

**GOEMAI AND KOFYAR/PAN GROUPS INTERESTS AND THE ROLES OF ELITES  
ON THE NAMU CRISES OF 2005 AND 2006**

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the interests of the Goemai of Namu and their Kofyar/Pan group neighbours on Namu and analyzes the roles played by the elites of the ethnic groups in perpetuating the crises that engulfed the area in 2005 and 2006. The paper investigates ethnic, economic and political interests as being responsible for the crises between the people and interrogates the elites' roles in manipulating these interests to achieve their personal gain at the expense of their people. The aim is to expose the elites' use of ethnic cultural organizations as impetus in defense of their peoples' interests to escalate the crises that left scores death and properties destroyed in the area. Oral sources and archival materials in addition to other relevant sources form the basis of data in this paper while historical analysis is used to establish the interests of the people that led to the roles of elites on the Namu crises. Suggestions on the way to encourage and sustain cordial relationships between the people shall however be proffered.*

**Introduction**

Namu town suffered two major violent crises in November, 2005 and April, 2006 between the Goemai of Namu and their Kofyar/Pan group neighbours all in Quaan- Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State, Central Nigeria. The refusal by the elites to shift ground on the ownership claim of Namu town despite the "setting up a committee"

<sup>1</sup>, "calling of a high powered stakeholders meeting"<sup>2</sup>, "entering into a memorandum of understanding"<sup>3</sup> and the agreement that Government set up a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to look into the first crisis in Namu town<sup>4</sup> only led to second crisis. The outcome of the meetings and the report of the commission of inquiry could not be adhered to by the actors in the conflict. It was apparent that the elites' insistence on the ownership claim of Namu was only in defense of their interests particularly the control over the resources of the area. It triggered their roles in the Namu crises and stagnate socio- economic and political activities of the area and left behind sour interaction between the people and has raised concern in this study.

However, the movement of different ethnic groups to Namu and their subsequent prosperity in both financial and material resources made them develop interests of various kinds in the area. These migrants acquired land either on lease or outright purchase from the Goemai people of Namu for various economic purposes and have become prosperous. Namu became populated with

different ethnic groups who migrated to the area and are engaged in both farming and the activities of buying and selling of agricultural produce as well as other goods and services. It is therefore imperative that diverse interests must develop among the various ethnic groups resident in the area. These interests, particularly the ethnic, political and economic interests that developed among the Goemai of Namu and their Kofyar/Pan group neighbours which the study focus on has pitched the people against each other on the ownership claim of the land and settlement, political participation and contest as well as commercial activities of buying and selling and have contributed significantly to the violent conflict in Namu in 2005 and 2006. These interests which were not issues in the pre-colonial period and even in the immediate post-colonial period suddenly became contentious between the groups in the last two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It however paved the way for the elites who played some prominent roles in fueling the Namu crises.

The elites in Namu, just like in other parts of the world as described by Takaya and Tyoden<sup>5</sup> are perceived to be behind the crises in their area. They are people in society who are very powerful and influential because they are rich, intelligent and belong to ruling classes of different administrations in local, state and federal governments, business and politics. However, most of them who fueled the Namu crises are non-residents of the area but their relations have migrated to the place either for farming, religious and commercial activities or civil service jobs. They are mostly senior civil servants, businessmen and politicians who cut across different ethnic groups in Namu and claim they were acting in defense of the interests of their people while in truth, they only seek to advance their personal political influence and material benefits through the adaptation and manipulation of strategies. They become godfathers of individuals and groups through which they execute their plans and ride on the back of their ethnic organizations or politics to divide the communities and control their thought, economy and politics for their own interests and benefits. They however down play the use of religion due to its sensitivity in causing conflict as, the two ethnic groups in conflict practice African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam, the three major religions in Namu.

In evaluating the interests of the Goemai of Namu which conflict with those of their Kofyar/Pan group neighbours and has induced the roles of their elites in fueling the avoidable implosion in Namu, the paper considered the geography of the area, the history of migration of the people into Namu before analyzing the Namu crises. While the geography examined the environment and ecology of the area particularly its conducive topography, climate and soil type which attracted migration to the area, the history of migration to Namu equipped the paper with the background knowledge of the early movement of the people to the area before they were later joined by their neighbours. Meanwhile, oral interview, colonial and post-colonial gazettes, journals, committees and commissions reports and records compiled on Namu in addition to some relevant previous research work such as “The Kaduna Mafia: A Study of the Rise, Development and Consolidation of a Nigerian Power Elites”<sup>6</sup>, “Hill Farmers of Nigeria: Cultural Ecology of the Kofyar of the Jos Plateau”<sup>7</sup>, Conflict and peace Building in Plateau State”<sup>8</sup>, “A New Geography of Nigeria”<sup>9</sup> and “Gazetteers of the Northern Province of Nigeria”<sup>10</sup> are some unpublished and published sources that will be reviewed and analyzed for this study. This will guide the research on skewed, biased, inaccurate and unreliable information and the need to address misconceptions on the interests and roles of elites on the Namu crises. It will also guide and information the study on the convergence and interactions of the people on Namu that apparently developed different interests, competition and various disagreements between the people and ultimately resulting in crises. This is more so

that the claim of ownership of land and settlement, creation of political and administrative units, contest for political positions and crave for commercial supremacy on the area virtually became the ingredients that caused the crises between the Goemai and Kofyar/Pan groups in Namu. The paper however analyzed the roles played by both the Goemai and Kofyar/Pan ethnic group elites in encouraging and abating the conflicts in Namu before summarizing, suggesting and recommending ways to rebuild peaceful coexistence between the two major actors in the Namu crises as well as draw conclusions.

