

Users And Uses of Firearms in Calabar Province, 1917 – 1960

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Abstract

This study investigates the users and uses of firearms in Calabar Province between 1917 and 1960. During this period, it appeared that a significant number of indigenous people of Calabar Province became users of firearms, which served their varied firearm needs, including the use of firearms to achieve some political, economic and socio-cultural needs of the people of the province. Firearms were also utilised by some indigenous people of the province for varied purposes, including the utilisation of firearms for various constructive and destructive engagements. This study deployed the historical research design of the qualitative approach in analysing available historical evidence used in the study, while relying on primary sources of evidence complemented with secondary sources of evidence. The primary evidence includes Archival materials, memorandum and circulars on firearm users and uses in Calabar Province from the National Archives Calabar (NAC). The secondary sources of evidence are drawn from the analysis and interpretation of primary evidence, which include book chapters, journals, articles, research papers, newspapers and magazines relating to Calabar Province on the users and uses of firearms. The Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Journal of African History, among others, served as the most vital journal outlets for obtaining evidence for the study. The findings of the study show that the technical potency of firearms captivated the attention of indigenous people of the province, leading to the emergence of numerous licensed and unlicensed users of firearms, as well as the multiple utilizations of firearms by indigenous people to satisfy their firearm needs in the province. Therefore, it is apt to say that the technical potency of firearms captivated the attention of indigenous people of the province, resulting in a significant number of firearm users who utilised firearms for varied purposes during the colonial era.

Keywords: Firearms, Utilisation of Firearms, Users of Firearms, Public Safety and Conflict.

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Introduction

Despite the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807 by the imperial British government, although the illegal trade continued into the 1860s, significant number of firearms appeared to have been domiciled in Africa, including the Calabar Province, which resulted to a significant number of firearm users who utilised firearms for varied purposes. Subsequently, firearm became an enduring symbol to the people of the province as it shaped the varied political, economic and socio-cultural life of the people. Saheed Aderinto's¹ "Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria" examines the role of firearms in Nigeria, including Calabar Province, suggesting that firearms were 'an object of material culture' which implies that firearms shaped the daily livelihood of the people of Nigeria, including those of Calabar Province. This study seeks to identify the users of firearms in Calabar Province between 1917 and 1960, while also seeking to determine the varied uses of firearms in the province during the colonial period.

Causal Explanation for the Users and Uses of Firearms in the Calabar Province, 1917-1960

Firearm imports into Africa, including Calabar Province, led to a significant number of firearm users and their use by the people of Calabar Province. David Northrup² posits that "the importation of firearms was the principal reason for warfare within Africa, and it was by means of such war that gun-toting Africans supplied the Atlantic economy with slaves." Inikori,³ and Richards⁴ independently demonstrate further that the massive quantity of firearms imported into West Africa was central to the flourishing of slave trade. These arguments lend credence to a significant increase in firearm users as well as the utilisation of firearms in the province by indigenous people of the province. The use of firearms in the various forms of European intrusion into Africa, including Calabar Province, from slave trade through imperial pacification to colonialism, appeared to have influenced indigenous people of the province, who were captivated by the technical potency of firearms, resulting in the subsequent engagements of firearms for varied purposes.

Overtime firearm became an 'object of material culture' to the people of Calabar Province as well as a means through which the people of the province satisfied their varied political, economic and socio-cultural needs, during the colonial period. This led to the attraction of the people of the province to the technical capabilities of firearms despite having visible warrior tradition. Similarly, D. Northrup's,⁵ "Africa's Discovery of Europe" examine the technical capabilities of firearms, suggesting it was the most significant technical innovation to arrive from the Atlantic. This argument furthered the claim that the technical potency of firearms aroused a strong desire in the people of the province to be users of firearms, while also utilizing same to satisfy their varied firearm needs.

The ban on the use of some dangerous traditional weapons like the bow and arrows for hunting by Frederick Lugard⁶ as well as the encouragement to import more Dane guns into the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province to substitute for poisonous weapons which the colonial officers feared could be used to fight colonial rule⁷ also appeared to have led to the increase in firearm users in the province, especially the hunters and others who utilized firearms to satisfy their varied needs. Under a regulated firearm regime, the hunters formed the bulk of those who applied for licenses to bear firearms in the province, especially Dane guns. The argument here is that those hunters were captivated by the technical potency of firearms, the extent to which the technical potency of firearms captivated some indigenous people of the province, led to a significant increase in firearm users and uses, which is central to this study.

¹Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 71.

²David Northrup, *Africa's Discoverer of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p 92.

³. Joseph E. Inikori, "The Import of Firearm into West Africa 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis" *Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (1977), pp. 339-386.

