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EVERYDAY PEOPLE, AUTOCHTHONY, AND INDIGENE-SETTLER CRISES IN LAGOS COMMODITY MARKETS

Gbemisola Animasawun

ABSTRACT: *Local markets in Nigerian cities are under-studied but ubiquitous and ancient sites of inter-ethnic conflicts and cooperation of everyday people (traders). Against the backdrop of indigene-settler conflicts in two major markets in Lagos, this study examines the causes of these conflicts, defined by the adversarial use of autochthony, their management and outcomes, and how macro-inter-ethnic relations inflect conflict and cooperation in local markets. While market leadership is a common cause of conflict, the management approaches adopted and outcomes differed in ways that reveal the impact of the macro on the micro. Also, post-conflict relations in markets underscore the utility of trade as a means of sustaining peaceful co-existence in a fractious country like Nigeria and the creativity of everyday people in peacebuilding, designing early warning systems, and conflict management.*

KEYWORDS: *Lagos, autochthony, everyday life, indigene-settler, marketplace*

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INTRODUCTION

As observed by Jeffrey Herbst and Gregg Mills (2012: 3), "No country is destined to suffer conflict because of its societal divisions (fault lines) and no nation is guaranteed to be at peace." Therefore, in order to comprehend and prevent violent eruptions along ethnic lines, it behooves scholars, practitioners, and policy makers to undertake investigations and analyses of inter-group relations and conflicts at sites of interaction, such as local markets. As locations where trading and "building social and entrepreneurial skill" are mutually dependent, local urban markets have huge potential for heeding the call by Olivier Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty (2014: 3) to search "for the multiple conditions of peace, (conflict) and its implications for the individual, state and the international across history and across disciplines" (Crewe and Gregson 1998: 43; Clark 2010: 9). The fragility of Nigeria's corporate existence due to adversarial inter-group relations in both macro- and micro-contexts cannot be ignored.

Since independence, national stability and instability has largely been the result of cooperation or conflict among Nigeria's main ethnic groups: the northern Hausa-Fulani, which Peter Lewis (2012: 20) describes as an hyphenated identity of two distinct groups (Hausa and Fulani), the southwestern Yoruba, and southeastern Igbo. After more than five decades of turbulent nationhood, including struggles for the consolidation of democracy since May 29, 1999, state-society and inter-group relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic have been largely defined by two types of violent conflict: those involving armed non-state actors and the Nigerian state in the context of insurgencies and inter-group conflicts along divisions of ethnicity, religion, and irredentism (Adebanwi and Obadare 2010: 380).

Deaths as a result of these conflicts are grossly under-reported, despite the increased death toll of innocent bystanders, which is described as one-sided violence (Eck and Hultman 2007). Moshood Erubami and Robert Young (2003) report that of the 7,612 violent deaths between 1999 and 2002, 4,300 (56 percent) were from ethnic or religious conflicts. Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (2011) estimates that number to be between ten thousand and a hundred thousand. John Campbell (2010) further noted that the state plays down these figures, which makes it difficult to ascertain how many people have died from inter-ethnic conflict across the country. Thomas Imobighe (2003) observed that Nigeria witnessed no less than forty violent communal or ethnic conflicts within the first three years of the return to democratic rule. Finally, Adebanwi (2004b) showed that fourteen of forty-six inter-ethnic conflicts that occurred between 1999 and 2003 occurred

in Lagos and five of these occurred in the district where the Ladipo market is located. Despite reprisals for this violence, federal government responses have failed to stop the scourge (Akinyele 2001; Ukiwo 2003; Adebaniwi 2005, 2007).

Virtually all such confrontations involved ethnic militias activated as engines of security for their respective ethnicities. In Lagos, for example, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) was the face of many inter-ethnic confrontations aimed at reversing what was seen as the internal neo-colonialism of many marketplaces, which was the result of non-Yoruba settlers (allogenes), as described by Geschiere (2009: 25, 27), occupying positions of power at many markets in the city. This type of violence is proactive, in that it is used to appropriate new entitlements that groups did not have previously. Reactive violence, on the other hand, is used to defend already existing rights (Varynen 1991). Typical of everyday life-worlds where individuals continuously interact in ways that Alfred Schutz (1973: 3) described as "inevitable and patterned," violent clashes among indigenes and settlers have redefined inter-ethnic relations in markets. Nevertheless, Peter Lewis (2012: 19) argues that, "Nigeria endures with a resilience that often surprises outside observers and even many citizens."