### **Location of Namu**

Namu, one of the three Chiefdoms of Quaan-Pan Local Government Area in Plateau State Central Nigeria is predominantly inhabited by the indigenous Goemai ethnic group. Its population as projected to 2004 is 65,112 people<sup>11</sup>. Situated in the South-West corner of the present Quaan-Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State, it is bordered to the North by Bwall and Doemak Districts, to the North- East by Kwalla District all of Pan Chiefdom and to the East by Kwo Chiefdom all in the present Quaan-Pan Local Government Area. It is bordered to the North-West, West and South by Lafia, Obi and Awe Local Government Areas of the present Nasarawa State respectively<sup>12</sup>

The soil type in Namu is the rich fertile loamy one, darker in colour, indicating the presence of humus. There is also the alluvial soil deposit and some clay soil though negligible but are used mainly for pottery. However, the soil type in Namu is generally high in nutrients from the decomposed grasses, leaves and animal remains that made the soil fertile. The soil is easy to cultivate because it is soft and found on the plain as against what is obtained in rocky areas of the *Kofyar/Pan* areas bordering Namu in the North. The soil supports dense vegetation and is suitable for the cultivation of crops such as Yams, Maize, Guinea-corn. Rice, Banana and Sugar-cane are also cultivated on the alluvial soil type found in Namu. It is therefore apparent that the geography of Namu as described, particularly the topography, ecology and the fertile vast land, rich in loamy soil that is easy to cultivate and is found spread across Namu attracted and harbor migrant ethnic groups such as the Kofyar/Pan group of Bwall, Doemak, Jagat-Noeng (Dokan-Kasuwan), Kwalla and Mernyang and of course, the Abakwariga, Alago, Bogghom, Mhiship, Eggon, Fulani, Gwandara, Hausa, Jipal Jukun, Jarawa, Kanuri, Mupun, Mushere, Mwaghavul, Ngas, Nupe, Pyem and Sayawa among other ethnic groups who trooped into Namu in search for these fertile farmland.

### **Historical Background of the Namu People**

Namu a settlement originally inhabited by the Goemai ethnic groups like their kinsmen in Dorok and Kwo Chiefdoms of Shendam and Quaan-Pan Local Government Areas migrated together with the Jukun, Alago and Igala among others from the Middle East to form the defunct Kwararafa Empire. Their disintegration from the defunct Kwararafa Empire led to the movement of the Goemai people to the present settlements they founded in Shendam and Quaan-Pan Local Government Areas just as some sections of the them are also found in Langtang South Local Government Area of Plateau State while others are found in Awe and Lafia Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State. In the case of the Goemai people of Namu, their movement terminated in the present Namu, the town founded by Nfum in 1732 A.D<sup>13</sup>. Longbaan, Musa and Hassan elaborated more and noted,

“the traditions of origin of the Goemai of Namu is that Nfum and his brother Naandur who are twin- like in resemblance, left Wukari after the disintegration of the defunct kwararafa kingdom

and migrated to settled in Japjan, the name Jihadists later changed to Namu and established the settlement and built the walled town of Namu<sup>14</sup>.

Longban, Sarki and Hassan continued,

the settlement of Namu was first named 'Japjan', meaning twin children in deference to the striking resemblance between *Nfum* and his brother *Naandur*. Another ancient but less popular name of this settlement was '*Japshen*' meaning seed of beniseed a term which has some allegoric attachments to this twin-like outlook of the two brothers who were said to resemble beniseed. The people of Namu had from 1732 till 1820 been under the Jukun sphere of influence, a situation which necessitated the installation of their first five chiefs by the *AkuUka* of Wukari<sup>15</sup>

