E-ISSN: 1116 - 2619 P-ISSN: 3026-8524
MPRI-JHLAR | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, LITERATURE AND ART RESEARCH
VOL. 12 NO. 6 – APRIL, 2026

NATURE OF PRE-COLONIAL INTER-GROUP RELATIONS BETWEEN ALAGO AND HER NEIGBOURS, 1800-1900

ABDULKAREEM DOGARA AHMAD
Department of History, College of Education, Akwanga.
Corresponding Author: ahmadkareem069@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/mejhlar.v12i6.0105

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to looks at the nature of pre-colonial inter-group relations between the Alago and their neighbours in the Lafia area between 1800-1900. Intergroup relations have been a subject of discussion in various societies. Today the question of who is an indigene or non-indigene has become pertinent in many societies. The Lafia area is not excepted from these challenges of human settlement and interaction in our contemporary societies. The paper interrogates the nature of relationship that existed between the Alago and other ethnic groups that made up Lafia area. And also, other ethnic groups that are not contained in the area but had contact with the Alago through other means of inter relations. This explained how they lived together with one another in the pre-colonial time. This paper is critical discourse of the major challenges the historian of today encountered. The task of reconstructing the past with the source available to time in the present. By so doing, the researcher adopts a qualitative approach to historical explanation, articles and internet has been analysed, primary sources were used judiciously for an effective understanding of inter-group relations in the pre-colonial period in the Lafia area. In the final analysis, logical conclusion was drawn to ameliorate the major challenges of inter group relations in the area.

Keywords: Pre-colonial, Intergroup Relations, Lafia Area.

Introduction

The main trust of this chapter is the analysis of the study area. i.e. the Alago polities and their neighbours in the Pre-Colonial Era. These include migration, inter-marriages, war, diplomacy, economic activities, trade and commerce, recreation, religion and cultural institutions among others. An interaction is a human and social phenomenon which takes place when establishes some form of contact. Contact which is

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

the coming together of different groups of people culture and identity is inevitable because no individual or group of people (s) is an island that can exist in isolation or exclusively of others in terms of survival, or harnessing the environment. Throughout the epochs of history, it has been shown that human beings have never lived independently of one another, but they are social beings that enter into definite relationship with one another. Whether formal or informal within or outside their environment.

Oral accounts and written documents suggest contacts and relations between the Alago people and their neighbours in the Lafia Area right from time immemorial. Those groups of people (Alago and their neighbours) had interactions with each group of people in various spheres of influence. This therefore, underscores the inevitability of interactions of any social formation. In view of the above, economic relations between the Alago people and their neighbours in Pre-colonial period played a fundamental role in uniting the people as far back as the era of migrations and settlement of these groups as neighbours in study areas. It is very open that economic relation or interactions between these neighbouring people before the arrival of the colonialists was predicated on the quest for land. According to Iyo, because the Tiv people were farmers, they sold their military capacity to Alago of land acquire lands for their settlements and farms and this must have been obvious reason for the cordial interactions between the two groups in the pre-colonial period.

Alago Polities in the Pre-Colonial Era

Since a group is generally seen as a social unit consisting of a number of individuals who possess sets of norms and values and are capable of regulating their own behaviours in matters that affect them, we can safely locate the polities of Alago people within the framework of groups consisting of individuals. In the same perspective, Afigbo in his analysis of Igbo and their neighbours, asserts that: "Inter-group relations presupposes contacts and interactions between polities each having an identity to make some inputs into the relationships, in short, each has scope and area of autonomous action".

Therefore, if this kind of relationship connotes the interactions which takes place between members of the same groups and societies who come in contact with one another, there can be no two ways to the fact that the Alago people, in the course of their historical development, did experience different forms of contacts as would be examined later. By extension, intra group relation is quite distinct from inter group relations. These forms of relation represent social intercourse between and among groups within the same conglomeration. In other words, the social and traditional relationships that existed between and among the different Alago polities as sub-units of the larger group is the subject of our assessment.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Right from pre-colonial times, the story of Alago polities has been that of different shades of interactions between and among people of common descent and ancestry. But, this same people got broken into different clans and major groups in the course of their historical development. It is in this context that the people of Obi today see themselves and are in fact seen by others as different from Agwatashi, Doma, Keana, Assakio among others. This however, by no means makes them any different from the rest of Alago. From this perspective, the polities have been treated according to their different migratory bands. This is the basis of the bonds of relationship that binds them together as clans, though each settlement considers itself as a distinct polity.

In spite of this tendency, however, the pre-colonial story of the Alago people is that of a continuum of cordial and brotherly interactions. This is attested to by their continuous recognition and respect for the positions of one another in the entire journey and settlements of the people. For instance, among their fellow Kwararafa descendants i.e. the Jukun, Igala, Idoma, Agatu etc, the Alago people had commanded a position of eminence in their relations within the larger family. Thus, even after a long period of disintegration, when the people relocated themselves into numerous settlements, that bond of brotherhood and a sense of belonging to a common origin pervaded their interactions.

This explains why the peoples of Obi, Keana, Doma, Assakio, Agwatashi, Owena, Alagye etc. have continued to treat themselves as brothers on all matters that bother on intra ethnic interests. By implication, only the Alago best understand the issues of internal differences.

It is recounted in the traditions that since the reconciliation between the founders of Doma and Keana after the events that followed the discovery of Salt springs by Akyana Adi, the rulers of Doma right from the time immemorial, Ogoshi, had continued to enjoy great respect as a big brother from Keana. In furtherance to this, there have been mandatory but traditional exchanges of the fruits of the ancestral finds between the two polities. Under this, the Osana (Ruler of Keana) usually sent bags of Salt to the ruler of Doma (Andoma) on an annual basis during the Salt festival as a sign of honour to their ancestors. In return, the Andoma sent a traditional garment - Opa to the ruler of Keana.

There are also other traditional visits either during festivals or at the death of prominent sons and daughters between the two polities. This is the same with virtually all Alago polities regardless of tradition of origin and location. For example, the death of any Alago rulers was quickly circulated among all the other rulers living in the other places before the news was made public. Similarly, attendance of funerals of fallen rulers and heroes in Alago lands by the others as the case may was a common practice. In the same vein, the coronation or installation of any Alago traditional ruler often known and attended by all other rulers as a matter of tradition. Traditional festivals of the people were also

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

scheduled in such a way that no clashes occurred so as to enable all communities attend the festivals of all their brother communities.

However, in the collective history of the people, there exists an intra-group relation of mutual suspicion occasioned by a strong feeling of supremacy by one or some groups over the others. This was predicted on their historical antecedent, i.e the times and routes of their migrations and separations. For example, the entire earlier group that sprang up from the Andoma led team always considered themselves as the leading or superior (original) Alago polities. This is however of very insignificant effect on the overall relationship between the Alago people. On the whole, East, West, North or South, an Alago remains an Alago. Any difference in dialects remain a collective product of intra and inter group relations traceable to pre-colonial occurrences resulting in adulteration and or slight changes in tune semantics and language syntax. For instance, while the tune of the Alago polity of Doma exhibits marked closeness to the Agatu language, the polities of Keana, Obi, Assakio, Agwatashi among others share a near common intonation recognized by these groups. However, a major area of disagreement generally is in semantics and to some extent, language structure.

The Alago in the Pre-colonial society had a social system in which the internal and external social relationships of each structural unit from the level of the household, including the community and the ethnic groups were mutually interdependent and equally significant in improving the encouraging social organisation. The cultures of these people followed a similar pattern and as such intra communal support and cooperation was always present. Each cultural community had rituals which were regularly conducted by their chief priest of the each of the communities. These rituals were arranged in annual cycles or seasons which in most cases rarely coincided among these polities- as to allow chief priest from other clans to attend this shared close social and cultural relations. These rituals are basically concerned with crops; seasons of harvest, initiations, all conducted at sacred sites. Alliances were also common along ritual links especially in occupations that provided the major materials for rituals in the communities. This also cut across cultural and linguistic cleavages. Hunters, blacksmiths, pottery makers usually formed ritual association within the said polities basically for ceremonial exchange between the Alago polities especially during the time of peace.