In this article, autochthony and indigene-settler crises in local markets is approached bearing in mind Olatunji Oloruntimeyin and John Ayoadé's (2002) macro-micro causation conflict theory, which states that many inter-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, especially in cities, are triggered by existing adversarial relationships among ethnic and religious groups at the larger political macro-level. According to Montserrat Guibernau (2012), these conflicts in local markets testify to the globalization of identity conflicts in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Furthermore, the focus of this study is to provide an answer to the calls of Patrik Chabal (2009: xi) on the need to "bring back the people as the centre of researches on Africa" and Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn (2013: 63) that "the study of African societies cannot avoid in-depth investigation of questions related to ethnicity." Therefore, engaging autochthony and indigene-settler conflicts in a largely understudied area like local markets follows the recommendation of Adebaniwi and Obadare (2010: 380) that understanding Nigeria requires an approach that is "vertical and horizontal, in its historical and dialectical dimensions, in order to articulate fully its grand opportunities and its fatal vulnerabilities." This is because indigene-settler conflicts are among the factors that have made many African countries, including Nigeria, polarized and fractious (Lewis 2012: 19). Cote d'Ivoire, for example, underscores the threat posed by autochthony and the reliance on indigene-settler

polemics in democratic elections, nation-building, and national security (Marshall-Fratani 2006; Collier 2010; Bah 2010).

Cognizant of the dearth of studies on autochthony and indigene-settler conflicts in regard to the experiences of everyday people, this study was carried out in local markets, which represent a microcosm of Nigeria's ethnic diversity (Seigworth and Gardiner 2004). This article analyzes the use of autochthony by everyday people in marketplaces within the context of the struggle for power and resources, on one hand, and the tenuous macro-inter-ethnic relations of post-independence Nigeria, on the other (Diamond 1983; Bah 2005). Against the backdrop of violent indigene-settler conflicts among the Igbo-allogenes and Yoruba-indigenes within the Aguiyi Ironsi international auto spare parts market, in addition to a similar conflict at the Mile 12 market between the Yoruba and Hausa, the following research questions were raised. First, what have been the causes of indigene-settler conflicts? Second, how does autochthony drive inter-ethnic conflicts? Third, how have such conflicts been managed and what have been their outcomes? I chose to focus on these two particular marketplaces because the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria interact there on a daily basis and their cooperation and/or conflict continues to determine peace in the country. These sites are also significant because it is there, within Nigeria's economic nerve center, that commodities (auto spare parts and food stuffs) that are crucial to the everyday mobility and health of society, both locally and trans-regionally, are traded. The interactions that take place there underscore the importance of peaceful relations for Nigeria's stability.

This article argues that similarities can be drawn in terms of inter-ethnic struggles for power, territory, and control at the macro- and micro-levels of inter-ethnic relations because autochthony and indigene-settler consciousness are activated by those seeking power and leadership in everyday life, creating an "us" versus "them" binary. Given that markets are sites of limited state control, being the market-chief or leader comes with enormous power and privileges that can make the "other" insecure, reflecting ethnic relations at the macro-level. Fear, suspicion, and a general lack of trust in the altruism of state interventions constantly compels individuals to seek security among their respective ethnic enclaves and symbols, like ethnic militias.

This study utilizes qualitative and process tracing research methods, with a focus on specific and recurrent events over a period of time (Keller 2013: 12). This approach was appropriate because it allows for a diagnostic analysis of events that are not always quantifiable. The process tracing approach was complemented by participatory action

research methods geared toward understanding how social interactions are interpreted by traders in inter-ethnic relations (Boylon 2008).