⁴William A. Richards. "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 21, No.1, (1980), pp. 43-59.

⁵David Northrup, *Africa's Discoverer of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p 90.

⁶Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 61.

⁷Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 164.

Users of Firearms in Calabar Province, 1917-1960 Colonial Police and the Troops

Despite the use of superior firearms by the imperial British troops in the various forms of European intrusion in Africa, including the subjugation of its people, pacification as well as planting colonialism in Africa, including Calabar Province, the colonial police and the troops appeared to have replicated the use of superior firearms to ensure public safety and security, including the protection of colonial rule. John McCracken's⁸ "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland" examines the colonial police and its functions, suggesting the establishment of the colonial police was to suppress hostile resistance by indigenous people against colonial authority's policies and practices. One of the means through which the colonial police and the troops in Calabar Province suppressed that hostile resistance by indigenous people of the province was through the deployment of sophisticated firearms against indigenous people of the province, who relied on Dane guns or lesser objects in resisting perceived aggression against them. Anderson and Killingray⁹ both affirmed the growing strength of the colonial police while protecting the colonial authorities, including their obnoxious policies and practices during this era.

Tim Stapleton's,¹⁰ "African Police and Soldiers" corroborates John McCracken's argument by stressing that the colonial police and the troops' sole objective was to offer protection to the colonial authorities, especially during indigenous people's hostile resistance to some colonial government's policies and practices. The police and the troops not only used firearms to maintain public order, they intentionally deployed superior firearms, especially the 'Lee-Enfield rifles', to protect the colonial authorities from hostile protests and riots from indigenous people of the province, while preventing indigenous people of the province from having access to possession and use of those superior categories of firearms. Kemi Rotimi's¹¹ "The Police in Federal State" also examine the establishment of the police in a colonial state, stressing that colonial rule was forcefully planted by imperial British government through the use of firearm violence on indigenous people, while using same to sustain and protect colonial rule, during the colonial era. The argument on the colonial police and the troops, regarding coercive subjugation of the indigenous people of the province, centred on the use of superior firearms, which the Arms Ordinance Act of 1917, through its various provisions, restricted indigenous people of the province from having access to possession and use of those superior firearms.

The Women's War of 1929 offers clarity on why the colonial police and the troops appeared to have been visible users of firearms in the province. The activities of the colonial police and the troops during the women's protest of 1929 yielded significant evidence to suggest the colonial police and the troops were users of firearms in the province. Buchanan Smith's "Notes on the Women's Riot in Calabar Province"¹² also added to the argument that the colonial troops and the police were users of firearms in the province, during the colonial era. During the protest, women who were armed with machetes dared the colonial troops who wielded sophisticated firearms, resulting in the use of those superior firearms on the protesting women. The confrontation between both parties to the conflict led to the shooting of the protesting women, killing thirty-one women, while causing injuries to another thirty-one women who were lucky to be alive¹² However, the continuous deployment of superior firearms by the colonial police and the troops to quell hostile riots and protests, including ensuring public safety and public order, made them users of firearms in the province.

Hunters as Users of Firearms

Firearms considered as "destructive implement of European ingenuity"¹³ was also exploited by indigenous hunters in their engagements with the environment, suggesting a linkage between firearms and professional hunting in the province, during the colonial period. The ban on the use of poisonous weapons like

⁸John McCracken. "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland: Aspect of the History of a Colonial Police Force". *Journal of African History*. Vol. 27, No. 1, (1986), pp. 127-147.

⁹David Anderson and David Killingray. *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830-1940*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 184

¹⁰Timothy Stapleton. *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1923-1980*. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2011), pp. 150-183.

¹¹Kemi Rotimi. *The Police in Federal State: The Nigerian Experience*. (Ibadan: College Press, 2001), p. 131.

¹²Extract from Aba Commission Report, 1931-1932 "Native Unrest in Calabar and Owerri Province", December 1929: CO583/176/8, p. 18.

¹³Garvin White. "Firearms in Africa: An Introduction" *Journal of African History*, Vol. 12, No.2, (1991), p. 173.

the bow and arrow for hunting by Lord Lugard,¹⁴ encouraged the use of less lethal firearms, especially Dane guns, for hunting, making indigenous hunters in the province users of firearms.

Saheed Aderinto,¹⁵ stressed on the popularity of Dane guns among the rural dwellers of the province, suggesting that, in the 1920s, most hunters in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province, were identified by the habit of hanging firearms on their bodies as well as bags that contained charms and other accessories that aided them to understand the hunting ecology. The use of firearms by indigenous hunters for hunting made them users of firearms.