Economic activities such as salt production, hunting, fishing, craft, industries agriculture among others played very significant roles of interactions in the pre-colonial polities of Alago people. Their livelihood and mode of interactions revolved around these vocations. In the area of agriculture, a hardworking person and admired young man was the one always in the company of his father to the farm. Farming was done by families or age groups in an organised reciprocal labour called “Oruma”, where members of the group worked on each other’s farm on rotational basis with big and small hoes and cutlasses.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Community by community in the pre-colonial Alago also organised reciprocal labour, Oruma, Doma versus Obi, Agwatashi versus Keana, Assakio versus Aloshi, Owena versus Adogi among many others. The basis of these interactions was to test the strength and capability of every Alago community in case such labour of this magnitude was organised with others Alago neighbours to avoid embarrassment. Because it will bring shame to either the family or community of the participants in the polities under discussion. The effect of this was to prepare an Alago people against their neighbouring communities if such labour was organized to avoid putting the polities to shame. The main agricultural products were millet, guinea corn, yams, benniseed, groundnuts, cassava, soyabeans, beans, maize among others. These food crops were used to exchange for other food items such as fish, games, salt, pots among others. Trade by barter was the major medium of exchange. Hunting and fishing is also one of the major economic activities that encouraged interactions between Alago polities. This is because there exists a large and well-organised yearly fishing and hunting expeditions apart from individual daily participation.

Hunting and fishing were carried out in other to obtain food tor exchange with other items which they needed. The various Alago towns and villages converged at Keana and Obi respectively to buy or make exchange of goods and services in respect to what they needed from the transactions. After obtaining the salt from the places mentioned above, they moved further to attend market centres of other Alago communities who were not opportune to be there. Others also went beyond the Alago boarders or neighbouring villages of the Eggons, Rindre, Igbira, Afo, Akye among others.

To facilitate the process of salt production usually exceeded local demand and as a result, the economy developed a duplicated exchange process. Traders from Bakyono, Abuja, Minna, Sokoto, Bauchi, Jos- Plateau, Bida, Keffi, Nasarawa among others converged at Keana and Ibi to buy salt. On the other hand, producers who had excess also exported it to other towns and market centres. The flourishing salt trade encouraged commercial exchange with other civilisations, especially on agricultural products, crafts, clothing among others. Salt is still mined in the traditional way inherited from the ancestors. The people also engaged in the manufacturing of many handicrafts such as weaving, carving, smelting, pottery and blacksmithing. The sources of materials for all these were obtained locally. These products were also consumed as well as taken to market centres within and outside the Alago communities for commercial activities.

Religiously, according to Mustapha Eladoga Ari, right from the earliest times, the Alago people were traditionally religious worshippers. The people believe in a Supreme Being whom they referred to as "Owuso" (God) and Osalekwu. He created the world, men, animals and all the things we see. This Owuso looks after men and the people-maintained contact with Him through lesser gods like: Ibaku, Ena, Itari, Otigalafu among others. These

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

lesser gods could affect the lives of men when they were vexed or when not appeased. The people also had an ancestral cult called "Aleku". an embodiment of the spirits of lesser gods, as well as the Asuku, Eku, Odu, Oya, Wagu, Ogiri and Amiri are some of the important festivals in Alago land, while Okumare, Ikashi, Inariko, Abokyo, Ogalama, Agbasha, Okwe, Odasha, Oyi, Obagwidu, among others are masquerades which were worshipped and celebrated by the traditionalists with a passionate belief that they would intercede on their behalf with Aleku, which would gladly receive them in their world beyond.

There was also a class of religious specialties, the Ayamiri- the burial groups, and the diviners, Oweba. It was the responsibility of the Ayamiri to bury the dead. When an elder (adult man) dies, the chief must be informed through Osuza, one of the Council Officials and the Chief would in turn informs the Council of Elders, Igabo finally sent a message to other Alago traditional rulers. No one was allowed to cry until certain conformations had been made. A breach of this rule constituted an offence, which attracted some fines. According to custom; a grave could be used to bury as many corpses as possible. New corpse was taken to such a grave after two or three years during which the earlier corpse must have decayed for a long time.

The people believe in the spirit world where their ancestors were believed to continually intercede with their Aleku and Owuso on their behalf. The people were expected to perform libatations- Inarigu, and communicate with their ancestors from time to time invoking their blessings and protection. Failure to do this was believed to have serious effect on the society. Passage into the spirit world, Aleku was after death. The Oyi- (shadow) of the deceased would be seated in a special hut, after which a goat would be killed to pave a safe passage for the dead into the spirit world, and then the Oyi (shadow) would accompany it into the groove spirit. Libations were also performed in other to protect the entire community in the event of an outbreak of any epidemic, draught or war.

The Alago people in spite of the fact that they do not reside together in a single state held similar political organizations right from time immemorial. As a result of their exposure to different conditions and environment during their migration to their present abode, the political units came together for mutual defense in case a war broke out between a unit (village) and other towns/villages. The political arrangement of the people under study was highly decentralised. Reasons being that each community, town and village in the area is completely independent and autonomous body. The head of each of these traditional institutions is called Ose (Chief). These were the Osoho of Olosoho (Agwatashi), Andoma of Doma, Osana of Keana, Osakyo of Owusakyo (Assakio), Oseshi of Oleshi (Aloshi), Osibi of Ibi, Adogye of Adogi, Osuko of Obi, Osoku of Agaza, Osewena of Owena among others. The various chiefs within these domains came together to

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

interact when there are problems affecting the entire Alago land. They also meet and discuss matters of urgency affecting a particular town and villages in the area. Pleasantries were exchanged among them and even their subjects. The Alago man or woman could go to any of the villages within the Alago land to take traditional title. This interaction is very significant in the life of the people. This is because it fostered strong unity within the areas. The Alago man from Agwatashi can also go to Doma, Keana among others to take traditional kingmakers so long as history proved that he had matrilineal relationship with the communities mentioned. The coronation of any of the Ose (chief) in the pre-colonial period were attended by every Ose, in company of his council of elders, the youths, women in other to go and share with their kiths and kins.

Migrations

In this study, migration is seen as the collective movements or progressive infiltrations of people into or out of a given environment. Migration studies have attracted a number of disciplines which includes historians, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, economists among others who have all approached the issue from their respective perspectives. In general, it is known that people are compelled to migrate from one place to another for a number of reasons. Historians have emphasised the importance of political upheavals and war, religious persecution, population explosion, famine, pestilence and epidemics among others as some of the principal forces of migration. Economists and Regional planners on their part have for a very long time, been interested in motivational analysis or the so-called push and pull factors which influence migration. They have tried to analyse migration as action accompanying individual decision to move on perceiving situational differences in their domain.

What is important here, however, is not the causes of migration, but the importance of migration as a significant factor for inter-group contacts and interactions. Migration can be seen to have been in two main phases; the primary and the secondary. The first deals with the initial population dispersal from the different environments. In the case of Alago, several versions of tradition of origins have been collated since the beginning of the colonial period to the present. Meek and C.L. Temple point to the Kwararafa Empire as the probably earliest abode of the Jukuns which had some links with the Alago people. From the different versions of oral account, it is clear that they all corroborate the colonial records that Alagos came from Kwararafa and established their different settlements in the area around Lafia.

The Alago people, like their Idoma speaking people are believed to belong to the Kwa-language group who are closely related to Yoruba. They along with the Igala, Idoma, Afo (Eloyi) the Igbira, Nupe, and Yoruba formed the people of that incredible complex area known as the Niger- Benue confluence. Thus, the legend of origin and the precise meaning

of the word "Alago" means obscure or different minds. As posited by Meek, who argued in a manuscript that, "the Alago originated from the Jukun of modern Wukari division: North of the Middle Benue Plain", considerable distance from the present Alago homeland. To buttress his view, he (Meek) quoted Barth, who also derives the history of Alago from the Jukun, by referring to them as a Birnin Kwararafa, the name of an ancient Jukun capital.

The Alago people were said to have migrated to Nigeria from the Middle East together with the Jukun, Igala, Goemai (Akwei), Idoma, Igbira, Etulo among many others in fear of communal crisis and then formed the famous Kwararafa Empire. Temple who also assigned a date to the Alago migration, left the question of origin untold but traced their more recent migration from Idah. In his words, their origin is certain, it seems more likely that the country was under Jukun dominion and that the two ethnic groups intermarried. It is probably that they were of the Igala tribe, a section of who left Atagara near Idah about 1235AD. Others were the founding fathers of Alago-people, with Inaji as their common father. The above people traversed Idoma and until they finally reached the River Benue, and were able to cross the river with the help of a Majical Chain of Oseshi of Aloshi, who was their chief priest.

