

THE AFEMAI AND NUPE TO THE NORTH CENTRAL UP TO 1900

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by **VICTORY OSHONE ALIU** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin under my supervision.

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Prof Rev. Sis JC. Nwaka

(Head of Department)

Date _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God almighty, the source of all things for giving me the strength to write this project, and also the wisdom and intellectual capacity to conduct my study.

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First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to Almighty God, whose infinite grace, wisdom, and strength have guided me throughout this academic journey. Without His divine direction, this project would not have been possible. I owe my greatest appreciation to my wonderful parents Mr. and Mrs. Aliu Words are not enough to express how grateful I am for your unconditional love, sacrifices, prayers, and constant encouragement. My deepest gratitude also goes to my big mummy and big daddy Mr. and Mrs. Michael Aliu You have been my foundation, my inspiration, and my strongest supporters through every challenge God bless you immensely. Every success I achieve is a reflection of your unwavering belief in me. To my dear siblings Miracle, God's will, Susan thank you for always being my source of laughter, motivation, and strength. Your understanding, patience, and support, especially during the stressful moments of this project, meant more to me than you can imagine. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to my friends who stood by me Beyonce, Abigail, Naomi with love, encouragement, and motivation. Thank you for your advice, help, and for believing in me even when I doubted myself. You made this journey easier and brighter God bless you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
CERTIFICATION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
DEDICATION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ix
CHAPTER ONE: Background to the Study									
Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Aim and Objectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Scope of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Methodology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Chapterisation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Literature Review	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
CHAPTER TWO: Geographical and Traditional Settings of Afenmai and Nupe									
Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
Traditions of Origin, Migration, and Pattern of Settlement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
CHAPTER THREE: NUPE CONQUEST AND ADMINISTRATION OF AFENMAI.									
Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-31
The Etsako – Nupe Relations before 1880	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	- 32

The Nupe Invasion on Etsakoland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
Afenmai Resistance to Nupe Invasion and Defeat of the Etsako land								37
CHAPTER FOUR: NUPE INFLUENCE ON AFENMAI								
Religious and Socio-Cultural Impact	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Political Significance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
Economic Impact	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
CHAPTER FIVE								
Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Afemai is a group of people living in the Northern part of Edo State, in Southern Nigeria. Afemai people occupy six local government areas: including Etsako West, Etsako Central, Etsako East, Owan East, Owan West and Akoko Edo. These make up the Edo-North Senatorial District. They are a multilingual speech community with dialects that are clans-based but mutually intelligible.¹ Afemai are also known as the Afenmai, Etsako, Estakor, Iyekhee, or Yekhee people. Afemai people has several documented dialects such as Auchi, Avainwu, Ekperi, North Ibie, South Ibie, Weppa-Wanno, Uneme, Uzairue, Owan, Ora and Okpella Okpamiri etc. Afemai is made of several kingdoms and clans with large villages and townships ruled traditionally by monarchs. Historical accounts claimed that they migrated from Benin, during the tyrannical rule of Oba Ewuare the great. A warrior, legend and the most outstanding king in the history of Benin Empire. The title Ewuare (Oworuare), meaning "all is well" or the trouble has ceased and as a result the war is over. The title symbolizes an epoch of reconciliation, reconstruction and the return of peace among the warring factions in Benin between 1435-1440.²

The Nupe of Nigeria inhabit the "low basin formed by the valleys of the Niger and Kaduna rivers, between 90E 30' & SOE 30' north." They occupy an estimated total land area of about 7,000 square miles.! With reference to a modern map of Nigeria, Nadel delineates Nupe's southern boundary to be a line drawn from Leaba, on the Niger, eastward to Kataeregi marks the northern boundary of Nupe land, another line drawn eastward from Shari (or Tsaragi) to Abugi and on to the Niger south of Baro. The Niger, flowing almost straight north-south between Leaba and Jebba, divides Nupe country from Yoruba in the west; the slowly rising country, east of Lapai and Gidi, sloping upward towards the hills of Gbari country, forms the eastern boundary of Nupe.³ The Nupe are composed of several groups of people of distinct dialects, two of which derived from outside of Nupeland. They speak different but mutually intelligible dialects of Nupe and live within contiguous geopolitical boundaries. These subgroups include the Kusapa, the Chekpan, the Batachi, the Bini, the Kyedye, the Benu and the Gbedegi. The last two groups were said to have derived from Borno and Yorubaland respectively.⁴ To their immediate south and southeast are the Owe, Bunu, Yagba, Kakanda and a few clusters of the Bassa. The latter two groups are settled on the west-bank of the Niger river as far down as the point just above its confluence with the Benue in Igala territory. Following the nineteenth century outbreak of the Nupe war and its subsumption into the Sokoto jihad after which the Nupes were incorporated into the Sokoto caliphate, Nupeland was divided among the five emirates. These included

Rabah/Bida, Lapai and Agaie, all to the north of the Niger, and Shonga and Lafiagi, to the south. The non-Nupe polities of Kakanda, Owe, Yagba, Bunu and Bassa, all became entangled in the Nupe war and ended up in different levels of political dependency vis-a-vis the Nupe.⁵

The Nupe wars popularly referred to as the 'Izannama wars' in Afenmai are recorded in the Afenmai traditions as the most devastating and fiercely fought externally motivated conflict ever witnessed in Afenmai land. The crisis started in 1860 and continued into the last decade of the 19th century and by 1897, nearly all the then Super Powers in the Afenmai country including the Aviele-Agbede, South Ibie, Auchi, Uzairue, South-Uneme, Ekperi, Weppa-Wanno, and the highly rated North Ibie and Okpella clans in the south, central and eastern parts of Afenmai had been brought to their knee.⁶ In the northwestern part, all the militant communities of Northern Uneme, Igarra, Ososo, Somorika and Atte clans were also conquered in succession and forced to capitulate. With the defeat of these seemingly heavyweight, all the other smaller Afenmai communities surrendered and accepted to pay the levy in human and agricultural resources imposed on them by the Nupe authority.⁷

Some of these communities were relatively poor in military experiences and equipage before the contact with Nupe. A number of battles were fought in several theaters between the Afenmai defenders and their Nupe predators during the over thirty years' period the war lasted. Though it is not our focus to provide detailed

information on all the encounters that took place between the parties in a project of this nature, it should however be noted that most of the battles occurred in the succeeding reigns of Etsu (Chief) Usman Zaki, Etsu Masaba, Etsu Umaru Majigi, Etsu Maliki, and Etsu Abubakar (1857-1897). These five Chiefs of Bida are recorded to have lunched military campaigns on Afenmai at one time or the other during the period under consideration.⁸ Though Mason credited Etsu Umaru Majigi with the ferocious in the extension of Bida domination to the southern part of Nigeria, available evidence reveal that the Nupe attacks on Afenmai were fiercer and more drastic during the rule of Etsu Usman Zaki and Etsu Masaba 1857-1873. They both needed more human and material resources to rebuild their battered capital at Bida which was damaged in the 1833-1857 Bida conflicts that erupted between both of them.⁹

According to Kolapo, levies and tributes were required by the contending groups in Bida to send as presents to the Emir of Gwandu to gain his support or recognition to the Bida throne. It was in a bid to sustain the flow of such gratification to Gwandu that partly increased the rate of Nupe attacks on communities in their southern frontiers.¹⁰ Afemai became a target at the point the wars were extended further south across the Niger-Benue confluence region especially during the period of Etsu Masaba 1857-1897. This period witnessed coordinated, intense and aggressive military attacks on the Afemai.¹¹

However, it is difficult to establish the frequency of Nupe military incursion into Afenmai due to dearth of material. If information from Obayemi and Isichie are correct, Nupe's military activities in Niger-Benue confluence area may have been extended to Afenmai and beyond long before the 1804 Jihad of Usman Danfodio.¹² This is not to say that the Jihad started earlier in the confluence area before Hausa land. It must be clarified that, early Nupe activities in Afenmai before 1857 were conducted by Nupe non-state actors or aristocrats solely for plundering, looting and slave raids and not for political and economic domination. This contention was also highlighted by Kolapo who opined that the period before 1857 in the Nupe military campaigns were periods in which various Nupe warlords unleashed devastating and clearly non Jizya (Islamic tribute) and slave raids on their southern neighbors.¹³ Afenmai traditions also noted that, during the early period, Nupe attacks on Afenmai manifested in the form of unpredictable skirmishes, plundering and slave raids which later transformed into frontal military combats between the two parties as from the middle 19th century.¹⁴

During the encounters, though as far as the time could permit, the Afenmai had some sophisticated weapons like poisonous arrows and spears, such were not effectively utilized. Even in places where the weapons were efficaciously used, some traitors among the Afenmai betrayed their people by rendering military assistance to enable the enemy infiltrate into their settlements to wreak havoc on the people.¹⁵ Additional evidence adduce to us shows that, Afenmai forces also to a

great extent relied on the use of supernatural powers as weapons for the wars. Unfortunately, in the course of the war, information about the weapons were also leaked to the invaders who promptly countered the efficacy of the Afemai charms and magical powers.¹⁶