Recognised Chiefs and Elites

Under a regulated firearm regime, those who had licenses to bear firearms were users of firearms. Despite firearms serving the varied needs of indigenous people of the province, including the use of firearms for hunting and protection of crops from wild animals during the colonial era, firearms were officially assigned to some indigenous elites and recognised chiefs for personal protection in the province, though under license. In a memorandum from the Secretary, Southern Provinces of Nigeria, to the Residents, Southern Provinces, the Secretary referred to a provision of the Arms Ordinance that allowed for granting of firearm licenses to recognised chiefs in the provinces¹⁶ suggesting it was a symbol of prestige for those chiefs to bear firearms. Whereas it was an infraction of the firearm regulatory laws to bear firearms without possessing valid licenses, the provision of the Arms Ordinance Act of 1917 recognised the need for some important chiefs in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province, to bear firearms under license, making them visible users of firearms in the province, during this era.

Rifle Club Members

The activities of members of the Nigerian Rifle Association (NRA) offer explanations for the social usage of firearms in the province during the colonial era. The core concern of the Rifle club was the use of firearms for recreational purposes, including range shooting. Though membership of the Nigerian Rifle Association was initially restricted to British colonial personnel, it later accommodated indigenous elites who were permitted by law to possess and use rifles for range shooting, like their British counterparts. Saheed Aderinto,¹⁷ posits that ownership of firearms was not a criterion for membership of the NRA, as the club often provided firearms and ammunition to new members, while encouraging them to purchase and own their rifles later. Therefore, the reliance on the use of firearms by members of the NRA during range shooting, which was recreational in nature suggest that members of the NRA were visible users of firearms in the province, though the bulk of the British who utilised firearms for recreational shooting appeared not to have done so under license.

Unauthorised Firearm Users

The constructive and destructive nature of firearms captivated the attention of some criminal elements in the province. Frederick Lugard's,¹⁸ "Political Memoranda" examines the human psychology of possession and use of firearms, suggesting it influences the bearer to the extent that it emboldens the holder of firearms to do what he may not have done without possession of a firearm. The availability of firearms in the province, as well as unlawful access to those firearms by some members of the province, especially some criminal elements, led to the utilisation of firearms for armed robbery activities. Armed robbery activities became more visible during the 1930s, when the world, including Calabar Province, suffered declining economy occasioned by the emergence of cash economy and the monetisation of the colonial economy. The monetisation of the colonial economy led more people in the province to go about their daily activities, carrying huge sums of money with them, which attracted some armed criminals to forcefully dispossess them of their valuable items, including the huge sums of money, during this era.

Relying on the technical potency of firearms, some criminal elements forcefully dispossess victims of their valuables, shooting into the air to psychologically scare their victims. The utilisation of firearms by criminal

¹⁴Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 61.

¹⁵Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 62.

¹⁶Memorandum from the Secretary, Southern Provinces to the Residents, Southern Provinces. M. P. No. A. 300/1919/, (NAC).

¹⁷Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 136.

¹⁸Frederick Lugard "Political Memoranda," London: Frank Cass, 1970, pp. 36-37.

elements makes them users of firearms in the province, during this era. The cases of armed robbery incidents along Aba-Oron highway¹⁹ and the exploits of Asuquo, a notorious armed robber in 1955,²⁰ corroborate the fact that criminal elements in the province, especially the armed robbers were users of firearms in the province, during this era. L. Fourchard's,²¹ "Urban Poverty, Urban Crime" examines the causal factors that influenced armed robbery in Nigeria, including Calabar Province, suggesting that poverty, unemployment and marginalisation of indigenous people were triggers for armed robbery engagements. The arguments above support the fact that the use of firearms dominated most violent criminal activities during the colonial era.

Statutory Firearm Licensees

Those who obtained firearm licenses in accordance with the provisions of the Arms Ordinance Act of 1917 were users of firearms in the province during the colonial era. Possession of firearm permit or license ensured that one could lawfully possess and use a firearm specified by the license granted him to use firearms in the province. In a memorandum from the Secretary, Southern Provinces of Nigeria, to the Residents, Southern Provinces of Nigeria,²² regarding issue of granting licenses to indigenous people of the province to bear 'arms of precision', including revolvers, pistols and rifles, the provision of the Arms Ordinance ruled that granting licenses to indigenous people of the province to bear those categories of firearms was not a general rule, implying the Resident of the province had to make recommendations should there be a justification for a need to possess and use the 'arms of precision'.