AUTOCHTHONY AND INDIGENE-SETTLER CRISES IN LOCAL NIGERIAN MARKETS

Beyond being a place where goods and services are traded, markets are also sites of interface and interaction because they are a meeting place where difference is maintained, albeit on changing bases and with changing terms (Guyer 1995). Markets are also settings of interaction, defined "as the most effective test of ideas and attitudes . . . because it compels individuals to express the values and viewpoints guiding their actions and specific responses from others" (Guibernau 2013: 14). Such interfaces and interactions generate outcomes that are not always neutral, potentially leading to "conflict or cooperation in arenas as diverse as public places . . . households and networks and in people's minds" (Hansen Tranberg and Vaa 2004: 58). Conflicts in such sites speak to the interactionist causation theory of violence, i.e., that where individuals and groups interact and are interdependent, conflict cannot be avoided (Tidwel 2003). According to the Action on Armed Violence Report (2013), armed violence (conflict) in Lagos is often related to trade, specifically in regard to the control of land, motor parks, and marketplaces. Non-indigenes, especially those from Southeast Nigeria, who are primarily traders, often come under attack during disputes with indigenes.

Apart from Lagos local marketplaces, indigene-settler crises have also been erupting in local markets of cities bedeviled by indigene-settler crises, such as in Jos, Zango Kataf in Kaduna State, and Kano (HRW 2014; Porter 2005). The Bodija market in the city of Ibadan has also been a site of inter-ethnic commercial cooperation and conflict with its own history of fragility and violence that intermittently threatens national peace and security. One such instance gained national attention amid the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election, claimed to have been won by late Chief Moshood Abiola, who is a Yoruba. According to Porter et al. (2005: 6–7), the trigger for the violence was the arrest of a Yoruba man who had an altercation with a Hausa man. Violence erupted when rumors flew in the market that fellow Yoruba traders who went to pay the Yoruba man's bail had also been arrested. At the end of the conflict, property damage and a significant number of deaths were reported (Porter et al. 2005: 6).

This study expands existing studies because research on indigene-settler crises in the aforementioned cities has rarely been linked

to how claims and counter-claims of autochthony in the marketplace fueled violence. Literally meaning “from the soil itself,” autochthony was first introduced in West Africa during French colonialism in the 19th century (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005). Edmond Keller (2013) outlines three aspects of autochthony: ethnic identity, a group’s claims of being present at a nation-state’s founding, and the autochthony of national public figures, on which sections of communities rely in staking their own claims as autochthons. At the sub-national level, these aspects play out in the following ways: one’s ethnic identity confers certain advantages, a group’s presence at a nation’s founding offers immigrants the right to stake claims of equal rights, and the autochthony of a public figure can compel people to seek protection under these individuals (Adebanwi 2014: 49). Autochthony emphasizes “otherness,” creating division and conflict in Africa and even in Europe, especially over the last decade. The debates over who belongs to which category stir divisive narratives and counter-narratives, depicting autochthons and allochthons in binary terms, first-comers and late-comers, hosts and strangers, sons of the soil and immigrants, depending on context.

Mathieu Hilgers (2010) observes that debates and disputes on autochthony often arise in political and economic contexts, such as elections and the development of land. In such contexts, discourses privileging autochthonous heritage gain greater importance, as it becomes a form of capital and is instrumentalized for creating, perpetrating, and resisting asymmetries or hegemonies (Portes 1998). This is most common in cities, due to competition for access and control of socioeconomic resources, such as land, employment, and marketplaces (Bates 1974). Keller (2013) describes the seriousness of claims to autochthony by drawing examples from the lives of Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and Alassane Ouattara in Cote d’Ivoire to show how autochthony is mobilized as capital and its conflict-generating potential. In such contexts, Jeremy Prestholdt (2014) explains that autochthony is a political tactic or line of attack, whose import increases during political or electoral disputes or competitions.¹ Using autochthony as political capital and a means of exclusion occur in both formal and informal settings at the macro- and micro-level and continue to sustain suspicion and exclusion in such spaces.

