

Chapter 9

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF STRANGER COMMUNITIES IN CALABAR: A STUDY OF THE IGBO AND HAUSA SINCE 1900

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INTRODUCTION:

By the first quarter of the twentieth century, Calabar, the first capital of modern day Nigeria, had already assumed a cosmopolitan status, playing host to many Nigerian and Non-Nigerian stranger communities. These groups, which arrived at different points in time, include the Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibibio, Ghanaians, Indians, Lebanese and Liberians, amongst others. Although their influx into the city of Calabar has continued unabated, the migratory histories and the socio-economic activities of these stranger communities have been a subject of abject neglect. Indeed, the activities of these migrant ethnic groups deserve special attention in view of the fact that their socio-economic impact has been strongly felt in the peaceful but developing ancient city of Calabar. For the purpose of this study, emphasis is on the Igbo and Hausa communities in Calabar.

The Igbo in Calabar

The Igbo, one of the largest Nigerian migrant groups in Calabar today, arrived Calabar at various times. The earliest Igbo settlers came to Calabar as slaves in the eighteenth century, during the era of the Trans-

Atlantic Slave Trade (Aye/Int/2004). At this period, Calabar was the chief supply centre of slaves for the European trade and its traders obtained slaves from the hinterland Igbo, Ibibio and Ejagham areas for onward transportation to the New World. By acting as middlemen between the hinterland where slaves were obtained and the Europeans on the coast, Calabar traders (with emphasis on the Efik), dominated this trade. As rightly pointed out by A.J.H. Latham, they “excluded all other people from direct access to the Europeans establishing and maintaining a position as monopolistic middlemen” (Latham, 1973:49).

Among the well defined land and water routes through which slaves arrived Calabar were the Arochukwu-Ito-Uwet- Calabar route; Bende-Cross River water route; and the Uzuakoli route, which passed through Enna, Edda, Biakpan down to Calabar (Uya, 2001: 11). These routes brought largely Igbo speaking slaves to Calabar. Other routes included the water route beginning from the Eniong Creek through Asang Eniong to Itu and finally Calabar - Ikom-Umon – Calabar route, and the Cameroon Grassland/Upper Cross River route, which passed through Ododop down to the Calabar Port. Just as there were various land and water routes for the trade, there also existed a number of slave markets, which developed in the hinterland where slaves were inspected before arriving Calabar. Some of these markets included those at Umuahia, Umon, Ukwa, Eniong and Itu. Archival records on Itu clan, however, confirm that Itu, located on the upper reaches of the Cross River, was the main slave market (CSO/26/3, NAI)

On arrival at Calabar, Igbo slaves were quartered at the area presently known as Ikot Ishie. This area, which was named after Ishie Offiong Okoho, an Igbo ex-slave of Chief Offiong Okoho of Archibong House in Duke Town, Calabar, has an interesting history behind its founder. Oral tradition maintains that Ishie, an Igbo slave, was bought as a youth and grew up in his masters’ household. He was adopted and acquired the name Offiong Okoho from his master, Chief Offiong Okoho. Indeed, this was in line with what obtained in Efik society during the era of slave trade. K. K. Nair affirmed that once slaves:

... became members of the Efik households, they took on the names of their masters and lost their own. To some extent it was an expediency enabling the European traders to recognise which master or house a particular trader represented. But it was also symbolic of the social relationship between the master and the slave, which in some respects approximated to that between father and son (Nair, 1972: 38).