The argument here is that granting licenses to indigenous people of the province to bear arms of precision was not a general rule, implying one needed to have a recommendation from the Resident, Calabar Province, before one could obtain a license to bear those categories of firearms in the province. In a memorandum from the Resident, Calabar Province, to the Divisional Officer, Calabar, in July 1921,²³ the Resident, Calabar Province, directed that indigenous staff of the colonial government who had served for ten years and above and who had their applications endorsed by their respective Heads of Departments were eligible to be granted licenses to bear firearms, especially shotguns. This implies that those who obtained firearm licenses from the prescribed officers were users of firearms in the province.

During this period, the inability of the colonial authorities to regulate the use of Dane guns appeared to have been premised on Dane gun's popularity among the rural dwellers, those who had ownership of Dane guns in the rural areas, utilising them for varied purposes, were also users of firearms in the province during this era. However, licensed users of firearms were those who engaged the legitimate provisions of the Arms Ordinance Act of 1917, which required obtaining licenses to possess and use firearms. However, possession and use of firearms without obtaining valid licenses to do so was tantamount to unlawful possession and use of firearms, which attracted some dire consequences, including arrest, prosecution, as well as loss of their firearms.²⁴

Farmers as Users of Firearms

Relying on the technical potency of firearms, some indigenous farmers who exploited the forest in search of arable lands for agricultural purposes used firearms to engage some wild animals, especially the bush cows and elephants that threatened or attacked them, while clearing up the forests for cultivation²⁵.

Drawing inspiration from the economic policy thrust of the colonial authorities, who placed premium on cash crop cultivation; some indigenous farmers exploited the colony's forest to acquire arable lands for cultivation of cash crops. The clearing of those forests by some indigenous farmers often exposed them to attacks by wild animals that held sway in their natural habitats. Indigenous farmers became users of firearms not because it was a needed tool for the cultivation of cash crops but it served their needs in warding off wild animals that often

¹⁹Memorandum from the Resident, Calabar Province to the Divisional Officer, Calabar, M. P. No. C. 49/1921, 18th July, 1921, (NAC).

²⁰"Police Nab Seven Aba Highway Men" The West African Pilot Newspaper, 28th April, 1955.

²¹Laurent Fourchards. *Urban Poverty, Urban Crime, "The Case of Ibadan, 1930s-1970s"* in S. Salm & T. Falola (eds), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*. Rochester: Rochester University Press (2006), pp. 287-290.

²²"Police Raid Robber's Jungle" Daily Service Newspaper, 18th May, 1955.

²³Memorandum from the Secretary, Southern Provinces to the Residents, Southern Provinces, M. P. No. A. 300/1919, Lagos, 18th February, 1919, (NAC).

²⁴Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 228.

²⁵Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*. p. 228

threatened or attacked them, during the clearing of the forests as well as using same to protect their crops from wild animals.

Saheed Aderinto's,²⁶ "Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria" examines the relationship between firearms and farmers in Nigeria, including Calabar Province, suggesting firearms were used by some indigenous farmers to ward off wild animals, protect farmlands and the farmers from vicious attacks by wild animals. A case of a rampaging elephant that invaded a farmland in 1951, while permanently occupying the farmland, was reported by some newspapers, especially the West African Pilot and the Daily Service, during this era.²⁷ Several other pieces of evidence exist that suggest the proclivity of some wild animals to attack the farmlands, while destroying numerous heaps of crops, causing some villagers to flee their homes.²⁸ Over time, the reliance on firearms by indigenous farmers as a tool to contend some wild animals that usually destroyed cash crops suggests that farmers were indeed users of firearms in the province, during the colonial era.

The Uses of Firearms in Calabar Province

Having identified the users of firearms in the provinces, it is imperative to examine the various uses of firearms in Calabar Province to determine the uses of firearms in the province during the colonial era.

The Use of Firearms to Ensure Public Order

The utilisation of firearms, especially the superior types of firearms like the "Lee-Enfield" rifles, by the colonial police and the troops was to ensure the maintenance of public safety and security, which was a statutory function of the colonial police force. Through the use of superior firearms, the police and the troops ensured colonial rule was protected from hostile resentment and resistance by some indigenous people of the province. The argument here suggests that one of the uses of firearms in the province was the utilisation of firearms by the colonial police to suppress hostile resistance from some members of the indigenous population.²⁹

During the women's protest of 1929 in Opobo and Utu-Etim Ekpo towns in Calabar Province, the violent nature of the protest led to the colonial troop's intervention, while attempting to suppress those protests. One of the most visible tools used by the colonial troops in suppressing the women's protest of 1929 was superior firearms, especially the rifles of the colonial troops, to forcefully quell the women's protest of 1929 in Calabar province. By 15th December, 1929, the rampaging women in Utu-Etim Ekpo also attacked a military camp in Abak, while showing solidarity with the women's protest of 1929. These protesting women were repelled by the colonial troops who fired sixty-two shots at the women.

