

Indigeneship and Citizenship in Nigeria: Myth and Reality

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Abstract

Like in many societies the world over, the indigenes-settlers' syndrome in Nigeria is an age long problem. The distinction between autochthonous people and migrant groups even in ancient kingdoms and primordial communities attest to this assertion. However, unlike in the contemporary period when the problem has assumed a more serious dimension perhaps due to its manipulation for individual and group gains, this was not the case in the distant past when highly hybridized people and culture emerged from the blending of autochthonous and migrant groups. As a way of justifying the distinction between indigenes and settlers and reaping the gains, myths have been built while certain positions have been established. Not surprisingly, crises have been generated some of which have defied all known logic till now. Considering these realities, the contention of this paper is that the dividing line between indigenes and settlers is very thin and that in the context of modern Nigeria, the issue of citizenship needs to be strengthened. This involves going beyond mere Constitutional provisions to enforcement as well as strengthening of statutory provisions. Thus, this paper argues that the resolution of the central issues involved in citizenship/indigeneship conflicts will redefine the concept of federalism in Nigeria.

Introduction

Defining who an indigene of a particular area is could be a difficult task, particularly in the light of the mass movement of peoples over time and across cultures and space. Yet the relative association of peoples with different areas; a product of their settlement and the seeming dominance of their cultures or perhaps the outcome of their ability to conquer and occupy a relatively virgin area, has resulted in situations whereby some came to identify themselves as the indigenes of a particular place.

While this could be right in a sense, it is also clear that many states, societies and communities all over the world, emerged from a blend of different layers of migrants sometimes with the supposedly aborigine groups or even among themselves. Interestingly such groups have so blended among themselves or even with the autochthonous groups that they have produced relatively homogenous cultures. The Swahili civilization in East Africa is a very good example of the scenario painted above (Greaves et al, 1997:559-560), and the process of state formation among different Nigerian groups also bears eloquent testimony to this development. Interestingly, citizenship in these and similar societies came to be defined not only in terms of obligations or responsibilities alone, but also in terms of rights and privileges. In other words, there was no discrimination on the basis of descent, period of arrival or even extent of stay although the princely and the merchant/business class among others continued to enjoy the privileges conferred on them by their ascribed or achieved status.

Arising from the development described above, it is plausible to argue that the relative peace witnessed in Nigerian societies as well as the attendant socio-political developments could not be completely divorced from the ability to manage relationship among groups, devoid of the over-glorification of indigenes-settlers differences. With a few exceptions, this was particularly the situation beginning from the emergence of states to the onset of colonial rule in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, it would appear that the seemingly unnoticeable differences among groups brought about by their blending over a long period was resuscitated perhaps due to a number of factors, including the colonial legacy, desire by the elite for power and position, the changing status of land and other natural resources as well as desire for separate identity among others. Beyond generating crises with the attendant loss of human and material resources, more of which have not been satisfactorily resolved till the present time, the indigene-settler problem has called to question the basis of citizenship in Nigeria.

Consequently, some questions become pertinent. These include but not limited to the following: Who is a Nigerian? What are the qualifications for Nigerian citizenship? Does one qualify as a citizen in any part of Nigeria irrespective of his location, ethnicity and religious affiliation? Should such factors such as indigeneity, migration or any other extraneous factor determine/deny/limit what a citizen can enjoy or the level he/she can aspire to. These questions and other related issues bothering on the problems of citizenship in Nigeria would be discussed. This is with a view to seeking to break the myths, addressing the realities and attempting a re-definition of the principle of federalism in the light of the problems associated with citizenship in modern Nigeria.

