

**MIGRATION, IDENTITY AND CONFLICT: THE IDOMA-FULANI
RELATIONSHIP IN BENUE STATE, 1980-2015**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **EMMANUEL ALI SALISU** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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Head of Department

Date _____

Date _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God for His love, my parents Mr and Mrs Ali Salisu
Agbochenu thank you for your prayer and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty for his grace and mercy towards my life and family. I thank my amazing parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ali Salisu Agbochenu for their support and prayers. I thank my lecturers in the Department of History and International Studies for the knowledge in which they have poured on me over the years with special recognition to my supervisor, Mr. Ekhaton- Obogie Osaisonor Godfrey.

To my Grandparents, Mr. Isaac Aina Mrs Oluwatoyin Rachael Aina, thank you for your prayers and words of encouragement and assistance in this endeavor.

I cannot fail to appreciate my friends and colleagues in the University of Benin, Edefe Unity, Agbofure Henry, Aikhegbe Gabriella, Adetunji Ifeoluwa, Kiroro David, Nduke-Abasi Imo Sam, Nosakhere Loveth Eghosa, Enaigbe Precious Oyemwen, Abiola Adufe Joel, Ganihu Blessing and Odafe-Akortha Josephine, thank you guys for acting as brothers and sisters here in school.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Crop farmers and Cattle herder's conflicts have remained the most prevailing resource-use conflict in Benue State especially in Ado, Agatu, Apa, Otukpo Local Government Area. Social and economic factors continue to inflame violent conflicts. The competition between these two agricultural land user-groups threatens the means of survival and livelihoods of both groups in the above Local Government Area.¹ This chapter considered the background of the study and the research problem. It also looked at the significance of undertaking the research to the people of the area and the nation as a whole. In addition, the purpose and what the research intends to achieve is succinctly spelt out. Also, considered is the period of the commencement and termination of the research and the reasons for the choice of the periods.

Nigeria is one of the nation states in Africa that has been affected by insecurity across its thirty-six States. Prior to the emergence of herders-farmers conflict, assassination, kidnapping, robbery, violence arising from political, ethnic, religious and domestic violence have been the issues associated with insecurity.² But in recent times, the emergences of herders-farmers conflict, coupled with assassination, kidnapping, robbery, banditry, among others, have turned some of

the states and territories unsafe. It should be noted that the conflict between herders and farmers has increased with a record of more than 9,000 premature death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people within the country.³ In the same vein, violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria is at high rate in the North-West, Middle Belt. Against this backdrop, this study examines the changing dynamics of farmers-herders relations in Idoma-Fulani community in Benue State.

Idoma, inhabitants of the region east of the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers in southern Nigeria. A number of peoples, including the Agala, Iyala, Okpoto, Nkum, and Iguwale, are classified as speakers of distinguishable Idoma dialects, which belong to the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family of languages. Within the dialect cluster there is a considerable degree of mutual intelligibility, though there is an absence of cultural and political unity among Idoma speakers.⁴ Fulani, a primarily Muslim people scattered throughout many parts of Africa, mostly in West Africa from Lake Chad in the east to the Atlantic coast. They are concentrated principally in Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, Senegal, and Niger but can also be found in several other countries. The Fulani language, known as Fula, is classified within the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo language family.⁵

The physical features of Idomaland have been classified into three distinct types. 5 The first of these is the Benue floodplains which covers the Northernmost escarpment of Agatu district extending further South to six and ten kilometres south of the Benue river which has a narrow strip latitudinally passing through Agatu territory some seventy-two kilometres East of Lokoja and the Niger-Benue confluence area. The plains are usually flooded during the months of August, September and October. The second one is to the South of the floodplains and it is an area which is gently undulating. This covers most of Owukpa, Orokam, Otukpa and Western parts of Onyagede, Ugboju, Adoka, Ochekwu and Agatu districts. The monotony of the landscape here is broken into a number of flat-topped, steep-sided ridges with an average height of between 1000 and 1,500 metres above sea level.⁶ The third is to the East of this region and it covers approximately 1/3 of Idomaland. This is a fairly hilly terrain with a height that averages not less than 500 metres above sea level. The rivers and streams of the districts from the North flow into the Benue, while those from the South flow into the larger tributaries of the Cross River. In the Southern and Southwestern districts of Oju, Igumale and Agila, they flow into river Onwu, which is a tributary of the Cross River further South.⁷ In the Western parts of Idomaland, particularly in Otukpo and Orokam, surface water supply becomes scarce during some months in the dry season and

palm wine is sometimes substituted for water for some domestic purposes. The land is generally nurtured by a number of perennial streams which unite to form large rivers like Ogbadibo, Ogengen, Okpokwu, Onyongo, Ombi, Ogoli and Ogaji. Most of these rivers are characterised by strong seasonal flow and sometimes overflow their banks during the rainy season.⁸

Idomaland is primarily made up of sedimentary rocks, which comprise of shales and sandstone of the cretaceous period. While the sand stones that are the major rocks in the Benue floodplains are coal bearing, the shales on their part contain different types and qualities of limestone. With the exception of the Benue floodplains where hydromorphic and alluvial soils abound, the remaining part of Idomaland consist predominantly of red, deep and sand loam soil. In other parts of the land like Utonkon, the sub-soil is mixed with a greyish clay soil with resultant thick cover that makes it very fertile. Towards the Southeastern districts of Otukpa, Owukpa and Orokam, the soil is very red and deep sand loam and less fertile. However, in areas of little vegetational cover, the clayed conditions of the deep sub-soil has been thoroughly weathered and extensively laterized.⁹

As it is the case with other parts of Nigeria, Idomaland has two seasons, namely, the wet season and the dry season. Controlled by the West maritime and South-westerly monsoon wind from the Atlantic Ocean, the wet season usually

starts from the end of April, breaks briefly in August and stops by mid-October. At the beginning of this season, conventional rainfall is frequent and it is usually accompanied by thunder. The heaviest rains are recorded in July and September. The mean annual rainfall has been approximated at between 1016 and 1524 mm.⁹ The dry season is characterised by the harmattan wind, which is a Northeasterly wind from the Sahara desert. This season normally starts from late November and lasts till the end of March. During this period, the daily temperature of the land drops to between 25 o and 35 o C and an average relative humidity of between 60% and 90%, that makes many parts of Idomaland very hot.¹⁰

Statement of the Problem

Farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria especially in the Middle Belt region, has not been a new occurrence but for it has since intensified especially in 2015. These conflicts have had significant humanitarian repercussions with so many internally displaced people spread out around the country. Between January 2016 and October 2018, at least 3,641 people were killed, 406 people were injured, 5,000 homes were destroyed, and 182,530 people were displaced with 57% of all these occurring in 2018. Furthermore, the farmer herder crisis has also a large amount of economic disadvantage to the states affected and even the country at large. Benue, Kaduna, Taraba, and Plateau lost 47%of their internally generated revenue and every year, the federal government of Nigeria loses \$13.7 billion in

revenue to this conflict. The Nigerian government and various literatures have tried to find the root cause of this conflict such as environmental factors, scarcity of land etc. so as to be able to tackle the violent crises But these root causes appear not to be the major cause and so have yielded no results in tackling the conflict as killings and destruction of properties is still on the rise. This research therefore examined another dimension of the cause of the conflict. That is instead of climate change, the research focuses on the negligence of the Nigerian government as the root cause of the upsurge in the conflict

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the changing dynamics of the relationship between Idoma and Fulani people in Benue State.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the causes and nature of Idoma/Fulani conflicts in Benue State.
2. Discuss the impact of farmers-herders conflicts between Idoma-Fulani, in Benue State and
3. Evaluate the degree of governmental response in curbing the farmers-herders conflicts between Idoma-Fulani in Benue State.