The women's riot in Opobo town also witnessed colonial troops' vicious attack on the women as they opened fire on the women, killing thirty one women, while causing injuries to another thirty-one women of Opobo District.³⁰ Ordinarily, the women's protest of 1929 appeared to have been a civil protest by some women of the Eastern region of Nigeria, including the women of Calabar Province, against direct taxation of women as well as the women's perceived dissatisfaction with being excluded from political activities during this era.³¹ The deployment of superior firearms by the police and the troops offers an insight into the overzealous attitude of some colonial administrators, especially members of the colonial police and the troops, despite being statutory users of firearms and trained to uphold the rules of engagement in civil strife.

The case of the Marina market riot of 1925 in the province, as well as the Calabar riot of 1956, all had similar brutal responses from the colonial police and the troops, as they were ordered by their superiors to deploy superior firearms to suppress those riots, while causing significant injuries and death to some indigenous rioters in the province, during the colonial period. Little wonder, the colonial authorities deliberately excluded the bulk

²⁶Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 62.

²⁷"Troops of Wild Elephants Ravage Farm in Ogbomoso Districts" Daily Service Newspaper, 24th August, 1951, "Stray Elephants Trample Four People to Death in Oyo Area" West African Pilot, 19th February, 1952, "Elephant Menace on Crops is Increasing," West African Pilot, 8th August, 1953.

²⁸"Troop of Wild Elephants Ravage Farms in Ogbomoso Districts," Daily Service Newspaper, 24th August, 1951.

²⁹John Macracken. "Coercion and Control of Nyasaland," Aspect of the History of a Colonial Police Force. *Journal of African History* Vol. 27, No. 1, (1998), pp. 127-147.

³⁰Extract from Aba Commission Report, 1931-1932 "Native Unrest in Calabar and Owerri Province, December 1929: CO583/176/8, p. 18.

³¹Jonathan Glover. *Women, Culture and Development. A Study of Human Capabilities*, (England: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 449.

of indigenous people of the province from having access to the arms of precision, fearing that allowing them access to the arms of precision would embolden their resistance to perceived colonial government's oppression.

Interestingly, the acknowledgement by then Commissioner of Police that the police indeed deployed armed policemen to suppress the women's protest,³² justifies the argument that the police and the troops utilised firearms to ensure public safety and security in the province. Similarly, the acknowledgement by then Inspector-General of Police, Mr C. W. Duncan, that the police fired at the ground during the protest, whereas they ought to have fired at the mob,³³ support the argument that the police and the troops often utilised firearms in their attempt at quelling those hostile protests and riots from indigenous people of the province, while ensuring public safety and security.

The utilization of firearms by armed policemen and the troops during indigenous people's protests and riots against some perceived obnoxious colonial authority's policies and practices corroborate the argument that, one of the uses of firearms was the utilization of firearms by the police and the troops to suppress hostile resistance from some indigenous members of the province. John McCracken's³⁴ "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland" examines the major objective of the colonial police, suggesting it was primarily established to bring down hostile resistance against the colonial government, stressing that it was through the use of firearms by the colonial police that colonial rule was protected in the province, during this era.

Utilisation of Firearms for Criminal Activities

Drawing inspiration from a seeming brutal use of firearms by some overzealous members of the colonial police and the troops, while protecting colonial rule, through the suppression of indigenous people's resistance to obnoxious colonial authority's policies and practices, some criminal elements also utilized available firearms to forcefully dispossess victims of their valuables, firing into the air to incite psychological scare on their victims. Between the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s, emerging criminal activities were dominated by the use of firearms to rob 'unsuspecting victims. More often than not, these criminal elements used firearms to incite psychological scare on their victims, while shooting into the air. Lugard's,³⁵ "Political Memoranda" examines issues relating to the psychology of possession and use of firearms, suggesting possession and use of firearms emboldened holders of firearms, to the extent of influencing them to do what they may not have done without those firearms in their possession.

The arrest of a notorious armed robbery kingpin and his gang members by the police in May 1955 highlight then emerging trend of the utilisation of firearms for violent crimes in the province. The arrest of Asuquo, a gang leader, who was known to be a "muscular and hefty giant of a man,"³⁶ arrested alongside his gang members by the police, was celebrated and reported by the Daily Service Newspaper of 18th May, 1955, as the greatest crime story of the year³⁷. The recovery of twenty shotguns, one rifle, six pistols, fifty-one Dane guns, £1,000, including 150 rounds of gunpowder and some local charms from them by the police,³⁸ supports the argument that one of the uses of firearms in the province was for engagements in armed robbery.