Some of their descendants thereafter moved out of Namu to found and established the settlements of *Dungkung*, *Swahaas*, *Wunze*, *Japtang*, *Kwalli*, *Aningo* and inhabited them to date even though, Dongkur noted that the migrants who moved out of Namu to found and established the settlements of *Dungkung*, *Swahaas*, *Wunze*, *Japtang*, *Kwalli*, *Aningo* are not from the royal family of the Longjan but they were some of the early migrants to Namu who came and met *Nfum* and family already settled and established in the area<sup>16</sup>. In any case, *Dungkung*, *Swahaas* and *Wunze* could not develop to form lasting villages or towns like *Janta*, *Kwalli* and *Aningo* because they later returned to settled in Namu town but the remnants of their settlements can still be identified even though they are now farmlands that have been allocated to migrants including Kofyar/Pan farmers to Namu<sup>17</sup>. *Langkaku* another Goemai area also known as *Ngung* by its native name on their part migrated from the same Wukari like Namu first to Kwande and later moved to settled at the present day Langkaku with the permission of the Longjan of Namu at that time. Longban, Sarki and Hassan again noted, *Langkaku* was founded in about the mid-eighteenth century by *Gizo*, a hunter who led a pocket of his followers from Kwande to a settlement at the foot of a tree called '*Gung*', which eventually became the original name of the place but later '*Langkaku*' which is a corruption of '*Long Akaku*' (Chief Akaku) named after Akaku Moegurum the third chief of Namu from whom they obtained permission to settle on the Land<sup>18</sup>.

While Namu town and the villages in the Southern part of the area were founded by the *Goemai* ethnic group, the *Njak* and its surrounding villages were founded by the Goemai of *Njak*. The Goemai of *Njak* were said to have migrated from Namu town to found and established the settlement of *Njak* town and their descendants founded and established the surrounding villages. This is one basis of the *Njak* people insistence that they are *Goemai* as they share so many culture in common including *Mangap* Masquerade, *Kwamteng*, *Matkerem* worship, funeral ceremonies and salutation which are also found in not only Namu but other *Goemai*land like *Luu-Niyu* and Kwande among other *Goemai* villages<sup>19</sup>. This is contrary to the views of Dagum who said the *Njak* are separate from the Goemai and are only neighbours of the Goemai<sup>20</sup>. In any case, the position of Dagum only supported the claim of some migrant Kofyar/Pan ethnic groups who moved and settled at *Njak* and are claiming being the Goemai of *Njak* ethnic group. These migrants are either people with slave background, those who ran away from Doemak to escape being killed for practicing witch-craft and diabolism<sup>21</sup> or those who were evacuated from Latok for killing Mr Barlow, a colonial administrative officer in 1930<sup>22</sup> and were settled at *Njak* area. Having stayed for long in *Njak* area they were assimilated into the *Njak* ethnic group. They however identified with and supported the Kofyar/Pan ethnic groups where they originated from during the Namu crises. However, many people who are ignorant of the traditions of origin of the Goemai of Namu often believe that Namu is fused with the *Goemai Kwo* (Kwande). For instance, Shiolban noted,

the history of *Goemai Kwo* who migrated from Wukari under *Attua* a Jukun Man is inadvertently the history of *Kwo* community settlements in the geographical area now covered by Kwande notably in the towns of *Ngua Moekwo*, *Gamaji*, *Luu-Niyu*, Kwande, *Turniang*, *Npap*, *Konggoeyen* and *Kurgwi* as well as *Namu*, *Ngung*, *Japtang*, *Kwali*, *Njak* and *Jagwa*. It also includes *Moeda* in *Kwalla* District.<sup>23</sup>

This situation portrayed the *Goemai* of *Namu* as being part of the *Goemai* of *Kwande*. But the people of *Kwande* and *Namu* insist they migrated separately from *Wukari* and founded the different settlements of *Kwande* and *Namu* respectively. Their views were also supported by *Yahaya Kwande*<sup>24</sup> and *Umaru Dongkur*<sup>25</sup>. The people however instituted their socio-political organization and embarked on their economic activities in the area.

### **Goemai and Kofyar/Pan and the Namu Crises of 2005 and 2006**

*Namu* is a cosmopolitan town and as earlier mentioned, suffered violent crises in 2005 and 2006. As one of the three Chiefdoms and one of the eight Districts of *Quaan-Pan* Local Government Area of Plateau State, North Central Nigeria, it presently harbours the indigenous *Goemai* ethnic group and their *Kofyar/Pan* migrant neighbours of *Bwall*, *Doemak*, *Jagat-Noeng* (*Dokan-Kasuwan*), *Kwalla* and *Mernyang* who S. G. Best described as “a federation of ethnic groups speaking different dialects of the same broad language”<sup>26</sup>. In this paper, *Kofyar* or *Pan* are refers to the same ethnic group and will be used alternately. Other ethnic groups found in *Namu* are the *Alago*, *Bogghom*, *Mhiship*, *Eggon*, *Jipal*, *Mupun*, *Mushere*, *Mwaghavul*, *Tal* and *Taroh* among others. These ethnic groups whose movement into *Namu* was initially not noticed because they were few in number however became emphasized when their population increased to a noticeable size especially after the construction of the major road linking *Shendam* and *Lafia* which passed through *Namu* as *Dongkur* noted<sup>27</sup>. However, these ethnic groups constituted the parties in the crises of the area with the *Goemai* of *Namu* and their *Kofyar/Pan* group neighbours as the major and primary actors in the crises.