Significance of the Study

Intellectuals have attempted to identify the root causes of the conflict and propose solutions to address it. However, there is a serious gap because the federal

government responds to the conflict, especially its lack of fairness in handling the conflict, the ethno-religious prejudice of the government which has not been mentioned or discussed. Hence, this research helps to bridge the gap, and also ways in which the crises can be curtailed and managed. This research therefore is crucial because it shows how a conflict occurring in one part of the country, in this case the Middle Belt, can have an adverse effect on the whole country economically and can also pose a severe security threat to the country at large. As a student of international relations, this research gives an insight on how a crisis occurring in a small region can pose a security threat to not only the country but also the world at large.

Scope of the Study

The socio-economic effects of the herder/farmer conflicts between Idoma-Fulani in Benue State are the focus of the research. The study will examine the origins, causes, and consequences of herdsman/farmers' crises between Idoma-Fulani in four L.G.A of Benue State as part of its primary focus. The study's focus is only on Ado, Agatu, Apa, Otukpo Local Government Area.

Research Methodology

The type and methodology to be used in conducting this research project are described in this part. The study focuses on the past. For the purpose of

gathering data, the research uses both main and secondary sources. As a result, the focus of the conversation in this part will be on the differences between primary and secondary sources of study material.

Primary Sources

These sources of research data entail essentially both written and oral testimony provided in their original form. Besides, there are documents which are classified or considered as primary sources of research data. These documents include; files, laws, manuscripts, records, letters, official minutes and publications, research reports, maps, diagrams, catalogued, wills, pictures etc.

Secondary sources: Secondary sources constitute books, newspapers journals, and internet sources that helped develop the work. Edo state and John Harris library were consulted. It should be noted here that old Punch newspapers, Vanguard Newspaper and ThisDay Newspaper will be consulted for the research work

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

Consequent upon the quest for in-depth knowledge on herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria with the period covered by this study an extensive review of relevant literature was carried out. The insights derived from the books consulted are explained below.

Sani Garba, article titled “Socio-Economic Assessment of Resource Use Conflict between Crop Farmers and Cattle Herders in Misau Local Government Area, Bauchi State.”¹ The article had the following specific objectives: to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers and cattle herders; determine the socio-economic causes of the conflict in the study area; determine the socio-economic effects of conflict on both groups, evaluate the perception of crop farmers and cattle herders on the performance of institutions involved in managing the conflict. The author concluded that crop farmers and cattle herders’ conflict instigate a loss of livelihoods to both groups and contributes to spread and persistent violence such as ethnic clashes and armed robbery. Therefore, it is in the interest of the State to address the genuine needs of the cattle herders for availability of grazing land, resolve the recurring conflicts in the agricultural

sector that provides employment to reasonable portion of the country's population. The author finally recommends that farmers should adopt intensive cultivation by using improved seeds and farm inputs. The cattle herders should embark on fodder production such as growing of Guatemala and Bracharia to feed their cattle in times of scarcity during the dry season. The author also recommends that the religious, traditional and nomad leaders should give more efforts in preaching the implications of the conflict on the people and the community in general.²

Omata, Joab Bako, work titled "Overage Of Tiv/Fulani Conflict: A Study of Daily Trust and Vanguard Newspapers March 2014- March 2015,"³ posits one of the most serious problems facing Nigeria as a country today is the high incidence of the Tiv/Fulani conflict. The conflict has become so rampant that no day passes without an incident of conflict reported in the national newspapers in one part of the country or the other. Thus, it seems that the audacity of the perpetrators increases daily as more lives are lost and properties destroyed. The author reveal that some of the differences in the perspective of the Tiv/Fulani conflict are affected by ideological leanings, sectional loyalties, biases, interest and misinterpretation which have negative effect on the people like hatred and social unrest which eventually leads to poor development. The amount of coverage given to the conflict situation is often determined by the location and ownership of

these newspapers. The author recommends that engagement with the people and ethical practices are imperative in order to avoid misinterpretation and wrong framing of headlines and inside stories.⁴

O. Okeke, in his book, “*Conflicts between Fulani herders and in central and southern Nigeria;*”⁵ opines that the dimensions, processes, and groups engaged in herdsman/farmers crises greatly differ. It was noted that whereas some resource-related crises involve the same user group for example, between two agricultural communities other crises involve other user groups of people, such as between herdsman and cultivators or between forestry professionals and farmers.⁶

R, S. Adisa in his book, “*Land Use Conflict between Farmers and Herdsman Implications for Agricultural and Rural Development in Nigeria;*”⁷ observed that Nigeria's most pervasive resource-use problem continues to be the farmers-herdsman conflict. Egwu claims that severe crises of various ethnic and religious groups across the states have existed in Nigeria and continue to exist. The dimensions, processes, and parties engaged in these conflicts all differ considerably.⁸

P.I. Olayoku. *Trends and patterns of Cattle Grazing and violence in Nigeria 2006-2014;*⁹ It was noted that confrontations between cultivators and herders, irrespective of their root reasons, have intensified as the overall number of

recorded fatalities has risen. The existence and way of life of both farmers and ranchers have been seriously threatened by these disasters. The assignment of Fasona and Omojola, who observed that the herders-farmers' crisis in Nigeria accounted for 35% of all recorded crises between 1991 and 2005, also supported the information provided above. In addition to causing massive property damage, this increased regularity and severity of rivalry among different land users has a detrimental effect on rural growth. These emergencies have shown a high potential to worsen the social and economic crisis, especially in remote areas where the majority of disputes are confined, with reverberating effects across the country.

Review of the crisis/conflict idea from the previous class. Violence or the possibility for violence has been associated with crises.¹⁰ It is frequently referenced to as both the avoided strategy and the real prelude to conflict. Conflict does not have a single, recognised meaning. P. Wallenstein defines conflict as an event where two or more groups compete for the same limited resources at the same time in chapter three of his book, *Understanding Conflicts Resolution*. Scholars usually concur that there must be more than one party in a fight and that timing is crucial in understanding war, peace, as well as the framework of globalization. According to Peter Wallenstein, disputes regarding economic the initial phase, human security, environmental issues, and historical

concerns could be overlooked by the terminology because resources have more than just an economic purpose¹¹. These disputes are not always about assets and even when they are, the resources involved are often not limited. Furthermore, rather than being based on views or behaviour as it has traditionally been described, conflicts are frequently based on perspectives. According to Schramm-Nielsen's piece "Conflicts management in Scandinavia" A conflict is defined as a condition of substantial disagreement as well as contention over anything vital to at least one of the persons concerned.

