

**PRE-COLONIAL DEFENCE MECHANISMS IN CENTRAL NIGERIA:
PERSPECTIVES ON THE IGBIRA, IGALA AND NUPE PEOPLE**

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ABSTRACT

North Central Nigerian is suffering from many types of insecurity such as kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery and the encroachment of Boko Harm terrorists. This paper is an attempt to reassess the security and defensive mechanism put in place by the pre-colonial peoples of the Central Nigerian area with special reference to the Igala, Igbira and Nupe communities using secondary sources in order to investigate how we can learn from the defensive mechanism of these pre-colonial communities, modernize and adopt it to modern challenges. The paper established that the communities, over the time, employed different defensive mechanisms peculiar to their terrains and the respective challenges they were facing as of then, and to some extent, these mechanisms helped them in checkmating and curbing the various security threats they witnessed. The paper employed descriptive and analytical methods of historical research in its analysis.

KEYWORDS: *Pre-Colonial, Mechanisms, Encroachment, Kidnapping, Banditry,*

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of human species, man has been in constant quest for domination and survival. This is because he is constantly facing the threat of obliteration from natural disasters, predators (such as lion, tiger etc) that prey on him and fellow humans in his wandering search for food, water, space among others. In later years, he became a sedentary animal and has been, over the time of his existence, developing mechanisms to defend and secure himself, loved ones, values, home, source of livelihood and environment from perceived, imaginary and real internal and external threats. [1] It is mostly his failure to survive or/and protect his home that lead to his migration to other places. These and other precipitating factors for his movement are called push factors of migration. This has been consistent from the crudest mechanism of running away, hiding and employing stone weapons to subdue his enemy to the iron age where he possesses more lethal weapons, to modern age where modern and sophisticated defense soft and hardwares are employed to defend what man called home, its territorial integrity, waters (as with naval forces), air (e.g Air defense forces). In all these, one thing is central; man is in constant struggle to survive. In pre- modern society, man employed traditional and less complex, but effective, mechanism to defend himself and loved ones from threats.

Traditional defense mechanism is the internal and local arrangements organized by different polities of a given area for the purpose of protecting and maintaining themselves against internal and external threats and aggressors. This is in order to protect, develop their cherish values and ensure the well-being of their communities. [2] As every security threat is local, Its relevance in defending a certain society as local initiative because its taking in to cognizance the understanding the dynamics, peculiarities and dimensions of insecurity and threats cannot be overemphasized. It is against this background that this paper attempt to assess the traditional defense mechanisms of the people of central Nigerian in pre-colonial times.

Defining the Area

History does not occur in a vacuum or abstraction, but rather in a defined and specific location. The present area of the central Nigeria consists of states such as Plateau, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger and Nasarawa. In the pre-colonial times, it consisted of kingdoms such as the Nupe kingdom (later emirate) and chieftaincies along with semi-centralized (such as the Igala and Idoma) and non-centralized communities. It is a hilly, rocky and mountainous with caves which is crucial in the defense mechanism of the people populating the area; it also has multiple ethnic groups and is perhaps the most diverse area in Nigeria with ethnic groups such as the Idoma, Igala, Tiv, Jukun, Nupe, Yorubas, Igbira, Kambari, Gungawa, Zuru, Gbagyi, Atyap, Ninzong, Hausa, Fulani, Angas, Kaje, etc that settled in area at different times establishing organized communities. The Kwarrarafa Empire of the Jukuns and the Nupe Kingdom were the largest political units to evolve in the colonial times, though later Kontagora and Ilorin emirates were added to the list.