The other ethnic groups were only implicated as parties because of their loyalty to the local authority in the area. Since the crisis involved land and political authority of the area, it also affected their livelihood directly. *Seddi* noted that the *Alago*, *Gwandara*, *Hausa* and *Fulani* early migrants to *Namu* in particular were accused of being loyal to the *Goemai* traditional institution by the *Pan* who said “they benefit a lot from the chieftaincy titles of the *Goemai* more than us who are *Goemai* closest neighbours and could understand *Goemai* dialect”<sup>28</sup>. Other parties in the conflicts were the Plateau State Government and *Quaan-Pan* Local Government Council. They were implicated and accused of either taking side with the *Goemai* or *Pan*. For instance, the *Goemai* accused *Quaan-Pan* Local Government Council of bias against them by suppressing and frustrating any agitation for self determination especially with regards to their request for the creation of administrative and political units such as new districts, chiefdom and Local Government Area, wards, states and federal constituencies as well as acting on any flimsy petition written against them by the *Pan* group resident in *Namu* claiming maltreatment. For instance, *Dongkur* noted,

Monday *Dashe Noebau* and *Darang*, resident on our farmland together with some *Pan* persons also resident on our brother’s farm around *Gunham*, signed a petition written on their behalf by one *Martin Davugun* to *Quaan-Pan* Local Government Council and to which a picture of some people including *Darang*, a leper was

attached. The petition alleged that the *Longjan* of Namu had forced them to pay tax including the leper<sup>29</sup>.

The Local Government Council on receiving the petition neither queried the *Longjan* of Namu nor investigated the main matter but promptly wrote to the *Longjan* of Namu directing him to stop the assessment and collection of tax in his domain stating that:

the Local Government Council had earlier directed that all traditional rulers commence the 2005 tax assessment and collection in their respective domain. But for the petition written to the Local Government Council, the Local Government has directed that you stay action on the assessment and collection in your domain as the council would want to get to the root of the problem before its subsequent collection. This has become necessary in view of the volatile nature of this matter. You are strictly adhering to this directive please<sup>30</sup>.

Up to the outbreak of the crisis in Namu, the *Longjan* of Namu was never told to resume tax assessment and collection, neither was he told who wrote the petition against him. Even when he reported that the *Pan* group were paying the poll tax to one Yarima Dashe, who was not even a ward head in Namu, the Local Government Council did absolutely nothing about it. This to the *Goemai* people is a clear demonstration that the Local Government Council was not only aware of what the *Pan* group were doing but that it supported them. This also formed part of the contributory factors to the Namu Crises.

The *Pan* group on the other hand accused the Plateau State Government of supporting the *Goemai* by granting their requests for the creation of administrative and political units even when it perceived that there are dangers in such requests. They noted that the Plateau State House of Assembly also supported the actions of the Executive Arm of Government by passing insensitive legislation and that in many cases selected and accepted memoranda in favour of minority against the majority ethnic groups and posited that:

the refusal to consider *Pan* people's memorandum dated 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2005 for the creation of *Pan* South Development Area with Headquarters in *JepJan* in favour of Namu after the public hearing where the report was not considered by the House of Assembly and the other bill by the *Goemai* as presented by the Executive was passed without amendment<sup>31</sup>.

However, the issues in these Namu crises which invariably were the causes seek to analyze some of the immediate and remote causes of the crises. The immediate cause of the first violence in November 2005 was the creation of Namu Development Area in favour of the *Goemai* as against the request for *Pan* South Development Area with Headquarters at *Jepjan* covering the same land area by the *Pan* group. This led the *Pan* group to accuse the *Longjan* of Namu, the *Goemai* Unity and Development Organization of excising their land. Besides they also alleged that the *Longjan* of Namu mocked them and asked the *Goemai* youth of Namu to destroy their properties while celebrating the victory for the Development Area created in *Goemai* favour. However the *Goemai* of Namu also accused the *Pan* particularly the youth of insisting on the claim that Namu is *Pan* land and vowed to retrieve it even if it means physical fight<sup>32</sup>. This disagreement led to the first Namu crisis of November, 2005. Government immediately suspended the take-off Namu Development Area and set up a committee to look into complaints arising from the creation of Development Areas in Plateau State.

They also applied other means to manage the crisis which included the setting up of a high-powered stakeholders meeting between the *Goemai* and *Pan* group on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2005<sup>33</sup>, signing of a memorandum of understanding between the warring communities who resolved that a Judicial commission of inquiry be set to look into the conflict just as the report of the Plateau Peace Conference of 2004 earlier recommended that a panel be set up to resolve ownership of Namu between the *Goemai* and *Pan*. In fact, Governor Dariye who chaired these meetings himself at the end set up a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to look into the Namu crisis to solve the claims of the people once and for all. It was noted that

by an instrument dated 30<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2005 and in the exercise of the powers conferred by section 2 of the commission of inquiry law, (cap 25) Laws of Northern Nigeria, 1963 and all other power enabling him in that behalf, Chief (Dr) Joshua Chibi Dariye, the Executive Governor of Plateau State Constituted a Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Namu Town conflict<sup>34</sup>.