Having served his master faithfully, Ishie Offiong Okoho was manumitted and was allocated the whole expanse of land (consisting of Ikot Ishie area) to live and prosper on his own. As a wealthy trader during the slave trade era, Ishie obtained his slaves from Igbo land and as earlier noted, his domain, Ikot Ishie, became a staging point for slaves that arrived Calabar. Beside the present Bassey Duke, Bedwell, Chamley and Nelson Mandela axis, Ikot Ishie has the highest concentration of Igbo community in Calabar. Research indicates that ninety percent of traders in the Ikot Ishie market are of Igbo extraction, and understand/speak the Efik language appropriately (Akoda, 2002:157) It is interesting to note that even though they have not lost contact with their original homeland, the Igbo at Ikot Ishie have been, and will remain, part of Archibong House.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the city of Calabar received another wave of Igbo migrants who came as traders, artisans, businessmen, moneylenders and a few civil servants. Some members of these new groups were moved by the need to participate in commerce on the Cross River basin and Calabar. Some scholars have however attributed the movement of these Igbo groups, especially the Awka and Ezza Igbo, to "population density" and "scarcity of land" (Udo, 1975:58-61).

Nonetheless, the latter Igbo migrants made the present Bedwell, Bassey Duke, Chamley and Nelson Mandela areas their permanent abode. The moneylenders resided between Webber and Ekondo Street axis, where they, together with the Lebanese, provided financial support to the local business community. With regard to this, an Igbo popularly called Nnamah

became a household name for lending money with interest rates in the forties and fifties of the last century.

Many Igbo also came to Calabar to obtain some form of education. Calabar was one of the earliest areas to embrace Western education and harboured long-standing institutions such as the Duke Town School (1946), and the Hope Waddell Training Institution (1895). The latter, in particular, assumed an international character playing host to many students from all over Nigeria and beyond. Students like Daniel Nelaingo came from Brass; Frank Bruce Jaja from Opobo; and Joseph Akwa from Fernando Po (Aye, 1986: 3). It is also worthy to note that the Hope Waddell Training Institution was the alma mater of great men of Igbo extraction such as the first Governor-General of Nigeria – Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and the governor of Eastern Nigeria – Dr. Akanu Ibiam. Hope Waddell records reveal that Akanu Ibiam was a very outstanding student, who, together with Alvan Ikoku, won many awards in 1916. He (Akanu Ibiam) studied medicine in the United Kingdom and returned after his sojourn to head the school as its first indigenous (Nigerian) principal between 1957 and 1960 (Aye, 1986: 196). From here he was appointed the Governor of Eastern Nigeria, and assumed that position in 1961. Similarly, Idika Kalu and Eni Njoku were alumni of the Hope Waddell Training Institution. The former was a member of the school's football team and won several awards for active participation in football in 1936 (Aye, 1986: 130). The latter who graduated in 1936 became a renowned professor.

Calabar continued to receive large numbers of Igbo strangers over the years especially with the construction of new road networks like the Calabar – Ikot Ekpene – Aba, and Calabar. - Ikot Ekpene – Umuahia roads and the establishment of new educational institutions. The impact of these Igbo migrants on the city cannot be overemphasized and would be examined under the last section; socio-economic impact of stranger communities.

The Hausa In Calabar

The city of Calabar witnessed the arrival of the earliest Hausa settlers during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Hausa arrived at different times and for various purposes. Some were war veterans who

settled in Calabar after the First World War. It is noted that Calabar formed the Third Battalion hosting the Nigerian Regiment of the West African Frontier Force (W.A.F.F.). Nonetheless, the bulk of the Hausa settlers in Calabar have attributed their migration to economic/commercial factor. This assertion is not far from the truth as the economic factor, which manifested itself through Hausa participation in the long distance trade, played a highly significant role in motivating Hausa settlement in Calabar (Adam, 1992: 18). In their separate researches, Mahdi Adamu and John Works Jr. rightly affirmed that Hausa migration to the forest belt is largely attributable to commercial enterprise (Adamu, 1978: 113; Works, Jr., 1976: 2 – 3).