The wars in Afemai eventually came to an end in the later part of 1897 when the influence of Nupe in Afemai land and the Niger-Benue confluence area was terminated by the British colonialist. In a nutshell; the period 1857-1897 in Afemai was a period of struggle for survival which was dangerously threatened by the incursion of the Nupe imperialist. Some of the weaker communities of Afemai were conquered after a short resistance. The inability of the invaders to suppress the resistance put up by the Afemai super powers at the early stage was a big challenge to them. This was linked with the unfriendly terrain in most part of Afemai. Consequently, Nupe resolved to engage collaborators to assist them with the bidding.¹⁷ The activities of the collaborators dealt severe blow on the military operations of the Afemai people and hastened their eventual fall.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research examines the Afemai and Nupe relations before 1900 to the North central. The objectives of the study are as follows

1. To examine the traditional background of Afemai and Nupe
2. To discuss Nupe conquest and its impact on Afemai

3. To examine the Role of Indigenous Collaborators in the Conquest
4. To highlight the nature of indigenous response to Nupe invasion political influence before 1900

Scope of Study

The scope of this essay covers the pre-colonial period an era, in the second half of the 19th Century, the inhabitants of the three geographical regions of Afemai land experienced sporadic but coordinated military attacks organized by the Nupe invaders whose primary objective was to exploit the human and economic resources of the Afemai. this contact had influenced their religion, socio-economic and political interaction. The work is limited to inter-group relations between Afemai land and her Nupe neighbor during the era earlier enumerated.

Literature Review

Concerning the research topic, not much has been written on it but there are a lot of books on the Afenmi people and these books combined together will help in the completion of this research work. The first book to be reviewed is that of J. E. Acheoah, article titled. “Contrastive analysis of English and Afemai morphology”. examine Afemai, also spelled Afenmai are group of people living in the Northern part of Edo State, South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Afemai people occupy six

local government areas: Etsako West, Etsako Central, Etsako East, Owan East, Owan West and Akoko Edo. These make up the Edo-North Senatorial District. They are a multilingual speech community with dialects that are clans-based but mutually intelligible.¹⁸

In the same view. Abiri's, book titled *Outline History of Etsako*. reveals that Afemai are also known as the Afenmai, Etsako, Estakor, Iyekhee, or Yekhee people. In Benin, they are known as Ivbiosakon. Afemai people has several documented dialects such as Auchi, Avainwu, Ekperi, North Ibie, South Ibie, Weppa-Wanno, Uneme, Uzairue, Owan, Ora and Okpella Okpamiri etc. Afemai is made of several kingdoms and clans with large villages and townships ruled traditionally by monarchs. Historical accounts claimed that they migrated from Benin, during the tyrannical rule of Oba Ewuare the great. A warrior, legend and the most outstanding king in the history of Benin Empire. The title Ewuare (Oworuare), meaning "all is well" or the trouble has ceased and as a result the war is over. The title symbolizes an epoch of reconciliation, reconstruction and the return of peace among the warring factions in Benin between.¹⁹

SB Akede Omo, *A Short History of South-Ibie Clan*. This book is the first public documentation on the origin of South-Ibie Clan. The book gives account on the origin of South Ibie clan, how they migrated from Benin under the leadership of 'Ibie' and triumphantly arriving at their promised land which is today known as

South-Ibie clan in Afemai Division. Although Akede's work did not give detailed account on the Nupe invasion and how the invasion affected South-Ibie's traditional institutions.²⁰

According to H.B Harunna, in his work titled. *Early History of Etsako*, gives an account of the origin of the South-Ibie clan and their arrival in the early 1500. The book states the migration of the Ibies from Benin, giving a detailed account on how the five Ibie clans were formed and their stop overs before finally arriving at their present abode. However, the book did not give a detailed account of the Nupe invasion.²¹

R.E, Bradbury book entitled, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking People of South-Western Nigerian*, gives an account of the Etsako tribes, their socio-political organization, their life cycle, their religion and Magic. The book only gave a general overview of the various aspect of life of the Etsako tribes. Though Bradbury deserves much praise for his beautiful job on the socio-political histories of Edo peoples including Auchi and other Afenmai people, he however failed to have seen the success of the Nupe conquest of Afenmai land among which culminated in the establishment of the institution under discussion in the second half of the 19th century as a manifestation of the people leadership weakness. Little wonder therefore that he viewed no resistance to the Nupe invaders which is not true.²² Despite this, the book will be useful in all the chapters of this work. Oshomha Imoagene's, book titled. *The Edo and their Neighbours of Mid-Western*

Nigeria, gives an account of Nupe invasion of Etsako land, the significance of the invasion and the impact of Nupe rule. The book did not give a detailed account of the origin of the Etsako people.²³ The book will be useful in the chapter three, four and five of this work.

I.A.B, Balogun, “*The Influence of Islam Amongst Etsako People of Bendel State of Nigeria*”. The journal gives an account of the origin and spread of Islam amongst Etsako people in general. It also discussed the changes Islam brought to Etsako. The journal did not give a detailed account on the origin of the Etsako tribe.²⁴ Despite this, the journal will be useful in the chapter three, four and five of this work. S.F. Namel’s, book titled *A Black Byzantium*, recognizes the fact that as the Sokoto Jihad was moving down to southern Nigeria, its initial religious intention started giving way to economic desires. But Nadel generalizes issues on the payment of slaves as tributes by Afenmai rulers to the Nupe over-lords and thus pays much attention to Yoruba Okun and Akoko. Had Afenmai rulers received the same over showered emphasis as the case of YorubaOkun and Akoko, the role of the Otaru of Auchi would have perhaps been easily inferred, based on Auchi status as the headquarters of Bida Vassalage in Afenmai land.²⁵

Micheal Mason. In his article, "The Jihad in the south: An outline of the Nineteenth Century Nupe Hegemony in North-Eastern Yorubaland and Afenmai, explains the beautiful work did not only debunk the erroneous Islamic

proselytization intention of the Nupes of Afenmai conquest and the no resistance allegation levelled against the people by Obaro Ikime and R. E. Bradbury, it also looked at the profound landmark left in the people's principles of government, including Auchi Where appointed state heads replaced the indigenaus gerontocratic government - Odionwere.²⁶

O. Eddy Erhagbe's, *The Dynamics of Inter-Group Relations in Pre-colonial Niger: Nupe Activities in Etsakoland, C.1860-1897*. gives an account of Nupe invasion in Etsako land, giving details of the Nupe mode of conquest, Etsako resistance, the nature of the Nupe rule and the Impact it has on the people and institutions in Etsako land.²⁷ Z. I Oseni's, *The Islamization of Auchi Kingdom in South Central Nigeria*, a lecture delivered at First Auchi Day, 1998. Examine the spread of Islam. Before Islam, Afenmai people, like other unenlightened and unexposed people, worshipped a number of deities which they trusted, worshipped and begged for assistance in an innocent manner. Such deities included Uchi (the spirit of the founder of Auchi), Orle (the river goddess), Amanue, Ogholodio, etc. These deities had shrines where they were worshiped by their devotees. At that time, such worship was the official religion of Auchi people. Even when the Nupe over-ran the area along with Kabba, Ebira and other Afenmai territories, the worship of idols was not discarded. The Nupe warriors were primarily interested in collecting tributes from their subjects. Such tributes included slaves and foodstuff.

They were not interested in Islamic propagation in the area as that would have defeated their goal of economic exploitation.²⁸

O. Kadiri, "Islamic Movements in Etsako Division of the Mid-West State of Nigeria," Although the Nupe are scattered over several states in west-central and northern Nigeria, the majority resides in Niger State in Nigeria. The greatest reason for the Nupe's defeat of the Afenmai people was their organized army and superior military weapons whereas the Afenmai people had no standing army but made use of their youths (age group) for internal security. The weapons included fire arms, swords, spears, bow and arrows, speed horses etc. These weapons and items they got from British and Africans traders that came to Nupe land through the river Niger. The initial reaction of the Afenmai people consisted of fierce resistance, but since the Nupe were able to suppress this opposition, the Afenmai people surrendered to the Nupe representatives. To avoid the Nupe, however, some left their villages in search of more secure locations.²⁹

N. Omo-Ananigie, book titled. *A Brief History of Etsako*, examine, the military success of the Nupe invaders in this area was due not only to their military superiority, but also to the assistance they received from local groups willing to turn against their neighbours. After capitulating to the Nupe, some of the Etsako clans helped them invade other clans and villages. The South Ibies, for example, helped the Nupe against the Auchi Kingdom. Auchi was used as a base for the raids

carried out into other villages. Some groups even raided other villages within their same clan as a result of their new relationship with the Nupe. For example, some Etsako leaders accompanied the Nupe in their invasion of other territories and shared in the war booty.³⁰

Following the subjugation of the Afenmia people, the Nupe introduced a system of collecting annual tribute from the area. The imposition of this system introduced alien principles into the political life of the vanquished Kingdom. Agents were appointed for the conquered areas.³¹ According to Mason, article titled. "The "Jihad" In the South: An outline of the Nineteenth Century Nupe Hegemony in North Eastern Yorubaland and Afenmai." stated once the amana had been accepted, and the amount of tribute agreed upon of which tribute was levied according to the size of the village, the question of administration was simply answered and justified. The system they put in place was one in which "resident officials who identified their interests with those of the conqueror were installed or elected to manage the collection and dispatch of annual tribute which they sometimes accompanied to Bida." These appointed agents were called "azeni." The agents in turn appointed local aides who helped execute the collection of the tribute.³²

Methodology

In the course of the research of this work, relevant data and information were obtained from two main sources. These are primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

The primary source used in this work in researching are of two categories, the archival research and the oral interviews. Materials were consulted at the ministry of local government library Benin City; these include term papers provided by the govt. National archives in Ibadan

Oral interview was conducted with experienced individuals, clergy men, intellectuals, adults who played prominent roles in local history. The individuals interviewed includes: Traditional rulers, chiefs, chiefs, traders and local courts correspondents, they all provided eye witness account of their experience in the period under study.