Saheed Aderinto,³⁹ posits that, the assortment of firearms deployed by criminals, while operating in the urban areas was attributed to the emerging number of elites, security organizations as well as some commercial companies and the existence of a sea port in the province, though those who lived in the rural areas of the province also experienced invasion of their homes by some criminal elements who used Dane guns, a popular firearm in the remote areas of the province to engage in criminal activities, while in the urban areas of the province, especially Calabar and other urbanized areas of the province, sophisticated armed robbery attacks were common, especially

³²Memorandum from the Resident's Office, Calabar, Calabar Province, No. 9/1925, May, 1929, (NAC).

³³Legislative Council Debate, "Tombo" was a local drink brewed from the oil-palm. It is usually known as Palm Wine, 28th January, (1931), p. 49.

³⁴John McCracken. "Coercion in Nyasaland", Aspect of the History of a colonial Police Force. *Journal of African History*. Vol. 27, No. 1. (1998). Pp. 127-147.

³⁵Frederick Lugard. "Political Memoranda" (London: Frank Cass, 1970), pp. 36-37.

³⁶Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearm, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 199.

³⁷"Police Raid Robber's Jungle," Daily Service Newspaper, 18th May, 1955.

³⁸Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearm, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 199.

³⁹Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 199.

the reported cases of robbery attacks on some large European companies, post offices and banks as those criminals deployed arms of precision, including revolvers and pistols to rob their targets.⁴⁰

L. Fourchard's⁴¹ "Urban Poverty, Urban Crime" examine the causal factors that influenced armed robbery in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province, suggesting that poverty, marginalization of some indigenous people as well as unemployment was a trigger for armed robbery, though the emergence of some returning soldiers from the frontlines exacerbated criminality because some of the returning soldiers made away with unaccounted firearms, mostly arms of precision, especially revolvers and pistols because they were easy to be concealed and used for criminal operations. Those criminal elements also utilised firearms to steal cars from lawful owners because the emergence of pleasure cars in Nigeria, including Calabar Province, was captivating.⁴² In some cases, after stealing those cars at gunpoint, they used those cars for criminal operation, while some of the criminals often sold those cars in "the underground market" because during this period, stolen items were easily converted into cash by those criminals,⁴³ owing to the emergence of a cash economy that accounted for the movement of large sums of money in the province.

Firearm as Hunting Implement

Firearm was a means through which indigenous hunters exploited the forests in search of animals. The abolition of slave trade and slave raids in the province appeared to have encouraged the use of firearms for hunting.⁴⁴ The utilisation of Dane guns, which was a popular firearm among the rural dwellers for hunting, highlights the relationship between firearms and hunting. Interestingly, the ban on the use of traditional weapons for hunting, especially bows and arrows by colonial authorities,⁴⁵ led to the utilisation of firearms, especially the cheap and affordable firearms like Dane guns, by some indigenous hunters who utilised them for hunting purposes in the province, during the colonial era. Saheed Aderinto⁴⁶, examines the implications of the 1948 amendment of the Arms Ordinance Act of 1917 in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria by the government of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, suggesting the decision by the colonial authorities to liberalize the use of Dane guns in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province was a victory for hunters and farmers who latched on the liberalization of access to Dane guns, to utilize it for hunting.

Interestingly, the bulk of those who sought licenses to bear Dane guns before the 1948 liberalisation policy on Dane guns in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province, were hunters, which implies that a significant number of hunters utilised firearms for hunting during the colonial era. Surprisingly, the 1948 liberalisation of the use of Dane guns, through the amendment of the Arms Ordinance Act, was heralded by some indigenous members of the province, especially the hunters and the farmers.⁴⁷ G. Basden's,⁴⁸ "Niger Ibos" examine the nexus between firearms and the hunters, suggesting it was common to see hunters who, after killing animals with their firearms, smeared the blood of those animals they killed on the stock of their Dane guns, which suggests that hunters indeed utilised firearms for hunting.

Utilisation of Firearms for Farming

During the colonial era, the colonial authorities placed a premium on cash crop cultivation as the reliance on cash crops for exports generated revenue to the colonial authorities. Relying on the technical potency of firearms, some indigenous farmers in the province utilised available firearms to exploit the forests, knowing it was a natural habitat for wild animals therefore, the tendency of being attacked by wild animals necessitated their utilisation of

⁴⁰Men Faced Charge of Armed Burglary and Theft, "West African Pilot. 16th March 1942.

⁴¹Laurent Fourchard, "Urban Poverty, Urban Crime. "The Case of Ibadan, 1930s – 1970s" In S. Salm & T. Falola (eds.), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*. (Rochester: Rochester University Press. 2006), pp. 287-290.

⁴²Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press 2018), p. 198.