Obi Success Esomch, article "The Implication of Farmers - Herders Conflicts on the Socio-Economic Development of Omala L.G.A, Kogi State, North Central Nigeria"¹² examines how farmers-herdsmen conflict constitutes a threat to rural development, internal security, and socio-economic development in Nigeria about Omala Local Government Area of Kogi State, North Central Nigeria.²² The author revealed among others that; Crop damage by cattle, land encroachment without permission, inadequate grazing reserves, lack of access to water points, killing of stray cattle, pollution of the water point, cattle routes blockage, Mbororo migrants, ECOWAS treaty, fertile land of the host community, socio-economic, cultural differences, the political economy of cattle herders were major causes and persistence of farmers pastoralists conflicts. The author among

others recommends that; since farmers pastoralists conflicts were resource-based conflict due to blockage of cattle route by farmers which eventually leads to encroachment of farmers land and thus translate to open violence and animosity, there is a need for resignification of cattle routes for the pastoralist to have a route to avoid farmlands encroachment, regarding the transit route for irregular migrants through Niger, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Chad, Cameroon, the author later suggested that the Minister of Interior should initiate dialogue with the neighboring governments on how to address and curb the rising number of migrants transiting border Nations.¹³

Okon Udo, article “The Impact of Herdsmen/Farmers Clashes on Food Security in Nigeria Christian,”¹⁴ revealed that farmers/herders crises in the country which has led to the wanton destruction of human lives and properties including livestock and farmland assets, has been the major cause of low agricultural production in the country. He also discovered that the displacement of farmers was due to the high level of insecurity of the farmlands due to the activities of the warring parties to the conflicts which made those places unsafe for habitation. In line with the findings of the Okon work, it was recommended, amongst others, that improved and modern ways of livestock management should

be employed by the government as an agricultural policy for the entire country to encourage new ways of doing this business.¹⁵

Akah Pius Odey, article “Farmers/ Herdsmen Conflict and Food Security in Obanliku, Upper Cross River Region of Nigeria, Since 1997,”¹⁶ examined and analyzed the factors responsible for the clashes between farmers and herdsmen in Obanliku and its impacts on food security system in the area. He argued that the early 1990s heralded an upsurge of violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the Upper Cross River region of Nigeria. The author indicates that the major cause of the conflict is struggle for acquisition and control of arable lands for farming and grazing, especially in the dry season. Other triggers of the conflict were: crop destructions, cattle rustling, pollution of water bodies and extortion of herders by traditional rulers. Efforts to resolve the conflict by Government and stakeholders so far have been unsuccessful. The author concludes that as a result of the long established residence of the herders based on mutual understanding, traditional approaches to conflict resolution anchored on traditional norms and values should be adopted to resolve the incessant conflict to engender food security.¹⁷

Another important study is Nathaniel Olugbade Adeoye, article, “Land use conflict between Farmers and Herdsmen in parts of Kano, Yobe and Borno States

of Nigeria: nomads' viewpoints.”¹⁸ It is evident from this article that the conflict between the nomadic herdsmen and farmers hinged on land resource control, which has been heightened by pressure on land from the two conflict actors and the absence or lack of clarity of land use boundaries. For instance, the study revealed that farmers' intrusion on the grazing reserves and herdsmen's deliberate grazing of cattle on crops were the main drivers of violent conflict. This phenomenon of herders-farmers conflict represents what can be called a 'land resource control conflict', which poses a threat to sustainable societal progress and national security. The author also discovered that whenever there was violent conflict between herders and farmers, dangerous weapons of war such as charms, spears, swords, and guns were used to confront the opponents, though the sources of the weapons were not disclosed. He however gathered that the conflicts always affected the feuding parties in some ways. Sometimes lives were lost and properties including houses were destroyed. The author further showed that the interventions of the local chiefs and religious leaders, who often mediate using dialogue, produced better results than those of the law enforcement agents who sometimes use arrest and incarceration to quench crisis.¹⁹

Anastasia Sandra Akerjiir article titled “Increasing Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria: an Assessment of the Clashes between the Fulani Herdsmen and

Indigenous Farmers in Ukpabi-Nimbo Community Enugu State,”²⁰ focuses on the underlining factors that are responsible for the increasing farmer-herder’s conflict in Ukpabi-Nimbo community, Enugu state as a case study. In a bid to investigate the structural and processual variables, in understanding the conflict. He also examines the relationships that has existed over time due to the change in the mode of interaction, and the role of government in response to the conflict. It was also found that the government responses to the conflict is slow, and security forces are deployed to the community after an attack has been carried out by the said Fulani herdsman even though there was an earlier warning prior to the attack that took place in 2016. The study concludes that the investigation into the increasing farmers-herder’s in Ukpabi-Nimbo community is far beyond what the eyes can see, looking at the various factors involve for the escalations and the unclarity as to who is behind the sequences of events.²¹

Okpeh O. Okpeh and Yakubu A. Ochefu, “The Idoma Ethnic Group: A Historical and Cultural Setting,”²² posits the historical and cultural background of the Idoma and understanding the people and their society. In this work, a broad based and circumspective examination of the evolution and development of Idoma ethnicity is attempted. The authors also discusses the economic activities of the people and their socio-political organisation. The author paper has attempted to

establish the political, social and cultural background necessary for the understanding of the Idoma ethnic group on the one hand, and the relationship between it and its neighbours on the other. From our analysis of the origins and development of Idoma ethnicity, it is evident that the people have been involved in migrations from the Apa cradleland to their present location.²³ It is not clear when the people actually arrived at their present habitat although from the oral, secondary and ethnographical sources available, it is clear that the people have occupied their present location from the earliest period of which we have any knowledge

Taofiq James Fadeyi, “Causes and Effects of Farmers-Herders’ Conflict in North Central Nigeria: A Study of Benue and Plateau States,”²⁴ the author adopted a triangulation of the conflict and structural functionalist theories to provide theoretical direction for the work. The author identified a number of ecological, socio-economic and political factors as triggers of the lingering farmers-herders’ face-offs in the study area. It notes that the crisis is not altogether, a new phenomenon but one that is rooted in age-long historical antecedents. The author concludes that the conflict has not only grown in intensity but the level of hostility between the warring parties has festered due to a number of unresolved immediate and remote causes.²⁵ The author recommends the resuscitation of the abandoned

Land Reserve Act to provide for a fair, just and equitable accommodation of the interests of all the disputing parties as a lasting and sustainable solution to the endless farmers-herders' conflicts in Nigeria.