Various views are held by the people concerning the origin and development of Alago history. For example, for Galadima, there is no concrete evidence to show that either Meek or Temple ever carried out systematic and extensive fieldwork among the Alago people. Rather they relied so much on the reports of the junior colonial administrators, prepared especially during the 1030s in connection with local administrative reorganisation that were the center of controversy in Lafia Division. In Galadima words. There is little or no ethnographic data to support the view that the Alago and Jukun are ethnically related. Nor is there any evidence to support the alternative view that since their migration the Alago people have become assimilated by neither another nor Jukun cultural groups.

These migrants stayed at a place called "Ogyogo" after crossing the River Benue for some period of time before they proceeded to Ojabiti near the present day Yelwata and the interaction with the people they met here was very peaceful, more so that their stay here was very brief and just to gain refreshment before continuing with their journey. The migrants proceeded further, having discovered their new abode, until they arrived at a place called "Obasidoma" which is about two kilometers from the present-day Keana, during their refreshment at Obasidoma that is Andoma fortification, Osana Akyana whose camp was at Ogede and later founder of Keana, in one of his hunting expeditions discovered a salt spring. Osana delighted at this discovery and wanted to consolidate his monopoly over the extraction of the salt for himself alone, turned down the request of his brothers to move further north. With this refusal to move further by Osana Akyana

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

and Ayidoma, Osabonya Ogoshi became furious and moved westwards and settled at the present day Doma. The other three founding heroes stayed behind with Osana Akyana and later dispersed north of Ogede to form an autonomus chiefdoms named after them, Osoho founded Olosoho (Agwatashi), Oseshi founded Aloshi and Osibi founded Ibi (Ribi) among many others.

While at their various camps and upon the realisation of the economic significance of the salt discovered by Akyana Adi, Osabonya Ogoshi, his elder brother invited other Alago captains to join forces with him to wage war against Akyana Adi. However, they turned down the invitation because they considered it unjust and uncustomary to fight one's own kith and kin. Ade Adefuyi captured this scenario adequately in Elizabeth's book, Studies in the history of Plateau Nigeria 1982, where he said Osabonya Ogoshi collected soldiers but when he ordered them to match towards Keana, the soldiers refused to fight against their kith and kin". When the war bid failed, Osabonya Ogoshi, whose motive was to sabotage Akyana's salt, found a wooden carved object and blocked the source of the salt spring, but also failed to achieve the desired objective. This situation accounted for the emergence of the Alago confederacies, each with its paramount leader and kingship organisation.

A later wave of Alago migration into Alago land brought the indeed, founders of Obi, Assakio, Owena, Obuh, Odubu, Akani, Adogi. Obiokpa Ogbole posted that they were not authentic Alago but Kanuri, while other versions allege that they belonged to an unknown ethnic group which overtime became assimilated totally in Alago society and are considered as Alago. But Osegba maintained that they are Alago who migrated later and did not come via Idah but came from Wukari en-route Jukun district of Awe to their present homeland. The most unquestionable fact is that, founders of Obi and Assakio came to their present day area from Wukari about the end of 8th Century as maintained by J.E. Alagoa. The most convenient indications of time in oral history are the reigns of kings in whose reigns they occurred. It is important to assert that from the king's list of Obi, Assakio and others late arrival are far shorter than those of Alago villages of Keana, Aloshi, Doma, Agwatashi (Olosoho). With this, we can submit that Obi, Assakio, Owena, among others are Alago but did not migrate to their present area as earlier as their fellow Alago people in the third decade of the 13th Century.

The secondary migration which can be seen as the continuous infiltration of people into or out of a given habitat, was normally geared towards filling the empty or poorly settled areas between the major concentrations of the different groups. According to Afigbo.

> Secondary migrations came about not only as a result of population pressure on land and other resources, but also in consequence or increasing political and social consolidation doing weak but unyielding

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

dissidents and defeated interest groups were forced to move if they were not prepared to accept the change in the circumstances.

This is true with the Alago and Mighili (Koro) who migrated from Anene the present resident of the Emir of Lafia Palace due to unholy relationship against them by the Kamberi (Kanuri) of Lafia after they migrated from Gwandara people of Shabu. The migration from Shabu was also as a result of criminal interactions where the Kamberi (Kanuri) forced Gowandara women in attempt to sleep with them. The Gwandara who were said to have been migrated into the Central Nigeria area as a result of the Sokoto Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio. The Gwandara settlements in Central Nigeria area includes Giza, Deddere, Shabu, Iggah who were very closed neighbours of the Alago. Others are Garaku, Gurku among others. The Fulani revolts of 1805, 1808 and 181l in the Chad Basin Area were partly as a result of Sokoto Jihad. These revolts which culminated in the sacking of Borno's capital, Birnin N'gazargamu by Gwoni Mukhtar in 1808, precipitated mass migrations of people into Central Nigeria and Alago land in particular. Consequently, the consolidation of Shehu Muhammadu El-Kanemi's ambitions in Borno against the Fulani in 1811 and against Bagirmi in 1817 also precipitated a mass exodus of Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri from Damaturu, Borno into the area to save their lives, property and above all in search for shelters. Also, the Fulani and the Hausa in the West of be and Mubi area in the East came to Central Nigeria during the Jihad period and settled mostly in Nassarawa, Plateau, Benue, Niger, Kwara, Kogi States of the region. It is also important to note here that the 14th - 15th Centuries, witnessed the movement of Kwararafa troops from the region in their efforts to capture Kano, which they did. Although their stay in Kano was very brief, the movement of these organised, brave, intellegent military force might have been responsible for the dispersal of the Hausa, Fulani and Maguzawa (Gwandaras), the Kanuris into the region and Alago land inclusive.

Oral account also has it that the Jukun, Idoma, Igala, Nupe, Ibira (Igbira), Mighili (Koro), Igede and Alago among others migrated from the Middle East, passed through Borno Empire, and first settled at Wukari in the present day Taraba State under the defunct Kwararafa Kingdom in the study areas. The further migration of the above ethnic nationalities to their present socio-cultural society is probably as a result of chieftaincy tussles among others. These groups of people belong to the Kwa- sub family of the Niger Congo family of languages and shares the same group of sub-family with the Yoruba. Farming activities also played a very significant role in migration. The rich fertile soil in the area and particularly in Alago land attracted nationalities like Mighili (Koro), Tiv, Eggon, Kwalla, Dumak, Angas, Tarok among others. These groups of people migrated from their domain and settled permanently in the area under study for farming activities.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Another area of concern in the history of migration into the Lafia area in pre-colonial era was the influx of Tiv people into the area. The Tiv are the largest ethnic group in Central Nigeria. They occupy the Northern and Southern banks of the River Benue from Makurdi in Benue State to Wukari in Taraba State. They are also in Nasarawa and Plateau States. Despite conflicting theories regarding their origins and migrations, there is a general consensus that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Tiv had started expanding into the Middle Benue Valley from the Cameroon highlands. This dispersion ever brought them into dire contact with different ethnic groups in this region including the Alago, Chamba, Kuteb, Jukun, Yala, Elohi, Bekwarra, Igede and Idoma, among many others. Tiv dispersal in the Central Nigeria area was the culmination of several factors which exerted tremendous influence on the Tiv Swem cradle land. One of factors was the demographic change to aboriginal settlement area experienced this period.

According to Sawuan K. Agber, this was consequent upon is overcrowding by other ethnic groups like the Bamenda, Kom, Bafum (Gbafum) and the Agbem, among others who were very hostile to the Tiv. Related to this was the question of the scarcity of farmlands which Tiv related became particularly acute during the first years of the Seventeenth Century. The interplay of overpopulation and acute land shortage gave these to general insecurity caused by internal strife among the Tiv and/or external attacks from enemies. All these factors are believed to have taken their toll on the Swem hill settlement, compelling them to migrate downwards into the Middle Benue Valley.