The remote cause of the crisis according to the proceeding of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry which report was allegedly leaked and caused the second violent conflict that erupted in April 2006. It was noted that there was an insinuation by the *Pan* group for a long time on the *Dajan* and *Dajin* myth of founders of Namu and *Doemak* but not as strong as it was in 1994 when Kwande and Namu Districts joined forces to request for *Quaan* Local Government Area. At that time the *Pan* group started to lay claim of ownership of Namu. Since then, several memoranda, letters of petitions and protests by the *Pan* group on anything connected with Namu particularly, when Namu was requesting for an administrative unit started to carry the *Dajan* and *Dajin* bond to buttress their claim of ownership of Namu. These same claims were also presented before the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Namu conflict. For example Paul Damar in a memorandum submitted to the Commission of Inquiry on behalf of *Doemak* Development Association noted that

*Dafyar* had 14 sons. Among the 14 sons were those twins *Dajan* and *Dajin*. *Dajan* founder *Jepjan*. *Dajin* founded *Dimmuk*. And other 12, are the descendants that have founded other settlements of *Jepjan*, *Doka*, *Kwa*, *Kwang*, *Kwalla*, *Bwal*<sup>35</sup>.

The *Pan* group therefore relied on the *Dajan* and *Dajin* founders of Namu and *Doemak* myth as the basis to claim Namu as their land<sup>36</sup>. They also claim that because they were all sons of *Dafyar*, the colonialists relied on the history of their paternity to federate Namu and *Dimmuk* as administrative unit during the colonialist creation of Sub-Native Authorities and later extended it to include *Kwa* for a *Kofyar* Federated sub-Native Authority<sup>37</sup>. They were also of the view that it was because of the *Dajan* and *Dajin* myth and their history of coming from *Kofyar* that *Pan* Local Government Area and later *Pan* Chiefdom was created in 1980<sup>38</sup> and 1981<sup>39</sup> respectively to include Namu. The *Pan* group therefore concluded that Namu cannot be separated from them and be created an administrative unit for the *Goemai* of Namu without their consent. However, the refusal by the *Goemai* of Namu to associate with the *Pan* group but rather associating with their kin across *Goemaliland* contributed in no small way to the animosity and tension that culminated in the violent conflicts in Namu.

The *Goemai* of Namu on their part maintained that they are *Goemai* whose ancestors migrated from Wukari to found Namu and bestowed it on them therefore they have the right to do whatever they desired with their land as long as it was within the law. It was in that respect that the *Goemai*

of Namu demanded for Namu chiefdom in 1981<sup>40</sup> and decided to join their brothers in *Kwande* to demand for a Quaan Local Government Area in 1994<sup>41</sup>. Since the attempts were not successful, the *Goemai* of Namu then decided to go it alone by requesting for a Namu Local Government Area<sup>42</sup>. On this individual attempt, Namu Local Government Area was created but later reverted to Development Area due to constitutional constraints<sup>43</sup>. The Development Area became a bone of contention between the *Goemai* of Namu and their *Pan* neighbours who insisted that the name *Pan* most reflect on anything nomenclature depicting Namu which the *Goemai* objected to as they do not have any common bonds with the *Pan* group. This sharp division of opinion contributed to the violent conflict in Namu. As Danjuma Agwo noted in this case,

of all the clans in Namu, none of them has traced their descendants to *Dajan* that the *Kofyar/Pan* group are claiming. Even the *Moefe Kwapgum* whose settlements were initially under *Pangmatlong* before they moved into Namu town are not aware of any *Dajan* who settled at *Pangmatlong*. In any case, the founder of Namu, *Nfum*, who was the first *Longjan* of Namu and has been succeeded serially by his descendants down to Umaru Kwande Allahnana who died in 2009, after whom no chief has been appointed until September, 2021 when Safiyan Allahnana was appointed due to the intrigues and political interests and Government negligence<sup>44</sup>

On the colonialist creation of Districts Namu and Doemak were joined for a federation. *Kwa* was later added and the name changed to a *Kofyar* Federated Sub-Native Authority. Martin Ntung, the first and the only secretary of the Federated Sub-Native Authority said

the administrative unit was a colonial policy with little or no input from the communities who were nursing grudges against one another expressing preferences to be on their own but since they were such small communities to be administered separately, they were Federated in a Sub-Native Administration under Shendam Division, later known as Lowland Federated Native Authority<sup>45</sup>.

The *Goemai* also contended that the creation of *Pan* Local Government Area and *Pan* Chiefdom was the continuation of the usual Government Policies of re-structuring and re-organization of administrative units and traditional institutions which spanned the colonial period and has endured up to the post colonial period. Therefore, Governor Lar's creation of Local Governments and chiefdoms was in conformity with such restructuring and reorganization of these administrative and traditional institutions and it was without recourse to ethnic affiliation as claimed by the *Pan* group. However, Namu was only tricked into joining *Pan* unconsciously. After all, Namu only requested for a Local Government Area alone. But how *Pan* was recommended to include Namu without consulting the people of Namu remained a miracle that has not yet been explained to the people till today.