In as much as we agree, that these contributions and views have their own merits towards understanding the Effects of Fulani and Herdsman Farmers clashes on Agricultural development in Nigeria, but we must also agree that they have not been able to give a total study of the changing dynamics of Idoma/Fulani relations in Benue State Nigeria. All the books, articles and theses reviewed have been able to cover only some parts of my research. Therefore, this proves to a reasonable extent that a proper study has not been carried out the changing dynamics of Idoma/Fulani relations in Benue State Nigeria, if the studies done are only on the major ethnic groups leaving out the minority groups. This research seeks to fill that vacuum that has been created for a long while by various scholars.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

ESCALATION OF IDOMA-FULANI CRISIS IN BENUE STATE

Introduction

The relationship between the Idoma people in central Nigeria and the Fulani herders was primarily based on a cordial relationship centered on trade and a nomadic lifestyle. At first, the Fulani engaged in a nomadic lifestyle moving between different communities to gather greener pastures for their cattle. This relationship was peaceful and cordial. Overtime, however, clashes began to occur between the farmers and herders. This study seeks to examine the socio-political and economic relationship between the Idoma people and the Fulani-Herders before the advent of the crises. To appreciate a detailed analysis of this historical development, there is need to understand the geographical location of the Idoma people, their traditions of origin and how they lived their lives before the herders came into their community.

Geography and People of Idoma Land

What is today designated Idomaland lies south of the river Benue. With a population that has been estimated at slightly over one million by the 1991 census figures, it is the area of land located within the broad valley of the Benue river and the Cross River basin.¹ The main thrust of the land is a contiguous belt of territory

which stretches from the Southern banks of the river Benue to the Northern fringes of Igboland. This territory lies within Latitude 6° 30' North and Longitude 8° 0' East and covers a total land area of approximately 5,955 square kilometres.² The Idoma are bounded by the river Benue to the North, by parts of Igbo and Ogoja lands to the South, by the Tiv and Igede lands to the East and by Igalaland to the West. It should be noted that the geographical contours of this region had been clearly established by the mid nineteenth century; consequently, regardless of the administrative and political changes introduced during and after the colonial era, the Idoma ethnic label and territory has, by and large, remained virtually unchanged.³

The physical features of Idomaland have been classified into three distinct types. The first of these is the Benue floodplains which covers the Northernmost escarpment of Agatu district extending further South to six and ten kilometres south of the Benue river which has a narrow strip latitudinally passing through Agatu territory some seventy-two kilometres East of Lokoja and the Niger-Benue confluence area. The plains are usually flooded during the months of August, September and October. The second one is to the South of the floodplains and it is an area which is gently undulating.⁴ This covers most of Owukpa, Orokam, Otukpa and Western parts of Onyagede, Ugboju, Adoka, Ochekwu and Agatu

districts. The monotony of the landscape here is broken into a number of flat-topped, steep-sided ridges with an average height of between 1000 and 1,500 metres above sea level. The third is to the East of this region and it covers approximately 1/3 of Idomaland. This is a fairly hilly terrain with a height that averages not less than 500 metres above sea level.⁵

The earliest attempt to study the Idoma anchors their origins and ethnicity on the Akpoto (or Okpoto). This is an ethnic group that is presently extinct. According to this view which was made popular by S. Crowther in 1854, an ethnic group designated the Akpoto once occupied most part of the land now inhabited by the Igala, Idoma and Igbira. Although the identification of this group and the actual nature of their relationship with the Igala, Idoma and Igbirra is still being studied by researchers, evidence exists to support their antiquity in the Niger-Benue confluence area.⁶ For example, Armstrong argues that largely arising from the relatively wide application of the Akpoto nomenclature in this general area, it is possible that a kingdom and/or people known by that name once existed. This view is further reinforced by J. N. Ukwedeh's argument that the Akpoto should be perceived as an autochthonous group which gave birth to or played a fundamental role in the formation of modern Igala, Igbirra and Idoma societies. Then too, the evidence gleaned from the oral traditions of the Igala, Igbirra and Idoma ethnic

groups showed undoubtedly that the Akpoto were the earliest inhabitants of the present locations of these peoples.⁷

Farmers and Herders: Peaceful Coexistence due to Constant Migration

It should be noted that farmers in Idoma did not come into contact with the Fulani until the 1980s. This contact was very recently compared to other regions in the country, particularly the South West where the herders moved into the region as far back as the pre-colonial era.⁸ According to Esharegoma Obaba, 65 years old retired Teacher who participated in the interview session, the first encounter with the Fulani people was in the mid-1980s. When they arrived with their cattle, they were welcomed without any problems into the community.⁹ Esharegoma Obaba explained further:

“I can still remember clearly the first time we sighted Fulani herders in our community. They came into the town asking for the village head so that he could give them permission to graze their heads. They were peaceful, and one could tell that our community was not the first they had been to; they were definitely moving from one place to another. They left after six months only to come back two years later”¹⁰

Another respondent, who refused to be named, corroborated Esharegoma Obaba’s account of the cordial relationship between the Idoma and Fulani in the community in the 1980s when the herders first arrived. The respondent opined that

the difference in the relationship between the herders and farmers in the past and now, which has led to conflicts is because in the past, the herders were not permanently in the community.¹¹ According to him,

“The main reason that made the past relationship smooth compared to the present day was that when they came, they just stayed for a brief period- six months to one year, at most , two years- and then moved to another place. But that is not the case today, when they come, you think they will leave as soon as usual. But no, they continue to increase in numbers, and you know that the longer a visitor stays in your house, the greater the chance of having issues.”¹²

In earlier times, farmers, and herders had a cordial relationship, which was primarily centred on socio-economic activities. The farmers welcomed the herders to live with them in the community. They exchanged goods and services with each other; the farmers bought meat, carrots, sugarcane and suya from the herders and their relatives while the farmers sold their farm produce to the herders. During this period, some herders acquire land from the people of Idoma through rent, which they used to farm and build shelters for themselves.¹³

Moreover, both the farmers and herders in Idoma maintained a socially cordial relationship. This relationship was evident during festivals, religious celebrations, wedding ceremonies, naming ceremonies and burial ceremonies. For instance, during the festivals in Idoma, the people usually invited the herders and

their families to celebrate with them. And also, during Salah celebrations, the herders extended celebrations; the herders extended the celebrations to the people of Idoma. The love and unity were very pronounced to the extent that some indigenous men and women in Idoma converted to Islam and inter-marriages also occurred between them.¹⁴ According to an interview with Mrs. Asebe Omeyimi, a 54-years old, there was a time when the people of Idoma needed the Fulani in the community for their cattle to eat up the heavy grass that made farming difficult especially in dry season when there was shortage of rain. The herders' cattle could also provide manure for crops to well.¹⁵

No society in world history has existed as an Island. In several ways, the people of Idoma and the herders exchanged different levels of relationships at the level of trade. The economic relations between the people of Idoma and the herders provided the framework for fusing together diverse ethnic elements to promote different levels of interaction. The bonds of trade that hold different ethnic groups together are stronger than any sentiments that could divide these groups. Based on the analysis above, the people of Idoma have well-developed socio-cultural relations that cut across festivals, formal marriages, informal education, burial and age-grade relations and other socio-cultural activities. It is important to note that these activities strengthen their inter-group relations with

people who have come settle in Idoma.¹⁶ However, as population grew, desertification and other pressures increased overtime, the delicate equilibrium between farmers and herders in Idoma has been disrupted. The Increasing desertification and environmental degradation in the northern part of Nigeria have forced these herders to migrate southwards in search of suitable grazing lands and water source for their livestock.¹⁷ As these herders moved into Idoma with the intention of settlement, coupled with the increasing population growth of the Idoma population and limited land available for farming and herding, competition began to arise, leading to conflict between farmers and herders in Idoma.¹⁸