The Hausa migrants in Calabar arrived in small groups, the founding fathers or earliest settlers being Abubakar Bagobiri, Mohammed Nakura, Shehu Pinky, Dan Saidu, Sarki Bakare and Mai Aku (Lawal/Int/1992). These men who came with at least an aide each, arrived on foot as cattle merchants though participating in bits of ornamental trade. Their route of migration was through Ogoja and Ikom and finally Calabar. Calabar was linked to Northern Nigeria through this land route. Adiele Afigbo rightly confirmed the existence of trade routes linking the south to the north as early as the 1750's. One of these was the land route from Ibi (on the Benue) through Wukari to Iyalla (in Ogoja), through Ikom and other towns down to Calabar (Afigbo, 1987:41). Gabriel Ogunremi further mentioned Ikom as one of the large trade centres (Ogunremi, 1982:194). Based on this and available information at the Hausa quarters, we can conclude that the early Hausa immigrants arrived Calabar through the Ogoja – Ikom – Calabar route after trading at Ikom.

On arrival in the city of Calabar, the early Hausa groups, and indeed subsequent ones, met the indigenous local population made up of the Efik, Qua and Efut, as well as other Nigerian and non-Nigerian settlers like the Igbo, Yoruba, Lebanese and Indians.

They (the Hausa) were quartered in rented houses that were located on Calabar Road in the heart of the ancient city. Not satisfied with this location, in 1917, the Hausa, led by Sarki Bakare, Pashe Maka, and Abubakar Bagobiri, demanded for a permanent residential area from the colonial authorities. Part of the letter read, "the necessity for our having our own

quarters is more felt than ever and the government will give us site, as it does in every important town in Nigeria where there is a large Hausa population" (Calprof 5/7/632, NA/E). The Hon. H. Bedwell promised "the matter will receive attention as soon as the District Officer returns to the Headquarters" (Calprof 5/7/632, NA/E).

In explaining the urgent need to relocate from Calabar Road, the Head of the Hausa community maintained that the Hausa, on arrival, met the Yoruba with whom they were quartered and jointly erected the mosque at Calabar road. Although both groups professed the Islamic religion, they belonged to different sects. While majority of the Hausa belonged to the Quadriyya and Tijaniyya sects, the Yoruba were largely Ahmadiyyas. The Ahmadiyyas do not attend the annual Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca because of their unbelief in Prophet Mohammed as the seal of all the prophets. The Hausa viewed this seriously and needed to relocate.

Secondly, the preference of the Hausa to live exclusively from other groups made it imperative to ask for a new residential area. In a study of the Hausa community in Ghana, J. Rouch observed that different groups of migrants organised themselves differently in the foreign towns to which they migrated (see Cohen, 1976: 14). Distinguishing between the two kinds of migrant organizations, he observed that some groups were organised in segmental, ephemeral "tribal" associations, while others, like the Hausa, organised autonomous, multipurpose "tribal communities". Similarly, Toyin Falola's research on migrant settlers in Ife society (Falola, 1985: 33), attested to the exclusive and autonomous habitation of migrant Hausa settlers. John Works Jr., on his part, identified both commerce and culture as the forces responsible for the closely knit communities. Hence, "over the years, the Hausa language, commercial exchange, hierarchical political organisation in several traditional states, and increased allegiance to Islam have knit the area together" (Works Jr., 1976: 1).

Although the demands of the Hausa to relocate were not met immediately, either because of the District officer's absence or bureaucratic bottlenecks, meeting these demands was not difficult for a number of reasons. The indigenous communities who owned most of the land and who had to be considered in this matter were well disposed towards stranger communities and accommodated the Hausa as they did other groups.

Indigenous groups attested to the peace-loving and law-abiding nature of the Hausa people in Calabar, a factor that facilitated their settlement in the city. This researcher affirmed that the host communities felt comfortable with the Hausa based on the understanding that they were long distance traders, and not civil servants that would compete for employment opportunities with them. Also, the Hausa earned the sympathy of the Colonial Administrators who treated them fairly and were not opposed to their attempt at preserving their cultural institutions and maintaining their homogeneity and identity.

In the third decade of the twentieth century, one of the pioneer Hausa migrants, Abubakar Bagobiri, rented the whole expanse of land known as Bagobiri, from an Efik House, Duke House, after due consultation and permission from the Resident and the District Officer (Lawal/Int/1992). He singularly paid a yearly token as rent for obtaining the area, and distributed the plots of land among Hausa migrants (Lawal/Int/1992). This researcher posits that the Hausa quarters in Calabar which should have been known as Sabon Gari, meaning new town, like most Hausa settlements outside Hausa land, was called Bagobiri because of the magnanimity of Abubakar Bagobiri.