EVERYDAY PEOPLE OF MILE 12 MARKET: AUTOCHTHONY AND INDIGENE-SETTLER CRISES

The Mile 12 international market is in the Ikosi-Isheri Local Council Development Area (LCDA) of Lagos State. Traders hail from throughout

Nigeria and neighboring countries like Niger, Togo, and Benin Republic, but most identify as Hausa or Yoruba. According to the Chairman of the Shukra Yam Sellers, Alhaji Jibril Dogo, a Sokoto indigene married to two Yoruba women, Mile 12 market was once located where the Ido market is and there had been indigene-settler tension there since 1969 between Yoruba and Hausa traders. In his opinion, this tension was the result of "envy," because at that time, 75% of traders were from the north. He also recalled that Hausa were the first to begin selling at Mile 12 market in 1976, which was then an overgrown land they had to clear themselves. The Yoruba market leader interviewed concurred, but said that Mile 12 market was established in 1979, not 1976.

According to the Lagos State Waste Management Board (LSWMB), Mile 12 market has 1,893 shops and 20,170 stalls, although in reality this is a gross underestimation. Taxes are paid to both local and state governments. Traders are organized into associations and each trade is dominated by specific ethnic groups. For example, both the Shukrah Yam Sellers Association and the Perishable Market Union (which includes sellers of tomatoes, dry and fresh peppers, onions, Irish and native potatoes, rice, and beans) are chaired by Hausa men and the Ifesowapo Yam-Flour market Association is chaired by a Yoruba woman.

Mile 12 market is a very large and important trading place in Lagos. Although it is impossible to determine the actual number of trucks bringing produce to the market, there are often seventy to one hundred truckloads of onions, one hundred to one hundred and fifty of tomatoes, and hundreds of deliveries of yams, carrots, lettuce, cabbage, and green peppers by bus from the northern parts of the country every day. The market attracts traders and consumers both from within and outside the country. According to the chairman of the Shukrah Yam Sellers, "more than 900 people everyday come from different parts of the country to buy yam in bulk . . . from places like Aja, Seme border, Shagamu, Cotonou, etc., even from Ibadan and some from Ekiti . . . every month we pay two million naira from the money we realize from the market activities."

Despite the significant number of Hausa at Mile 12 market, there were no full-blown indigene-settler crises until November 25–26, 1999, about six months into the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo, who is Yoruba. The conflict was an escalation of latent leadership disagreements between the Shukrah Yam Sellers' Association and Yoruba-indigenes and Hausa-settlers. According to my Yoruba respondents, prior to 1999, the Yoruba members of the association felt the Hausas were ruling the market in an oppressive manner, which the Yorubas believed was indecent, as this was their homeland.

The fact that all market associations were under the leadership of the Shukrah Yam Sellers' Association meant that the market was viewed as the exclusive preserve of Hausa traders. Yoruba traders interviewed revealed they merely grumbled when unsatisfied with what they considered to be the excesses and arbitrariness of Hausa leadership. The non-expression of displeasure by the Yoruba reflected a negative peace, which Johan Galtung (1996: 9) defines as "the absence of war . . . and absence of threat." During interviews, my Yoruba respondents noted they felt it was pointless to stand up against the Hausa leadership of the market because Nigeria's heads of state were also Hausa, meaning they would have been fighting a losing battle from the start. These rumblings at the market represented a microcosm of issues in broader society that erupted into the indigene-settler conflict on November 25–26, 1999.

The violence at Mile 12 market broke out amid other inter-ethnic clashes involving OPC in and around Lagos throughout 1999. My respondents revealed that the attack was well coordinated because many of the OPC were traders in the market and they supplied intelligence for the operation. Very early in the morning of November 25, members of the OPC took strategic positions throughout the market to prevent their targets from escaping. By 9AM, the full operation had commenced and the Hausa traders barely resisted. Both sides suffered human and material losses, as the market was left in ruins after the police and military were deployed and order was restored. Although my Yoruba respondents suggested that the conflict was spontaneous, Hausa respondents believed it was the result of Yoruba jealousy and the recent rise to power of a Yoruba president of Nigeria.

As described by Alice Hills (2009: 30), the post-conflict Mile 12 market has seen "the lessening of the incidence of and intensity of military operations, killings and overt destruction." Indigene-settler clashes have consistently been nipped in the bud in ways that speak to the capacity of the local government. As an ethnically heterogeneous community, tensions and animosities will continue to exist, but violent confrontations have since been prevented. Asked about how violent conflicts with the Yoruba have been prevented since 1999, the Chairman of the Shukrah Yam Sellers' Association informed me that:

The Yoruba leader was around yesterday, his name is Hamza, he came around to sell his goods and now he has gone back to get more goods. He was part of the group that brought the OPC to fight us then but now we understand one another and we have given him money toward his business to avoid further conflict.