Fulani/Benue Crisis, How it Started

The Idoma people of the middle region share a long history of peaceful co-existence with the Fulanis of the northern Nigeria. The two groups are known to be involved in business relationships for a very long time. Oral account among the Idoma people has it that the Idoma's and the Fulanis were at one point in time bosom friends, who lived and tended cattle together, when the Idoma decided to migrate to the middle belt region, they demanded for their cattle from the Fulanis which they later obliged. After the successful migration, the Idoma who are known for their deep penchant for meat, upon the next meeting with the Fulanis declared *munchi*, meaning I have eaten it, a name that has stuck with them for years.¹⁹

Unfortunately the once convivial relationship has become a vinegary one almost at all points when these former bed mates meet, there tends to arise a confrontation. The major issue behind the crisis was traceable to conflicts over grazing fields and farm lands placing pastoralists and farmers on a constant collusion.²⁰

According to Prof. Iyorwuese Hagher, January 10, 2013, an executive director of the Africa leadership institute, Dayton, Ohio, narrated that, the crisis started on 23rd June 2001. Mr. Iortim Umande, an unarmed Idoma farmer, found Fulani cattle eating up his crops. When he tried to drive the cattle out of his farm, the Fulani took out his sword and killed him. Consequently, this led to reprisals and counter reprisals by both the Fulanis and the Idoma till date.²¹ Though, according to another source, the National Vice-President of the cattle breeders association, Alhaji Hussaini Bosso, their problem in Benue State started when Suswam publicly announced that he did not want them in the state. They said that his statement led to the massacre of their members in the state, and hundreds of their cattle were said to have been killed.²²

Idoma and Fulani clashes in Benue State

Benue state is home to about four million people, situated in the southern borders of the Middle Belt. The state is blessed with so much fertile land that there is abundance of food items and because of these significant amount of agrarian

items such as yam, cassava, grains like corn, millet, and also different types of fruits, Benue state is widely called or known slogan is food basket of the nation. The state is endowed with good agricultural land and various water bodies especially the Benue River, which enable agriculture and rearing of animal for food and commercial purposes.²³ Those latter favorable agrarian characteristics encouraged migration of herders mostly from northern part of the country, as well as from bordering countries throughout the Lake Chad area, in pursuit of adequate pasture and freshwater for their own herds. Amidst the blessing of fertile land, Benue State is also amongst the state worst impacted by violence resulting from confrontations involving farmers and herders due to the fact that the two ethnicity which are Tiv and Idoma ethnicities make up the bulk of the population in the state, and both are Christian farmers and regarded indigenes, while the majority of the herders are members of the minority Fulani ethnicity, largely Muslim and they are considered non-indigenous.²⁴ From the last decade, violent clashes involving largely indigenous farmers who are majorly Christians, and herders who are mostly Muslims, have killed many people and forced more than 80,000 others to flee their home town and even the state.

Fulani herdsmen raided a Local Government area of Benue State called Agatu on January 1, 2018. In broad daylight, the Fulani herdsmen raided multiple

towns and farming communities, killing children, women, men, and the old equally. In the initial killing spree, over 300 villagers were reportedly killed, with severe deaths recorded in areas including Aila, Okokolo, Akwu, Adagbo, Odugbehon, and Odejo Maya, 2018. One among the eye witness accounts to the violent ties between Idoma farmers and Fulani herdsmen, Mr. Shaibu Ahmadu, a former police officer, according to Maya 2018, narrated in the Otukpo IDP camp that the mass killing that occurred in January 2018, was the high point of a territorial expansion agenda by the Fulani's that began years ago in Nassarawa State.²⁵

According to the former police officer, Aila, one of the settlements in Agatu L.G. A, has long been desired by Fulanis due to its highly fertile lands. So the herders opted to first attack and conquer the Okokolo village in order to reach this desired objective. It is worth noting that villages like Tom-Anyiin, Tom-Ataan, Mbaya, and Tombu in the state's Buruku Local Government Area had already succumbed to the Fulanis. The Fulani invaders arrived at Okokolo by boat after crossing the River Benue from Nasarawa State. It was a battle. They marched on Akwu, Adagbo, and eventually Aila after burning down Okokolo.²⁶ It was difficult opposing them since we were only regular farmers who only have hoes and cutlasses while the Fulanis were equipped with AK-47s, Ahmadu added.

In Addition, Maya claimed that Agatu Local Government is not the first in Benue State to be assaulted by herdsmen. Between 2011 and 2014, alleged herdsmen raided several more villages in the four LGAs of Guma, Gwer-East, Buruku, and Gwer-West, many times. Worrying about these Fulani herder attacks is the structure of attack that is being implemented. Unlike before, when Fulani herdsmen assaulted, murdered, and 41 withdrew, the Agatu incident have shown a Fulani herdsmen occupation plan. The destroyed communities had been taken over by Fulanis who had come in with their cattle from Nasarawa.²⁷

As a result, the fleeing locals were unable to return to conduct mass burials to the bodies that littered their communities and farms. Meanwhile, residents of the Agatu Local government area, who have resettled in the IDP camps (Internally Displaced People) of Otukpo, Ojantele, Ataganyi, and Ugbokpo said that a chopper assisted the Fulani herdsmen by dropping ammunition and food supplies to the attackers.²⁸

Similarly, the inability of Nigerian troops stationed in Agatu to apprehend any of the assailants has fanned accusations of security officers' participation in the attack. In July 2015, alleged Fulani herders assaulted Adeke, a village on the outskirts of Makurdi, the state capital. Six people had been slain and by December at Idele village, Oju local government district. Three Fulani herders were slain and

decapitated in a retaliatory strike by communal youth. Following the Oju killings, a retaliatory assault was carried out also in January 2016 at Ucha Nyiev community.²⁹

In February 2016, Fulani herders allegedly murdered approximately ten people in Tom-Anyiin, Tom-Ataan, Mbaya, and Tombu in Benue State's Buruku Local Government Area. In February 2016, ten people were slain in the same area, and more 300 became homeless Alu 2017. According to a government source, 71 people were murdered during a week of conflict in Benue State in 2018 that is from January 1st to 6th. The attacking Fulani herders were alleged to have assaulted the villages of Gaambe-Tiev, Ayilamo, and Turan in Logo LGA on New Year's Day, as villagers were heading back to their houses from the church after the New Years' service.³⁰ In that same 2018. Benue State recorded around 20 incidences of armed assaults between December 2019 and February 2020 as a result of the invasion of cattle and Fulani herdsmen into various areas of the state particularly at border settlements of Nasarawa and Benue State.³¹

On January 28, 2020, Ortom the Governor of Benue, narrowly managed to evade Fulani herdsmen ambush as he was fired at during his visit to his farm in Adeke, along the Makurdi-Naka Road The attack on the farmers in Benue state is indeed still on the rise and lots of Nigerians took to social media to express their

displeasure on the happenings. As a matter of fact, march 2021, around 200 individuals are said to have been massacred in Benue.³² And as reported by premium times, in early May, alleged herdsmen stormed Katsina Ala a Local Government Area of Benue, slaughtering more than hundred locals as well as displacing several more. August 25th 2021 was another black night for the people of Yelwata where 8 people, including a lady and her 4 children, were reported slaughtered by heavily armed Fulani herdsmen on Tuesday night. Yelewata is a border village connecting Benue and Nasarawa states in Benue's Guma Local Government Area Duru.³³

The death toll from herdsmen killings in Benue State is estimated at over 1,269 people, 1.8million internally displaced people. Some of the towns that have been invaded by the Fulani herdsmen have been seized and occupied by them.