But the question that would pose itself here is, why is it relevant to study the pre-colonial defense mechanism of these areas in the 21th century? Today, the central Nigerian area defines the broad insecurity that is bedeviling Nigeria. It is infested with security challenges such as farmers-herders crisis, ethno-religious conflict, kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery and theft among others. The relevance of this research is that it enables us to look at the traditional defense mechanism employed by the peoples in the past, to enable us assess and restructure the security mechanism in the present as Nicholo Machiavelli once said:

.....It is easy by the diligent study of the past, to foresee what is likely to happen in the future of any republic, and to apply those remedies that were used by the ancients, or, in not finding any that were employed by them , to device new ones from their similarity with the past. [3]

Pre-colonial Conflicts in the Central Nigeria

Going by the Darwinist interpretation of history on the survival of the fittest, humans since millions of years during their historical evolution were struggling animals and were always in constant struggle to either dominate or defend themselves from threats. It was this capability and instinct of dominating that led them to emerge as the most dominant specie in the animal kingdom while the defensive instinct helped them to defend themselves against predatory animals and fellow tramping humans among others. In the course of human development this dominator and defensive traits are consistently visible, hence the inevitability of conflict among humans and other forces. It is against this background that humans continually engage in

expansionist wars to dominate and defensive mechanism through trainings, tactics, strategy, alliances, and weapons in order to peacefully survive.

Central Nigerian area is not different from this trait as since time immemorial, the area had been infested with expansionist wars and conflicts between the various kingdoms and ethnicities in the area. There was the Jukun expansionist campaign between the 16thc-17thc, [4] the Nupe Jihadists, the Zazzau expansionist exploit and the various slave raids by the predatory centralized states. For instance, Amina the warrior's daughter of Bakwa of Zazzau was reported to die in Attagara during one of her expansionist campaign to central Nigeria. Writing in the 19th c, Muhammad Bello bn Fodio:

The first to whom power was given in this land according to what we have been told was Aminatu, the daughter of Sarkin Zakzak. She made war upon these countries and overcame them entirely. She died in Attagara. [5]

Saying of her exploits in the central Nigerian area, the Kano chronicle also has this to say "All the towns as far as Kwararrafa and Nupe. Every town paid tribute to her. The Sarkin Nupe sent 40 eunuchs and 10,000 kola to her." [6] The need for traditional defense mechanism in the central Nigerian area arose because of the security threats and onslaught posed by these expansionist states in pre-colonial times.

This impacted their world outlook and even settlement pattern as they mostly live on hills and mountains, rocks, caves or forests to avoid the mounting cavalry of the Hausa states. Perhaps it was this security menace that informed the naming rituals among the plateau people of the central Nigeria where a male child would be tied to the back of a little boy who was given a bow and arrow and was instructed to recite the following lines after shooting the arrow on a clear target:

As you (pronouncing the child's name) grow from childhood into adult life. The bows and arrows are your weapons of defense. Our survival as people depend on our use of them. When in danger use these weapons to defend and protect the family, clan, the feeble and the community. In your power and skillful hands bring abundant meat from the bush to feed the family, the aged and friends. [7]

These security threats shaped the settlement of the peoples of the area where they mostly preferred to settle on rocks, hills, mountainous areas, thick bushes, caves etc for defensive purpose against the predatory pillage, conquest and raiding of the centralized states of the North (e.g Kwararrafa, Hausa states, Borno and later the Sokoto Caliphate and its emirates) the and the South (such as Benin and Oyo). Settling on the high lands help them to know about the enemy's encroachment through watch posts on giant trees, mountain peaks and hill tops (*Mahanga*). They also train the youths through age grade systems, hunting and apprenticeship in arms making. There is also the use of divination and masquerades, arms, charms, magic among others to deter crimes and protect the societies from external and internal threats. [8]

In essence, the organs within such local structures had the capacity to deal squarely with those tendencies that undermined and

threatened the internal cohesion, corporate entity and existence of the polities [9]

However, for the sake of focus, this paper would limit itself to the defense mechanism developed by the Igala, Igbira and Nupe communities of central Nigeria in the pre-colonial times.

Defense Mechanism in Pre-colonial Igala Land

It is pertinent to note that before talking about the defense mechanism of the Igala people one has to look, albeit in brief summary, about the Igalas. In modern Nigeria, the Igala people are mostly found in the east of the river Benue confluence, Kogi state in North Central Nigeria in places such as Igala-mela Ajaka, Ofu, Dekina, Bassa, Ankpa, Omala, Lokoja Ibaji, Ajaokuta etc. The Igala people are about 4-5 million today as the 9th largest ethnic group in the country. [10] The origin of the Igala people is shrouded in mystery as there are many theses put across by different historians. [11] But when we are talking about the origin of certain ethnic group are we talking about the origin of their kinship or the people themselves? According to some literatures, the origin of the Igala is from the Yoruba, this is based on the similarity between some Igala and Yoruba linguistic expressions. At another level, there is the hypothesis of the sky origin which explains that the Igala were the progenitors of one heavenly being known as Aganapoje. There is also the Borno origin thesis, the Egyptian origin thesis, the Jukun and the Benin Origin. [12] Nevertheless, by around 16th c, the Kingdom of Igala was formed at Idah as Ane-Igala with the Attah as the king, the father and the national symbol of the state.