While the Hausa retain leadership, offices have now been allocated for each ethnic group arranged along the country's six geo-political zones. According to the chairman:

There is the way we do the election here, we have six zones headed by different chairmen and they currently have a three-year tenure. In this market the chairman is a Hausa man, vice chairman, an Igbo man, Treasurer, Yoruba man, the Secretary is from the middle belt [Ebira], every language has the opportunity to hold a post. The tenure is two terms of three years so there is an opportunity for the incumbent to contest only once more.

The Ifelodun Yam Flour Association, established in 1989, is the umbrella body for most Yoruba in the market. While interacting with other sellers during the focus group discussion, all shied away from directly speaking about the events that occurred in 1999. With a motto of "No Strangers No Progress," the chairman of the association stated this attests to their tolerance of other ethnic groups, but when asked how they have sustained this peaceful co-existence, he revealed that:

Yes, each tribe in the market has its own elders' council, i.e., there is an elders' council for the Hausas, Igbos, Yorubas, etc. The other parts in the market mainly sell yams and they have an association called the Shukrah Yam Sellers' Association and we are the Ifelodun Yam Flours Association. If we have any ceremonial events here we do invite them and vice-versa.

Also, whenever conflicts arise between different trade associations, the elders' councils convene a three-man panel. Resolutions are enforced through threats of banishment from selling at the market. Members are strongly discouraged from reporting incidents to the police, although the elders' council uses law enforcement when members are recalcitrant.

The Mile 12 market has also established a committee for interfacing with the larger Ikosi-Ketu community to avoid further clashes between local street urchin boys and market sellers. In order to prevent violence around this issue, a security committee was created in 2002–03, comprising Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo traditional rulers in the area, the Divisional Police Office (DPO) of Ketu, representatives from the Department of State Service (DSS), and a councilor from the LCDA. The creation of this committee reflects broader attempts by the local government and other individuals to sustain peace in sites of everyday

life. For example, northern traders threatened to stop delivering produce because the Lagos state government wanted to impose sanctions on trailers for causing heavy traffic on roads. The market committee worked with the government and an agreement was reached so that deliveries could continue, satisfying both consumers and sellers. From 1999 to 2015, the individuals who shop and sell at Mile 12 market have maintained a peaceful co-existence and have also ended reprisal clashes in the north.

However, it should be noted that the elected chairmen of the Ikosi-Isheri LCDA has been suspected of causing some of the indigene-settler tensions and intra-association conflict in the market. As revealed by one of my key informants, a member of the security personnel assigned to the market for over fifteen years, Alhaji Kaita installed himself as the head of the Shukrah Yam Sellers' Association in 2006 by conspiring against Alhaji Isa Mohammed, after which he sought to renovate market stalls. Once renovated, rents were raised, the total number of stalls was reduced, and those that remained were redistributed in a 5:2 ratio. These changes led to a general protest as people across the ethnic divide lost their stalls. Once his actions were confirmed, the Chairman of the LCDA, the Hon. Kunle Soname, removed Alhaji Kaita from power and normalcy returned shortly thereafter.

YORUBA-IGBO CONFLICTS IN THE LADIPO MARKET: REHASHING THE MACRO IN THE MICRO

At the Ladipo market in Lagos, the Yoruba and Igbo are embroiled in a love/hate relationship. The Yoruba are the autochthons of Lagos, while the Igbo are from southeastern Nigeria. Trading has always been central to the survival of the Igbo (Olutayo 1999). Motivations for the contentious relationship are social, historical, and environmental. Among other things, the Igbo have always been visible trading secondhand materials, including auto spare parts, which became lucrative with their migration to "Lagos, Port Harcourt and the north through the transport network of roads and railways by the colonial government" (Olutayo 1999: 161). Migration to cities like Lagos was bound to eventually lead to indigene-settler clashes, as ethnically conscious people began to utilize the advantages of their ethnicity through claims of autochthony (Osaghae 1994; Hyden 2006). This undergirds many instances where autochthony becomes instrumentalized as a means of gaining spatial, socioeconomic, and political advantage by groups living and working in close proximity. Located in the Mushin local government area of Lagos, one of the most volatile neighborhoods in the city, Ladipo market is a

strong base for the OPC, which contributes to stoking indigene-settler tension and conflicts in the market.