In all, the Hausa migrants left their temporary settlement to Bagobiri in 1935. This movement was completed by the beginning of 1936. About a year later, the Bagobiri mosque was erected in the heart of the quarters.

From the 1990's, Hausa community expanded rapidly. They have long expanded beyond the Bagobiri area to include Gokdie and Mary Slessor streets. Their expansion too in commerce and religion has known no bounds. The new central mosque built by the Hausa during the 1990's stands tall on the right flank as one enters the metropolis through the Mary Slessor Avenue – a pointer to the fact that the Hausa community in Calabar, although a migrant group, has indeed made Calabar their final place of habitation. In the next section we examine the socio-economic impact of both the Hausa and Igbo on Calabar.

The socio-economic Impact of the Igbo and Hausa communities

The socio-economic impact of stranger communities in Calabar cannot be overemphasized. Their presence has led to an increase in the population of the city. Archival records confirm that by 1937, the adult male strangers in Calabar were as follows: Yoruba – 173; Itshekiri – 15; Hausa 176; Ijaw 55; Igbo – 1554; Ibibio – 1867 and Bini – 74 (MINLOC File, No. 8965 vol. 1, 11/10/37). Between 1952 and 1953, D. Simmons estimated the population of Calabar to be 125,000 (Simmons, 1956: 12) and in 1963, the census figure showed that Calabar had 99,352 residents (see N.P.C. Census, 1963). The creation of states in May 1967, which made Calabar a state capital and an urban centre, further led to its population growth. The population of Calabar increased and has continued to grow at an annual rate of 5% to 221,000 in 1978 (NISER, 1980: 28). Today the city of Calabar is home to more than 5 million inhabitants.

As the population of the town appreciated, school enrolment was also affected. The establishment of more institutions like the Edgerley Memorial Girls Secondary School at Edgerley Road, St. Patricks College at Ikot Ansa in 1934, the West African People's Institute (WAPI) in 1938, Holy Child Secondary School in 1953, the relocation of Duke Town Secondary School to the present Duke Town campus of the University of Calabar, the establishment of the Polytechnic (now Cross River University of Technology), and the commencement of the University of Calabar in 1975 all led to an increase in population. The stranger communities, especially the Igbo and Ibibio, greatly outnumbered the indigenous communities in these educational institutions. For instance in 1931, out of a student population of 587 enrolled in Hope Waddell Training Institution, the Igbo made up 183 while the "Efik" came a distant second with 119 students (Hope Waddell Log. Book).

At the higher level, the University of Calabar which was a campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, until 1975, has also witnessed an increase in student population. The bulk of these students arrive Calabar from neighbouring towns like Aba, Umuahia, Owerri and Port Harcourt. Accordingly, their influx into the city has resulted in the rise of new settlements

around these institutions. For instance, these educational institutions attracted teachers, labourers, shoe menders, traders, bricklayers, electricians, carpenters, both indigenes and non-indigenes alike to their different locations. Based on this, new residential areas such as Mbukpa and Edibe Edibe developed around Edgerley Girls School; Marian and Goldie around Holy Child Girls School; and Etta Agbor, Orok Orok, Yellow Duke, and Mount Zion streets developed around former Duke town Secondary School (presently Duke Town Campus of the University of Calabar (Aye/Int/2002)

Similarly, new road networks and markets were opened. The Mbukpa market was one of such markets that were established shortly after the foundation of Edgerley Girls School. Smaller markets located on Goldie and Edim Otop streets were also opened for transaction. The Bagobiri area also developed a market where food items like tomatoes, onions and other vegetables from Northern Nigeria were offloaded almost on a daily basis by big lorries that made the area their terminus. These developments, no doubt, enhanced the volume of trade in the city.