Secondary sources.

Secondary sources which were consulted in public libraries, the archives of the Jattu palace, textbooks, journals and periodicals. The information helped immensely to guide and supplement the materials obtained from primary sources. The source helped to provide data for a historical analysis of the Nupe war relating to this research would be consulted from both the University of Benin main library (John Harris) and the Afenmai main library in Auchi town would be extensively consulted to elicit data that would be useful and meaningful for the completion of this research work.

Chapters Outline

The research is divided into five chapters, and they are as follows:

Chapter One:

Background to the Study

This contains the introduction to the work, its aims and objectives, the scope of study, the research methodology, its literature review, its chapterization as well as its contents. This is basically the introduction of the research work.

Chapter Two:

Geographical and Traditional Settings of Afenmai and Nupe

This chapter discusses the geographical location, socio-political institutions, cultural institutions and practice of Afenmai people. Chapter two ends with a conclusion on the traditional institutions.

Chapter Three:

The Nupe Conquest and Administration of Afenmai.

This chapter examines the mode of conquest and the nature of Nupe rule in Afenmai land. It ends with a conclusion of the works in the chapter.

Chapter Four:

Nupe's Influence on Afenmai

This chapter gives the social impact, political impact, cultural impact and economic impact of Nupe rule in Afenmai people.

Chapter five:

Conclusion

This is the concluding aspect of the research based on argument and analysis from formal information.

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CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHICAL AND TRADITIONAL SETTINGS OF AFENMAI AND NUPE

Introduction

The Etsako people occupy an area of approximately 1,035 square miles with a population of 135,135.¹ The geographical boundaries of Etsakoland are not clear – cut although they follow a ridge or stream for some distance. The area is situated on the north eastern part of present day Bendel approximately latitude 7^o 25 and 6 45 north and longitude 6.10 and 6.45 east. The major rivers in the area include, the Niger, Obe Orle, Edion, Ojo, Ezi, Odura, Oruru and Ubo. Streams include Ola, Okhosho, Okualehemen, Okua Khereogio, Ughoimi etc. All these rivers and streams help to water the area and provide the inhabitants with drinking water.² The climate condition of the area falls within the general pattern that exists in Nigeria as a whole two main seasons, dry and rainy seasons. The maximum temperature for

the whole year is about 80f and the average and the average and minimum are about 50°f about the beginning of November lasting till the end of March. The greatest impact of the harmattan a dusty wind blowing from the Sahara is felt in Esakoland due to its proximity to the north.³ The geography of Etsakoland as a whole was to have a great effect on the lives of the people. It enabled an easy diffusion of the alien cultures brought by the Nupes, the Europeans among the people. This was because the vegetation did not obstruct movement and so it was easy for these aliens to spread their ideas and cultures.⁴

Traditions of Origin, Migration, and Pattern of Settlement

Historically, Etsako people were known to have migrated from Benin kingdom in the 16th century during the reign of Oba Ewuare or Oba Ozolua, according to oral tradition of origin passed down through folklores and tales, the people of Etsako left Benin during a political revolt between the Oba and some of his close counterparts.⁵ The present area now known as Etsako was formerly referred to as the “Kurukuru” in the colonial era, as a derogatory connotation, the area was now to be known latter as the Afemai Division, the occupant of this area were the people of Owan, Etsako and Akoko-Edo. One version of these available folklores holds that Uneme and his father Uka were those that first migrated from Benin. Uneme was born in the middle of the 15th century (about 1450AD) Uka and his wife Esohe.⁶ Esohe who was then popularly known as Eso which was latter to be corrupted to Etso or Etsa were among the leading blacksmiths inner caucus of

the then Benin Empire, Uneme was born to Uka and Etso, and at the despotic behaviour of the then Oba of Benin, they left Benin. The Oba ordered that Uka be brought back to Benin alive and in good health, the reason for this is that the Oba cherished the safety of every member of the technological cult to which Uka was a prominent member. If he falls sick, by orders, he must be cared for by the messengers.⁷

When Uka refused to return after three months the Oba performed the ritual of the “palm fruits” pronounced Uka’s descendant to scatter as the fallen palm tree fruits scattered, but Uka had at this time died having just one seed Uneme alive. Uneme’s first child, folklore asserts was a female called Uzanu, the ancestor of the Uzanu settlers, his other children are Ava the ancestor of Imiava, which came to settle at Anegbette, Oguluka and Uzoshi,, whose generation came to be known as Udouri. There are diverse dialects spoken in the six local government areas of Afemai, although there is no central language for the Afemai people but near to one, Yekhee, spoken in four out of the six local government areas. There has not been any language called Etsako before now, Etsako language Research and Development Centre recently developed it from the dialects in Afemai. The Etsako language cuts across all the dialects of Afemai; you will notice in the numeral.⁸

The name Afemai connotes “our people” and this is used to refer to the Northern Senatorial district of Edo State, the word “Kukuruku” is a derogatory name given to the Afemai people by the Nupe slave invaders during the slave trade

era. The challenges faced by scholars in Africa and indeed the third world countries in the realms of research are absence of records and documentation.⁹ What is known is generally a product of oral tradition, archaeology, linguistics, anthropology and ethnology. In one oral tradition, we are told that there was a man called Oluku who was the father of Uzairue, Ekperi, Aynawun, Weppa, Wanno and Azama. There was at that time in Benin a powerful and rich man, although not a chief, called Adenomo, who persecuted Oluku's family that they fled and settled between River Ole and OKpella-Ibie hills. This oral tradition has it that most Etsako kingdoms used to send tributes of leopard skin to Benin, and when it was discovered that those, they sent to Benin never returned they stopped. This traditional folklorist holds that the father of Etsako was a Benin man called Azama, married to Ughiosomhe, the mother of Imokeye, Ikpemhi, Anwu and Omoazekpe, and the second wife Etso gave birth to Ekpa and Amwo. They also assert that Etso had previously been married before marrying Azama, and that it was in this earlier marriage that she gave birth to Uneme, and when her second husband Azama died she remarried and gave birth to Ekperi.¹⁰ They all lived in the era of the reign of Oba Olua, which was characterized by migration, which some account attributes to the introduction of a republican form of government set up to replace that of the pre-existing traditional monarchical system. Consequently, it is believed that these changes among other factors sparked off unrest all over the empire manifesting in the form of revolution and civil disobedience. Thus, the Edo speaking people of

North-East of Bini (Esan and Afemai) migrated to their present homelands in groups.

The migration of Etsako people, the Uzauriues, Anwiawus, Weppa-Wannos, Ibies, Auchi, Agbedes, Okpellas, Avieles, Jagbes, Anwanins, is closely associated with this movement. All the children of Azama and their step brothers who today comprise the Ivhiarra communities migrated with their families in this period and became the founders and progenitors of the kingdoms that make up Etsako. Imokeye founded Imoke, Ikphemhi founded Ikpe, Omoazekpe founded Afahio, Anwu founded Avianwu, while Weppa and Wanno or Eppa and Ano jointly founded Weppa-Wanno, and also Uneme and Ekperi founded all Uneme and Ekperi kingdoms.¹¹ One oral tradition went further to assert that although there are feasible confirmations that Etsako people are from Benin, that each village in Benin at that time had a warrior Chief that fought for it, and defended the kingdoms in times of war, and Adaobi was a warrior from the Etsako quarters; and one fateful day the Oba announced that nobody in the land except in his quarters should pound anything especially yam and coco-yam. Another law was that whoever killed a tiger was castrated and sent to the palace and made a harem to one of the Oba's wives thus the proverb: "Ogbe Ekpe Ogiegbo Usovhe Edo", (a person who kills a tiger sends himself to Edo). Therefore, Adaobi called his brethren together and told them to prepare a departure from Benin within five days and this was believed to be the Etsako exodus from Benin¹².