Between Indigenes and Settlers: Myths versus Realities

In justifying the dichotomy between indigenes and settlers, protagonists would easily contend that one is mostly an indigene of a particular place. The argument was that one can only belong to a particular ethnic group and that by virtue of that, one might not be in a position to enjoy those benefits associated with settling in a place or among groups with different history, culture and language. For example, in his x-ray of the genealogy of Alhaji Ismail Babatunde Jose, Oyeweso (2006) contends that the idea of ethnic purity is neither illogical nor impracticable. Echoing Jose (1987:1-2), Oyeweso (2006:30-31) traced Jose's genealogy first to Ikare-Akoko, where his great grandfather was born and later to Ijebu-ode where his grandfather got married to a royal family. His genealogy was also traced to Sokoto and Bida, the roots of her great grandmother and grandmother respectively and finally Lagos where Ismail was born. Also his grandfather residency at Calabar where Hamza Jose, his father, was born was also considered relevant. Some pertinent question raised here are, is Alhaji Jose, an indigene or a settler of Lagos? Does he have a right or legitimate claim to Owa-Ale Chieftaincy in Ikare? Can he embrace or will he be embraced by the royal household of Ijebu Ode? Can or should he be discriminated against by the Nupe or Fulani based on fixed and unchanging notions of ethnic identity or indigeneity. Arguably, the meaning one could make out of this development is that there could be multiple indigeneship.

Arising from the issue raised in the preceding paragraph is the notion or the perception that the indigeneship of a particular society, group or region confers certain rights, which others should not enjoy by virtue of being settlers or migrants or strangers. Such rights included but not limited to unhindered access to education and employment opportunities, land, political participations or even right to produce the chief or head of a community. This notion perhaps informed the Jukun's attitude and disposition to the Tiv in Wukari divisions of the present-day Taraba State.

The Jukun saw them as the indigenes of the region having being firmly established there by the 17th century. Their contention therefore is that while other groups in the region like the Tiv as well as the Hausa-Fulani have other places to go to, the Jukun have only Wukari as home.

Whereas the Tiv had arrived in the region as far back as the 1840s when the present Wukari was established, and notwithstanding the efforts made by the colonial government to recognize them as being part of the society where they lived, the Jukun essentially saw them as settlers. More importantly, the political reversals suffered by the Jukun at different times not only woke them up from their slumber, they became more rigid in refusing or denying the Tiv access, relevance, entitlements, political participation and power on the ground that they were settlers (Best et al, 1999:82-115).

Meanwhile, settlers' groups in different parts of the country have consistently maintained that having settled in a place for a long period, it is not proper to refer to them as settlers, but rather as indigenes. Their contention is that while their kiths and kins could be located elsewhere, they could not really trace their root appropriately neither could they fit properly into the old society they or their forbears left several years ago. To worsen matters, there have been raised in the new locations, some generations of people from their lineage who have come to see where they were born and raised as their homes. For instance, the prolong crises between the Tiv and other ethnic groups particularly the Azara in present-day Nassarawa State could be explained from this perspective. Whereas other groups in the region considered the Tiv as non- indigenes, the Tiv who constitute a strong numerical force in the areas considered themselves indigenes of the areas particularly on account of their long residence (Ali & Egwu, 2003:113-115).

In the light of the development discussed above and without justifying unnecessarily the claims of the Tiv in Nassarawa, it is plausible to argue that establishing dichotomy between indigenes and settlers could be pretty difficult. In the light of the emergence and growth of communities in Yorubaland in particular, it could be said that some of the groups that claimed to be autochthones were in fact earlier or more powerful group of settlers who were challenged by the hostile environment in which they found themselves to seek better accommodation elsewhere. A close study of three closely settled Yoruba communities of Ifon-Osun, Erin-Osun and Ilobu illuminates this issue better. Ifon-Osun for instance was founded by a prince from Ile-Ife having settled at different places before finally arriving at the present location. Similarly Ilobu was founded by some groups of Oyo and Nupe elephant hunters in search of adventure before finally being organised by Ayonu, a prince from Iregba who eventually established a dynasty. In a similar vein, Erin-Osun was founded by migrants from Erin-Ile who left their location in order to escape the Fulani rampages in the region. Although the problem of which group settled first plagued the region for so long, it is clear that different wave of settlers moved into the region at different times, just as some others moved out of the regions. Implicitly some measures of homogeneity were attained (Adesoji, 2003). The emergence of Osogbo, originally an Ijesa town and Ibadan initially as an all comer settlement later dominated by the Oyo elements are other relevant examples.

