

CONTRIBUTIONS OF HAUSA MIGRANTS TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN NIGER DELTA: A CASE STUDY OF WARRI

Rhogho Bright Oghenevwegba

Department of History,
College of Education
Warri, Delta State, Nigeria.
robbright2017@gmail.com

Abstract: Warri is the home of the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw. Warri was one of the cities in Nigeria that played host to Hausa migrants in the colonial and postcolonial period. The city functioned as an administrative centre administration and a major centre of the oil industry in Nigeria thus presented economic opportunities. The economic opportunities which Warri presented attracted the Hausa migrants to Warri. The Hausa were found in most Nigerian cities and even in most parts of West Africa. The Hausa migrants engaged in various economic activities in Warri and. Migrant communities were known to have contributed to their host communities. The Hausa migrants played certain important role in the economy of Warri. They contributed to the socio-economic development of the city in the course of their business. The findings of this study were that the Hausa migrants dominated and supplied the city with certain food items from the north. They did not also involve in direct competition in their economic pursuit their Warri host thereby gaining wide acceptance and prevent friction. The study adopted the historical method that interprets and analyses historical data from available evidence on the subject matter.

Keywords: Migration, Migrants, Socio-economic, Development, Commercial.

Introduction

Warri is situated in the Western Niger Delta in South-south Nigeria and is the home of the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw ethnic groups. The Geographical environment of Warri permits trade, agriculture and fishing in the colonial and postcolonial period. The city grew and became transformed from an agricultural farmland to a major centre of the oil industries in Nigeria in the postcolonial period (Imobighe, 2002). Warri was among the societies in Nigeria that played host to migrant communities in the colonial and postcolonial period. Warri functioned as an administrative headquarters and a commercial centre during the colonial period, thereby presenting economic opportunities. The economic opportunities, which Warri had during the colonial period, attracted the Hausa migrants. Colonialism in Nigeria led to the emergence and expansion of most urban centres and facilitated rural-urban migration (Bako, 2006). The Hausa migrants who came to Warri during the colonial period were significantly facilitated by the increasing popularity and availability of road transport. In the post-colonial period, Warri was one of the major centres of Nigeria's oil industry and also hosted one of the country's seaports. It is also the fastest-growing urban area in Delta State. As the petroleum business increased, Warri became a major commercial centre attracting people from far and near. Migrants from other ethnic groups in Nigeria moved into Warri in search of opportunities in the booming economy (Sada 1984). The Hausa migrants were among the ethnic groups that settled in Warri during the colonial period. The Hausa were in a settlement close to Igbudu market, in Agbassah enclave but their commercial activities of hawking goods beads, carvings and leather goods carried most of them into the town. The Hausa ventured into other commercial activities such as sales of livestock, foodstuffs, and currency exchange, among others. They also had other smaller settlements in Warri that emanated from their main settlement in Igbudu, such as Ogbolokposo (garki), Ugbuwangwue, Ubeji, Jeddo and Sapele Road.

For years, Warri served as an open society and at no time were Hausa migrants regarded as unwelcome intruders. The interaction between the Hausa and their Warri host was more evident in the economic sphere because the Hausa were mainly traders. The Hausa had been involved in long-distance trade in West Africa for centuries. The Hausa migrants, contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of Warri. They helped in broadening the commercial activities of Warri. Most residents of Warri traded in items brought by the Hausa migrants, such as tomato, pepper, onion, local rice, livestock and fruits, among others. The Hausa migrants also gave Warri a new facelift through the building of new shops.

Hausa Migrant Community in Warri

The Hausa people, found mainly in northern Nigeria, constitute one of the migrant groups in Nigeria. The Hausa have a long tradition of migration in Nigeria. They are found in almost all cities in Nigeria and even in most parts of West Africa (Adamu, 1978). Famine had been attributed to the migration of the Hausa from their homeland. Famine as a result of drought caused the displacement of population and the movement of the Hausa in search of areas where they could sustain themselves (Alhassan, 2012; Osagie, 2018) also identified ecological differences as a bases for the migratory phenomenon in northern Nigeria. Africa is made up of varied ecological zones ranging from the tropical zone in the west to the Mediterranean in the extreme north. As a result of the different natural endowments in the different regions, long-distance trade developed and also the phenomenon of migration of the people from one place to another. Differences in natural resources also explain why the Hausa who lived mainly in the grassland migrated southward. In other words, economic specialization played a very important role in the migratory phenomenon of the Hausa southward. The long dry season and unreliable rainfall that characterized northern Nigeria had encouraged the development of a culture of frequent migration. This kind of migration is termed seasonal or short-term migration. Migration of the Hausa out of their homeland, especially the youth, was also ascribed to the high rate of poverty in the region (Vatsa, 2020)