Another version of the migration story holds that Etsako people were known to have migrated from Benin kingdom in the 16th century during the reign of Oba Ozolua¹³, at first, they settled at Aviele, lying North of Benin kingdom, and at some point, dissension arose between them and the initial settlers and this forced them to further migrate North-ward to settle at the area now lying between Auchi, Uzairue and Ugioli. Later on, peaceful expansion followed and the people grew in numbers to form different clans/communities, the area now known as Etsako, this comprises Etsako East – (Agenebode, Oshrielo, Iviagbepue, Imiakebu, Afama, Imiegba, Itsukwi, Ayogwiri, Emokweme, Ekwother, Iviukhua, Okpella Wiebua, Ibie and Weppa-Wano) Etsako Central – (Fugar, Anegbette, Udochi, Ogbonna) and finally, Etsako West – (Auchi, Uzairue-Jattu, Agbede, Anwian, (Ivbiaro South-Ibie, Afashio, Aviele/Ugioli, and Warake).¹⁴ One point of call here is that despite the multiplicity of the accounts of migration folklores that exists among Etsako historians, one obvious fact is that they all reach a consensus as to their migration from Benin, what we cannot argue is that we came from Benin, we are descendants of the Oba, that's one reason why we for ages paid tributary to the Benin kingdom¹⁵.

According to folklore, Uhi a traditional community near Ehor is one of the major resting places of Etsako and his son Uneme along with other new found land seekers on their way out of Benin. Ava and his generations to come eventually settled in Anegbette, which came to be the name of the place on the day the then district officer (D.O.) a white man, visited Imiava (children of Ava) and asked the

chief, pointing all over the direction around him, what are these people called? As a result of misinterpretation, the interpreter asked who owns all this lands? the chief then told the interpreter to tell the D.O. that “the land is not for one kindred, but that we are all pushing one another to possess whatever quantity each one can control”, the interpreter then said to the white “Anegbette” (meaning, we are struggling for space), thus the community’s name was recorded as such.¹⁶ The people of Etsako used to be called the “kukuruku”, a name derived from the kukuruku hills, which served as a shield for the people during the inter-tribal wars and the Nupe invasion in the early 20th centuries. The people of Etsako were said to have migrated from Benin in the 15th century A.D, a direct resultant of the precipitations of the harsh and draconian rule of the Oba of Benin at the time, before which they occupied strategic places and positions in the Benin society, example of such is Igun street in Benin which is a home to bronze casters was said to be home to Agbede and Uneme people of Etsako. This is perhaps why till date; the people still practice the arts of bronze casting and other related occupations, called “E ne Iue Osama”.¹⁷

Yet another version of the migration stories hold that the people of Etsako angered by the conduct of the then reigning Oba, first encamped at Obadan/Okhisighamen community, about 30 miles away from Benin City, and sensing that the Oba would give them a chase; with a view of bringing them back to Benin, left this first encampment after 13 years and went further to settle at the

hinterland, at Aviele in current Etskao West Local government area.¹⁸ Up till now, the Etsako people are with their kin from Akoko Edo and Owan, it was at the second encampment that the community broke up with various segments migrating in diverse directions from the Aviele settlement. However, the largest group of this community remained together and this is today Etsako nation.¹⁹

Etsako Language Classification

The people of Etsako speak a common language called “Yekhee”. This is a dialect of the language block called Edoid language, following the general consensus that the Etsako came from Benin, our excursus will not be complete if we do not trace the whence of the Benin themselves; in other words, the Benin people came all the way from Egypt and eventually found a more secured shelter in their present abode after a short stay in the Sudan and Ife, which they called “Uhe”²⁰, *Ab initio*, the arrival of the Binis, a band of hunters had been sent from Ife to inspect the land, and since their report were favourable the people embarked on their journey, but met some inhabitants in the land before their arrival. These aboriginals were said to have originally come from Nupe and the Sudan in waves. During the reign of Ewuare the Great (c. 1440-1473 A.D.) as overlord of Benin Empire, his eldest son Kuoboyewa the Edayi n’Iken of Uselu and the second son of Ezuwarha had a misunderstanding and poisoned each other that they both died the same day, and when Oba Ewuare heard the news of the death of his two eldest sons on the same day, he retired into the inner palace and wept bitterly for his sons, and declared a 3

years mourning with strict laws prohibiting bathe, dressing and sexual intercourse by anyone in the kingdom for that three years, this was the first major precipitant of the large scale migration from Benin kingdom, which the origin of Etsako have been much accrued²¹.

After the death of Oba Ewuare his eldest surviving son, Ezoti was placed on the throne, but only reign for fourteen days, and Okpame his brother was sent to Esi to bring Ezoti's only son and heir, Owere, in order that he might be crowned Oba, but they were both buried alive by Okpame, who was latter barnished when the truth became known, and he latter sought refuge in Ora. Olua the second eldest surviving son was made Oba, but his deceptive and excruciating rule which was a result of the advice of his son made him and the heir apparent Iginuwa unpopular, and they vowed never to let Iginuwa succeed his father on the throne and upon this a republican government was set up to replace the popular monarchical system, this system did not favour the kingdom thus Okpame was invited to come reign instead of his father as Oba "Ozolua" with the task of redeeming the empire from the disintegration of which all existing and prevailing rebellions and hostilities were symptoms he resorted to force and Benin once again was plunged into a "migration plague".²² From the foregoing, one cannot actually place at what exact point in time that the people emigrated from Benin, or whether they all left at once or in batches, or whose specific reign each or all the groups left, but one thing is sure, that the Etsako people left from Benin and migrated through various courses until they

settled in the present abode between the 14th and 18th century. Much other minor immigration has been accounted for, notable among which are those headed by Omoaze and his son Okpisa, accompanied by Otsomokhae and Oiwa a priest, Amadi and Chigia an outcast, and they arrived “Epa” or “Weppa-Na-pe”, and settled at “Akieppa”, others include the stories of “Ofugar” Anwuri, General “Adaobi” and his wife “Ise”, Ayun Uchi” (Auchi), etc. There are many myths and legends existing in Etsako folklores that linked the origin of the world with Etsakoland, as creation myths among the people, however there is a leeway, and that is the fact that in spite of the mythical origins as contained in legends and folklores of the Etsako people, there is a general consensus amongst history writers which also corresponds to numerous oral traditions as related through the ages, that the Etsako people came from Benin, having migrated probably in stages and batches during the reign of Oba Ewuare and Oba Ozolua in the 14th and 15th centuries respectively. ²³

Religious Beliefs and Associated Festivals

The people of Etsakoland were generally given to ancestor and fetish worship. To them everything in the universe animates as well as inanimate had a soul. Thus, they offered sacrifices to various objects which were believed to represent gods. Such objects were always seen as the medium which people could communicate with their gods and ancestral spirits. The inhabitants of every village erected a shrine for its original founder. They worshipped collectively and everybody was

expected to contribute towards the sacrifice offered to the spirits. The people of Avhianwu and Uzairue clans believe in the return of the dead as Iyabana i.e spirit. These spirits were believed to speak a language which only an Ogiator was any person who was suspected of shutting between this world and the other before finally settling down in this life. The spirits were believed to pay an important role in burial ceremonies. It was believed that the deceased made his wishes or demands known to his family through these spirits.²⁴ The Etsako people also believed in a supernatural being whom they called Osinegba no khua and who was considered superior to the small gods known collectively as Isinegba ni Keke. They believed that just as you had to approach the influential man of position through his son or agent you also had to approach the Almighty God through the servants, Isinegba ni Keke. Worship of gods and goddesses was accompanied by festivals which were celebrated at specific periods in the people's life okle in order to mark some historical occasions or thanksgiving for example like planting and harvesting periods were always marked by festivals set aside for prayers and thanksgiving to the gods of the community examples of such festivals were Esiogio and the Agbe festival. These festivals were usually connected through the offering of sacrifices, dancing, feasting and drinking.

The Etsako people believed in the existence of witches and wizards. Any unexpected happenings like a renowned palm wine tapper suddenly falling from a palm tree or any form of sudden death or case where pests invade the farms were

usually attributed to the evil machination of wizards and witches. It was believed that witches usually met on top of trees and covens. During their meetings they were believed to dance and to feed on others either by sucking their blood or by attacking them magically. The ceremonies associated with burial were usually a reflection of the religious beliefs of the Etsako. Their belief that death was just a means of transition from one world to another forced them to believe that despite the fact that their relations were dead, they were still living. Children and women were buried without much ceremonies but the death of an elderly man especially a married one always called for elaborate ceremonies.²⁵

In Etsakoland, the dead were not buried instantly rather they were expected to be seen by all their children before burial. The post-burial rites especially the Utomi were performed usually by the eldest son of the deceased sometimes such rites were performed several years after death. The children sought permission from the elders and fixed the date when they felt that they would be ready for the ceremonies. The ceremonies were usually expensive and they started with a wake keeping called inwojho and this was normally accompanied with songs, eating and drinking. There was another important festival in the clan. This was called the Alu Adukwukwa or Alu Ukpe. It was on the eve of this festival that the edion nedie as had been discussed met to pray for the progress of the clan in the New Year. There was a general cleaning of the four villages during this festival and quarrelling was prohibited the significance of this cleaning was that it helped to keep arcay all calls

from the New Year.²⁶ However, in Ivhioromhia kindred. The traditional African constitution and customary laws were held by blacks that migrate to every part of the African continent including the Binis and Etsako land people. Thus, the same traditional customs as the Etsako people as a whole. The constitution cannot be creased because it binds them together.²⁷