Because of the nature of the Igala people, especially their quest for survival and expansion in the pre-colonial era, it became necessary for them to work out a defense mechanism that would protect them from internal and external aggression. For example, the Igala people had to defend themselves from the encroachment and harassment of empires such as the Benin Kingdom, the Kwararafa (Jukun) and the Hausa states and the Sokoto caliphate later, once the Igala people were under the over lordship of the Jukun of Kwararafa, so the need for working out defensive mechanism cannot be overemphasized.

The Attah was the chief security officer of Igalaland but was supported by the traditional local clan's heads in their respective domains such as the Agboko, Agandako, Omoghaje, etc. The Attah delegated some of his powers to these local chiefs. [13] For instance, on the authority of the Attah, the heads of the clans from the riverine communities such as Abokko, Agandako and Ogbaje serve as customs and security of their clans, inspecting goods and cargos entering the Igala land through the waters. They provided reports; protect traders, trade routes, ports etc. These clans send residence to the capital at Idah for easy communication between their local chiefs and the Attah and to assure their loyalty to him.

In constructing the structure of his new Kingdom, the immediate concern of the Ayegba was how to solve a problem that had always faced new rulers; how to sustain his position by preventing attacks from the remnants of the old power block and external invaders; in this case the Jikuns" [14]

One of the defensive mechanisms of the Igala was the Masquerades. The Masquerades were the incarnate and representatives of the dead ancestors of the land that protected the Attah and the state institutions and correct the living. There were twelve Masquerades. Awe was their head and

the most important who had the power to even check the Attah himself and used it striking stick to strike and deter trouble makers. The other Masquerades, Ewe, the bearer of the leopard-skinned stick and who represents the ritual authority of the royal ancestors. Others were Egu, Amuda, Ajamalade. They represented the watchful eyes of the dead, enforce laws and orders, publicly discipline criminals such as thieves, called out and shame offenders and impose fines on those who breach local security arrangements ranging from locally made bears to live stocks. The Masquerades were more of the dead ancestors protecting the living and the Igala civilization from threats. Underscoring this point, Abdulkadir has this to say:

The Igala masquerades by their nature and connection to the land of the dead and by their mystical proven prophetic powers acted as constraints to acts that would otherwise be detrimental to peace, security and stability of the Igalaland. [15]

The oracle also helped in securing the Igala community by employing its divine services to educate the state about future security threats and what the gods recommended. For example, when the Igala was Jukun's vassal and the Attah Ayanga Odolo refused to give annual tribute to the Aku of Wukari, the Jukun empire set for a mission to decimate the Igala at Idah, the Attah consulted the oracle where it was recommended that he sacrificed his daughter, prince Inikpi, which he did and the Jukun threat was subsided. [16] In this scenario we are presented with two viewpoints. Firstly, an act that might be termed as barbaric and secondly, an act of sacrifice to fatherland. From one perspective that the act of taking one's life in a traditional African Juju could be termed as barbaric and uncalled for. At the other hand we can see how the highest office in the land, the most important person in the land can go to the length of sacrificing his offspring to protect and defend the kingdom from external aggression which showed that, had there been any easier task, he could have executed it without thinking twice, but could there be more difficult choice? This demonstrates how the defense of the Igala people is of paramount importance to the state; that nothing is too expensive or special to sacrifice.