Based on oral accounts, Ladipo market was established in 1994. The actual number of shops or stalls is not known, but the market is densely populated and has become reputable for the sale of second-hand (Tokunbo) car parts to people across Nigeria and West Africa. A male respondent, who has worked in the market since 1995, revealed that there are over thirty units there, within which there are hundreds of traders in addition to many apprentices, mostly of Igbo extraction. According to Maazi Anthony Chibuzor, the General Secretary of the Aguiyi Ironsi Market Trader's Association, who was also the publicity secretary at the market's inception, the market has many units specializing in different kinds of auto parts. As Chibuzor stated, we have "Osioro, 186, and 113, that is where they sell Mercedes and radiators. We have Promised Land. We have Gaddafi Warehouse. We have Accord Warehouse. We have Auto Friends. We have A and C etc."

According to Dolapo Aina (2014), "people from all tribes in Nigeria have shops in Ladipo . . . [however,] you can't but notice the dominance of the Easterners (Igbo)." Relying on their firm presence as a basis to claim the leadership position of Market-Chief (Babaloja) has polarized the Yoruba (autochthons) and the Igbo (allogenes). Although there had been animosity between the two groups in the market, all my informants agreed that indigene-settler consciousness and conflict began with the appointment of Alhaji Oladokun Habib-Oki to the position of Babaloja of Ladipo market by the late Alhaja Habibat Mogaji on June 27, 2013.

Resistance against Alhaji Oki's leadership took a violent turn when the OPC, which is primarily located within the market, weighed in on the side of the Yoruba, while the Igbo mobilized the Bakassi Boys. Since then, intermittent clashes, which have warranted the deployment of the police and the military, have become common. According to a security operative in the local government, "tension often grips Ladipo market and Mushin as a whole on Thursdays because the Igbo traders who are the majority in the market always use it as an opportunity to demonstrate their rejection of the leadership of Alhaji Oki." One of my other respondents, also a security operative, revealed that:

throughout last year (2013) we were having serious crises . . . it started around February or so. They destroyed so many vehicles even media guys' vehicles were also vandalized because the Babaloja wanted to show that he was performing his duties . . . so he invited press men . . . Ladipo people felt they should not have even brought a Yoruba man to come

and control them because the issues of dues, tickets, everything is supposed to be controlled by the local government . . .

According to an informant, Igbo traders are insisting on "a formal election, so that the people will decide who their leader will be if the government insists that we must have Babaloja."² Another leading figure in the Igbo community condemned a statement by the Area Commander of the Zone D Command of the Nigeria Police, under whose command the market falls. According to one of my respondents, "the senior police officer openly asked us to accept Babaloja or return to our various states . . . it is because they want to take our shops away from us because we are not Yoruba." During my interview with a leading Igbo opinion leader in the market, he tried to make the point that Igbos are the first people in the market and that they are the most invested in it. With respect to Alhaji Oki, whom Igbos reject as Babaloja, the Igbo respondent stated, "even the Babaloja met us in the market and he owns only one warehouse. So, even on that basis he met us in this market." However, Yoruba respondents posited that the "Babalaja's (Alhaji Oki's) warehouse is the largest and the first warehouse" and that the Igbo people are "too domineering and should be content with just trading and not controlling the reins of power in the market."

Disturbed by the frequency of indigene-settler clashes and more generally by the dirtiness of the market, the Lagos state government closed it down on April 30, 2013. Again this was seen as an attack against the economic interests of the Igbo, which led the governors of the states in eastern Nigeria to meet with the Lagos state governor to appeal to him to reopen it. The senator representing Anambra South in the national assembly, Andy Uba, condemned the closure, stating that:

The continued closure of Ladipo Market, which is one of the biggest spare part markets in Africa, is not only a drain on the country's economy, but has adversely affected the traders and their families. I believe the government had made its point and the traders have also learnt their lessons. In the best interest of economic development, Ladipo cannot but be re-opened. (*Vanguard* 2013)