Economic Organisation in Etsakoland

In Etsako land clan trade flourished and was well organized the medium of exchange was the colorie shell. Trade by barter was also practiced on a large scale. Etsako land had trading links with her neighbours who provided ready markets for her agricultural produce. The people of Etsako bartered such food stuffs as cassava, yams, leguminious foods and melons for fish with the peoples of Ekperi and Ineme. They transversed tens of kilometres of forest paths and dared the danger of falling prey to the wild animals that populated the routes with goods, on their head to reach such Ekperi villages as Ofokpoi, Agbaji Udeba and Osomhegbe and such Ineme villages as Ale-gbeffe and Udochi where they battered their food stuffs for fish, domestic animals, cereals, groundnuts and garri were traded for money at Uzairue market. The people of Avhianwu also bought and sold at markets in Weppa-Wanno, Aki Eppa and Agenebode. The Igbiras, Ewas and Ibies found a ready market in Avhianwu for their Egbu cloths, mats and clay materials respectively²⁸. Men from Oshogbo in the western part of Nigeria brought cloths which were preferred to the egbu (calico) obtained from the Igbiras. These brands

of cloth were called Ukpo-Oshogbo or simply Oshogbo just because the dealers came from Oshogbo. They were also called Ikpo-Osumeta or simply Osumeta. This was so because transactions and payments were made on Osumeta basis ‘Osumeta’ is a Yoruba word meaning ‘three months’ buyers were allowed to collect cloths of their choice on credit. They were given three months grace. The economy of the Etsako community were essentially Agarian men were mainly farmers although in some cases, some were fishermen. Fishing was done mainly in the riverine areas like among the Weppa Wanno Ekperi and south Ineme clans. The farmers of Etsakoland were engaged in the production of such food items like yams, maize, cassava, vegetables and fruits and some of the clans like Weppa-Wanno were also noted for their production of rice some Etsato people were also engaged in hunting and trapping of palm wine.²⁹ These last two were usually taken as part-time engagements the extent of a man form depended on the number of wives and children he had. Some of the Etsako communities were noted for their expertise in handwork. Some were also noted for their manufacture of earthen ware pots especially in the north Ibies and hand-woven cloths were also produced throughout Etsako. Markets were usually called by the name of the village where they existed thus there existed such major markets like Aki-Ikpe, Aki-Uchi and Aki Agenebode. The markets were usually held on specific days and on such days, people were not. In Ivhioromhia quarter early childhood education as in Avhianwu is based first on activities and directives, including observational method imposed by the family

structure to teach children the various disciplines that enabled them to gain a firm grip of any profession they choose for themselves in the future.

The age-group or age set, which is a classification, was the means of determining the period in which an individual was born. All individual, children born in the same year or within one or two years apart are usually placed under one age-group with the father of the age-group from any of the selected quarters in Avhianwu. The significance of the age-group is reflected in the cultural political and social roles played by each group over a period of time in Avhianwu. Children learn by going to the farm with their parents to work, observe natural growth, in plants and know how the soil is being cultivated. The shifting of crops from year to year for better harvest and the combination of soil that is rich for high yields. The element of child upbringing is education next the scientific nature of learning is based on individual observation of events that are true over a period of time and also personal instruction of parents on good agricultural practices that result in high yields of crops. The bed time stories narrated but members of the family give a child various lessons about life good and bad acts and behaviour. This lesson also gives them the ability to develop understand and recount historical events before beginning tertiary school education, such as primary school or any form of structured education.³⁰ Marriage also occupied an eminent position in the social life of the Uzairue people marriage was so highly regarded in the area that traditions governing it were greatly revered and preserved. Three types of marriages were

recognized in Uzairue clan namely Isomi, Amolya and ‘anabor’ in an amaya type of marriage the bride price was usually exorbitant. This was because the money was sort of meant to buy the girl. It was for this reason that it was mostly a slave that was given in Amoiya type of marriage.

All the bits and pieces of historical information about the origin of Etsako as we have, are derived from oral tradition passed across through centuries, one cannot thus deny that in such a long period of oral transmission of information spanning through generations of people, so much has been lost and much of the story has changed. As it where the stories now vary from one clan to another, one village to another, and one person to another, as such in the course of interviewing the people.

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CHAPTER THREE

NUPE CONQUEST AND ADMINISTRATION OF AFENMAI.

Introduction

The Nupe people of Nigeria call themselves Nupeci and refer to their language as Nupe, while their neighbors, such as the Hausa, Gbari, Birnin Gwari, Yoruba, and Kakanda, identify them by other names, such as Nufawa, Abawa, Anupeyi, Anufawhei, Tapa, and Anupecwayi respectively. Although the Nupe are scattered over several states in west-central and northern Nigeria, the majority resides in Niger State in Nigeria. A sizable population lives in Kwara and Kogi states as well

as in the Federal Capital Territory¹. The main towns are Bida, Minna, Agaie, Lapai, Mokwa, Jebba, Lafiagi, and Pategi. During the creation of states by subsequent Nigerian governments, Minna was made the capital of Niger State, although Bida remains the largest predominantly Nupe town. The Nupe occupy a lowland of about 6,950 square miles (18,000 square kilometers) in the Niger Basin, mostly to the north of the river between the Kontagora and Guara confluents, from Kainji to below Baro. Despite its inland location, most of the area is less than 330 feet (100 meters) above sea level and never rises more than 820 feet (250 meters). The oral traditions of the Nupe credit the foundation of the Nupe state to Tsoede in the fifteenth century.²

The Nupe people have various traditions. Many practices have changed as a result of the movements started by Usman Dan Fodio jihad of the 19th century, but they still hold on to some of their culture. Many Nupe people often have scarification on their faces (similar to an old Yoruba tradition), some to identify their prestige and the family of which they belong as well as for protection, as well as jewelry adornment. But these traditions are dying out in certain areas. Their art is often abstract. They are well known for their wooden stools with patterns carved onto the surface.³ It is interesting to note that towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, when the British dislodged the Nupe from the Etsako land and that was the time the interest in Islam was aroused. The presence

of the Nupe people in large numbers in Etsako land and other towns sparked off an Islamic revolution with the passage of time.

The Etsako – Nupe Relations before 1880

Relationship that existed between the Afenmai and Nupe was mainly in aspect of trade relations. The Afenmai and other neighbouring communities in Etsako land were engaged in trading relations with the Nupe before 1800. It was observed that Nupe traders traded from Nupe land to the Afenmai land and the trade routes was established through the Yoruba communities that were in between Nupe land and Etsako land. These items were exchanged with kolanut, palm oil, palm kernel oil and camwood before 1800.⁴ There were some important goods that were seized and stolen by the Nupe people from traders from Afenmai and other neighbouring communities that were involved in long distance trading. Some of the goods included ivory tusks, slaves, yams, hoes, cutlasses, hunting traps, livestock (goats, sheep's etc.). Other communities, such as Jattu, Esan, Agbede, Ewu, Ekpoma etc. that traded with the Nupe people used the Etsako land as a passage way and trading route to carry out their trading activities. The Etsako land is still used as a passage way for traders in present-day Edo State.⁵ There were many other commodities that were used as articles of trade between the Etsako land and Nupe people. Among these were religious/spiritual items and objects, particularly magic, medicine, charms, divination etc. Both the sellers and the utilizers of these items

strongly believe that these items helped to stave off and neutralize the effect or activities of witches, witch craft and evil doers before 1800. The role played by these religious/spiritual items as well as other indigenous practices in the resistance of the Nupe invasion cannot be over emphasized. Despite the trading relationship between the Etsako land and Nupe traders, the Islamic religion was not introduced as a result of the indigenous religion which had a strong hold of the lives of the people of the Etsako at that point in time.⁶ There were some very significant trade items that enhanced the promotion of the socio-cultural and economic relations between the Etsako and Nupe before 1850. Among these were a local kind of woven cloth (calico), red long fez caps (aru-odi), ivory bracelets and anklets (isamha), beads (ikpema) etc. The Nupe traders exchanged these products for the products of the people of the Etsako land. No doubt, these trade items influenced, encouraged and ensured the growth and development of the indigenous modes of dressing of the Etsako men and women before the invasion of the Afenmai land in 1860.⁷ It is very clear that, unlike the nineteenth century which was a period of war and hostility characterized by the Nupe raids, the pre-1800 period had witnessed peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding and fruitful relations between the Afenmai and the Nupe.