Also, the Igala exploit the availability of settlers among them from other parts of the Nigerian area to boost their defensive mechanism. In contrast of what may be expected of chasing away and harassing strangers, the Igala welcomed them and made use of their charms, strength and tactics to defend themselves from internal and external aggression. For instance, the Igala had Hausa traders in their midst and when the Jukun army were marching to vanquish the kingdom, after the latter declared its independence, the Attah Igala employed the charmed Hausa medicine men to help in the protection of the state. The Hausa poured traditional medicine inside the Inachalo waters near the enemy's encampment which produced fish in the waters, when the Jukun troops ate the fish they fell to Diarrhea weakening them and leading to their death in hundreds at the hands of the Igala troops, hence, decimating the numbers of the Jukuns. This does not mean in any way that the Igala did not have native charm but, perhaps their charm, would be familiar to their aggressive neighbors, the Jukuns, so by employing the Hausa charms, they caught the Jukuns by surprise and easily defeated them.

Furthermore, another important defense mechanism of the Igala was that, though, the state may lack standing army, there was a mechanism put in place to assemble troops if the need arises. The titled councilors were always responsible for mobilizing the army in the times of war and accompanied the king to battle field. [17] Other court attendants were also called in. From this

we can infer that the Igala did not have any standing army for the purpose of defense as obtainable in Oyo, this is perhaps because it was not a militarized state but only interested in its self-internal defense.

However, Youths were prepared and taught how to handle arms such as cutlasses, arrows and shields for eventualities. Here, the pertinent question is how effective was this arrangement in the time of invasion or external aggression? From expansionist perception this can work properly, for the state would be readily prepared. Also, for defense purpose, this could hardly work, because the attacking party would for the most part, made a surprise attack which would make it very difficult to mobilize forces from different parts of the kingdom in required time. Though one may argue that the oracle may give prior information of pending attacks, there is still the issue of training, discipline and regimentation which needs troops to be stationed and drilled by experienced military officer for a long period of time. For example, Shaka's military revolution, among many other things, made use of standing army against the traditional call up army which revolutionized military operations in the area.

As for internal defensive mechanism, before things escalated into chaos, a traditional mechanism was put in place where disputes were settled at family levels, if it persisted then it would be taken to the village level; other minor cases such as land dispute were settled by the local village heads Omada and Gago, but more serious cases of murder, treason, and rape were referred exclusively to the Attah's court (Ogbede), though for the most part, he delegated these powers to other eunuchs called Ogbeh, who also referred back to the Attah in the face of more complicated cases. In this regard, the state deterred crimes by punishing criminals. This helped in stopping crimes as it was very effective and there were few cases of internal aggression.

Just as the army, there was no standing police force for internal security but rather personal body guards in slaves and attendees protecting important people and places. However, in the case of social disturbance, they were sent to quell it. Practicing the time tested policy of deterring crimes, the Igala punished crimes publicly, for instance, in 1850 Crow her reported seeing the execution of a runaway slave who stole and sold slaves. Kidnappers and armed robbers were also executed by impaling (Ediyokpa), murder was punishable by death and thieves were sold as slaves.

Nevertheless, one problem with the internal security and defense mechanism in the Igala kingdom is that, while the kingdom kept expanding over time, the absence of a standing army and police made it difficult to continually protect the integrity of the state, there were logistical challenges such as the movement of troops or security from one end of the state to the other, as most of the mechanism that was put in place concentrated in the capital, Idah. Furthermore, the jihad exposed the weakness of the state to curtail external aggression.

Defense Mechanism of the Igbira People

As with most Nigerian ethnicities, the origin of the Igbira tribe is shrouded in mystery. In about 12th-14th centuries, the Igbira tribe lived in an area in central Nigeria on the Gongola known as Bira (present day Taraba state); from there, they migrated into the basins and valleys of River Benue, hence the name Ibira (a variation of Igbira) and then to the south west confluence are of the Benue and the Niger in the 16thc and 17thc, where they further migrated northwest to their present location, which, in modern Nigeria, correspond to the Kogi central senatorial district in

Kogi state, north central Nigeria. The 1991 national census puts the population of the area 722,032. Another national head count was undertaken in 2006. The provisional figure of 884,396 released by the National Population Commission (NPC) is being disputed. It is distributed as follows: Okene LGA (320,260), Adavi LGA (202,194), Okehi LGA (199,999), Ajaokuta LGA (122,321) and Ogori Magongo LGA (39,622).