Tiv migrations into this region during this period produced a number of significant consequences that should be noted. In the first place, their arrival changed the demographic situation in the region. In the process of acquitting more land, which had gradually decreased arising from the influx of refugees from the disintegrating Kwararafa confederacy, the Tiv people were compelled to displace other initially settled ethnic groups, forcing them to migrate to other parts of the region.

Secondly, in the course of such population movements, there was the intensification of intra and inter-group conflicts over land in the region during this period. Thirdly, in addition to disrupting the pattern of migrations, the predominant Tiv presence in the Middle Benue Valley during this period cuts off groups like the Idoma from the Kwararafa confederacy. In this connection, it may be argued that the buffer this constituted insulated the Idoma from being affected by the political upheavals in Kwararafa. As a result of this, further migrations of the Idoma and other related groups from the east were permanently terminated. Terrumun R. Avav has suggested that the Tiv, in that regard could be said to have guaranteed the political independence of the Idoma during this period by protecting them from the vagaries of the Kwararata paramouncy. However, migration as a factor of inter-group relations promoted group contact through hunting and gathering of fruits, inter-group marriages, brought about hostilities among the

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

various groups that clashed over land or for further journey after gaining refreshment. A good example of this was requested by his younger brother, Akyana Adi to move further and the younger brother refused to comply as a result of his discovery of the salt spring burt later settled their differences through the exchange of salt and Opah (Cloth). The demographic area of the people was also affected as population of the area increases.

Inter Marriages

There is no doubt that affinal and consanguine relationships were very strong factors of inter-group relations among the Alago themselves and as well as between them and their neighbours in pre-colonial period. It should be noted that the Alago and indeed still are, clearly exogamous.

This, the Osana observed that:

> The custom which forbade a man marrying within his lineage or people related to him by previous marriage ties created a complex inter-locking web of relationships in many parts of Nigeria and thus contributed to inter group relations. The idea behind inter-group marriages was to have relatives in as many states as possible in order to promote relations.

There is no doubt that whenever the law of exogamy exists, members of one family would naturally belong to different lineages and clans and possibly ethnic groups or nationalities. Thus, marriage and family bonds are the principal mechanisms by which joined together into a larger community. As it has been earlier pointed out, among the Alago as well as between them and their neighbours, inter-group relations have been strongly enhanced through intermarriages. It will appear that between the various Alago ethnic nationalities such as Doma, Obi, Adogi, Kadarko, Alagye, Anna among many others. The fusion also embraced other ethnic groups like the Gwandara, Jukun, Idoma, Tiv, Hausa, Fulani, Igala, Igbira, Rindre, Mada just to mention but a few, who are their neighbours. The strongest of such interaction being between the Gwandara, Kamberi (Kanuri), Eggon, Agatu, Mighili (Koro) and Mada.

It is important to note here that most of these women stated above, the Alago married young girls they had mostly acquired through trade and exchange with their is one of the strongest factors/characters of inter- group and their neighbours. In the light of this, inter-ethnic marriages promoted group contact because people of diverse ethnic groups such as Alago and Koro, Alago and Eggon, Alago and Tiv etc come together, married and lived as one family. This, therefore, reduced the rate of hostility among them.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Diplomacy

In order to maintain peace that existed among states, communities and societies in order to derive the benefits of peaceful co-existence in the area, many ethnic nationalities in Central Nigeria deliberately maintained diplomatic ties with one another and were also conversant with the intricate art of diplomacy. Like their contemporary European nations, Central Nigeria and Alago land in particular regarded diplomacy as the art of conducting relations with other states of neighbouring towns and diplomacy as the art of conducting relations with other states of neighbouring towns and villages so as to further the 'national interest'. The goals of diplomacy were to promote peace or cause war, conclude treaties, maintain and break alliances, establish boundaries, develop and protect trade, and pay tribute. Diplomatic relations between one tribe and another were also influenced by those underlying factors include among others economic, political and financial interests and public opinions.

The rulers in every state were responsible for foreign policy. They formulated and implemented ties foreign policy. They decided measures which were to be taken to strengthen relations with other ethnic nationalities in the study area. Many methods were used to promote peace in pre-colonial interaction among the various ethnic groups in Central Nigeria. Firstly, communities and societies that formed Central Nigeria also exchanged gifts with one another. For example, Alago sent goats their Eggon, Tiv, Gwandara among many neighbours. Gifts sent by rulers of one ethnic group to various ethnic groups might mean an expression of reconciliation if there had been a quarrel between them, recognition of the recipient's superior position. Example, tribute paid by Eggon to Alago or Mada to Rindre is an expression of courtesy and friendship. Gifts were also sent when requests were made to solicit support or neutrality against other states and solicit cessation of hostilities among states. The goods produce in the area usually include as part of the gifts, but the highly valued items include salt, slaves, cloths (opah), cowries, beads, groundnuts and from the 15th Century, European liquor. In support of the gifts sent to each other in the study area in pre-colonial period, the Alago people in collaboration with their kins men of Keana and Ibi who produced salt sent is as gift to the Aku Uka of Wukari after every annual salt festival in Alago of Ibi and Keana. This, no doubt strengthen the warmth, bond and mutual cooperation among the Jukun and the Alago relations.

Secondly, ethnic nationalities through their traditional rulers sent regular another. The message could be to congratulate a new incumbent on the throne, victory at war, sympathize in cases of death or disasters. There were many ways by which these messages were sent. Court officials could deliver the message orally. To avoid confusion, court officials were required to memorize the messages and were warned such officials not to add any word to the message. Other officials could be sent to deliver the same

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

message in order to prevent misunderstanding. Talking drums and musical instruments were also used to convey messages. Talking drum, messages in Pre-Colonial Era are mostly found among the Tiv people. Diplomacy played a very vital role in inter-group relations between the Alago people and their neighbours. Diplomacy promoted contact through trade, peace settlement and further checked the excesses of the neighbour. Exchange of gifts such as sending of salt from Alago land to the Aku Uka of Wukari was a good sign of the diplomatic ties.

Pre-Colonial Economy of the Alago People

Economic factor was one of the major factors of inter-group relations. These factors promoted inter-group relations in the study area. The among many other geographical formations or setting of the areas offered opportunities both for human activity and settlement. This contributed to the growth of towns in the area. It was also this environmental factor that made the settlers of the area to engage in the pursuit of different economic activities. Such activities included agricultural production, hunting, fishing, manufacturing industries, trade among others. It is important for us to examine how each of these activities was carried out in Central Nigeria and Alago in Pre-Colonial period. In any society, land constitutes an important factor because it provides man with raw materials, clothing and shelter. It therefore constitutes the basis of the social, political and economic activities of any community. The significance of land to any society is demonstrated by Tamariyo when he argued that: "the survival of man is thus related to the existence of land and the skills to exploit it fully in the attempt to satisfy his seemingly endless needs".

Agriculture constitutes the bedrock of the economy of all the societies in the areas. Different methods of cultivation were used varying from shifting cultivation, terracing on the hills and slopes, and bush fallowing. The communities employed various means usually modified from the primitive idea of production. However, the skills handed over from generation to generations were activities are used for daily living and supplying the basic raw material for the raw materials provided production.

In the Lafia Area, rainfall is the most important element of climate as far as in Central Agriculture is concerned. The rhythm of economic activity which is revealed in farming calendar of various parts of the country is controlled by the incidence and distribution of rainfall as the length of the rainy season which decreases from south to north as critical factors in agriculture in an area where most farmers do not practice irrigation. The crops produced in various parts of the country differ considerably and largely as a result of the differences in the length of the rainy season.

In the Lafia Area and Alago inclusive, rainfall begins in March and ends in October. The farming season starts with the beginning of rainfall. Planting commenced immediately

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

with the planting of crops. The productivity of the soil which is based on the agricultural potentiality of the tropical lateral soil otherwise known as the "Agyenowa", a red soil found between Alago and their neighbours and the dark "Eji" or marsh land supported the cultivation of both cereals and root crops. Nengel observes that, in the course of the 19th century, crops were grown beyond the level of subsistence in most of the polities. The production of crops provided the food requirements of all the inhabitants and also the main items of internal and external in some of the societies.

In Alago land, guinea corn, cocoa yam, yam and maize, cassava, millet, melon among others are the staple food crops. With the missionary and colonial influence other crops such as spinach, mango, guava, pawpaw and many others were introduced.