Furthermore, the effects of the activities of stranger communities who arrived Calabar to engage in business, obtain gainful employment or education, have had tremendous impact on the growth and development of the town. This has, no doubt, put pressure on the social services available especially housing. It is important to note that because of inadequate houses caused by population explosion, Calabar landlords increased their rents at every excuse in order to maximize profits. Research study conducted among landlords and students residing around the University of Calabar axis – Etta Agbor, Mount Zion and Yellow Duke streets – reveals that students pay between sixty and ninety thousand naira annually for a self-contained room (which includes a toilet, bathroom and kitchen). A room where the occupant shares the toilet, bathroom and kitchen with other tenants, goes for between twenty five to forty thousand naira. In an interview with seventeen students of the University of Calabar, they were unanimous in attributing the high rents to the presence of their colleagues (especially the Igbo) who travel from far distances and are willing to pay any amount charged by landlords without any resistance.

Furthermore, the influx of stranger communities into Calabar resulted in improved inter-ethnic relations between the migrant and host communities. This came in the form of economic exchange, inter ethnic marriages, participation in social events and exchange of gifts. Economically, internal and external trade were sustained as both groups exchanged goods found in their various localities. From the Hausa, the host communities obtained their beef, vegetables, like onions, tomatoes, carrots and cabbage in addition to northern textiles, and leather products. From Igbo speaking areas came textile and yam from Onitsha, rice from Abakiliki, motor parts, electronics and household provisions from Aha, amongst other items. In return, the Hausa and Igbo obtained Kola nuts, palm oil, dry fish and crayfish from the Calabar people. These commercial items were transported by land in big lorries. The various markets in the city of Calabar serve as places for economic exchange. They include the Watt market, Etim Edem, Ika-Ika Oqua, Akim Qua markets. Others are the Henshaw Town Beach market, Ikot Ishie market, Marina, Mbukpa, Eight miles and Goldie markets. The Hausa quarters at Bagobiri also has a mini market where commercial transaction occurs between the Hausa and other indigenous and non-indigenous groups.

Aside serving as places of economic exchange, these markets enhanced good inter ethnic relationship as various ethnic groups were seen and are still seen trading among themselves.

Subsequently, inter-ethnic marriages became a common feature between the host and stranger communities resident in Calabar. An earlier research conducted in the late 1970's and early 1980's revealed "the state probably commonly married to or from is the Bendel State" (NISER, 1980:28). There are many Calabar men married to Edo or Delta State women (formerly Bendel State) and vice versa. This trend has continued unabated. There have also been good measures of inter-ethnic marriages between the Igbo/Yoruba and the indigenous ethnic groups. Hausa men have also married indigenous Efik, Qua and Efut women, but unlike other ethnic groups, these marriages tended to "detrribalize" the women. An earlier research on the migrant Hausa in Calabar illustrated that the indigenous Calabar women, on marrying Hausa men, were forced to change both their religion and their first names to reflect Islamic names (Adam,

1992: 89). Thus a woman bearing Obonganwan, Iquo or Efioanwan would now be renamed Aisha, Safiya or Hadiza and so on. Significantly, the reverse rarely occurred as indigenous Efik Qua or Efut men were not attracted to Hausa women.

The cordial relationship between the indigenous and stranger communities in Calabar was also manifested through the mutual participation and exchange of gifts during chieftaincies, marriages and festive occasions such as Christmas and Sallah celebrations. For instance, over the years, the coronation ceremony of a new monarch, Obong of Calabar, has often recorded the presence of the Sarki Hausawa (Chief of the Hausa) and his cohorts at the occasion. This trend has been observed to this day. In 1950, the Hausa community in Calabar, led by Sarki Bagobiri attended the church and traditional coronation ceremonies of Obong Ededem Archibong V (Cadist 1/17/1,NA/C). Similarly, the incumbent Hausa chief, Sarki Lawal claims to have participated in the coronation ceremonies of all the Efik monarchs since he assumed headship of the Hausa community in the 1960's (Lawal/Int/1992) to date. When Edidem (Prof.) Nta Elijah Henshaw ascended the Efik throne in December 2001, the Sarki was conspicuously present at the coronation festivities. The cordial relationship the Sarki enjoys with the Calabar people cannot be overemphasized. As early as 1963, he was honoured with a chieftaincy title by the Obong's Traditional Council (Adam, 1992: 125). This has to a great extent, fostered the relationship between the Hausa and the Efik.