In buttressing the above assertion, the communities west of Shendam demanded separate administrative units from Shendam Local Government Area where many of them submitted several memoranda requesting for the creation of Local Governments in respect to their communities<sup>46</sup>. For instance, some of the *Goemai* people west of Shendam requested for *Turniang* Local Government Area comprising of *Dorok*, *Kwande* and Namu Districts<sup>47</sup>. Others made requests without indicating the name and headquarters of the Local Government Area as long as the area to be created is within Shendam West. These requests by the communities made the Committee that was set up by Governor Lar recommend the creation of Shendam West Local



Government Area with Headquarters at the nodal town of *Kurgwi*<sup>48</sup>. The recommended Shendam West Local Government Area with the Headquarters at *Kurgwi* was however changed to *Pan* Local Government Area with the Headquarters at *Baap*. This change of the Local Government Area's name started the animosity that arose from the elites' manipulation of the creation of *Pan* which lingered until the Namu crisis. This is because the *Goemai* people of Namu who also requested for Namu Local Government Area protested their inclusion in *Pan* Local Government Area even though it was not attended to. Rather, the whole of *Pan* Districts was made *Pan* Chiefdom to compound the predicament of the *Goemai* people of Namu though they promptly and vehemently protested their inclusion in *Pan* Chiefdom.

According to Haruna Maimako, while they were opposing the inclusion of Namu in *Pan* Local Government Area, their problem was compounded by the creation of *Pan* Chiefdom where all the districts that made up the Local Government were made components of the chiefdom. This was done without considering the opinion of the *Goemai* people of Namu or inviting them for any meeting in respect of the creation of either *Pan* Local Government Area or *Pan* Chiefdom. If there was any invitation as such, certainly it could have involved only some of the *Pan* descent who had migrated to and were settled in Namu for long<sup>49</sup>. These tricks and intrigues constituted some of the remote causes of the Namu crisis. It also started the role of the *Pan* elites in the manipulation of their people into accepting ethnic incitement which of course included divulging government secrets to their people. The *Goemai* however noted that

no wonder the *Pan* group elites leaked the report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry to their people and said it was in favour of the *Goemai*. This however was responsible to the reaction that became the second violent conflict that engulfed Namu in April, 2006<sup>50</sup>.

The Namu crises have impacted negatively on the people of the area. Many of them were killed, properties were burnt or destroyed. While those *Goemai* people who survived were sheltered in Shendam Army Barracks, *Kwande*, *Kurgwi* and *Assakio* in Nasarawa States, others ran to *Sabongida* also in Nasarawa State. The *Goemai* people in the satellite villages of *Langkaku*, *Kwari*, *Janta*, *Aningo* and *Njak* among other villages of Namu also ran to *Kwande*, *Demshin*, *Kurgwi* and other *Goemai* settlements as well as *Jangwa* in Nasarawa State to take refuge there temporarily. The *Pan* group on the other hand fled to their home towns in *Bwall*, *Doemak*, *Kwa*, *Kwalla*, *Kwang* and *Dokan-Kasuwa* just as the *Eggon*, *Alago*, *Mupun*, *Mwaghavul* followed the *Goemai* or ran to their home villages<sup>51</sup>. Besides the killings and burning of properties, women were also raped. There was also an outbreak of diseases which effect added to the casualty rate in the area. The youth who were armed with weapons supplied to them to prosecute the Namu war by the elites became idle after violence hence they engaged in armed robbery and assassination since the weapons were not mobbed up after the duration of the fracas. In fact, Tarzan noted, only recently that one Badong was caught for gun running and fabricating locally made AK47 and lamented the rampant case of armed robbery along Namu- Lafia and Namu- Kwande roads and indeed, Namu has now become a haven for criminals of all sorts as an aftermath of the crisis<sup>52</sup>.

### **Interests and Roles of Elites in the Namu Crises**

The parties in the Namu conflicts were no doubt the *Goemai* of Namu and their *Pan* neighbours. They definitely had various interests on Namu which they all wanted to explore and benefit. These interests were seen along ethnic, economic, and political aspects. To benefit these interests, the people depended on the ownership claim of the area to manipulate each other. This constantly

pitched them at conflict until it resulted to the Namu violence. The interests however clearly manifested when the *Pan* migrants to Namu who acquired land from the *Goemai* inhabitants of Namu to farm showed interest in owning and controlling the land that was leased out to them and started laying claim of owning not only the farmland but Namu as a whole. They started citing the Dajan and Dajin myth as the bone of the relationship that binds them with the *Goemai* of Namu in support of their claim. This contributed to the escalation of the conflict between them and the *Goemai* of Namu.