The Nupe Invasion on Etsakoland

The Nupe's first contact with Etsakoland was said to have been made during the reign of Isoede who in a bid to expand his kingdom waged 'big and

victorious wars against neighbouring peoples. Some of the conquest attributed to Isoede were those of yagba, bunu and kukuruku which were all in the south of Nupeland. After the jihad of 1804 (otherwise called the Sokoto jihad led by uthman dan fodio (1754-1817)(several other jihads were the slave trade which was already in progress at the time and the inordinate ambition of many people to become rich by trafficking in human beings had inspired the blood thirsty Nupes and Hausas to go abroad for new adventures. The Nupe marauders also had their mission the spread of Islamic religion. They had come from the north through idah across the River Niger at Agenegbode and Okene to carry out barbaric and inhuman acts of aggression against the people of Etsako and beyond.⁸

The Nupe invaders waged wars of harassment, torture and abduction against the people of Owan Etsako and Akoko Edo. This war was known to the people of these areas as the Nupe war (Okho Izanama) being seen as monsters of cruelty, the Nupes were stigmatized by the people as Izanama (Izanama) meaning ‘the monsters that were created and from the encounter with the Nupes, Owan, Akoko – Edo and Etsako had, jointly got the name ‘kukuruku’ of which a division was later created. The word ‘kukuruku’ was coined from the guttural noises made by the people. When fleeing at the advance of the Nupe slave raiders.⁹ Even after the first full scale assault and the people’s reaction and resistance against the invading Nupe slave raiders, there were still skirmishes. The constant assaults, menace, plundering and range on villages and towns by these tortures and traffickers in human life

made life unbearable. At other times, they restored to collecting taxes in money and slaves you can either give them slaves and money or face the music with them in battle¹⁰. What were the clubs' sticks, cutlasses and stones used by the unorganized villages as against the poisonous arrows and firearms used by the Nupes. The infiltration of the Nupe slave raiders from Bida into Avhianwu took place at the time Oghie Obakhire ruled all Avhianwu in about 1830. The three other contemporary rulers in Avhianwu at the time had been Oghie Itsuoko the village head of Ivhuiunone, Oghie Odio, the village. Ehad of Ogbona and Oghie Aseghiemhe the village head of Ivhiraokhor, Ogie Obakhire, who hailed from Ivhiokhile in Ivhiarua paid the Nupe infiltrators Igbee-Igbeise (2000 cowries) the equivalent of 60k and a girl of marriageable age to ransom in Avhianwu. But, the Nupes before ending their siege of Avhianwu promised to come back in a year's time.¹¹

In the interim Oghie Obakhire ordered a moat to be dug around Avhianwu purposely to provide greater resistance against the Nupes. The work on the moat was begun it was not however completed before the Nupe's second attack Oghie Obakhire did not live to see this second attack an Avhianwu and no attempt was made to continue or complete the work on the moat after Obakhire's death. In any case, more than three quarters of the moat had been dug before it was abandoned parts of this moat are still visible.¹² The Nupe slave raiders had come back as they had promised. This time around it was a woman called Egbo who paid the ransom.

She paid the Nupes igbee-uwegigbe of N1.20 two girls of marriageable age and a goat.¹³The Nupe's third attack on Avhianwu came three years later and at the time Oghie Itsuoko who hailed from Ivhiauha in Ivhiunone ruled all Avhianwu. Oghie itsuoko resisted the Nupe slave raiding brigands when the latter further increased their demands and the people of Avhianwu were driven to ouao. They returned home later to give ten men and 24000 cowries as ransom. The fourth attack on Avhianwu came at the time Oghie Atua who hailed from Ivhioramhie in Ivhiarua ruled all Avhianwu Oghie Atua would not pay when the Nupes made a bigger demand and the people of Avhianwu again ran to oua and other villages in Weppa. They later returned to pay the ransom. It was at the time of this fourth raid on Avhianwu that the people of Ekperi fled their homes in the neighbourhood of the present day ugbekpe to different and distant places. They were all scattered and settled at their present-day homelands: Osomhee gbe, Agbaji of okpo udaba and so on.¹⁴

A later raid and occupation took place at the time of Oghie Imaka who hailed from Ivhioromhia in Ivhiunone and ruled all Avhianwu. The other traditional rulers in Avhianwu at that time were Oghie Omiawa of Ivhaarua Oghie Iza of Ogbona and Oghie Ogege of Iraokhor contemporary clan heads at the time had been Ogie ikelebe, the first Otaru of Auchi, Oghie Kanoba I of Ekperi Oghie Ighietsemhe of Alegbetter Oghe Omoaka of Agbede and Oghie Omogbai of Uzairue. Another contemporary ruler though a village head, that needs be

mentioned because of his valour who was oghie osighbemhe of aghiere. He was the traditional ruler of Aghiere (Weppa).

The Nupe invasion of Avhianwu in particular and kukuruku division in general had put an end to the Oba era and ushered in the Nupe era known as Agb Izanama. After several years of continued harassment, kidnappings and killings there came the need to negotiate with the slave raiders as traditional rulers became apprehensive of continued indiscriminate assaults and increase in the number of casualties and material losses.¹⁵ The traditional rulers held series of discussions at Avhianwu in oghie Omiawas palace in an attempt to hatch tactics of how to deal with the invading slave raiders. Oghie Omiawa had declared that it was too barbaric of the Nupe Hausa warriors to go about the place in pursuit of slaves. He suggested a system of giving a certain number of slaves to the Nupes every other year Oghie Omiowa's suggestion was accepted. The traditional rulers then agreed on a unified quote of slaves to the Nupes every other year Oghie Omiawa's suggestion was accepted on a unified quota. A compromise agreement was at last reached with the invaders the Nupe slave raiders and maruders came periodically to settle for days or weeks even months in the particular village whose turn it was to pay the ransom taxes. They would not end their siege of that village until their demands the number of slaves and money asked for are met. The Nupes however stationed in every region permanent liason agents called Aperi Oghie Imaka Uoho at the time of the Nupe's occupation was the Okphe-Ukpi n' Okhua and Oghie of Avhianwu hosted

the Nupe terrorists and slave collectors at the beginning. During the time, Oghie Imaka hosted those slave collectors, he in collaboration with Oghie Osighbhemhe of Aghiere (Weppa traded on his nupe quests. Oghie Imaka would notify Oghie Osighbhemhe whenever the Nupes arrived at his home to collect tributes in slaves. Oghie osighbhemhe would come with his men to roundup the Nupe emissaries. He would sell them and the proceeds he shared with Oghie Imaka. This joint venture however was soon sabotaged. ¹⁶

Oghie Omiawa the Okphe-Ukpi and village head of Ivhiarua had conspired to sabotage Imaka and his Weppa ally Oghie Osighbhemhe, Oghie Omiawa had viewed Imaka's intrigue with Osighbhemhe against the Nupes as a violation of the article of the treaty with the Nupes and feared that it would have grave consequences on the people of Avhianwu's freedom and sovereignty if finally discovered by the Nupes themselves. He disclosed imaka and his ally's 'cruel' treatment of the Invading enemies "the Nupe collectors the Nupes reacted swiftling to what they called Imaka's destructive plots by deposing him (Imada) their new host and friend automatically became Oghie Omiawa's who consequently became the Oghie of Avhianwu.¹⁷ The people of Avhianwu were not known to have put any form of organized and confrontational resistance against the Nupe slave raiders. Apart from the occasional guerilla attacks upon the Nupes. Ivhianwu sought safety in flight as they on many occasions ran to Weppa villages where they sought refuge from the Nupes. Avhianwu however had also hide outs and fortresses like the

Oghodoghodo and Edegbake cause and isolated grades. Ogbhodoghodo is endowed with such featured as would provide an Invulnerable position of attacks upon the enemies. It is cave situated in the wilderness of Ivhioromhe in Ivhiarua. It has an orifice on the outside plan the Nupes continued the slave raiding missions to Etsako and beyond in general.¹⁸

Afenmai Resistance to Nupe Invasion and Defeat of the Etsako land

Nupe land was a place where slavery and slave trade thrived and there was always a very high demand for slaves. Slaves, at that time, were used for many purposes. These included domestic purposes, labourers in the farms, soldiers in times of war etc. The demand for slaves became relatively higher after the death of Mallam Dendo, the then king of Nupe land in 1833. There was a fierce struggle for succession among his sons, which were Prince Usman Zaki in Rabbah and Prince Masaba in Lade. These two princes of Nupe land in bid to increase their military strength in other to achieve military victory against one another between 1833 and the early 1940s sponsored and supervised sporadic slave raids in the Afenmai land where the Etsako land was situated capturing and enslaving thousands of Etsako people.¹⁹ The greatest reason for the Nupe's defeat of the Afenmai land was their organized army and superior military weapons whereas the Afenmai land had no standing army but made use of their youths (age group) for internal security. The weapons included fire arms, swords, spears, bow and arrows, speed horses etc. These weapons and items they got from British and Africans traders that came to

Nupe land through the River Niger.²⁰ The initial reaction of the Afenmai land consisted of fierce resistance, but since the Nupe were able to suppress this opposition, the Afenmai land surrendered to the Nupe representatives.²¹ To avoid the Nupe, however, some left their villages in search of more secure locations. The people of the Afenmai land tried unsuccessfully to dig trenches round their village to prevent the entry of the Nupe forces.²² When majority of the inhabitants of the Afenmai land first got wind of an impending Nupe invasion, they fled from their homes into the bush with some belongings. While some were able to return to their original residences, in other cases people refused to return to their original homes²³. The Afenmai people put up a very strong resistance but eventually submitted to the Nupe hegemony. The raids carried out by the Nupe forced the people of the Afenmai land to develop a warning shout, which was meant to inform people of imminent danger and attack whenever the Nupe army were approaching. The shout was “Uku-ku-ku” in addition to “e ghe bade,” meaning “they are coming again.” It is generally held in Etsako traditions that this was the origin of the word “Kukuruku,” which the Nupe corrupted and “applied this piteous war cry in a contemptuous way to describe the people of the area as “Kukuruku banza.” There was later a concerted movement by the Etsako to have the name changed during British colonial administration.²⁴