The earliest known Hausa appearance in Warri was during the colonial period. It is a known fact that the Hausa had ventured into various parts of West Africa before the colonial period. The Hausa migrants migrated to Warri during the colonial period. As a result of the economic opportunities which Warri presented during the colonial period. According to (Abubakar 2023), the Hausa had been in Warri for a long time, but their presence and activities were not recorded. The first Hausa migrants who came to Warri in the 1940s were people who hawked goods such as beads, carvings, and leather goods (Ifediora, 1997). During this period, the Hausa people were not in one place; they were spread all over Warri in places like Daudu, Mchival and Odion. As the normal tradition of the Hausa people, they looked for their own *sarki* (king or leader), and the first was Chief Gambo. He was the one who administered the Hausa migrants in Warri in the 1940s. As the Hausa increase, they looked for land to build their own settlement It is a known fact that the Hausa usually lived in a restricted area wherever they settle. In 1940, the head of the Hausa community in Warri, Chief Gambo, wrote a letter to the Local Authority in Warri in regard to a plot of land to build Hausa quarters in Igbudu, Warri, an Agbassa enclave (National Archive Ibadan, 1947). This they achieved in the 1950s under the help of Chief Sam Essi.

The impact of the Nigerian oil boom in the 1970s was another vital factor in the increase of Hausa migrants in Warri. The economic effect of the oil boom increased investment. There was an expansion of opportunities in itinerant and casual urban activities in most cities, and it attracted an increasing number of Hausa migrants struggling to supplement their income in the face of drought and declining agricultural terms of trade. During this period, Warri was among the cities that attracted Hausa migrants. Sada (1984) had attributed the flow of migration into Warri during this period as mainly due to the oil boom and the consequent industrialization. The oil economy and the associated industries had combined to give Warri a dynamic lease of life. This period witnessed a massive migration of Hausa to Warri, coupled with the drought in Hausaland.

The Hausa migrants in Warri involved in various economic activities. They engaged in long distance trade and were known to supply some of the city's food (Ifediora, 2009). Such food items include as tomato, onion, pepper, carrot, beans, and sugarcane water melon livestock among others. The Hausa in Warri also rendered variety of services such as currency exchange, tailoring, transport, traditional medicine among others. Their business activities dominated the Igbudu area of Warri, and as a result of that the area became a commercial hub.

Contributions of Hausa Migrants to the Socio-economic Development of Warri.

The history of West Africa was filled with the impact of migrants on the host communities. Trade and the search for living, more than any other factors, have played the most important role in the evolution of migrant communities. The development and expansion of most communities in Nigeria was not the work of the indigenous people alone. It was a combination of migrants and the indigenous population (Adesoto & Ofofbor, 2017). Migrants were usually more welcome in places where they engaged in economic activities, which do not bring them to direct competition for opportunities with their host population, than in areas where both of them engaged in the same economic activities. As in other places of West Africa, the Hausa traders, to a large extent, avoided the commodities, which were ordinarily produced and marketed by the local people (Adamu, 1978). This helped to reduce friction and made their commercial efforts supplement, rather than substitute the efforts made by their hosts in Warri. There were not much commercial competition and rivalry between the Hausa migrant traders and the indigenous people of Warri. This made them to be accepted by the people of Warri because their trading system was unique.

One of the long-lasting significant effects that the Hausa migrants established in Warri was the establishment of settlements known as Hausa quarters (National Archive Ibadan, 1947). The Hausa had such settlements in various places in Warri. Such settlements include their main quarters at Igbudu, Ogbolokposo

(garki), Ugbwangwe, Ubeji, Jeddo and Sapele road. These settlements emanated as a result of the migration of the Hausa to Warri. These settlements were associated with one form of trade or the other, or as a result of one historical antecedent or the other. For example, the Hausa settlement at Ugbwangwe started as a cattle market, likewise that of Ugbolokposo (Danjuma 2023).

Like the Ebira migrants in Ekiti, the Hausa migrants in Warri had contributed to the population growth of Warri over the years. According to (Olabimpe, 2022) migration to urban centres added growth in the developing countries. She noted that;

The major sources of the growth of urban population in developing countries will not be natural population but rather the continuing in-migration of rural people; over 50 per cent of the population growth in many developing countries is due to the accelerated pace of rural-urban migration.

Migration is a significant means of maintaining population growth. The Hausa migrants in Warri helped to increase the local population through their various settlements, with hundreds of people. As a result of this, Hausa migrants had contributed to the rapid growth of Warri over the years.