Although the examples given above could be easier because the different groups were mostly Yoruba, the point being made is that in a loose sense all could be said to be settlers who at different times settled in places that are now indigenous to them. Beyond having little or nothing to do with their former roots, it is almost impossible to fit into the society from where they emerged in the first instance. Consequently, their desire to enjoy certain rights in places they now regard as their homes and where they have been for so long should neither be jeopardized nor denied. Oyeweso (2006:31) has however rightly observed that while the assertion that “we are all settlers may sound outlandish or anachronistic to sustain, the claim that we are not all indigenes can be considered with more sobriety and reciprocity. This according to him makes the claim “we are all citizen” more defensible and democratically acceptable.

Perhaps another myth being bandied about is that no matter the number of years a settler had lived in a place, he/she will remain a settler. The relationship between the Hausa-Fulani settlers on one hand and the indigenous population of present plateau state better illustrate this position. As far as the Berom, Amo, Buji, Anaguta, Jere, Jarawa and Afizere are concerned, they are the indisputable indigenes of the state (Jos and its surrounding villages) whereas the Hausa-Fulani are settlers or strangers who migrated into the region for various reasons ranging from commerce and employment to desire for fortune. In particular, tin mining was seen as a major factor for the influx of the settlers though with the active encouragement of the colonial government. Even after mining was no longer lucrative, the Hausa/Fulani embarked on dry season farming which proved so lucrative that it attracted more of them to the region. However for the Hausa-Fulani, the contention is that they had produced the rulership in Jos since 1902 up to 1947 and are therefore not strangers or settlers. Specifically, thus the Hausa-Fulani desire to have an emir appointed in Jos and to have the *Gbong Gwon* institution abolished. Besides, they aspired to political leadership position and succeeded a few time (Jibo et al, 2001). But not surprisingly, crises arising from a clash of interests occurred in the state at different time between 1994 and 2002.

Realistically, however and particularly in the context of a modern nation it is not impossible for a settler to aspire to enjoy rights and attain positions ordinarily reserved for indigenes, particularly as citizen irrespective of origin, place of birth or ethnicity. The Hausa-Fulani in Plateau State as in other parts of the country could have been emboldened by this understanding; hence the clamour for entitlements, rights and relevance in the places where they are located. But the problem associated with this development is the nature of successive Nigerian Constitutions which emphasize what constitute indigeneship in a nation, and more importantly who is a citizen. This has led to distinguishing between national and local citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979), and more importantly, it has made it difficult to promote citizenship and constitutionally guaranteed citizen rights particularly in the absence of any enforcement strategy or procedure.

A corollary to the issue raised in the preceding paragraphs is yet another myth that the dividing line between being an indigene and being a settler is very thick as it is very difficult for a settler to become a native. In this regard, reference could be made to Igbo migrants in different parts of Nigeria, the Ijebu in Ibadan or even the large Yoruba population in Jos as in other parts of the north (and also relevant here is the Cow Fulani settlers all over Yorubaland). Although it has been possible for the Igbo outside Igboland as well as the Yoruba in the north to establish a semblance of political structures (with the creation of *Eze N'digbo* and *Oba Yoruba* just like the Hausa-Fulani also have *Sarkin Hausawa* in the south) perhaps to safeguard their interest and attain a measure of relevance, that has not changed their ethnicity. Neither did it guarantee them any entitlement.

And where entitlements are made possible mostly as rewards of political participations, they are more a product of political rather than ethnic alignment, particularly at the elite level. Even for the Ijebu at Ibadan, an intra-Yoruba issue, the seeming dominance of the Ijebu particularly in the 1960s with the ascendancy of Chief Obafemi Awolowo resulted in the emergence of the Mabolaje group (made up mostly of Ibadan indigenes but decidedly anti-Action Group, a political party led by Chief Awolowo) to challenge the supremacy of the Action Group (Sklar & Whitaker, 1964:597-654). Although despite its emergence, the Action Group continued to command majority support not only in Ibadan but the whole of Yorubaland, it is clear that the emergence of the Mabolaje group was a gang up of some Ibadan elite against a supposedly settler group the Ijebu. What all these meant is that a settler will remain a settler, even within the same ethnic group. Summing up the situation Kazah-Toure (2004) asks:

What for example makes a Hausa from neighbouring Niger Republic still carrying a Nigerian passport, illegally settled in Katsina five years ago to be considered as an indigene, while a Nigerian citizen of Igbo origin (born, bred, working and paying tax in Katsina) is treated as a non-indigene. In another instance, take a Yoruba from neighbouring Benin Republic accepted as an indigene of Ota and not so a Nigerian who is Kanuri that was born, educated and pay tax in Ota which is the only home for him /her in the country.

On the contrary, it could be argued that the dividing line between indigenes and settlers is very thin more so that an indigene somewhere could be a settler in another place in which case the rights enjoyed, as indigenes are limited or non-existent as settlers. The wider implication of this situation is that while one may enjoy some rights as indigenes, such rights could be limited by virtue of being a settler, a stranger or a migrant elsewhere whereas with a citizen of Nigeria there are Constitutional guaranteed rights for every citizen to enjoy irrespective of his/her ethnicity, location or place of birth.

In what perhaps appears as a summary of some of the issues rose so far, Mamdani (2001) in his examination of the indigene/settler question, enunciates a number of principles in understanding identity crisis. One of the principles is that the indigene/settler category is interconnected and interloping as one defines the other. According to him, settlers exist because some people have succeeded in defining themselves as indigene in order to exclude others, whom they have defined as settlers.

He therefore contends that the indigene/settler relationship is based on the principle of exclusion. Besides, he maintains that settlers are not defined merely by immigration, more so that almost all African groups and peoples somehow, have migrated from one part of the continent to another over an enduring period of time. Consequently he contends that the concept of a settler is a political construction with roots in conquest, state power, coercion and law. Furthermore, according to Mamdani, the settler can never become an indigene or a native since the basis of differentiation is the denial of civic citizenship through a political imposition of a permanent and exclusionary ethnic or religious label¹⁰.

Byond Myth: Citizenship in Nigeria

Arguably, the satisfactory resolution of issues of citizenship could have gone a long way to address and resolve in a more concrete manner the indigene-settler problem, but this has not been the case. Interestingly, successive Nigerian Constitutions since political independence had emphasized the issues of citizenship and fundamental human rights. Chapter III of the 1999 Constitution especially identifies who a citizen is and how one can become a citizen. Specifically sections 25 to 27 identify how citizenship can be attained in Nigerian. These are by birth, registration and naturalization (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). In the same vein, chapter IV of the Constitution dwells extensively on the Fundamental Rights of Nigerians irrespective of their ethnicity, location or place of birth (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Obviously these provisions were meant to act as safeguard against or to provide redress for violations of one's citizenship rights. It would seem however that these provisions did not envisage or perhaps display a total ignorance of situations whereby the enjoyment of citizenship rights will be handicapped or prevented by extraneous considerations such as indigeneity or ethnicity. Even where there are clear provisions on the fundamental rights that Nigerians can enjoy, the situation is not in any way different. For instance section 42 of chapter IV of the Constitution provides for the right to freedom from discriminations. Specifically it states that, a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not (a) be subjected to disabilities or restriction to which citizen of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions, political opinions are not made subject or (b) be accorded any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizen of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Lofty as these provisions are, the reality is far from the ideal. Hence, the contention of Oyeweso (2006:36) is that the Constitutional provisions are negated by political consideration in which case there is a focus on what he refers to as indigeneship rights which are either ethnic or sub-ethnic groups' rights. This he argues has exposed the federal system to a certain level of divided or dual citizenship between group rights and individual rights. Consequently, it places group rights over individual rights and hence the rights of ethnic groups particularly of indigenes over citizens.