The military success of the Nupe invaders in this area was due not only to their military superiority, but also to the assistance they received from local groups

willing to turn against their neighbour.²⁵ After capitulating to the Nupe, some of the Etsako clans helped them invade other clans and villages. The South Ibies, for example, helped the Nupe against the Auchi kingdom.²⁶ Auchi was used as a base for the raids carried out into other villages. Some groups even raided other villages within their same clan as a result of their new relationship with the Nupe. For example, some Etsako leaders accompanied the Nupe in their invasion of other territories and shared in the war booty.²⁷ It is believed that the Otaru of Auchi got some slaves from the Nupe for the assistance he gave to them.²⁸ The Nupe victory over the Auchi kingdom can therefore be partially ascribed to the disunity among the neighbouring communities. Despite the military superiority of the Nupe, if the Auchi kingdom and neighbouring communities had been united in self-defense, the story might have ended differently. For example, Ogidi, a neighbouring community defense stood its ground until relief came from the Royal Niger Company's army, essentially because of their unity. Instead of the unity of the Etsako people and her neighbouring communities, they all went ahead to face the Nupe individually and this to a great extent spelt their defeat on the battlefield.²⁹ In assessing the extent to which Nupe contact affected the people of the Etsako land socially and politically, it is important to note that the Nupe were responsible for making the inhabitants of the Etsako land to modify their customs and beliefs. In the wake of their intrusion, they introduced novel principles and ideas, to which the people were still getting accustomed when the British arrived.³⁰ Although by 1897 the Nupe no longer had

direct control over the Afenmai, their administrative innovations persisted. The new political positions and titles they introduced survived, while beneficiaries of the titles continued to exploit their positions. For example, even after the Nupe influence had been lost in the area, the tributes that once went to Bida continued to be levied by the people.³¹ The impact of the innovations of the Nupe on the Afenmai's social life was very significant. The origins of some of the characteristic traits of present-day Auchi kingdom can be traced to this period. And this influence came as one of the southern ripples caused by the Sokoto jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio. The Nupe stopped the harassment of the people of the Afenmai land as a result of their own struggle with the Europeans in the last decade of the nineteenth century.³² As a result of the attack on their capital by the forces of the Royal Niger Company, the Nupe were forced to devote all their resources to its defense. In spite of their heroic resistance, the Nupe succumbed to the superior force of the British on 27th January, 1897. Since colonial rule did not result in the obliteration of the socio-cultural practices of the people of the Etsako land, their present-day society still exhibits quite a number of those traits acquired as a result of the Nupe contacts of the nineteenth century.³³

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CHAPTER FOUR

NUPE INFLUENCE ON AFENMAI

Introduction

Until the Nupe invasion of 1860, Etsako, which came into being in northern Edo from about the latter part of the fourteenth century, was essentially a patrilineal segmentary society. Like other acephalous societies, the indigenous religion played a dominant role in the culture and customs of the people. The Nupe invasion of the area, though not motivated by their determination to introduce Islam in Etsako, encouraged the spread of the religion to many of the villages and clans from about the 1860, 1870s, and 1890s. Contrary to one theory, the process of conversion of people of the religion was by peaceful persuasion before 1891¹. Most of those who accepted Islam during this period did so out of imitation of the Muslim Nupe/Hausa/Fulani soldiers, administrators, traders and scholars in their villages. The use of force in spreading the religion occurred in Agbede or Aviele from 1891, and was economically and politically-inspired.

Though this culminated in the ascendancy of Islam in the area in the period of the Nupe administration, the majority of the Etsako people in the other clans continued to adopt the indigenous religion before 1897². On the other hand, the Nupe government under the Fulani in Bida, in a bid to establish its authority over the territory, and ensure the control of the administration of the clans, found itself compelled by circumstances relating to lack of strong central governments in the communities, to bypass the Etsako segmentary systems and

evolve its own kind of sociopolitical and cultural institutions for the people in 1860. There were four major changes that emanated from the innovation: first, there was decline of traditional political authentic (the olders. the age grade, etc) and emergence of a new ruling elite (i.e. the rise of Islamic monarchies such as the Otaru of Auchi, the Oba of Agbede, the Aidenogie of South Ibie, the Egiegbai of Ekperi, etc.) from 1860; second, there was relegation of certain aspects of the indigenous socio-cultural institutions, e.g. Etsako religion, names, dress, diet, etc. and the growth of new ones, particularly Muslim names, Muslim/Arabic dress, Nupe facial marks, etc.; third, there was evolution of important titles for the Muslim royal women, e.g. the Ogbachi of Auchi, the Giwamata of Agbede, etc; and lastly was the British intrusion into Nupe affairs in the territory, the result of which was the extrication of Etsako from the imperial hegemony of the Nupe whose kingdom has been incorporated into the new ' Colonial State' in Nigeria during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries³.

Religious and Socio-Cultural Impact

Following the subjugation of the Afemai People, the Nupe introduced a system of collecting annual tribute from the area. The imposition of this system introduced alien principles into the political life of the vanquished Kingdom. Agents were appointed for the conquered areas.⁴ According to Mason stated once the amana had been accepted, and the amount of tribute agreed upon of

which tribute was levied according to the size of the village, the question of administration was simply answered and justified. The system they put in place was one in which “resident officials who identified their interests with those of the conqueror were installed or elected to manage the collection and dispatch of annual tribute which they sometimes accompanied to Bida.” These appointed agents were called “azeni.” The agents in turn appointed local aides who helped execute the collection of the tribute⁵.

Those who were appointed as “azenis” were sometimes Nupe or Hausa clients of one or other of the important title holders of Bida, and in most cases, local notables were appointed. The agents were allowed to keep a portion of the tribute collected and occasionally also received gifts from the capital in appreciation of their services. The main gifts they got were potash and salt. These notables or agents treated their appointed subordinates at the village level the way they were themselves treated by their superior.⁶ The colonial form of administration introduced by the Nupe changed the previous existing political order. The principle of gerontocracy, which had been the bedrock of the Afemai traditional system, was now to a large extent replaced by a system which relegated age to the background. Monarchical principles were introduced in Afemai. Denton noted that headship of village was once vested in its oldest man but that changed when the Nupe established their authority over the Afemai land. For a more active administration to be achieved the Nupe selected

“men of character, wealth and ability, from among the people of the clan, to act as their local agents and these men came to be regarded as headmen and tribute was rendered them by the people for the services, they gave acting as intermediaries with the slave raiders.⁷ The heads of the clans of appointed agents who also acted as village heads, and these appointees got the Nupe name “Dawudu”. They first instituted the principle of individual authority, which was not indigenous to the organization of these clans. The Nupe were said to have introduced the post of “Otaru” in the Afemai Land⁸. After the conquer of the Afemai People, the Nupe appointed a man of personality and wealth as their local agent. This man was known as Ikelebe and he had earlier been wronged by the Nupe, who had mistakenly killed his mother. Ikelebe was very wealthy and powerful, and according to tradition, he kept his cool despite the murder of his mother. This reportedly impressed the Nupe invaders, who informed the Etsu Nupe of this remarkable personality. Accordingly, the Etsu dispatched a few gifts to Ikelebe. Among the gifts were a turban, a cap, a sword, a horse, and a staff of office. The gifts were later presented to Ikelebe by “the representatives of the Etsu Nupe at his installation ceremony at Aibotse village when he was declared the Otaru of Afemai.⁹ With effect from that time, he was recognized as the chief agent of the Nupe in the area and the head of all the Afemai villages. In each village, he appointed a “dawudu” who acted as his assistant. Some new Nupe titles were later introduced by the Otaru. Collectively,

the new title holders were called “igbanusomi” (turban chiefs), since part of the insignia of their office was a special turban acquired from the Nupe.¹⁰

Islam was practiced during the area during the period of Nupe hegemony but only a few people adopted it. With the adoption of Islam as the state religion, the people adopted new social norms in accordance with Islamic prescriptions. The Sokoto jihad that started in 1804 was allegedly aimed at raising the standard of Islam among the people of Hausaland, but in keeping with the Muslim prescription to extend the frontiers of Islam, proselytizers introduced Islam into the areas of the Kafiris (unbelievers). Despite the introduction of Islam, the entry of the jihad into the Afemai People was based mainly on political and economic considerations. In the Afemai People, the Nupe were noted not for the propagation of the religion of Islam, but for their slave trading activities¹¹. They did not, therefore, embark on a conscious policy of converting their subjects to Islam. Yet, Islam still followed the sword since, “after the conquest or submission its continued influence was assumed by northern, often Hausa... traders and missionaries, and repatriated slaves, who, while away from home had adopted the religion of their masters.” The agents appointed by the Nupe to assist in the collection of tribute were often Muslim converts, and these converts often forced their subjects to adopt their religion.¹²