Because of the cultivation of variety of food crops the Alago land and the surrounding plains were far from being mono-cultural. It must be noted that crops like tomatoes, ground nut, ginger, cotton are considered specialised or economic crops. Therefore, out of many crops cultivated in the area of study, ground nut, yam and melon were partly responsible for the wealth of the area. An experimental farm shows every promise that the local soil and climatic condition will be found to be eminently suited to valuable rooted crops. It is significant to note that because of importance of agriculture to the economic development of the study areas, the Alago and their neighbours in Central Nigeria were engaged in extensive agriculture activities. Ozegya noted that; most of the land is under cultivation with the exception of perhaps a forth lying fallow in its tum.

In this regard, every household has been the basic unit of production among all the ethnic groups in the region. This consisted of the family head, the children, wives, and clients. Almost everybody in each household or the entire family participated in the family activities including women. The household planned it production of foodstuff with a certain amount of exchange within ethnic nationalities in the area. This is done to satisfy other personal needs such as marriage, burial, birth, feasts, fines, health, and offerings.

Communal labour was also practiced. It was called "Oruma" in Alago, Gaiya in Hausa, Egbo in Eggon, Ihumbe in Tiv, Opiah in Idoma, Luvoh/Nmblah in Mighili Hausa 59 (Koro), among others. This form of labour was freely negotiated between the Alago and their immediate neighbours of Tiv, Eggon, Mighili (Koro), Kwalla, Agatu among other for theirneeds. Communal labour works were highly focused in the area of new land, building of houses, production of one's personal needs when one was ill or indisposed houses, of his/her health. The recipient of communal labour among the ethnic nationalities mentioned above was obliged to provide food, drinks "Ize"(1ocal beer), meat during such work in appreciation.

Another form of labour in pre-colonial Alago society was the obligation of son-in- laws to work in their respective farms. Obiokpa in his words stated that:

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

> The culture required son-in-law obligation to parent-in-law. This could take place during clearing and hoeing of farm fields, building of house funeral among others. This does not involved Alago alone but such neighbours that married from Alago; like the Eggon, Tivs, Kwalla, Agatu, Mighili (Koro) and all the ethnic nationalities in the area.

This invitation is aimed at testing the capacity and strength of the sons-in-law and their friends. This request from the father-in-law can be forwarded either before or after the marriage was contracted. The effect of this form of labour among the Alago and their neighbours was those who have many female daughters tended to have large farms and largest harvests. The importance of the obligations of the sons-in-law to parents- in-law cannot be overemphasized and not doubt strengthening the bound of interactions among the Alago and their neighbours.

There was also a wage labour but on a small scale between the Alago people and their neighbours. The Alago neighbors of Tiv, Eggon and Kwalla are good examples of this system. They often sold their labour to Alago when they had little or no food that could take them to the next harvesting season. In the words of Agbo: The Tiv, Eggon, Kwalla, Dumak come to us to collect food and negotiate whether to go to our farm and work or double the items they harvest.

According to him, this idea brought strong ties of relationship between them and their neighbours. This is because the people involved in interactions at the end of their harvest always fulfilled the arrangement. Alago also do the same with their neighbours. Although discouraged the in pre-colonial selling of labour for several reasons. The most important among these reasons was that though in people who sold their labour before they eat were also considered lazy people. Thus being lazy could earn a bad name of insult to the family and could prevent the particular family or clan or other ethnic nationalities from marrying into that family, clan or group.

The Alago people and their neighbours earned or kept animals. The livestock rearing was usually in small number. Animals such as cattle, horses, goats, sheep, chickens and donkeys among others were reared, chickens and goats reared were for sacrificial and ritual purposes. The Fulani brought with them into the area few breeds of giant cattle, goats and sheep as well as new methods of rearing animals. The Fulani men, boys and even other ethnic groups in the area engaged in herding cattle with them for reciprocity- while their women owned small pieces of land to farm and also exchange milk for items they did not have.

Another important factor of interactions in the pre-colonial period between the Alago people and their neighbours was fishing activities. Fishing was not only a source of protein to the people but an avenue where people met to interact and rub minds. It was also an

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

exercise generally recognised by the people. In Central Nigeria area fishing was therefore a secondary exercise so as to supplement agricultural production, and the domestic rearing of animals. Fishing was done primarily for local consumption. Fishing has generally undertaken in rivers and lakes that contained water throughout the year such as Obi or Assakio River, Kiguna River and Ole Gambo and Sabon Gida. Although fishing was carried out all year round, there was a peak season between December and up to March of the other year when fish stock was more abundant. This is organised between their neighbors when farming activities had reduced drastically. These rivers Alago and tar as fishing is concerned, because it is the major area significant role an play a recognised by the people for fishing a activities, During the month of January to March, considerable amount of fishing is done in almost all rivers that link Alago and their that because of the available water in the area, Therefore, one can point out neighbors, the two activities that is; catching the fish and aquatic hunting was prevalent as the fish caught vas used for exchange for what is lacking and personal consumption among the Alago and neighbours. Hunting was another major occupation and factors of contact between the Alago and their neighbours in the pre-colonial period especially in the dry season. There were two categories of hunters known as "Oyiyite" (professional hunters) which consisted of people who can be regarded as full time hunters; the later groups include those who took to hunting as a game. They usually organise themselves into groups for that purpose. Professional hunters spent most of the time in the bush and, in addition, had a reputation as great herbalists, which was attainable in our area of study. The venture is undertaken by adult men and young persons.

The hunted meat which include hare, Buffalo, Bush pig, antelope among others were used to supplement diet and also had some economic significance because the people took part to the market centres for sale or for exchange between neighbours.

However, apart from being a source of meat, hunting was generally considered as an activity of clan or groups that are closely linked with spiritual worships. Certain areas were marked in the pre-colonial days for hunting. Azegya reported that people were in allowed to hunt in some areas. Only those who first went to the place early days not ownerships and the right in such places. Men, who have been initiated into the claimed or secret folk of their ancestors, were allowed to participate in hunting expedition in whoever was reported to have committed any offence of any kind, would accreditation, I to participate in the hunting expedition organised between Alago people and their not be allowed issues are resolved. For one to participate in the activity, there must be a neighbours until atmosphere of happiness, goodwill and purity of heart among neighbours in the study area. Another law for the hunting expedition had to do with avoiding sexual intercourse because the people believed that such thing brings bad luck in hunting expedition. In order to ensure that all participants had observed the rules, all members of the hunting

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

group were asked to assemble at a spot half way to the expedition ground and were asked to confess any breach of the prohibition. This is done in order to avoid clashes while the bunting was fully taking place. In order words, man must be in harmony with his fellows and should not bear any grudge against anyone in the community nor should have any anger in his heart either among the Alago or with their neighbours if hunting was organised among various ethnic nationalities in the area.

Manufacturing of crafts were mostly carried out during the dry season. However, some crafts such as basketry and mat weaving were done side by side with farm work. This was because the wet season favoured their production. The main manufacturing industries and crafts in the Central Nigerian Alago land, and among the Alago and their neighbours were textiles, blacksmithing and pottery. Other crafts included wood carving, salt production and calabash decoration. Blacksmithing during the wet season was carried level, such as sharpening hoes, axes and knives. This or maintenance out but at minimal was because the blacksmiths combined manufactures and farm work. The crafts undertaken by males were weaving, dyeing, iron work, blacksmithing, wood carving, basketry and mat weaving the ones carried out by the women were pottery, salt calabash production. However, both men and women did spinning.

Textile was one of the major crafts of Alago and her neighbours in the pre-colonial period. This weaving of cotton cloth, 'Opah' in Alago, Tiv, "Abuda", Eggon, "Okyen" among others weaving was universal and nearly every household had an expert. It was an important occupation to every compound in the area because cotton cloth was used in marriage contract, burial and possession of "Livimi" in Alago, a roll of the strip of cotton cloth was a sign of wealth and prestige. For instance, if an old man died his 'Opah' in Alago, gown made of strips of cotton cloth was spread to cover the shelter or stalk which his dead body was kept before burial. This act was a prestige and a sign of wealth. Temple stated that: The textile industry depended solely on raw materials produced within the region. Cotton was grown in considerable quantities.