The herdsmen seized 14 of the state's 23 local government districts. These attacks on villages and farmers by the Fulani herdsmen is said to be largely caused by the growing population but what further triggered the sudden surge in the conflict is the imposing of anti-open grazing law. This law entails that the herdsmen will no longer roam their cattle into a random or open field instead an allocated place will be given to the herders or a ranch system will be implemented for the herders. The restriction placed on herders pertaining grazing, was intended

to encourage herders who are majorly of the Fulani ethnicity to transition from nomadic pasturing to ranching, so as to minimize or avoid deadly land disputes with sedentary farmers.³⁴ According to Yikwabs, et al, there was an interview that took place with one of the farmers staying in one of the IDP camp about the anti - open grazing law, and he said that the growth in sedentary farming does not allow for open grazing because there are no more available fields for the animals to roam around grazing, implying the necessity for the regulation to allow sedentary farmers to carry out their respective work.³⁵

He went on to argue that because the population is growing, farmers can no longer allow the animals to roam freely, and obstructing farmers from completing their lawful work. But contrary to the farmers' reaction and acceptance when the new regulation was issued, the Fulani herders immediately opposed it through their association which is called Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), an advisory body of Fulani herders in Nigeria. They said the law was unfair and it also abolishes traditional lifestyle.³⁶ They interpreted the law that, contrary to the stated purpose, the resolution was designed to drive them out of the Benue community. The herders see the regulation as a plot or tactic to force them to leave the state on the grounds that they are not indigenous to the state. they further explained that the law was aimed at alienating them considering the

fact that the Fulani are the ones who often the keep an enormous herds of cattle, as opposed to other ethnic groups who keep only 10 or even less cattle, so ranching two or three cattle is perfectly feasible, but ranching an enormous herds of cattle like theirs is almost impossible given the cost.³⁷

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF IDOMA-FULANI CRISIS IN BENUE STATE

Introduction

The farmers-herders crises in Nigeria has emerged as one of the most pressing security challenges in recent years, significantly affecting the socio-economic landscape of the country, including the Idoma community in Benue state. This crises/conflict primarily arises from competition over land and resources between predominantly sedentary farmers and mobile pastoralists. The impact of the farmers-herders crises on Idoma cannot be overstated as it has severe adverse effects on the town and its residents. This chapter will examine the economic, socio-cultural and political impact of the crises, as well as its effects on the women in Idoma¹

Economic Impact

In every society, the economic aspect plays a vital role in shaping the community's society's well-being and progress. A stable economy is the backbone of a thriving society, providing opportunities for individuals to earn a living, support themselves and their families, and contribute to the overall development of the community. Conversely, when a society's economy is struggling or in Crises, the entire community suffers. The effects of economic instability can be far reaching, leading to a widespread poverty, hunger and desperation. In such situations, including the settlers and indigenous populations, are often the hardest hit.² The ongoing farmers -herder crises in Idoma is a stark illustration of the economic challenges facing this community. The

conflict has had a devastating impact on the land, leading to significant economic losses and disrupting the livelihoods of countless individuals and families. In this context it is essential to examine the ways in which the farmers-herders crises have affected Idoma as a community. By understanding the economic implications of this conflict, we can better appreciate the need for urgent action to address the crises and restore stability to the community.³

One of the most debilitating consequences of the farmers-herders crises in Idoma is the rampant food shortage and food insecurity that has plagued the community. The displacement of farmers from the affected communities has drastically reduced agricultural production. This has been amply demonstrated by relative shortage of farmers produce in the urban and rural markets in Nigeria. This is evidenced in the tremendous price hike of food commodities across the country.⁴ The primary objective of farmers is to cultivate crops for food, cash crops, and family consumption as well as for sale or exportation to ensure economic survival. However, when farmers are denied the opportunity to farm freely, it inevitably leads to a shortfall in expected yields, resulting in poor harvests and reduced crop production. This in turn, leads to a low supply of farm produce to homes and markets, ultimately affecting the general economic value and activities in the town locality. The impact is evident in various marketplaces in Idoma, where the quality and quantity of produce have significantly declined. Consequently, an interview with Mr. Anuga Otokpa explained that buyers from neighbouring towns, communities in Benue such as, in Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ohimini, Ogbadibo, Oju,

are discouraged from trading at Idoma Markets due to the unavailability of the produce they need. This disruption in trade has led to a significant economic downturn in Idoma. The ripple effects of this crises in Idoma, has affected the market with implications for food security, economic stability and social Cohesion.⁷

Furthermore, unemployment is another effect of the Crises in Nigeria. The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in employment and economic activities, accounting for approximately one-third of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing about two-thirds of the labour force. This trend is particularly evident in the rural areas, where farming remains the primary source of livelihood for the majority of the adult population⁸. According to Bola, around 90% of the rural population engages in crop related activities, which significantly contribute to agricultural income⁹. However, the ongoing conflict between herdsmen and farmers has severely impacted agricultural productivity and employment. Many farmers in regions like Idoma have faced threats and violence, leading to the abandonment of their farmlands. This conflict has forced numerous community members to flee their homes, resulting in a significant increase in unemployment as individuals are displaced. The disruption of farming activities not only affects the farmers but also has broader implications for food security and the economy in these areas ¹⁰. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has reported fluctuating unemployment rates in Nigeria, with recent figures indicating a decline of 4.1% in early 2024. However, these statistics may not fully capture the Load realities in places like Idoma, where the impacts of conflicts and displacement can lead to higher levels of

unemployment and economic instability.¹¹ According to Mr. Pendo Eshovo, it was stated that

“Even the farm labourers in Idoma who are now afraid to go to work are now jobless, resulting to downturn of employment”¹²

Socio-Economic Impact

It is obvious that crises between two set of people would affect their relationship adversely. The relationship between Fulani and Idoma people has gone low. As noted by Albert,” The conflict has created a deep-seated mistrust between farmers and herders, making it difficult to resolve.” This mistrust has been exacerbated by the increasing frequency and severity of attacks leading to a breakdown in social cohesion and communal relationships. Furthermore, the crises has created an environment of security and fear with many communities living in constant fear of attack.¹³