The Igbira arrived at their present location from across the Niger in about late 17thc and settled according to five clan groups of Eika, okechi, Adavi, Okengwen and Ihima, Iganyi evolved later. The smallest unit of the Igbira socio-political organization was the family unit headed by the eldest family member, then the clan, inter-clan, the clan elders liaisewith the chief priest to restrain and ensure enforcement of local laws within the community. [18] While on the other hand, the chief priest and the warriors designed the state's defense strategy. Just as in the case of the Igala people, the Igbira of the central Nigeria also suffered from internal and external threats, hence, had to develop security mechanism that would defend them from these aggressions. For example, the Nupe emirate raided the chiefdom between 1860s-1870s, the Igbira were able to resist the jihadist and also launched a decade and half resistance against the British colonial domination.

As geography shapes human history, the nature of threats the Igbira people faced in the pre-colonial times also shaped their settlement patterns to be more defensive and security conscious. They usually lived in hilly and rocky environments which allow them to have a panoramic view of invading forces from afar through traditional watch posts. This also made it difficult for invading forces using calvary (as it happened) during the Jihad to attack them, for horses could not reach the top of the hill. This was among the natural defense initiative employed by the people of the central Nigerian area, the Igbira inclusive, to avert threats and aggression from external forces. [19]

Divination was also very crucial in the defense mechanism of the people of Igbira. The Iraha shrine was such a place of divination for defense against external threats. The Isovo Irayi divinations held in the Igbira New Year (November and December in the Gregorian calendar) offered sacrifices to the gods who in turn told the people what was in store for them for the coming years including natural calamities and security breaches. Besides, the gods would also recommend a solution to the community. For instance, it was the gods through the Isova Irayi divination that foretold the coming of the Jihadists from Bida in the mid 19thc century, which gave them prior information that helped them prepare and repelled the Nupe warriors, despite the latter's superior cavalry, arms and numbers. The gods also prophesized the invasion of some mystical yellow creatures (the Europeans) whom, as they warned, shall not be fought, hence, protecting the Igbiras from the wanton massacre of the British fire arms. However, at another level, Okene and Suberu argued that the Igbira resisted the British force for a decade and half. [20]

There was also the Ekwu masquerade that was employed to impose priestly decisions. As the messenger of the gods, it had supernatural powers seeing beyond the mortal naked eyes. In the annual event of *Ekwuchi*, the masquerade uncovers evil schemes, criminals, and warned them. In the case of persistent crimes that may threaten the community, it surprisingly appeared in crimes scenes to dose out crimes or kill the criminals to cleanse the society of their evil. It also recommended sacrifices to the gods in order to avert dangers and calamities, on suspecting

external security threats, the masquerade walk round the boundaries of the Igbira land to protect the people. Added to this, the Ori traditional worship, after due sacrifice, provided accurate and instant answers to the people on matters of security concern. This helps because the Priest responsible was selfless and immaterial. The answers and predications of the priest through the gods helped them to avert, defeat, mitigate or minimize the calamity and casualties of a threat. The Igbira also used charms to prevent metals from piercing through their body and also used it to disappear in the case of being over powered.

However, one limitation associated with the Igbira defense mechanism, despite their resolute mechanism and determination to protect their father land was their arms. Compared to the arms of the European, the Igbira charms and arms were inferior and could not protect them from the European conquest as their bows and arrows, spears, swords and machetes were not in any way a match to the European maxim guns. [21] Added to this, the state does not had centralized army command This limitation made mobilization of large body of troops, consistent and continuous training and perfecting tactics, logistics and communications very difficult.

Defense Mechanism of the Nupe Kingdom

The Nupe people of north central Nigeria are mostly in present Niger state, Kwara and Kogi state. The Kingdom of Nupe was one of the centralized states in pre-colonial Nigeria and one of the few that dominated the scene along with Kwararafa in the North central area. Contrary to what the popular narration has that the Kingdom was founded by Tsoedo (Edegi), the Kingdom, over the course of time from around 1000A.D to 1900 evolved in three phases with each phase having it on peculiar architecture. The earliest one was the Bini confederacy of 12 small chiefdoms from around the first Millennia A.D up to around 1500s, then the Tseodo Mega state of Nupe (1500-1800) and later the Nupe emirate (1800-1900). Soit is pertinent to look at the three different phases of the development of the Nupe kingdom as each has it different defense mechanism.