It has been argued that the problem of citizenship in Nigeria today largely stem from the discriminations and exclusion meted out to people on the basis of ethnic, regional, religious and gender identities. This is because those who see themselves as "natives" or "indigenes" exclude those considered as "strangers" from the enjoyment of certain rights and benefit that they ought to enjoy as Nigerians upon the fulfillment of certain civic duties, such as the payment of tax (Bamidele & Ikubaje, 2004:65). The 1979 Constitution from which the 1999 Constitution was modified has been seen as laying the basis or foundation for the indigeneship problems. This is because it expressly provides that in order to enjoy access to positions and opportunities on the basis of "federal character" one needs to be an "indigene" of the state or local government concerned. Being an indigene involves showing evidence of belonging, through one's parents or grandparents to a community indigenous to a State or Local Government, which in effect suggests the membership of a local ethnic and linguistic community. Thus, the inability to prove such membership of a group of people will result in being defined as a "stranger" who cannot enjoy all the rights and privileges of indigenes and/or natives (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979; Bamidele & Ikubaje, 2004:76). And similarly section 147 of the 1999 Constitution states that the president shall appoint at least one Minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such state. Therefore, it should be quickly pointed that the motive behind the incorporation of these provisions into the Constitution ostensibly is to strengthen the Federal Character principle. Specifically chapter 2 section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution explains the reasoning behind the provision, thus:

The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria's and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of person from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999)

In other words, the Federal Character principle was meant to promote unity in diversity while encouraging accommodation at the federal level particularly in term of appointments. Without holding brief for the framer of the Constitution therefore, it could be said that the principle was not meant to achieve anything sinister or divisive.

However when it is considered that the Federal Character principle and its ancillaries such as the quota system as well as zoning among others have promoted mediocrity at the expense of merit particularly with the abuse that characterized its application in civil service appointments, promotion, admission into schools and so on, then it could be seen as a solution that has become problematic. More importantly, the exclusion of Nigerians on the basis of ethnicity or sub-ethnicity and the consequent denial of access to land, education, employment and even political offices could not have been envisaged or perhaps deliberately ignored/glossed over by the framer of the Constitution.

Remarkably, one major thesis running through the preceding discussion is that the Constitutional provisions on citizenship and fundamental human rights should have provided the needed antidote to the indigene-settler dichotomy, but they did not; first because some of the provisions were seriously flawed and even contradictory in some cases wherein citizenship versus Federal Character, and more importantly in the promotion of group rights over individual rights through political concept like indigeneity. Second, because the provisions did not envisage or contemplate some problematic situations. And in essence, citizenship had not, and might not be able to resolve the indigene-settler problem particularly in its present form.

Breaking Myths: Re-Thinking Citizenship in Nigeria

In defining who an indigene is particularly in the context of the Federal Character principle, the 1999 Constitution emphasizes showing evidence of belonging to a community indigenous to a state or local government through one's parents or grandparents which in effect suggests membership of a local ethnic and linguistic community. Ironically the experience of the different groups referred to as settlers or strangers in different parts of the country indicate that they settled in places now known to them several years ago. In other words, several generations of these groups, perhaps not limited to that of parents and grandparents or even great grandparents were born or grew up in their present locations.

Consequently beyond being eminently qualified as members of communities indigenous to a state or local government, they are also in position to participate meaningfully in the socio-political and economic life of the community; fulfilling their obligations and enjoying basic rights. Therefore, the provision, which was meant to exclude some people particularly from the political life of their community and by extension, the whole country could actually serve their interest if properly interpreted. And second, the provisions expose the weakness inherent in determining Nigerian citizenship particularly in the light of the limitations imposed by the Federal Character principle, and implicitly, there is the need for a re-thinking or a redefinition of citizenship vis-à-vis other limiting factors; apart from involving or introducing changes that are capable of challenging the *status quo*, a re-thinking or strengthening of citizenship that will address the problem of indigene versus non-indigene.

Essentially, there appears to be agreement among authors and scholars on the need to strengthen individual rights and accord them more importance than group rights, the reason being that efforts at protecting and promoting group rights have been directly responsible for the escalation of indigene versus non-indigene problems, including the numerous crises witnessed in different parts of the country in the past. Towards this end, it has been suggested that citizenship rights should be tied to either place of birth (different from one's ethnic groups) or residence so that any Nigerian who has lived in any part of the country for certain number of years can enjoy full residency rights, which must include all rights normally available to the traditional indigenes of the states.