The spinning and weaving equipment included wooden rods, posts of the loom, the loom and the shuttle. These equipment were all made of wood. On the other hand, the ginning equipment were "Okye", a small but heavy iron rod and a very smooth stone. The Okye used to separate the seed from the cotton fibre on the stone. Wooden rods were used as pedals and upon which the finished strips of cloth were wound. The cotton threads were woven into a narrow strip, some three to five centimeter wide called "Ikpoh". The cotton cloths were dyed by using a plant called "Ogah" in Alago, indigo. The dye was obtained by a fermentation of indigo leaves in water. Some villages such as Giza, Deddere, Agon, Doma, Obi, Assakio, Agyaragu, Agwatashi, Nassarawa and Keff among others specialized in dying.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Blacksmithing were found all over the region. Iron ore was obtained from the West, East of the Plateau. The tools used in the production process were fire, bellows and the variety of hammers. The smelting of the anvil, tongs, skin charcoal and anvil, tongs, skin bellows and the variety of hammer. The smelting of the iron ore was carried out by the use of cir perdue method. The process needed much on ore was labour. Men usually formed teams for the smelting. The blacksmith's major occupation was manufacturing of farm implements such as hoes and axes for use in agriculture. Thus, there was a direct link between agriculture and industries. The material produced by the blacksmith received the top priority in internal exchange as agriculture was the mainstay economy of the region. The blacksmiths also produced spears, arrows, swords, rings and sickles. The spears, arrows and knives were used in hunting and for lance purposes or war. The girdle rings and other iron ornaments were used as essential parts of the bride wealth payment in pre-colonial Alago societies and their neighbours. Such groups of people include Eggon, Mighili (Koro), Gwandara among others.

The blacksmiths were honoured and regarded in high esteem in the region. Probably because of their role as regards the production of agricultural tools, hunting and war weapons as well as materials used in the marriage institution of the various ethnic nationalities in the region.

Pottery was the main craft of women and it was widespread among the Alago women and their neighbouring women. However, some places such as Awe, Obi, Akiri. Kyekura in the east, Assakio, Gwayeka, Alogani, Kagbu, and Mada Station in the north were known with the production of qualitative pots. The soil types found in these places are clay and sandy soils. Pots made from these soils were said to be qualitative and hence the centres for pot making in the areas. The differences in soils above became places listed for the production of pots led to the internal exchange in pottery products.

Pots were used for cooking, storage of foodstuffs, liquid and in measuring grains and beer for exchange. Pottery products were also used for religious purposes, kept in sacred groove, family shrines and personal deity. Among the Alago people, the personal deity was called "Alekwu or Okwe" All the ethnic nationalities in the area converged at the various areas, pots of different kinds are produced for the purpose of buying and selling. This therefore, brought people together. The pots used as idol was called "Ibaku" more was also earthware jar, sacred jar, used in the art of rain making. Generally taking, all over the areas one of the main objects of veneration was pot. The production of the pots in Alago societies and co-existence peaceful brought neighbours her among neighbourliness.

The wood carvers manufactured handles for hoes, axes, sickles, bows and wooden dishes. They also manufactured mortars and pestles and textile equipment. This is mostly found among the Tiv people. The items were brought to the market centres where Alago, Tiv

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

and others neighbours met to interact. Few blacksmiths in Alago and Eggon and other groups in the area also partake in the carving business and this is done mostly in the rainy and dry seasons.

Basketry and for carrying grains during harvest time and used for very important the baskets were storing cucumber, okro, groundnuts and for measuring grains for exchange. The mats were also used for bedding, drying grains and for burial purpose. The grass mats were useful for making huts and fishing as traps.

Women carried out calabash decoration. The decoration consisted of varied shapes like geometrical shapes of the heart and floral representation. Calabashes were used as part of goods brides took with them when married. Another important economic activity in almost all households in Keana, Ibi in Alago land was salt production. Salt manufacturing was not reserved for any particular gender both men and women who were interested in the industry participated.

Saline water was collected and heated until all the water evaporated leaving only salt cake that would be patterned into conical shapes and then beaten down into crystals and stored for use. Sometimes, natural evaporation was also practiced. Brine spring or lake mineral salt required a different process. After extraction, the earth which contains the mineral was first of all filtered and then evaporated. As regards vegetable salt, the seeds and aerial roots of mangrove trees were cut and then any of these two techniques would be adopted in extracting the salt. Either the saline juice of the seeds and prop roots were squeezed out and evaporated to get salt, or the seeds or roots were burnt and then soaked in water then heated with fire and allowed to evaporate. Salt remains a precious and indispensable article.

The salt was and still remains a precious and indispensable article of food and limited source of supply, those communities with of its importance and the knowledge of its production techniques often regarded such techniques as top secret trade because the possession of a source of salt supply enhances or promotes inter- state trade and co-Alago and Tiv, Idoma, Jukun, Eggon among other among Alago and operation traders even from outside the study area like Bakyono, Sokoto, Bauchi, Zaria, Borno and the area generally known as Nasarawa Province as well as other parts of neighbours the Northern Nigeria came to Keana, Ibi, Azara, Awe and Akiri to purchase salt. On the other hand, producers who bad excess also exported to other neighbouring towns and villages thereby promoting inter-group relations. This offered employment to men and women in Alago land in the pre-colonial period. Economic factors promoted group contact such as buying and selling of farm products, salt, items produced from local industries, fish and meat through organized annual fishing festivals among various ethnic nationalities that inhabited the study area. This, no doubt brought people of diverse ethnic groups together.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Trade and Commerce

The geographical dissimilarities within the Central Nigeria and Alago particularly resulted into differences in soils and environmental resources. This has led to the development of trade among communities in the areas, along the rivers and on the plain. The basis of internal trade in the region was agricultural and industrial products. Fishing and hunting products such as skin and meat were also exchanged.

From the earliest times, barter system of exchange was the order of the day. In the Erom, the earliest barter system, objects such as pots, baskets and calabashes of various sizes were used to like grains and liquid. There was no standard unit of commodities measure quantity measurement exchange depended on the desire for goods. Crops such as guinea con, cucumber, okro, cocoyam, pepper and so on were all grown for benniseed, beans, cotton, along the rivers exchanged fish, cocoyam, guinea corn, the communities exchange baskets and mats (woven from fan palm leaves) with items such as cassava and other grains such as beans, benniseeds, okro, pepper and so on from those on the plain land. The salt produced from Keana, Ibi, Akiri, Azara, also traded to the people on the areas. Fishing was a fruitful source of income the people of Jangwa, Tbi, Tunga, Agbashi, Tiv and other village units along the Rivers Gongola, Benue and Niger. Manufactured products such as hoes, axes, bows, pots, mortar and pestle, wooden dishes and so on were also bartered with agricultural products, fish, meat and skins.

Though there were no standard units of measurement, the people were able to adopt equivalents based on requirement of goods. Equivalents were to be agreed by the parties and usually in the presence of some witnesses. The reasons among others were one person may wanted to get the item required on loan or credit because he did not have the ability to pay until the next harvest and in case of death. Some examples of exchange equivalents were: a basket of cotton fibre was equivalent to a big basket of guinea corn. A big basket full of benniseed was equivalent to a big basket full of beans. Mortar and pestle were equivalent to one hoe or axe. Five arrows were equivalent to one bundle or a big basket full of guinea corn. Five handles of hoes were equivalent to one bundle of guinea corn or a big basket full of guinea corn or beans. One pot of beer called ‘Izeh’ in Alago equivalent to a dira full of guinea corn, benniseed or bean. Equivalent were not fixed. They were carried out depending on the quantity of goods demanded.

The salt distribution among the people formed part of the basis for internal trade in the region. As salt is very essential, not only served as an item of cooking but gradually adopted by the people in the areas as part of the goods used in the payment of bride price. The people of the areas seem to have adopted a few commodity currencies such the people of two as Ogye; cotton cloth and Arika’, girdle-ring or bracelet. The adoption of these commodity currencies in the region cannot be said with precision. Ogbole stated

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

that over centuries trade in the region stressed "Ogye which was turned into a value currency as the exchange for both internal and external trade".