The acceptance of Islam by some of the people of the land marked a major departure from most of their traditional beliefs and practices and Islamic

practices now became entrenched their everyday lives till the present day. Muslim worship almost phased out other forms of worship and beliefs. The major shrines dedicated to gods and goddesses were destroyed and no longer served. Such practices as sacrifices to the “god of rain” during periods of drought in Afemai became limited. Mosques were established to replace shrines, and “Imams” came to occupy the former position of importance that the traditional priests previously enjoyed.¹³

The influence of Islam also became apparent in the life cycle of the Afemai People. Muslim festivals now existed with traditional ones. Hence sailah (Id el Fitri and Id el Kabir) became the major festivals, and fasting during the month of Ramadan was also observed alongside the Uchi day festival, a traditional festival, is celebrated on the 8th of January every year till the present day. The morning and evening cry of „Muezzins“ became a notable feature of worship in Afemai People, calling believers to prayers in the mosques. While the traditional practice of forming age groups continued, they were now formed during the sallah festival since the festival became a notable landmark in the communal computation of time as well as in the social life of the people.¹⁴

The Muslim doctrine in respect to marriage was quite similar to the indigenous Etsako practice. Fundamentally, the two permitted the marriage of more than one wife. The new religion permitted its adherents to marry as many as four wives, provided that they had the means to support the wives. Afemai

Muslims also began the practice of giving away their daughters in marriage without taking any bride price; this is considered a Muslim religious charity, sadaqah. The practice of keeping women in purdah, (that is seclusion) was also introduced, mainly by the very wealthy who could afford to dispense with their wives' farm labour. Such secluded women could only come out at night or wear the veil over their faces. Although no longer involved in farm work, these women were engaged in other productive activities in their secluded quarters. Afemai Muslims also adopted new Islamic names in place of the traditional ones. In this respect, the basic philosophy that underlay the nomenclature system of the Afemai People whereby children's names reflected the mood or status of their parents at time of birth was now altered, and Muslim names were now given. In most cases the traditional "Etsako name" was used as the "middle name" As with the later Christians, some of the Muslims retained their traditional names as well.¹⁵ Their Muslim way of dressing, that is, the wearing of long gowns and robes known as kaftan and wearing of Arabian caps, was also introduced in the Afemai People. This also implies to the women's mode of dressing. A typical Afemai lady dresses with every part of her body covered with a veil on her head and this has been the mode of dressing in the Afemai People till date.¹⁶

Political Impact

Nupe invasion in Afemai had political impact on the Afemai communities. Some of the chieftaincy disputes in Akoko communities were as a result of the Nupe invasion. For instance, the royal rivalry in Ekperi was a good example. During the Nupe imperialism in Etsakoland, Ekperi was the centre of the Nupe, there was a street known as Isale Tapa inhabited by the Nupe descendants. The ruling power in Agbede changed from the earlier ruling house to that of the present, claim to be a descendant of Nupe, who adopted the title Zaki (an Hausa word for lion) which is akin to the chieftaincy titles of the Northern people. The earlier ruling house left Agbede to settle at Ekperi.¹⁷

Economic Impact

The Nupe imperialism in Afemai land had a devastating effect on the economic development of Afemai People. The economic activities of Afemai were affected, both directly and indirectly by population loss, as many able-bodied men and women were carried away as slaves. An emphasis on population loss as such is highly relevant to the question of socio-economic development. Just as population growth played a major role in European development in providing labour, markets, and the pressure which led to further advance. So also, population loss affected the economic development of Afemai people. During Nupe invasion, high number of Afemai People was carried away as slaves, (most especially able-bodied men in their prime age), these prevented the little population that remained from

effectively engaging in agricultural, indigenous arts and crafts making. They abandoned their home and occupation and went into hiding. Many towns and villages abandoned their sites and fled up to the hills, for instance, Agbede, and Ekperi hills in Afemai land, and some into the forest and hiding places. They put all their effort in ensuring their safety, and these led to decrease in economic development of Afemai land.¹⁸

Conclusion

In assessing the extent to which Nupe contact affected the people of the Afemai land socially and politically, it is important to note that the Nupe were responsible for making the inhabitants of the Afemai land to modify their customs and beliefs. In the wake of their intrusion, they introduced novel principles and ideas, to which the people were still getting accustomed when the British arrived. Although by 1897 the Nupe no longer had direct control over the Afemai land, their administrative innovations persisted. The new political positions and titles they introduced survived, while beneficiaries of the titles continued to exploit their positions. For example, even after the Nupe influence had been lost in the area, the tributes that once went to Bida continued to be levied by the people.¹⁹ The impact of the innovations of the Nupe on the Afemai land social life was very significant.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This project has attempted to discuss Nupe strategies and tactics of using indigenous and external collaborators in the invasion and conquest of the Afemai between 1857 and 1897 the Nupe invasion of Afemai land was partially an upshot of the Usman Danfodio Jihad which began in 1804 and led to the creation of Sokoto Caliphate. It was extended to Afemai through the confluence region of Nigeria specifically from Idah, Ebira-Tao and Akoko land. Before the commencement of the wars, Nupe had to conduct exploratory campaign to ascertain the geographical characteristics as well as methods of war of the Afemai. This was particularly to avoid a repeat of the humiliation they suffered in the hands of the Ebira during their 1860 and 1873 military encounters. Haven realized that the Afemai could be difficult to conquered due to its environmental characteristics and military strength of some of the communities, Nupe resolved to introduce new strategies and tactics that could produce the desired results. In the course of the

battles, though the Afemai put up some stiff resistance, by the last quarter of the 19th century, except for some few resilient communities, every other bit and parcel of the Afemai territory was conquered piecemeal and brought under Nupe rule. Several reasons have been noted by scholars as possible factors for the defeat with no serious attention given to Nupe strategies and tactics of using collaborators to further their conquest. This project concludes that, notwithstanding the fact that the various Afemai communities lacked cohesion and did not see an attack on one of them as an attack on the whole; the wars would have been prolonged till the coming of the British if the people had not allowed themselves to be used as stooge in the conquest of their mother land. In assessing the extent to which Nupe contact affected the people of the Afemai socially and politically, it is important to note that the Nupe were responsible for making the inhabitants of the Afemai to modify their customs and beliefs. In the wake of their intrusion, they introduced novel principles and ideas, to which the people were still getting accustomed when the British arrived. Although by 1897 the Nupe no longer had direct control over the Afemai, their administrative innovations persisted. The new political positions and titles they introduced survived, while beneficiaries of the titles continued to exploit their positions. For example, even after the Nupe influence had been lost in the area, the tributes that once went to Bida continued to be levied by the people. The impact of the innovations of the Nupe on the Afemai's social life was very significant. The origins of some of the characteristic traits of present-day Auchi Kingdom can be

traced to this period. And this influence came as one of the southern ripples caused by the Sokoto jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio. The Nupe stopped the harassment of the people of the Afemai, as a result of their own struggle with the Europeans in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As a result of the attack on their capital by the forces of the Royal Niger Company, the Nupe were forced to devote all their resources to its defense. In spite of their heroic resistance, the Nupe succumbed to the superior force of the British on 27th January, 1897. Since colonial rule did not result in the obliteration of the socio-cultural practices of the people of the Afemai, their present-day society still exhibits quite a number of those traits acquired as a result of the Nupe contacts of the nineteenth century. For example, even after the Nupe influence had been lost in the area, the tributes that once went to Bida continued to be levied by the people (Robson, 2016). Afemai The origins of some of the characteristic traits of present-day Auchi Kingdom can be traced to this period. And this influence came as one of the southern ripples caused by the Sokoto jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio. The Nupe stopped the harassment of the people of the Auchi Kingdom as a result of their own struggle with the Europeans in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As a result of the attack on their capital by the forces of the Royal Niger Company, the Nupe were forced to devote all their resources to its defense. In spite of their heroic resistance, the Nupe succumbed to the superior force of the British on 27th January, 1897. Since colonial rule did not result in the obliteration of the socio-cultural practices of the people of the Auchi

Kingdom, their present-day society still exhibits quite a number of those traits acquired as a result of the Nupe contacts of the nineteenth century.

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(ii) List of Informants

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Date of Interview
Anagbor, Saliu	53 years old	Teacher	Agenebode	14/5/2025

Bossey, Regina	63 years old	Teacher	Aivanhwu	20/4/2025
Imeka, Friday	62 years old	Trader	Auchi,	1/6/2025
Idaewor, Margret	54 years old	Trader	Auchi	24/6/2025
Osilama, Amos	60 years old	Civil Servant	Aivanhwu	20/4/2025
Suleiman, Y	60 years old	Professor of African History	Edo University, Iyamho,	8/5/2025
Stanley, Dominic	61 years old	Civil Servant	Auchi	25/5/2025
Samugana, V.M.	76 years old	Retired Court Clerk	Ikpe	5/1/2025
Shokpekhai, G.	94 years old	Trader and farmer	Ozalla Clan	7/2/2025
Udiumah, Ireta	55 years old	Trader	Auchi	6/1/2025

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