The farmer-herder crises in Idoma, has caused mistrust and strain social relationships in the community. The Relationship between herders and farmers in Nigeria has historically been characterized by a degree of mutual dependence and cooperation. Farmers relied on herders for the natural fertilization of their lands through grazing livestock, while herders benefited from access to water and pasture provided by the farmers’ agricultural practices. This reciprocal relationship fostered a sense of community and collaboration allowing both groups to thrive within the same geographic areas. However, the intensification of the farmers herder crises has significantly altered this

dynamic, leading to a serious level of mistrust between the group.¹⁴ According to Mrs. Oizamsi Peculiar who stated that,

“Now the average Idoma person now sees any Fulani as an enemy that should be detested, abhorred, or avoided as much as possible. This is because the friendliness or mutual relationship shared before has gone down.”¹⁵

Furthermore, the crises between two groups (farmers and herders) have also resulted to increased insecurity and fear. The farmers-herders crises have led to a significant increase in insecurity and fear among affected communities. As noted by Okoli, “The conflict has created a pervasive sense of insecurity with many communities living in constant fear of attack.”¹⁶ This fear has been exacerbated by the increasing frequency and severity of attacks, as well as the lack of effective response from security agencies.¹⁷ In Idoma, the farmer-herder crises has been a striving issue as the crises has imposed fear on farmers in the community.¹⁸ In an interview, Mr. Patrick Iramofu explain vividly, the low production of farm produce like Yams and vegetables has affected celebration of festivals in Idoma like Aba and Eje–Alekwu festival festivals which are popular cultural events that attract people from all over the world are adversely affected especially in the area of food items like Yams, and vegetables which has witnessed a draw down production in farms because people are scared to go to their farms for farming. He also explained further that, it is pertinent to also mention that fear of visitors to travel to Idoma due to the predator behavior of the dangerous herders.¹⁹ According to him,

“My own cousin (Nife and Ozioma)” who was to do marriage at Idoma were afraid to come due to the fear of abduction by herders at Idoma. We were forced to arrange for the ceremony to be done in Lagos which normally should have been done at the bride’s home place (Idoma)”²⁰

Consequently, the conflicts between cattle herders and Farmers in Idoma have resulted in significant loss of life, destruction of properties and extensive damage to arable farmland. This situation poses a serious threat to security, as farmers, fearing attacks, are increasingly unable to access their fields and harvest their crops. The clashes hinder the standard of living in Idoma, specifically the destruction of crops and farmland by herders; livestock directly affects the economic and cultural stability of farmers.

This destruction not only diminishes agricultural productivity but also disrupts trading activities in local markets, further compounding the impact on standard of living. Moreover, the welfare of the farmers are now in threats due to the fact that they can no longer account for safety in their farmlands because of the fear of attacks by herders.²¹ The welfare and socio-economic disruptions caused by these conflicts cannot be quantified, yet they contribute significantly to the low standards of living observed in these rural area. Further examination reveals that the non-attainment of sociocultural/economic development in communities like Idoma is closely linked to issues of security and peace. The persistent disruption caused by herders-farmers communal conflicts is a threat to the security of rural population.²² This vividly goes to show that the farmers-herders crises significantly impacts the destruction of crops and

property, leading to a circle of poverty and insecurity in rural communities like Idoma community in Edo state.

Political Impact

In the past, Fulani herdsmen in Idoma demonstrated wavering loyalty to the host communities' leadership. This loyalty was evident through regular homage paying and gift-giving often in terms of cows or cash, to the community leader, the Och' Idoma of Idoma.²³ However, this time honored practice has been misinterpreted as bribery leading to simmering tensions between the Och' Idoma and other traditional rulers. The recent escalation of the farmers-herders conflict has created a sharp division within the Idoma leadership cycle. The insecurity caused by these conflicts has eroded confidence in the government's ability to protect its citizens, culminating widespread discontent among the populace. The once peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders has given way to suspicion, mistrust and violence.²⁴

The political implications of this conflict are far-reaching and enormous. For instance, The crises has sparked protest in Idoma, where indigenous people have demanded decisive action from their leaders including the Och' Idoma. In response, the Och' Idoma has convened emergency meetings with neighboring community leaders, such as Och' of Tiv, to forge a united front in resolving the crises. In one of those meeting, various resolutions were made of which was forwarded to the state government but these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. The crisis has significantly impacted the political

stability of the community diverting the palaces from its traditional socio-cultural focus to addressing farmer-herders conflicts. This shift in focus has become a distraction from the palace's political duties and responsibilities, creating a power vacuum that threatens to undermine the traditional authority of the Och' Idoma. Furthermore the conflict has also led to economics instability as farmers are unable to cultivate their lands and herders are struggling to find grazing areas for their cattle. This has resulted in food shortages, increased poverty and widespread desperation. Ultimately, the farmer-herder crises in Idoma have far-reaching consequence for the political dynamics of the people as it has exposed the deep-seated ethnic and socio-economic tensions among the indigenous people of Idoma.

The Impact of Farmers-Herders Crises on the Women in Idoma Community

The ongoing farmers-herders crises in Idoma has significantly affected the lives of women and young girls in the community with profound socio-economic and psychological repercussions.²⁷ Before the advent of the crisis, women in Idoma played a central role in the farming and agricultural activities. They actively participated in cultivating crops, harvesting and trading agricultural produce. However the escalation of the crisis has disrupted the way of life, leaving women vulnerable and forcing them to abandon the role in agriculture and trade.²⁸

One of the most immediate effects of the crises is the sense of fear and insecurity that has gripped the women in Idoma. Women are now reluctant to go to their farms due to threats and harassment from herders. The threats, discourages women from engaging

in agricultural activities. The withdrawal from farming has contributed to a sharp decline in agricultural productivity and has exacerbated food shortages in the community.²⁹ Before the crisis, women in Idoma were actively involved in both short and long distance trade, selling farm produce and buying goods to sustain their families. With fewer women farming, there is now a scarcity of agricultural products, making it impossible for women to maintain their trading activities. The economic downturn has led to reduce income for households and diminished the market's vibrancy further straining the community's livelihood.

The farmers and herders crises have also forced women to abandon farming and explore alternative means of livelihood. However, many of these alternatives activities are less sustainable and profitable, leading to a widespread economic hardship. The crises had also strained family relationships, particularly between spouses as the inability to provide "food on the table" has become a source of tension and conflict.³¹ Beyond the economic implications, the crises have deeply affected the social fabric of the community. Women whose husbands, fathers, brothers have been abducted or maltreated by herders are left to bear the emotional burden. The trauma from these events has disrupted normal life for many women in Idoma leaving them to navigate an uncertain future filled with pain and sorrow.³²

Ways of Curbing Farmers and Herders Crises in Idoma

The farmers-herders crises in Idoma, Nigeria, requires a multifaceted approach to resulting starting from the side of the government driving down to traditional rulers in Idoma.