Robert Obi (2013) reported that traders claimed to be losing 100 billion naira daily and many interpreted the market closure as a direct attack against the Igbos in Lagos and the diaspora, given its negative impact on remittances. Also, many of my Igbo respondents perceived the closure of the market, which was followed by the deportation of seventy Igbo to Anambra State on the morning of July 26, 2013 by the government of Lagos State, as being part of a larger agenda of hatred by

the governor. An informant in the market succinctly told me that, "it is either that someone very high up in the LASG does not like Ndigbo, or it is BRF himself."³ Although the Lagos State government has consistently played down the indigene-settler crisis in the market by insisting that cleanliness is the basis of its interventions, it set up a conflict resolution committee in March 2013. The committee comprised nominees by the governor, traders, and the Ndigbo in Lagos, who also decried the deficit of good conduct and orderliness by venders.

An indication of the lack of success of the committee was the pre- and post-election violence that erupted in Ladipo in 2015. The largely Igbo traders pitched their tent with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and sponsored a candidate for the Oshodi/Isolo Federal constituency. Their attraction to the PDP was because the party has been the main opposition in Lagos since 1999, despite being in control from 1999 to 2015. For the traders, voting against a party led by Asiwaju Tinubu was an audacious way of expressing their displeasure with the decision of the late Alhaja Habibat Mogaji and Asiwaju Tinubu's mother to install Alhaji Oki as Market-Chief. This was discernible in the reception of the Honorable Tony Nwulu in March 2015 when he visited the market.⁴ Traders came out in the thousands with three Igbo masquerades to welcome their brother, whom they chose as their representative. Nwulu assured the traders of his support and promised to fight anyone who treats them unjustly. Days after the campaign visit, the fire of indigene-settler confrontations was rekindled as politicians canvassed for votes. Although policemen from the Mushin division later restored order, pebbles and other dangerous weapons, including guns, were used by the rival parties.⁵ In times past, the government might have closed down the market over the clash, but mindful of the approaching elections, they chose not to, while condemning the violence with threats to close down the market if it persisted.

CONCLUSION

From the conflict narratives and events within which indigene-settler conflicts escalated in the Mile 12 and Ladipo markets, people in these spaces can be seen using autochthony as capital for economic and political gain. This attests to its potency in conferring advantages on one group at the expense of others. As a strategy for affirming control and dominance in micro-competitive spaces, users are calculative and attuned to the broader context of mutual suspicion that undergirds inter-ethnic relations in the macro-context. This was what happened in Mile 12 market because the Yoruba waited for the emergence of one of their own as president of the country in 1999 before agitating for control.

This was won using the narrative of autochthony to assert their rights as indigenes, believing they should be in control and receive the attendant gains. This is in line with the basic assumption of autochthony, which states that every bounded territory belongs to a specific cultural group on which claims to resources and rights are defined (Idowu 1999). However, despite the use of autochthony and ethnic militancy by the Yoruba in (re)claiming power in Mile 12 market in 1999, traders have devised innovative means of sustaining a peaceful coexistence and trading activities across ethnic divides.

Unlike the Mile 12 market, the indigene-settler conflicts at Ladipo still beg for more innovative approaches, which may not be helped by the long history of rivalry between the Igbo and Yoruba nationally and for the control of Lagos, in particular. The Igbos have persistently challenged the hegemony of the Yoruba aristocracy in academics, politics, and trade (Adebanwi 2004; Keller 2013). Therefore, exploring means of resolving the Igbo-Yoruba crisis in Ladipo must note the macro and historical context of relations and contestation for the control of Lagos. Despite the apologia rendered by the Oba of Lagos after the threat to the Igbo residents before the 2015 elections, the unprecedented victory by Igbo politicians does not bode well for peace initiatives in resolving the crises in the market; many of which have failed in the past.