Economic interest was another issue in the Namu crisis between the *Goemai* of Namu and their *Pan* group neighbours. The access, control, and privileges that have long been enjoyed by the *Goemai* of Namu on the control of land in addition to other economic activities attracted interest from their migrant neighbours particularly the *Pan* group who wanted it changed to accommodate them. The *Goemai* beneficiaries felt it was their inheritance and could not share it with anybody except to maintain the status quo. This led to the *Pan* group refusing to pay tax to the appropriate authorities through their *Goemai* hosts. It also created the problem in appointing leader of the market association and farmers association among other associations in the town. This competition pitched the people against each other along ethnic lines in an effort to establish who benefitted more from the economy of the area. This extended to political interest particularly the contest for elective positions that hitherto was exclusively enjoyed by the *Goemai* who wanted the status quo maintained against the position of their *Pan* neighbors. This stance pitched the two groups against each other and made the struggle for political representation become more tense and pronounced. In any case this development ushered in ethno-exclusive pursuit in nearly every sphere of life, be it social, cultural, economic or political.

The interests of the *Goemai* and *Pan* group alone were not enough to cause the crises in Namu had the roles of the elites who sought to manipulate the people to advance and achieve their personal political influence and material benefits did not manifest. In this case, the elites energetically masterminded and instigated their people along ethnic, economic and political dimensions to perpetuate the Namu crises in the name of promoting and protecting the interests of their people. At this time in Namu, the elites rode on the back of either ethnic organizations or political parties to penetrate the community and control their thought, economy and politics for their own interests and benefits. The democratic government of 1979-1983 in Nigeria unconsciously constituted the major vehicle of the elites' political activities in Namu. Although it was not so pronounced at that time, but it manifested shortly after the creation of Local Government Areas and delineation of constituencies in Plateau where Namu was included in the *Pan* Local Government Area in 1980. The protests by the people of Namu after these creations showed nobody from Namu participate in the decisions for the creations except Habu Shindai who was then representing Namu, Bwall and Kwalla wards as Shendam West constituency in the Plateau State House of Assembly<sup>53</sup>. While Shindai claimed it was a government decision, the act was done to enhance the relationship of the people of Namu with the *Pan* group, Agwo said Shindai acted alone in the creation of *Pan* Local Government Area and *Pan* Chiefdom but claimed doing so on behalf of Namu. He only consulted the chiefs of Dungbaan and some elites in the *Pan* areas<sup>54</sup>. Challenged by these kind of political rigmaroles, the elites of Namu strengthen their support to the *Goemai* desire for the creation of a Namu Local Government Area, Chiefdom and additional electoral constituencies in 1980, 1981, 1994, 1996, 1997, and 2001 until Namu Local Government Area was recommended and Namu Chiefdom and Namu Development Area were created in 2002 and 2005 respectively but the *Pan*

truncated the Development Area when inaugurated in November, 2005 which the event led to the violent hostilities that followed thereafter.

The elites also used their ethnic and cultural organizations to achieve their interests. While the Goemai elites of Namu used the District Development Association and Namu Chiefdom's community Association for the request of the Local Government Area which at a time aligned with Kwo Chiefdom Association of Kwande, the Pan on the other hand used the Pan Youth Association, Pan Development Association, Doemak and Koffier Association among other cultural organizations of the Pan group to either request the same geographical area like that of the Goemai for Development Area or oppose the Goemai request<sup>55</sup>. However, the elites who have always been in conflict with each other for the control of the area have ethnic, political and economic aims to achieve. Namu vote is decisive in winning of elections in Quaan-Pan Local Government Area and in Plateau State in general. The elites also have farmland and businesses in Namu which they want to maintain and protect. They therefore act like the Mafia and have hands in everything from family quarrels to serious violence like the Namu crises. They are not known to operate an open identified organizational structure in the conventional sense. Their aims, membership and operational styles equate to that a cult phenomenon, the details of which are known only to its godfathers and the inner core membership<sup>56</sup>. One of such conflicts is the claim by Pan ethnic groups on some of the Goemai elites whom they said came from different parts of Goemalnd to lobby and financed the creation of Development Area and Chiefdom for the Goemai of Namu. But those accused on this matter are Namu people resident in other Goemai settlements who are fighting for the liberation of their people. Danjuma Agwo noted,

“calling those elites as people from different parts of Goemalnd is ignorance on the part of the Pan group. He said these people have their family compound right inside the walled town of Namu and their farms are being leased out to even the Kofyar/Pan group among other migrant ethnic groups to Namu at Dungkung. He said if these people are not called the Goemai people of Namu because they are staying in other parts of Goemalnd, how will they call their uncle, a retired director of administration with the Plateau State Civil Service and a traditional title holder in Namu on whose land the Doemak ethnic group of the Pan group rented and are operating their yam market on it<sup>57</sup>

