both have a militant groups; Eggon calls theirs Ombatse, the Tiv calls theirs Soja Patari,. The alleged accord between the Tiv and Eggon in that fight became like the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes in 1640 which agreement, nobody can find up to today; however there were allegation of commercial Tiv individual merchandizes with no proofs because the Tiv/ Eggon relationship has not being defined.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that, the relationship is of essence because is a gateway between the North and the southern part of Nigeria for three reasons. First, the larger parts of the Tiv are in Benue states who are

predominantly Christians. Secondly, the geographical location of Nasarawa state and Benue state is a hybrid of the socio economic and political dynamics in North Central Nigeria. Thirdly, there are more benefits deriving from their cordial relationship than the adverse effect.

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