While observing that in 1987, the political bureau set up recommended this and suggested ten years residency for the enjoyment of this right, Oyeweso (2006:36-37) commended the example of Group Captain Dan Suleiman who as governor of Plateau state in 1976 had proposed that any Nigeria born in Plateau state or from any other state who has lived in Plateau state for twenty years should enjoy all the rights and privileges of a native of Plateau State. Observably, progressive as the Suleiman principle was, it was not adopted as a national policy, and neither was there any evidence of its workability, even in Plateau State.

However, beyond being a mere proposal, it has been suggested that there is need to build a national citizenship through a reform of the Nigerian Constitution which involves incorporating the "Residency Right" mentioned above into the Constitution. This section as suggested should provide that a Nigerian citizen who has resided continuously for a period of five years in any state of the federation and performs his/her civic duties, including the payment of taxes, shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of the state. Hence, this would be in accord with the practice in most federations, and would strengthen the provisions in the Constitution in addition to removing restriction on who can contest elections in different parts of the country (Bamidele & Ikubaje, 2004:81-82). And whether twenty, ten or five years, what is being advocated and what is considered relevant is that residency rights should be incorporated into the Constitution. Besides, the need to reform section 147 of the 1999 Constitution was suggested which states that those to be appointed as ministers from each state of the Federation must be indigenes of that state. Conversely, in this sense it was suggested that indigenes must be defined as those who meet the residency requirement in any particular state (Bamidele & Ikubaje, 2004:81-82).

Thus, in agreement with the issues of residency as a major factor in defining citizenship, Taiwo (2001:86-117) maintains that every Nigerian citizen has a right to everything; land, resources and so on within the borders. His contention is that if a foreigner could become a Nigerian after fifteen years of residency through naturalization, then it should not be difficult for Nigerians to enjoy citizenship right irrespective of where he or she lives; stressing that anything short of this represents a diminution of citizenship.

Hence, contending further that there cannot be abbreviated citizenship within an undivided polity, he observed that most restrictions that can be placed upon the definition of residence within Nigeria may be the requirement of some length of time before a citizen can claim a place as his/her home. More importantly, he stresses that a basic principle of modern citizenship seems to be, where you pay your taxes is where your home is, and there you demand services and enjoy benefits. In essence, residency defined by a determined number of years and qualified by the performance of such obligation as paying tax should make a Nigerian eligible for citizenship anywhere in the country, irrespective of his ethnicity or place of birth.

Furthermore, it would seem that incorporating residency right into the Constitution would be the first step in guaranteeing citizenship to all Nigerians, and to solving the indigene-settler problem. And beyond this, there is a need for implementation such that it does not remain an order on paper. Relevant here is the suggestion for entrenchment in the Constitution via an independent commission that would monitor the implementation of some of the very critical provisions of the document (Bamidele & Ikubaje, 2004:83). And accordingly, in the case of citizenship, the National Human Rights Commission would be relevant because the country has in place the commission, but how functional, effective or pro-active is the commission? Thus, what is required is a very vibrant, efficient and responsive Human Rights Commission, otherwise it is better that it be non-existent.

But nonetheless, enforcing individual or residency right in the context of the Nigerian situation could sometimes lie with the people, and then there is the need to prepare Nigerians to seek to enforce their rights. Enforcement in this sense will involve being ready to take up the gauntlet as the occasion demands. This could involve seeking legal redress or seeking Constitutional interpretation on citizenship cum residency right issue and being willing to explore all legal avenues, and to any level. Therefore, empowerment is central to the ability of Nigerians to seek enforcement along with an awareness that would involve employing all known media to create awareness, using different languages to reach the mass of the population. Hence, the content of the awareness program should also include the scope of rights, what they are, the Constitutional provisions backing them up, and ways of enforcing the rights and seeking redress in the case of infringement or denial. And in addition, non-governmental organizations with bias for citizenship rights could be involved to create and sustain awareness and facilitate enforcement.