It is rather understood that the Pan group elites are migrants to Namu and are settled in isolated and dispersed houses on farmland in the manner of their home villages before a few began of recent to buy tracks of land, established oil palm plantations, which is their native crop around 'Kanwa' close to the Pandam Game Reserve boundary on the west end of Namu town. Being influential Senior Civil Servants, businessmen and politicians who have now settled in the area and want to create new spheres of influence for themselves, they act as advisers to their cultural organizations in all their activities related to Namu. However, there are other ethnic groups that had migrated to Namu, whose members are also influential in Plateau State. But those are loyal and are cooperating with the Goemai and their roles have been geared towards the development of Namulnd. They supported the Goemai in their efforts for the creation of Namu Chiefdom and Namu Development Area. Some of them grew up and attended schools in the area. In fact, their parents had testified that on arrival to Namu, they met the Goemai in Namu and its surrounding villages who were the people that gave them land to settle and to farm. Some of them attested to fact that they even came to Namu before the Pan group arrived to settle in the Namu area<sup>58</sup>. They

therefore will support any developmental efforts of the people rather than contest ownership with them hence the Pan group accused them of taking side with the Goemai people and consider them also their rivals. These elites in essence are the brain behind the Namu crises. Although they are not visible in their roles in the crises, but as Shalloe noted,

since the Pan youth in Namu will always brag that they have people at the top, referring to their elites who will release them from arrest and prosecution even if they committed any crime, he believed the roles of Pan elites in Namu crises was visible. He said the young men truly committed crime and were released even after they had been arrested though he laid most of the blame on Government for inaction or supporting the Pan group or elites in the Namu crises<sup>59</sup>.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The paper is to evaluate the interests of the Goemai and Pan ethnic groups and the roles of their elites in the Namu crises. This is to show how these interests and roles of the elites played active part in fueling the crises of Namu between the people. Long after the crises have come and gone, the interest of these elites on the area which is still smoldering has the capacity to resurrect into another violent conflict if it is not properly checked. In summary, the conflicting interests that developed on Namu between the Goemai of Namu and the Pan ethnic groups and the roles of the elites led to the Namu crises. This study looked at ethnic interests between the two major groups because the claim to ownership of the land and attempts by the ethnic groups to control the land and the entire settlement of Namu so that they can control any other thing in the area was the major cause of the Namu crises. It consequently generated other interests in the people particularly in the economic and political interests where the roles of the elites in the crises were manifestly displayed.

The study also looked at the economic prospect in the area as igniting economic consciousness and interests in the people. Namu brags of vast fertile land suitable for agricultural produce such as yams, beans, rice, maize and groundnut among other farm produce that are traded in commercial quantity to places like Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Kano and Maiduguri throughout Nigeria. In fact, these farm produce from Namu were said to be exported beyond the shores of the country. This attracted the economic interest of the Goemai and of course, the Pan migrants to Namu and subsequently to the clash of interests resulting in the Namu violent crises. Just like the ethnic and economic interests, political interests between the Goemai of Namu and the Pan ethnic groups also had a devastating effect on the Namu crises. Because political interest and election in particular divides the people along ethnic lines and has lingered up to date. The Goemai of Namu always viewed the Pan ethnic groups contesting election in Namu as unfair. More so, that the Pan ethnic extraction of Bwall, Doemak, Kwalla and Mernyang have home wards where they can contest election without being challenged by other ethnic groups from other wards. Their contesting elections in Namu ward therefore amounts to denying and suppressing the Goemai of Namu who cannot even contest in Kwande which is also Goemalands let alone anywhere in Panland. The Goemai of Namu therefore viewed this as acts of suppression and marginalization on their right for the opportunity to represent themselves in a democratic government. But the Pan groups also felt it is their constitutional rights to contest election in a place they migrated for long and are living there. Moreover, they collectively form the bulk of the population in the area.

The study found and concluded that Namu, a fast growing and prosperous town has attracted different sets of migrants from divergent ethnic background. The interactions between the people started in a good and sound atmosphere as all the ethnic groups were accommodated without any threat to each other until 1994 when the Goemai of Namu started to request for a separate administrative unit out of Quaan-Pan Local Government Area. The outcome of this self-determination saw the emergence of Pan ethnic interests to control land, the settlement of Namu and the administration of the area glaringly displayed. This was against the already established and existing traditional institution of the Goemai people of Namu which the people wanted it upgraded to Chieftdom and also a Local Government Area created for them. The situation raised interest of ethnic groups who were benefitting from the economic and political gains of the area. While their elites were afraid to loose these benefits, they instigated ethnic, economic and political conflicts through the use of their cultural organizations. This interests of the elites are still lingering because the recent appointment of Longjan, the paramount chief of Namu chieftdom to the Kofyar/Pan ethnic groups is to them a deliberate and intentional effort to elevate Namu from a status of district to chieftdom to separate Namu from Pan chieftdom and sever their ancestral link from the Kofyar/Pan ethnic groups origin in favour of the Goemai people of Namu.

On the Pan group reliance on the contradictory colonial compiled reports and records to claim the ownership of Namu, the study suggests and recommends further studies on the review of the colonial records not only on Namu but the country as a whole. The contradictions in the colonial records have been largely responsible for the counter claims of ownership in most communities. It distorted the histories of indigenes of these communities and pitched them in crises with migrants to their areas and thereby creating problems of ownership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Such case is also witnessed in Jos between the indigenous communities of Afizere, Anaguta, Berom on one hand and the Hausa residents of Jos and has constituted the nucleus of the unending Jos crises<sup>60</sup> Historical analysis of interests in Namu crises at the end served as an introduction to the complex economic and political problems that affected the cordial relations that hitherto existed among the communities.

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