Other stranger groups have also been participants in these ceremonial activities, and have had their deserving sons honoured with chieftaincy titles. With regard to the Igbo community, the highly respected Igbo leader, Chief Emmanuel Ezenweyi, was also honoured by the Efik and was a friend of the late Efik monarch, Edidem Bassey Eyo Ephraim Adam III (1982 – 1986). Similarly Prof. Alex Menkiti, a University of Calabar don, received chieftaincy honours from the Efut people of Calabar. These examples highlight the mutual relationship that exists between stranger communities in Calabar and their host communities.

Another significant impact of stranger communities in Calabar was the development of Town Unions. With the exception of the Hausa autonomous community, stranger communities organised themselves into

Town Unions with the aim of catering for the welfare of their members. Some of these unions, however, developed into pressure groups over the years. The Egbe Omo Oduduwa was one of such formidable group of Yoruba sons and daughters (Adam, 1992: 95). The Igbo were not left behind in the formation of ethnic Unions. Archival records revealed that the Igbo Community Union with an initial numerical strength of about 2,000 was founded in 1923. (Cadist 1/6/1317,NA/C). It was further split into sub-groups like the Onitsha Divisional Union, which was established in 1925, the Orlu Divisional Union in 1958, and the Awka District Union in 1962 amongst many other unions (Cadist 1/6/1317,NA/C).

The Ibibio also had the Ibibio state Union, which was formed at Calabar in 1927 (Udoma, 1987: 38), and in later years, the Bini, Annang, Oron and other resident non-indigenous groups formed unions to enhance their member's welfare. Members held monthly meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest. Consequently, the formation of these ethnic unions led to the creation and celebration of ethnic "days" like the Igbo day, Ibibio day and son on, to demonstrate their ethnic solidarity (Aye, 1967:170). These "days" were usually marked during the months of November and December. Business activities were halted and members appeared in traditional apparel. Masquerades and dances entertained guests and the days were observed generally with pomp and pageantry. Aside this, the Igbo in Calabar also celebrate the annual New Yam Festival. As earlier noted, some of these unions have, indeed, developed into pressure groups within Calabar, and indigenous politicians have had to depend on their numerical strength to win elections.

In all, while the indigenous and migrant groups maintained a cordial relationship, there were occasional disagreements between them. Research shows that the 1950's in Calabar were marked with political thuggery and violence as a result of politics (Akoda, 2002: 291 ff). This pitched the indigenous Efik group against stranger communities, particularly the Igbo. The participation of stranger communities in the administrative reforms of the 1950's, which the indigenes, particularly the Efik resented, posed a problem (Akoda, 2002: 265 – 294). Aside these diversions, however, the atmosphere between the indigenous communities and stranger groups was cordial and indeed has remained so.

Conclusion

From the analysis above, the city of Calabar was a focus of stranger communities from the eighteenth century. It embraced people of diverse cultures, origins and languages. As a result, Calabar became a heterogeneous society. The socio-economic impact of these stranger communities (with emphasis on the Igbo and Hausa) on their host city has been quite obvious. The city has witnessed an increase in population, which has in turn exerted much pressure on the existing social amenities, particularly housing and school enrolment. Positively, however, new schools and markets were constructed as well as road networks. The Igbo and Hausa communities also contributed to the increase in the volume of trade in Calabar; sustained internal trade between Southern and Northern Nigeria and improved inter-group relations with their Calabar hosts manifested in inter-ethnic marriages, and social activities amongst others. These developments have enhanced the growth and development of the city of Calabar and sustained the metropolitan character, which the city developed as a major trade entrepot in the Atlantic slave trade era.

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