The Ogye in the region was in standard multiples. The standardised multiples were as follows, Five 'Owu' strips of cotton cloth. Five 'Opah' were equivalent to one gown woven from cotton cloth. Five sleeveless shirts were equivalent to one bull. Five bracelets were equivalent to one 'Opah'. For other purposes, the Ogye could also be bartered by measurement. The strip of the Ogye was measured from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. The standardisation of the Ogye into multiple indicates a long acquaintance with the use of Ogye as a currency in the region. It appears also as the use of cotton cloth as currency was indigenous to the area. Therefore, despite the introduction of cowries and dollar in the 19th Century the value of the Ogye as currency in the areas did not depreciate until British colonisation. This is evident from the fact that even after British conquest, the Opah acquired a value in British coins.

There were laws and rules which were bound against the transaction of business in the areas. These businesses were sale, contract, pledge and loan. A sale was made before witnesses. Any sale done in the night would be re-examined during the daytime. A contract, for instance, to carry a load or to work on a farm for rewards was lawful, its contract could take any form but it was better to have it into by consent. They are made in the presence of witnesses. Personal constraints were a means of enforcement of was entered contract. Ifa person owed a debt and had no means of paying it, he could let his personal services to the creditor for a specific period of time depending on the value of the debt. There was pledging of persons for debt. A male person, article or beasts were subjects of pledge. A male person usually a son was the commonest because the amount of work done by him was always not equal to the debt. Loan was recognised but no interest. If an article, for instance, a horse or bull was obtained on loan and if perished, the person who obtained the loan must pay the value, the whole risk of the item lent was on the borrower from whatever cause.

Cultural and Religious Institutions

Another important factor that promoted both intra and inter-group relations in the area of study was the exchange of traditional dances/masquerades among the different ethnic nationalities. For example, the people of Eggon, Gwandara, Kwalla, Tiv among others came to Alago land to display their traditional dances and masquerades and vice-versa during weddings, festivals and any occasion organised by the inhabitants in the study area. In the same vein, the Alago people also paid reciprocal visit to showcase their talents when such ethnic nationalities referred to as Alago neighbours organise their annual festival and other cultural organisation in their various places. This interaction fostered and promoted peace and unity among the Alago and their neighbours.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

The celebration of Amiri, Ogiri, Odu and Oya cultural festivals in Alago land also promoted inter-group relations, during these festivals neighbours of the Alago mentioned above attended these festivals through invitation by well-wishers. This relationship went a very long way to cement or gum the friendship among the different Alago polities as well as between the people and their neighbours. This factor also promoted inter-group contact because of the exchange of dances and masquerades. The people viewed this as a sign of togetherness, peaceful co-existence promoted inter-group marriages because the best dancers return home with a wife.

Wrestling was one of the most popular sports in pre-colonial Alago society and their neighbours. Wrestling was an annual event which took place during the annual Oya, Juiri, Ogiri, Odu festivals to appreciate the gods for good harvest. It was usually an inter-village or inter-kingdom competition which had partners as well as opponents. As a sporting event, it was the tradition for the Alago people to invite their Alago neighbours together as allies to challenge, Eggon, Tiv, Kwalla, Agatu, and Gwandara. Wrestling fostered inter-group relations as champions of such bouts were held in high esteem and it even led to inter-marriages. Although, as it is common in every competition to produce both winners and losers, the defeated contestant during the wrestling may feel bad, but this does not stop him from trying his luck the next season. It should be noted that such defeats often stop resulted to some misunderstanding, but this did not defeat the main objective of the competition.

At a wider scope, it was also customary and common practice for the Hausa, Kamberi (Kanuri) and even the Fulani in the last decade of the 19th Century to partake in wrestling bouts in Alago land. However, societies like the Ankwe and Akye despite their proximity to Alago did not partake in such competition but nevertheless, the annual were featured as spectators. This shows how wrestling brought people together. Recreation no doubt promoted inter-group contact through the annual wrestling organized during festivities in Alago land where other neighbours of Gwandara, Akye, Eggon and Tiv among others were invited to participate alongside with them strengthening their relations.

Religion as one of the dynamic factors of inter-ethnic relations observed a very special attention in the study area. Its essence in the traditional African society and Nigeria in particular is fundamentally brought to bear by M. Fortes and Evans Pritchard as follows:

> Members of an African society feel their unity and perceived their common interests in symbols, and it is their attachment to these symbols which more than anything else gives their society cohesion and rituals, sacred places and persons, these symbols represent the unity and exclusiveness of the groups which represent them. They are regard not as mere symbols, but as final values in however, themselves.... furthermore, these scared symbols which effect the

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

> social system, endow it with mystical values which evoke acceptance of the social order that goes for beyond the obedience exacted by the secular sanction of force.

This means that traditional religions in the pre-colonial period had integrative significance in the history of African society. As Ajayi clearly observed that even though they are non-evangelistic,

> The traditional African religions were integral parts of the culture that spread along with the language and other manifestations of culture with conquest, commercial and other social communications sometimes. However, particular features of traditional religion were singled out and Spread on their own. This was true of that acquired reputation authoritative forecast and diagnosis of people's malaise.

This indeed, forms the basis of understanding the role of religion and religious institutions in inter-group relations that existed between Alago and their neighbours before the presence of colonialism. The Alago and indeed most of the ethnic nationalities in the study area were religious and had the belief in henotheism. In this case, each ethnic nationalities had their own supreme gods. These groups still have the belief in respect to their neighbour's gods. However, these supreme gods in comparative terms might not have been seen to have equal strength or capacity. It's in this order that, the practice of importation was very common among the people in the study area. It was on this ground, that the Alago borrowed "Okpokwu" and "Iwagu" (Juju) from the Gwandara people, likewise the Gwandai took from Alago "Inariko, Odu and embedded it into theirs. This is done through the chief priest of these groups. The exchange of Ekah (Oracle) among other ethnic goings was also visible. The Alago people visit Gwandara People of Deddere and that of Giza to curse any person neither Alago or non-ethnic group that set him or her up, accused what he/she did not know, label or suspected him or her to be a thief this curse is due through consulting an oracle called "Akukz" in Deddere "Igba" and "Kasa" in Giza via their chief priest or blessings.

This curse if not appeased will lead to one's death or the entire family members of that person(s) that the curse is made against him her. Similarly, the Gwandara and other ethnic nationalities also visited Alago towns and villages to curse whoever that labeled them on no account through Ibaku, Ma, Otigalafu, Agye Oriya and Agye Oba among other oracles. This interaction among these groups is still functioning up to this modern day. Oracles promoted inter-ethnic relations between Alago, Gawandara, Akye, Eggon among others. Another area of concern in Alago relations with their neighbours could be found Agye-gu, Odegyo (cult) these cults among many others were incharge of raining. This usually had

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

as its area of operation. In the event of persistent draught in the study they were highly consulted and therefore invoked the god of the rain to drop immediately.

These among many others no doubt strengthened the kind of interactions between Alago and their neighbours from the pre-colonial time up to this moment. This factor also promoted inter-ethnic contact because of the importation and exchange of cultural values among other gods. It also promoted inter-ethnic marriages as women from different places got married at the end when they go to curse any neighbours that offended them in their various neighbouring gods.

Political Relations

In the political aspect of interaction, in pre-colonial Alago society, when newly Alago chiefs were appointed, they must travel in a company of friends and relations to Wukari, for the traditional blessings and confirmation to their offices by the Aku Uka of Wukari who is believed to be the chief custodian of the defunct Great Kwararafa Empire. As time goes on, the Aku Uka decided to send his representative to perform the said functions because of the risk involved in such journeys and the possibility of Greacheny and usurpation by other ambitious contestants to the throne. The people were heavily assimilated thus, became Alago in various Alago towns and villages. This situation immensely contributed to the good relationship that existed between the Alago people and their Jukun neighbours.