Migrant ethnic groups had, over time, played significant roles in the development of their host communities. The presence of the Hausa in Warri brought about some development to the city in the period under review. The Hausa quarters in Warri had four streets, namely Igbudu Market Road, Nupe Street, Mosque Road and the United College of Commerce (UCC) Road. These four streets served as a gateway to the popular Igbudu market, which was regarded as the largest market in Delta State. The four streets of the Hausa quarters served as access ways to the market. People coming to the market from all parts of the states usually enter the market through the Hausa quarters (Ladan 2023).

The Hausa migrants contributed to the economic development of Warri in the area of payment of taxes to the government. The Hausa migrants in Warri were taxpayers, and their continuous payment of taxes economically increased government income for development. The Hausa migrants also paid tax for their cattle that arrived Warri from the north to the Local Government and the Igbudu community. The trailers that carried goods from the north to their quarters, Igbudu market and Sapele road market also paid tax to the Local Government and the local community. The trailers that came with goods from the north, after discharging such goods, had to park somewhere before they returned to the north. They also paid tax for such parking space. There were Hausa migrants, who often took shelter outside their main quarters as a result of residential

congestion. Others had mini-rented stores outside their quarters. The rent they paid served as income to the Warri landlords (Danjuma, 2023).

The impact of the Hausa migrants was remarkable in the area of economic improvement in Warri. Being mostly traders, the profit they made despite the fact that they sent some part to their hometown in the north, they reinvested into the economy of Warri, thereby contributing to the socio-economic development of the city. The coming of the Hausa migrants to Warri provided the city with skilled and unskilled labour. They helped to meet the labour demand of the people of Warri. In later years, especially in the 2000s, most young indigenous boys in Warri did not usually engage in manual labour. They left it for the Hausa migrants. The Hausa thus helped to fill the labour vacuum in Warri that the indigenous population refused to respond to. This was because these jobs were considered to be menial, and also because the people of Warri craved for white-collar jobs and jobs in the oil multinationals. It should be noted that the Hausa migrants in Warri did not take jobs from the locals, but they helped to fill the labour vacuum. According to (Hamisu, 2023), the Hausa migrants were very strong and hardworking, and they provided affordable, cheap labour to the city. If not for the Hausa migrants, most manual jobs such as clearing of bushes, drainage, and grave sites, among others, would have been difficult. Some Hausa migrants had always been mobile cobblers. Though Ghanaians, who came to Warri in the 1980s and 1990s were also mobile cobblers, until they left in the early 2000s, shoe repairing had been the sole occupation of the Hausa migrants and they provided good services to the people of Warri.

The offloading of goods from trailers that came from the north served as employment opportunities for the indigenous youths in Warri. The offloading of goods from trucks was usually done by the indigenes of Warri, and they made a lot of money from it. However, the indigenous youth later left it for Hausa migrants. The Hausa migrant boys charged at a lower rate than the indigenes, and also because of the aloofness of the indigenous boys towards such jobs. People with such trucks, be it Hausa or the indigenes, preferred the services of the Hausa young boys over the indigenes because of trust and cheap labour. The Hausa were ever ready to settle for a lower price for their services.

The Hausa were long-distance traders who, through importation and exportation of goods in and out of Warri contributed a lot in broadening the commercial and industrial activities of the city. There was massive and continuous importation of goods from the north to Warri, such as tomatoes, pepper, onion, livestock, leather goods and other agricultural produce. Prior to the coming of the Hausa migrants to Warri, commercial linkages of Warri with the north were not on a larger scale. Long-distance trade linkage developed more with the settlement of the Hausa migrants. Some indigenous men and women were long-distance traders. They travelled to the north to buy goods such as onions, pepper, rice, *tiko* (dried meat), etc. They learned the trade routes from the Hausa migrants (Danjuma, 2023).

Some indigenous merchants served as wholesalers of goods that came from the north. Majority of the retailers that sold meat, tomatoes and pepper in most markets in Warri were indigenes of Warri. The indigenes of Warri also sold fruits that came from the north, such as watermelon. It is therefore pertinent to say that the presence of the Hausa migrants had provided economic opportunities for the people of Warri. Mrs Enaibre was one of the indigenes of Warri who engaged in long-distance trade in onions and rice. She travelled to places like Sokoto, Kebbi and Kano to purchase her goods. (Enaibre 2023). Ambrose Odjega, was another indigene of the area who learned livestock trade from the Hausa. He usually travelled to the north to buy livestock and then sold them to the people of Warri. The indigenes of Warri had been influenced by the presence of the Hausa migrants to become full-time businessmen and women. According to (Jibril, 2022), many indigenes were involved in the long-distance trade and became masters of their own. Some indigenes of Warri even knew all the major trade and farming centres in the north. He added that some indigenes even sponsored farming in the north. That is to say, they gave farmers in the north money to farm for them. Some of the indigenes even had their own farms in the north. As a result of this, they bypassed the Hausa migrants in Warri and traded directly with the traders and farmers in the north.