⁴³Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press 2018), p. 198.

⁴⁴Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 61.

⁴⁵Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 61.

⁴⁶Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 61.

⁴⁷Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearm, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 61.

⁴⁸George Basden. *Niger Ibos*, (London: Frank Cass, 1938), p. 144.

Dane guns to repel those attacks, while protecting their crops. Saheed Aderinto⁴⁹ examines the connection between the use of firearms and farming in Nigeria, including Calabar Province, suggesting that some farmers in the province utilised firearms not because they were necessary tools for cultivation of crops, but were utilised to protect themselves against some wild animals in their quest to secure arable land for the cultivation of cash crops. Through the use of firearms like the “muzzle loaders” a type of firearm, some farmers were able to protect their farms from aggressive animals that often invaded their farmlands, causing damage to cash crops, which served as significant sources of revenue generation to the colonial authorities, including those of indigenous farmers, who engaged in commercial farming.

The Uses of Firearms to Escalate Intra and Inter-ethnic Clashes

Despite the engagements of firearms for constructive purposes, some indigenous people of the province also engaged firearms for destructive purposes. G. White's,⁵⁰ considered firearms as “destructive implement of European ingenuity.” His argument validates the utilisation of firearms for the escalation of intra and inter-ethnic clashes in the province, during this era. The competition for the control of access to trade routes, market spaces, as well as arable lands for agricultural purposes often led to intra and inter-ethnic skirmishes in the province. These clashes often necessitated the use of firearms by the parties involved in the conflict to undo rival parties to those conflicts.

Despite the existence of other causes of firearm-related violence that led to injuries and death to some indigenous people of the province, it appears that more indigenous people of the province died as a result of firearm-related violence that resulted from intra and inter-ethnic clashes⁵¹ because more Dane guns were domiciled and used by the rural dwellers to escalate intra and inter-ethnic skirmishes in the province during this era.⁵² Unrestricted access to Dane guns and minimal enforcement of responsible usage of Dane guns ensured easy deployment of Dane guns to escalate intra and inter-ethnic clashes. The case of the Marina market riot of April 1925 in Calabar, Calabar Province, provides an insight to the utilisation of firearms for intra and inter-ethnic skirmishes. During the conflict, the use of firearms, especially Dane guns, was involved as one indigenous Efik man used a Dane gun to kill an Ibo man who resided in Ikang community of Calabar Province,⁵³ lending credence to the argument that firearms were often utilised to escalate intra and inter-ethnic conflicts in the province, during this era.

Engagement of Firearms in Ceremonial Shooting

Relying on the availability of an assortment of firearms, and the popularity of Dane guns among the rural dwellers of the province, some indigenous people of the province capitalised on the 1948 liberalization of Dane guns usage by the colonial authorities, to utilise Dane guns to incite public spectacles during festivities, especially during marriages, burial and coronation of chiefs in the province. Indigenous people of the province utilised Dane guns for ceremonial shooting, which heralded local ceremonies in the rural communities, though same practice also heralded appointments or replacement of new colonial administrators in the province. The incitement of public spectacle during frenzied moments of some local ceremonies accounted for reasons some indigenous people of the province utilized firearm in the province. Firearm boom in most cases, announced the death of prominent people in the province, while the intensity of those firearm shots depended on the deceased's social standing or membership of a particular group in the community.⁵⁴

Arthur Leonard,⁵⁵ examine the social and spiritual aspects of the burial rites of Ibibio people, including the intersection of social class and spirituality within the context of ceremonial shooting, suggesting that, during burial ceremonies of some important chiefs, the traditional belief of the people of the province allowed for firing

⁴⁹Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 61.

⁵⁰Garvin White. “Firearms in Africa: An Introduction” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 12, No.2, (1991), p. 173.

⁵¹“Two Persons killed in Riot,” 26th July, 1954; “Arms Freely used in Chieftaincy Clash,” 1st September, 1953; “Clans Clash on Merger Proposals,” 19th May, 1954; “Aggressive Tribalism,” 9th December, 1941; *The West African Pilot*.

⁵²Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p.177.

⁵³“Efik Versus Ibo Riot, One Ibo Killed” *The West African Pilot Newspaper*, 19th December, 1949.

⁵⁴Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 83.