Accordingly, beyond creating awareness to facilitate enforcement or even implementation of Constitutional provisions, awareness is also needed to guard the masses against political manipulation by the elite, a necessary element when it is considered that the elite have often played up or down the issue of indigeneship and settlers depending on which side would serve their interest better. For instance, it has been observed that party politics was central to the conflicts between the Tiv and the Jukun in the Wukari local government area of Taraba State whereas the two groups were polarized into opposing political parties at different times, and efforts at achieving equation between the two groups played dominant roles in the emergence of public office holders, like governors at different times.

In the Second Republic for example, Alhaji Abubakar Barde who became governor of the old Gongola State on the platform of the Great Nigeria Peoples' Party (GNPP) gave preference to the Tiv over the Jukun for not supporting him. This he did by appointing a Tiv, Iyotyer Tor Musa as the chairman of Wukari local government, a situation that did not go down well with the Jukun, who saw it as an insult on their collective psyche (Best et al, 1999:93-95).

Similarly, when Governor Jolly Nyame became civilian Governor of Taraba state in the aborted Third republic, he appointed some Tiv people into the government perhaps on the basis of the support he got from the Tiv. Although these appointments deepened the hostility between the Tiv and Jukun of Wukari, the end as far as parties and politicians are concerned, justified the means (Best et al, 2003:48-56). On the other hand, the Second Republic in Plateau State witnessed a situation whereby Chief Solomon Lar who emerged on the Platform of Nigeria Peoples' Party (NPP) saw his mission as emancipating the indigenes from the unfair dominance of the Hausa-Fulani settlers in commerce, and appointments to traditional institutions. He subsequently restructured chieftaincy institutions to create room for an indigene to be appointed or upgraded many stools occupied by the indigenes. The Hausa/Fulani settlers who were angered by these moves, eventually got accommodation in the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led federal government as they were compensated with board appointments, thus the Hausa-Fulani settlers in Plateau state got the slots allocated to the state as a form of reward for their loyalty (Jibo et al, 2001:68).

Consequently, an elaborate program of awareness is needed to alert the masses at the often receiving end of indigenes-settler crises to the danger inherent in allowing themselves to become pawns on the chessboard of the political elite, whose major goal mostly is the realization of their selfish interests /desires of attaining and sustaining themselves in political offices. And furthermore, awareness is needed to educate the masses about making choices of leaders not on the basis of ethnic origin or indigene-settler basis, but rather on the quality of candidates, their antecedents as well as their ability to deliver. And as argued by Akinyele (2002:39), ordinarily the concept of citizenship should suggest that an individual has a right to contest an election wherever he resides; this he argues will begin to happen when Nigerians begin to focus on the ability of politicians, rather than their ethnic origins.

Conclusion

The indigenes-settlers problems in Nigeria had become protracted due to the narrow definition of citizenship in theory and in practice, and the desire by the elite to enjoy the benefits of both indigeneship and citizenship has not helped matters.

Thus, rather than playing down divisive tendencies and promoting uniting factors, the reverse has happened; and beyond generating crises of diverse proportions with attendant loss of human and material resources in the past, there is no indication that a worst crises might not be generated in the future because the fundamental cause of the crises is either being ignored, glossed over or wished away as if it were capable of solving itself. Hence there is a need to take the bull by the horn and address comprehensively the root cause of the problem.

In this age of global citizenship, becoming a citizen in Nigeria both in words and in fact should not be circumvented by Constitutional provisions or by political considerations through which some elite might want to feather their nest. Rather citizenship should be strengthened, beginning with Constitutional provisions, which should not only be enforced by the government, but also by the people (after all he/she who the shoe pinches feels the pain most) who should ordinarily seek relief. Otherwise nobody will know if any pain is felt, and if relief is needed and thus their differentiation as well as their diversity of their interest, background and goals notwithstanding, remain relevant for the people with a large scale program of awareness to inform, sensitize or equip the consciousness the people, and therefore, prepare them to take their destiny into their own hands.

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