The Bini confederacy as the earliest political administration was the coming together of local chieftaincies on the Niger united by ethnicity and interest. The history of the pre-tseodo Nupe communities was limited because of lack of records. There was no standing army among them, but rather each of the confederates contributed units to fight external and internal threats. They also had three age grade system which were *Enadzankanzhi* (the younger ones) that were put under training, *Ena Drufuzhi* (this are the Youth) who were engaged in community services and internal policing when necessary, and *Ena Misaszhi*(the elders) whose advices were sorted out in the case of any national emergency.

The defense mechanism of these early Nupe settlements was also embedded in their religious settings. The chief priest was the head of religious processions and also checked societal vices, the religion itself was believed to administer justice and punishment. However, the *Enanyankunzis* were the main fighting force under the *Ndacheko* (Chief Hunter) who was the professional responsible for the state calls up army. There was also the *Etsu Tanchi* (head of bow and arrow). Nevertheless, though an evolving and developing state, the confederacy was bedeviled with many gaps, especially that of security characterized by the unavailability of standing army which facilitated the victory of Tseodo in the 15thc century partially because of his exposure with the more organized Igala Kingdom. It was only during wars or eminent threatagainst the confederacy that, a temporary joint army, far from being standing army was

assembled to fight a common enemy. This poses the question of organization, continuous training, mobilization, planning, specialization and logistics.

Personalities are also the determinants of history, the rise of Tseodo was crucial for the emergence of the Nupe Kingdom as a mega state in about 1500. Tseodo was said to be prince and son of Attah Igala and has a Nupe mother. His father was the son of Attah of Igalaland who was on hunting expedition to Nupe when he met his mother at Nku, a village of the Bini confederacy. It has to be noted that the Bini confederacy was under the overlord ship of the Attah Igala. [22] He grew up among his mother's people and later was sent to Igala as a slave. His father, the then King, recognized him through the charm and a ring he gave his mother to give him. He was loved by his father but fearing the mechanism of his jealous and envious half-brothers, he left for Nupe in a mythical canoe.

Tseodo was fortunate to have a firsthand knowledge of the Nupe Bini- confederacy, he was raised there and also lived among the Igala. He exploited the relative weakness of the confederacy and conquered them as Sheshi noted: "while details of the conquest may be unknown due to lack of sources, it was not difficult to subdue the Bini group probably due to lack of a standing army" This era was characterized by a revolutionary approach to the defense mechanism of the Nupe as it now became a militarized state.

One of the characteristic of the defense mechanism of the Nupe people in the Tseodo era was the constant changing of the capital. Because the Kingdom engaged in expansionist wars, the capital kept changing from one location to another making it very difficult for the enemy to understudy the domain. The capital was first established at Nupeko then Gbara, then Mokwa, Jima, and later Raba, for strategic and defensive reasons, making it very difficult for the enemy to attack the capital.

Secondly, offenders were instantly and summarily punished to curtail their excesses and serve as deterrent to others. There were at least eight execution centers located in *Jebba, Tada, Gbera, Santali, Giraji, Ceworu, Fofo* and *Tayi*. Thirdly, the Nupe also borrowed a leaf from the Hausa states by importing houses from Borno, Kano, Katsina and North Africa to develop a cavalry making the state a super military state that was capable to protect itself against external aggressions and internal rebellion. At a time, the Kingdom had 5,555 horses for cavalry [23]. This could be seen from the Mugbe-Mugbe wars in 1820s between the Nupe kingdom and the fulani warriors in alliance with Ilorin. In this war, the Nupe army, trying to defend the state's territorial integrity made use of both cavalry and infantry foot soldiers. Here, it has to be noted that, cavalry and its complex organization needs a long period to be perfected, the Nupe cavalry was feared in the area under discussion, hence one can infer that the kingdom probably developed its cavalry centuries earlier before the Jihad wars. Furthermore, the state also incorporated its craftsmen such as the black smith among others into the defense system by making arms such as swords, spears, shields, etc, other craftsmen produced bows and arrows, sword scabbards, horse saddles etc for the military. It also had an alliance system with Oyo during the Jihad wars to curtail the menace of the Jihadist. [24]