The Role of Government

The government has a crucial role to play in resolving the crises. Firstly, the local government in Idoma should form a specific task force to check mate the excesses of farmers and herders in the interior villages and forest.³³ This taskforce should comprise representative from both the farming and herding communities to ensure fair representation. Secondly, the state government should inaugurate the vigilante group to provide security for both farmers and herders. The state government should also enact laws to ban open grazing in Edo State, where Idoma is located. Lastly, the federal government should enforce the Ruga settlements, which are to provide separable places for farming and grazing. Although this initiative was not achieved in the past, the Federal government should respond adequately to escalation of conflict by deploying adequate security measures and placing well- trained security personnel on high alert.³⁴

The Role of Traditional Rulers

Traditional rulers have a vital role to play in resolving the crises between host communities and herders. As custodians of tradition and culture, they possess the moral authority and influence to bring peace and stability to the community. Firstly, traditional rulers should encourage community policy by working with both host communities and

herders to monitor the activities of their members as this will help identify and expose deviant individuals who engaged in destructive behavior.³⁵ Secondly traditional rulers should establish accountability mechanism to deal with individuals who break the law or engage in violent behavior. This could include punishment, mediation, or the forms of conflict resolution. This will serve a deterrent to other potential offenders and maximize the level of trust among communities.³⁶ Thus, resolving the farmers-herders crises in Idoma requires a collaborative effort from the government, traditional rulers and both farming and herding communities.³⁷

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

To cut to the chase, this project is an emphatic research of the historical analysis of activities of farmers and herders crises on the women in Idoma land in Benue State from 1980 to 2015. It ties up all the major points in the previous chapters relating to the effects of herdsman-farmers migration in Idoma land and its impact on women and children. It reveals a complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors that have significantly impacted the local community, particularly women.

Summary

Following the objective of this research that is identifying the root cause of the sudden upsurge in the farmer-herder conflict which is, the negligence of the Nigerian state and its failure in performing its duties, the first chapter gives a brief background of the conflict, a brief literature review of the root causes of the farmer-herder conflict, the aim of the study, significance of the study, methodology and chapter outline of the study. Chapter two focuses on the concept, causes and manifestations of farmers-Herders crisis in Idoma land, where discusses was made on the geography and people of Idoma community. It further identity and explain the socio-economic activities and political institution of the people of Idoma. Chapter three surveyed conceptualization farmer-herder crisis and the relationship between the people of Idoma and the herders

before the advent of the crisis. It further examines the causes of the conflict, actors involve is also reviewed in this chapter. Chapter four of this study tackles the various cases in the Idoma particular Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ohimini, Ogbadibo, Oju, Okpokwu and Otukpo village. The socio-economic impact of the conflict was also highlighted. The chapter also addresses the main root cause of the upsurge of the conflict according to the finding and also the measures taking by major stakeholder to solve the conflict.¹

The Herders-Farmers conflict in Idoma has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges in the country, representing a complex struggle over land and resources. This conflict primarily involves herders seeking pasture for their livestock and farmers striving to protect their land for cultivation. The relative peace that once characterized the interactions between these two groups has significantly deteriorated, particularly as herders have been compelled to move southward in search of grazing land due to climate change, desertification, and land degradation. The analysis of the relationship between farmers and herders in Idoma prior to the onset of the crisis reveals a historical coexistence characterized by mutual benefits. This symbiotic relationship allowed both communities to thrive, as they navigated their lives in harmony with the geography and resources of the region. However, the encroachment of herders into Idoma's borders marked a significant turning point, transforming a once peaceful coexistence into a contentious relationship. The subsequent crises have

deeply affected the community, with particularly devastating consequences for women. As herders migrate, tensions escalate, leading to confrontations that often spiral into violent clashes. These altercations are exacerbated by issues such as encroachment on farmland, with herders accusing farmers of obstructing traditional grazing routes. This ongoing strife has not only resulted in a struggle over resources but has also deepened ethnic and religious divisions.

The crisis, primarily triggered by a scarcity of resources, has led to a devastating impact on the people of Idoma, particularly the women. The lack of sufficient land for farming and grazing activities, crop destruction, and long-standing disagreements between farmers and elders have all contributed to the crisis. The consequences have been severe, causing trauma among the women and the people of Idoma, leading them to abandon their farmlands, which are their primary source of livelihood. Consequently, this has had a negative impact on the community of Idoma, affecting their economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics. The community has experienced a downturn in their market, resulting in reduced economic standards, efficiency, and efficacy, thereby escalating the already dire situation.

Finally, The Herders-Farmers conflict has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges in the country, representing a complex struggle over land and resources. This conflict primarily involves herders seeking pasture for their livestock and farmers striving to protect their land for cultivation. The relative peace that once

characterized the interactions between these two groups has significantly deteriorated, particularly as herders have been compelled to move southward in search of grazing land due to climate change, desertification, and land degradation. As herders migrate, tensions escalate, leading to confrontations that often spiral into violent clashes. This ongoing strife has not only resulted in a struggle over resources but has also deepened ethnic and religious divisions. The conflict is often framed as a battle between the predominantly Muslim Fulani herders and the largely Christian farming communities, particularly in regions like Idoma. Many residents in the South perceive the herders' migration as an encroachment on their ancestral lands, fueling fears of an attempted Islamization of their territory. In addition to violent confrontations, the Idoma land has witnessed alarming incidents of abduction. Farmers working in their fields have increasingly become targets for suspected herders, who are believed to be responsible for these kidnappings. These acts create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the farming population, who now approach their daily tasks with heightened anxiety.

The threat of abduction adds another layer of complexity to the conflict, as it not only disrupts agricultural activities but also intensifies the mistrust between the two groups. The ramifications of this conflict extend beyond immediate violence. Community leaders have highlighted the dire consequences of the ongoing strife, noting a significant loss of life and the psychological toll it has taken on the affected communities. In a memo to the Herders and Farmers Disturbances Commission in

2016, Idoma land leaders estimated that approximately forty-six individuals from their community lost their lives in the violent confrontations of 2015. They provided a list of twenty identified victims, illustrating the human cost of the conflict. Similarly, the Idoma Welfare Association, in correspondence with the Inspector General of Police following the outbreak of violence in 2011, noted that over eight individuals had perished as a direct result of these clashes.

Eyewitness accounts from both the Hausa Quarter and the Idoma host communities describe a landscape marred by violence and destruction. The roads and streets have become eerie reminders of the chaos, often compared to scenes from horror films. Remnants of violent encounters are frequently visible, as the aftermath of conflict lingers in the form of debris and evidence of struggles for survival.

To address the profound issues stemming from this conflict, a concerted effort must be made to halt the proliferation of arms and to disarm the Fulani herders. The unchecked availability of weapons has significantly escalated the violence and contributed to the tragic loss of life in these confrontations. Without meaningful disarmament and dialogue between the involved parties, the cycle of violence is unlikely to break, and the potential for peaceful coexistence will remain elusive.

It is crucial to recognize the role of both government and traditional leaders in curbing the ongoing crisis. Their involvement is essential for implementing sustainable solutions that promote dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between

farmers and herders. By prioritizing the needs of women and marginalized groups, the community can work towards rebuilding trust and fostering resilience in Idoma.

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Patrick Iramofu,	39 Years	Trader	Idoma	12/08/2025
Pendo Eshovo,	47-Years	Trader	Idoma	10/08/2025

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