Despite the huge number of Igbo traders in Lagos, and for reasons that may be connected to the historical rivalry between the Igbos and Yorubas, there has never been an Igbo nominee on the Lagos State Market Development Board (LSMDB) since it was created in 1981, although there have been Igbo appointed as commissioners and advisers to successive administrations since 1999. The current executive council of the LSMDB is chaired by the daughter of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, who is also the Iyaloja-General of Nigeria, Mrs. Folashade Tinubu-Ojo. Shortly after the inauguration of the current executive in April 2015, the President of the Ikeja Shop Owners' Association, popularly known as Computer Village,⁶ John Okonkwo, told Anna Okon (2015) that:

it is the wish of traders of Igbo descent to be included in the activities of the board. It is our hope that when General Buhari assumes office on May 29, he will persuade the Lagos State Government to allow Igbo traders to be members of the Lagos State Market Board We also need Igbo personnel in Kick against Indiscipline, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, as well as other agencies.

While expressing the desire of Igbo traders, Okonkwo's demands have more resonance on being and belonging to Lagos and how the present

reflects the competitive nature of the past in Igbo-Yoruba relations in most spaces of contact. The demands for inclusion underscore the importance of Lagos as a “location and attraction in relation to . . . profit”—the ultimate goal of traders (Adebanwi 2014: 228).

The traders (Hausa and Yoruba) in Mile 12 market have demonstrated the capacity and potential of people in managing the indigene-settler crisis, much as the consciousness of being autochthons (indigenes) is not lost on the Yoruba. Leadership of traders’ associations has been shared in ways that have given all major ethnic groups a voice, in addition to a presence. So, the conflict between the two can be seen as having become functional because it precipitated fundamental reforms in the power structure of the market in ways that have accommodated the two and given everyone a sense of belonging. The state government has also supported traders by providing them with a dedicated toll-free telephone line, to which anyone in the market can place a call if they see people scuffling or involved in an altercation, which was appreciated by all my respondents. However, with the emergence of a Hausa man as the president of Nigeria in the 2015 presidential elections, it will be interesting to see whether the Hausa at Mile 12 will want to reclaim leadership, as Raimo Varynen’s theory of reactive violence would suggest (Varynen 1991).

Autochthony as a basis of *othering* or inclusion and exclusion permeates all strata of society and has become more salient in formal and informal contexts since 1999, especially where there are struggles for sociopolitical and economic gains, when Nigeria’s Fourth Republic began. As sites of everyday life, the two markets are reflective of the ramifications of “Nigeria’s citizenship troubles” and the (in)ability of everyday people to make differences in identity functional or dysfunctional (Kendhammer 2014: 3). Claims and counter-claims of autochthony in the local markets illustrate the fragility and perpetuity of the citizenship crisis in Nigeria, just as it typifies the capacity of people for cooperation in a way that transcends the fault lines of identity. While violence along ethnic lines in local markets continues in Nigeria, the potential of trade, capacity, and the influence of people for initiating a peaceful co-existence and cooperation invite exploration because their relationships, experiences, roles, positions, status, and influence as non-state actors can be tapped for information on peaceful co-existence and the constructive management of conflicts.

NOTES

1. This became a tool of political exclusion and the basis of endorsing corruption during Nigeria’s First and Second Republic. For instance, Chief

Obafemi Awolowo wanted Adegoke Adelabu to provide details on some issues of financial propriety, but was resisted by many Ibadan indigenes who saw it as an attempt by Awolowo to ridicule a son of the soil when he himself was not an indigene.

2. Interview, leading Igbo trader.

3. BRF is an abbreviation of the full names of the immediate past governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babatunde Raji Fashola.

4. The Honourable Tony Nwulu hails from Anambra State and won the Oshodi/Isolo federal constituency II election alongside Mrs. Rita Orji, an indigene of Imo State, who won the Ajeromi/Ifelodun federal constituency. In addition, Oghene Egboh, an indigene of Delta State, won the House of Representatives seat for Amuwo Odofin federal constituency, all under the platform of the PDP.

5. Also, traders in markets such as Alaba International (Igbo), Iddo (mixed), Idumota (Yoruba), Ladipo (Igbo), Oshodi (Yoruba), Mile 12 (Hausa), and Owode Onirin (Yoruba) have stockpiled arms and engaged attackers in defensive and reprisal attacks.

6. Computer Village is located in Ikeja Lagos and is known for sales and repairs of new and second-hand computer accessories and unlocking mobile phones. It is dominated by the Igbo people.

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