Another way the Hausa migrants contributed to the economic development of Warri was by giving goods to the indigenous people of Warri, especially women, on credit. They gave items such as rice, beans, onions, tomatoes, and fruits, among others, to the indigenes of Warri to sell before returning the money. (Danjuma, 2023) Many indigenes had made a lot of money as a result of this kind gesture of the Hausa credit sale to the extent that they even used such profits to acquire properties. Some indigenes became financially buoyant to the extent that they no longer bought goods on credit but on cash. According to (Ubreye, 2022) the Hausa migrants even preferred to trade and give their goods on credit to the indigenes of Warri than their fellow Hausa kinsmen.

The Hausa community also contributed in giving the city a new facelift. This was because they had both residential and commercial houses in the area. Residential and commercial houses were constructed to accommodate them. The Hausa community in Warri influenced the building of new shops, especially in Igbudu market. The presence of the Hausa migrants in Warri had made the Igbudu area a commercial hub. The migration of the Hausa to Warri and the establishment of a quarter changed the economic fortune of the Igbudu area, making it a host to three commercial banks, namely Zenith Bank, Ecobank and Firstbank, and a Microfinance bank, Green Acres Microfinance Bank Ltd. These banks have helped in facilitating business transactions in the area.

The indigenes of Warri had always wanted to work for the government or oil multinationals. However, the roles played by the Hausa migrants in the economic activities of Warri did not mean that they had absolute control of the

Warri economy. The fact was that the Hausa migrants controlled only a small fraction of the Warri economy, and this did not constitute dominance, although they functioned in most aspects of the economic activities. Even in some of the areas where the Hausa migrant traders specialized, some indigenes also participated.

Another outcome of the continuous presence of the Hausa migrants in Warri was the widespread acceptance of some facets of Hausa culture, particularly the Hausa language and the Hausa dress. The non-tonal nature of the language and the richness of Hausa vocabulary made it easy to learn (Adamu, 1978) In the course of their daily commercial and social interactions, many Warri residents learned the Hausa language, and they saw it as fun. (Ladan, 2023) noted that the Hausa language was a necessity for Warri residents because it helps them to trade easily when they travel to the north to buy goods.

In the area of dressing, Hausa migrants and the indigenous people of Warri sometimes dressed like the other. The Warri indigenes adopted some of the Hausa mode of dressing such as Hausa caftan for men. The Hausa caftan outfit for men was one very popular in the town. Most parents in Warri made the Hausa *caftan* for their children during Christmas celebration. Adamu (1978) noted that much more widely adopted, and by far stronger and more easily seen, is the economic and cultural heritage of the Hausa people bequeathed already to millions of West Africa. It is further noted that there is now no part of West Africa in which strong aspects of Hausa culture are not found. Language and dress are by far the most important.

Conclusion

This study examined the contributions of Hausa migrants to the socio-economic development of Warri. The movement of people from one geographical location to another is as old as man. It has characterized virtually all cities. The Hausa are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and also one of the migrant groups in the country. The Hausa are found in most Nigerian cities and even in most parts of West Africa. Famine, drought, ecological differences and the high rate of poverty had been identified as some of the factors that led to Hausa migration to other parts of Nigeria and indeed West Africa. The eventual oil boom of the 1970s also attracted Hausa migrants to Warri due to its position as a centre of the oil industry, hosting one of the country's refineries. This study has examined the various socio-economic activities. The Hausa migrants made more contributions to the development of Warri in the social and economic aspects than in the area of politics. The Hausa migrants were very important in the economy of Warri. That is to say, they were economically and commercially important. The Hausa in Warri developed entrepreneurial capabilities that contributed to economic development. In some areas, they dominated certain economic activities and played important roles in quite a number of enterprises.

The Hausa, for instance, played a dominant and important role in livestock such as cattle, goats, and rams, food items such as tomatoes, onions and pepper, and also in the trade in currency exchange. The economic activities of the Hausa promoted socio-economic development, intergroup relations, and peaceful coexistence. There was not much competition with regard to economic activities between the Hausa migrants and the indigenous people of Warri.

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