The successive Keana monarchs actually preserved a policy of attracting Tiv migration to strengthen their aims of achieving the goal of creating a far more highly centralised state than any other in the region. Reaffirming this therefore, Tseror argues that the 18th Century was a crucial period in the political life of Alago people of Keana. Osana Ozegya Adi was particularly determined to succeed in the task of political centralisation. At this junction, every existence of the Keana chiefdom was threatened, due to Islamic force in the area and Keana civil war prompted by attempts to keep other probably for this reason and having realised this, Ozegya recruited a special contingent (mercenaries) of Tiv people from the South of the River Benue and settled them in Keana for protection. As such, the Tiv became a significant factor in the polities of Keana's survival. The Alago people of Keana welcome the Tiv people. From the fear of the Hausa from Katsina domineering ambition. By 805-1835, the Hausa people were firmly established as the ruling clan in Awe. As the Alago felt threatened, they manipulated the Tiv people into the surrounding countryside to provide security for the Keana kingdom. This therefore opened way for Tiv people who were initially confined at the bank of River Benue to expand with the Iharev turning to favour expression towards Keana and the Nongov turned Eastwards to towards Awe". This however, marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the geo-politics of this region. As the Tiv settlements were established, a

growing suspicion arose in the Alago/Tiv relations at the growing population of the Tiv people in the area. This was followed by the outbreak of series of hostilities against the Tiv people. For instance, the Hausa (Katsinawa) forces from Jangarigani under the leadership of Ango Yaki attacked the Tiv people in Awe area.

Available evidence shows that the present Kamberi (Kanuri) of Lafia city were in company of the deposed Osana Ozegya of Keana as his bodyguard/security led by Dunama after the Osana Ozegya killed a lion which had been for a very long time terrorising the Jukun people of Wukari and its environs. The Aku Uka and his people promised giving him a wife as a sign of appreciation, the Osana Ozegya who later declined the appreciation that the only favour he wanted from them was to be restored as the Osana of Keana and immediately his request was granted by the Aku Uka. While Dunama and his people who were his bodyguard/security arrived Keana and restored Osana Ozegya as the Osana of Keana, started growing wings and horns by proving stubborn and almost taking over the business in the palace and Keana kingdom as a whole. In the light of the foregoing, Alago had a plan and dug a deep hole inside the palace where the leader of the guards (Dunama) used to sit. This was done with the intention that if the Dunama who was also accorded the title of Makama Keana sits he will be buried alive. That is exactly the action the Alago people took when an urgent meeting was summoned in the palace to actualize their plan. With this development, the other security guards that accompanied the restored Osana Ozegya ran and escaped for their lives and found the present Ribi which derived its name from Ibi, one of the first established Alago towns in Awe Local Government. The other group went and settled at Shabu. At Shabu, they the Kamberi (Kanuri) began to employ another power against the indigenous Shabu people and worst of it all sleeping with their wives which in turn sent them away to meet the inhabitant people of the present Lafia city where the traditional palace of the Kamberi (Kanuri) was sited. The people that inhabited this area were the Mighili (Koro) and Alago and the place was called "Anene". The name "Lafia" came to stay when the people of Shabu sent them away due to their dubious behaviour as stated above, asked them to go and settle in peace, "Ku zo na "Lafiya." This is how Lafia being the state capital of Nasarawa got or derived her name.

Consequently, upon the staying of the Dunama people in the midst of the Alago and Mighili (Koro) as their new settlement called Anene, now Lafia, the Dunama people devised new means disengaged the Alago and Mighili (Koro) real inhabitants of the area. This involved the slaughtering of goat, sheep and other domestic animals in the night and had the blood dropped from were these animals slaughtered directly to the house and granaries of their hosts, the Alago and the Mighili (Koro). Because the plan was aimed at embarrassing the host communities, the Kamberi (Kanuri) would early, morning summon a meeting and order the people to go round house by house and granary by granary in

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

search of their missing animals and these could be traced right inside the granaries either of the Alago or Mighili (Koro).

The people (hosts) were humiliated, beaten and asked to pay fines of offences not committed. Thus, this devious act or interaction did not go down well with the Alago and Mighili (Koro) who had been living with each other harmoniously; decided to raise their arms against it but yet Kamberi did not leaved their dirty plans against their host neighbours. In the light of this ugly and unholy interactions between the Kamberi (Kanuri) neighbours, the (hosts) Alago and Mighili (Koro) disengaged by migrating to join their kits and kins in Doma, Assakio, Ana and Agyaragu, Gwadanye, Musha, Duduguru among others. This was embarked to avoid unnecessary embarrassment for the offences not committed by them. History still has it today that most of the street names in the interior of Lafia where the Kamberi (Kanuri) lived now are called Angwan Doka which derived its name from "Odoka" an Alago word which means "To ask".

Despite this scenario, ethnic groups such as Eggon, Tiv, Gwandara, Kwalla, Mada, Hausa, Fulani among others who settled at various Alago towns and villages were give what is called "Mai-angwa" (Head of each ethnic groups) who would play the role of supervisory body for onward submission of both socio-political and economic developments to the Ose (King) of various independent Alago communities.

From the above analysis, it is clear that inter-group relation is a concept that binds people of different ethnic nationalities together despite the conflict that occupied the central idea in the history of the people in the recent times. Conflict relations occupy a special place in the interactions of social groups, and this forms the basic building blocks for the integration of previously fragmented groups. It is the cumulative effects or experiences of conflict resolutions that deepen the degree and scope of integration in any given society. Arising specifically from the preceding facts and generally given the ever-changing nature and character of inter-group relations, it follows logically that any serious attempt to study and understand the phenomenon in any society should necessarily take into consideration the depth and significance of these factors and specific roles they play in the total process of the development of the inter-groups over time.

Conclusion

From the above analysis of the nature of pre-colonial inter-group relations between Alago and the neighbours. The research has identified some certain areas the binds people together in the pre-colonial era, this include migration, intermarriages, diplomacy, economic and geographical factors as the main areas that fostered contact between Alago and her neighbours in the Lafia area. Conflict relations occupy a special place in the interactions of social groups, and this form the basic building blocks for the previously fragmented groups. It is the cumulative effect or experiences of experiences of conflict

resolutions that deepens the degree and scope of integration in any given society. Arising specifically from the preceding facts and generally given the ever-changing nature and character of inter group relations, it follows locally that any serious attempt to study and understand the phenomenon in any society should necessarily take into consideration the depth and significance of these factors and specific roles they play in the total process of the development of the inter-groups over time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afigbo, A.E; *The Igbo and their neighbours*, university press Ltd, Ibadan, 1987.

Ajayi J.F; "the Problems of National integration in Nigeria. A Historical perspective" one of the papers in the series of NISEF, 1999.

Avav, T.R; "The Tiv and their neigbours" in P.T Adhere (ed).The Tiv in contemporary Nigeria Zaria: Tiv students project (1993).

Cohen, R, and Brenner, L; 'Brono in the 19th century" in (eds), Ajayi J.F.A and Crowder in History of West Africa vol.2 Longman group Ltd, London 1974.

David, A; Colonializing and inter-group Relations in the Central Highlights: The Afizene story, Aboki publishers Markudi 2011.

Effiah-Attog S; " From Ethnicity to Federation: A case study of the Biase of South/South Geo Political Region of Nigeria pre-independence time". In Okpeh O. Olapleh and C.B.N,

Ogbogbo (eds) Federation in Historical perspective. Aboki Publisher Markudi, 2013.

Fortes, M. and Evans E.E;" Pritchard, African Political System". London, 1975.

Galadima, M.O; "the Development of chieftaincy Institutions of Alago people of Keana" M.A Thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Jos 2001.

Godwin A.W; "the Development of chieftaincy Institutions of Alago people of Keana" An M.A Thesis submitted to the Department of History, Nsuk, 1993.

Gunn H.D, *People of the Plateau Area of Northern Nigeria*, London International Africa Institute, 1953

Lovejoy, P.E; Caravans of Kolanut: The Hausa Kola trade: 1700-1900 ABU Press Limited 1980.

Mahdi, A; "The contribution of Hausa people to the Ethnic and cultural Transformation in some parts of Middle Belt of Nigeria" A Social Science seminar, ABU Zaria, 1971.

Osegba, H.I; "power and conflict: A study of conflict of political Leadership in Alago Land" A Research Project submitted to the Department of pol science, university of Jos, 1989.

Ogbole, J; "Keana in perspective" A pamphlet on the coronation of the 43rd Osana of Keana. 2015.

Oyakatta, S; Inter group relation between Alago and their neighbors in Central Nigeria. A Ph.d thesis submitted to Benue State University Makurdi, 2014.

Oyakata, S.O; Inter-group Relations in central Nigeria: A study of the Alago and their Neighbours, 1960-2010.

Temple, C.L; Notes on the Tribes, provinces, Emirates and States of Northern provinces of Nigeria, Franc, cass 1965.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]