However, despite this military strength and organization, the Tseodo dynasty fell in the 1820s to the Fulani warriors of Malam Dendo. The Fulani gradually infiltrated the state as Mallams (scholars) and later militarily conquering it. The greatest undoing of the Tseodo dynasty was the dynastic dispute between warring princes that weakened the state. After the death of Etsu

Mu'azu in the early 19thc, two princes, Jimada and Majiya, became entangled in dynastic war over the throne dividing the Nupe populace, public opinion and forces. The Fulani successfully played one prince against the other. Majiya killed Jimada in 1820, but the latter's son (Idris) ran to meet with the Fulani against the former and after his ascension as the puppet Emir, the Fulani later absorbed the power of the Estu and pledged their loyalty to Gwandu, the western part of the Sokoto caliphate. [25]

But perhaps the greatest failure of the Nupe defense forces was lack of strategy, their problem aroused when during the battle with the Fulani warriors, they placed their cavalry in the rear and the infantry in front. The Fulani mallams said some incarnations that blinded the Nupe soldiers and their horses leading them to tramp on the infantry at their front. Again, they usually made use of Fulani mercenaries who could easily infiltrate their ranks and abandon them for their ethnic cause and solidarity as it happened during the jihad wars. [26]

After the Jihad and the successful emergence of the Fulani overlords over Nupe kingdom, the new emirate evolved a new defense mechanism that was more elaborate and complex than what was obtainable in the Tseodo's era. For instance, the new Emir (Etsu), equipped the defense forces with new weapons; horses as he would naturally had more connections and acceptance with the new far northern powers of Kano, Katsina and North Africa for religious and ethnic solidarity. ⁴⁴He also formed his personal body guards and slaves to police and protects the markets, trade routes and streets.

In this new arrangement, the *Mayaki/mai yaki* (Warrior in Hausa) was the chief of the army who always stayed in the palace, he was assisted by the *Uban dawaki* (the horse master) was the commander of the cavalry, the cavalry was now an elite force. There was also the office of *Sokyara* that commanded the mounted vanguard; the *Ejeko*, the commander of the archers and *Sonkali*, the head of the infantry. This shows how the jihad revolutionized the defensive mechanism of the Nupe emirate by bringing in more professionalism and division of labor to the state. [27] The Nupe cavalry were well known, Kontagora and Gwandu emirates used to call them in to quell rebellions in their domain. The army had its nucleus form the 200 palace body guards, however within it expansive ranks were slaves, mercenaries, and volunteers. The nobles also contributed foot soldiers (*Dadkiri*), horse men (*Dodkoczi*) and gun men (*Bindigaciz*) during wars to defend the state. [28] For the palace guards, they were divided into two, i.e. *Dogarai* (Infantry) who equipped with guns arrows and bows and where under *etsu dogari* and the *lefedi* (the cavalry) wearing cotton wool amour and bearing swords, spears and big leather shield. [29]

All these are put in place to protect the state from external and internal aggression as well as to project the influence of the state to other places. Nobody was allowed to disturb the king's peace; there was elaborate judicial system based on Islamic Shari'ah to check and prosecute crimes, even nobles were kept at watch in order not to engage in uncalled action that may jeopardize the "kings peace."Nadal observed that "Rebels were quelled, wars (against the state) where answered with war, and raids answered with raids to protect and reestablished the Kings peace" [30]

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, this paper attempts to conceptualize and contextualize the nature of conflict in central Nigerian area and the need for the various kingdoms, communities and societies such

as Nupe, Igala, Igbira to defend themselves from internal and external threats. It has been ascertained that these societies had developed a unique and complex defense mechanism peculiar to threats bedeviling their survival. This includes masquerades, divinations, age grade system, settlement patterns, and in the case of the Nupe advanced army and cavalry. The judicial and police systems were also meant to check internal security threats. However, other factors such as lack of standing army and developed police force and dynastic disputes (in the case of the Nupe) limited the defense mechanism of the societies. Added to this, was their unsophisticated weapons technology compared to the European invaders in the late 19th and early 20th century that led to their subjugation by the foreign power.

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