⁵⁵Arthur Leonard, *Lower Niger and Its Tribes*, (New York: Macmillan, 1906), p.175-176.

of gunshots for eight days during the day and at night. He argued that ceremonial shooting had some deep spiritual meaning among the Ibibio people. Aside from inciting public spectacle among indigenous people of the province, it also provided a means through which the departed spirit had a seamless ascension to the spirit world. Ceremonial shooting was also popular among Efik people, especially after the completion of the burial rites of Ekpe society members, which entailed a fourteen to sixteen-day ceremony.⁵⁶ Among Efik people of Calabar Province, burial ceremonies of members of Ekpe Society, a major secret cult in Efik land, were occasioned by firing of shots after the burial rites of the deceased had been completed.⁵⁷ The argument here is that the assortment of the utilisation of Dane guns for ceremonial shooting suggests that one of the uses of firearms in the province was for engagements in ceremonial shooting during the colonial era.

Firearms and Recreational Shooting

Despite the activities of the Nigerian Rifle Association (NRA) involving the utilization of rifles for range shooting which also served as a central objective of the NRA, the reliance on firearms by members of the NRA whose membership appeared to have been dominated by British colonial officers and later by pockets of indigenous elite for range shooting, suggest that one of the uses of firearms was for the engagements in recreational shooting which provides a link between firearm and the social uses of firearms. Relying on the assortment of interests from the political, military and economic elites, the NRA grew in influence and membership, utilising firearms, especially rifles, a superior type of firearm for leisure shooting, including range shooting. Ownership of firearms was not a prerequisite for membership in the NRA, as the Rifle Club often provided firearms and ammunition to new members, while encouraging them to purchase and own their own rifle later.⁵⁸

The involvement of members of the NRA (Nigerian Rifle Association) in international and regional shooting competitions, like the “West African Challenge Cup” competition, which aimed at selecting the best marksmen in a shooting competition,⁵⁹ suggest the utilisation of firearms by members of the NRA for shooting competitions, which tends to confirm that one of the uses of firearms was the utilisation of firearms for social engagements, especially in range shooting.

Firearms Use in Pawnshop Practices

Pawnshop involves a practice where human or material objects are deposited as collateral for loans. Drawing inspiration from Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson’s⁶⁰ “Trust, Pawnshop and Atlantic History” which discussed the Atlantic history of Old Calabar, some indigenous people of the province exploited the popularity of Dane guns in the rural communities to engage in pawnshop practices. The use of firearms for pawnshop practices emerged in Nigeria, including Calabar Province, after the colonial authorities prohibited other forms of pawnshop practices, especially the use of humans as collateral for loans,⁶¹ which gained prominence during the transatlantic slave trade era.

During the colonial era, some indigenous people of the province appeared to have valued old Dane guns than taking ownership of rifles because Dane guns served their varied firearm needs. This situation led to the use of Dane guns as collateral for loans by some indigenous people of the province because Dane guns were sought after firearms, by those who lived in the rural communities. During this era, those who loaned out money, while in custody of those deposited firearms as collaterals were in agreements to use those deposited firearms until the debtors were able to redeem the loans.⁶²

⁵⁶Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 83.

⁵⁷Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, p. 83.

⁵⁸Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 4.

⁵⁹“West African Challenge Cup” 16th October, 1927, Comcol, 459, (NAI).

⁶⁰Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson. “Trust Pawnshop and the Atlantic History. The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (1999), pp. 333-355.

⁶¹Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p72.

⁶²Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p.71.

Utilization of Firearms for Imperial Hunting

Despite the imposition of a wide range of firearm regulatory laws by the colonial authorities with the aim of ensuring restrictions on possession and use of firearms in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, including Calabar Province, some British colonial officers utilized superior firearm, while engaging in imperial hunting. Imperial hunting involved the use of firearm, especially rifles, for hunting by some British colonial officers during the colonial era. W. Crocker⁶³ argued that the use of rifles for hunting by some British colonial officers ran riot with universal wildlife conservation laws. Whereas indigenous hunters were limited to the use of Dane guns for hunting, some European colonial officers deployed rifles, a superior firearm for recreational hunting. It should also be noted that the actions of those British colonial officers in deploying rifles for hunting were to impose imperial dominance over the colony's forest environment.⁶⁴ Margery Perham's⁶⁵ "Lugard" examine the utilisation of rifles by some British colonial officers for hunting, suggesting their attitude was appalling, as those British colonial officers would not have done same in the United Kingdom. She singled out Frederick Lugard as one of the most dignified colonial officers who served the colony with integrity. Perham,⁶⁶ noted in her biography of Lord Frederick Lugard, the sterling qualities of Frederick Lugard, while noting how he dismissed a British colonial officer from service for shooting three giraffes with unlicensed firearm, during the colonial era.

Richard Oakley's⁶⁷ "Treks and Palavers" discussed the core values of the universal wildlife conservation, while delving into the British constitutional provisions on the subject. He gave a personal account of killing a bull during his engagement in imperial hunting. He expressed how remorseful he was after killing the bull because the core values of the British on wildlife conservation place premium on love for animals, which they view as a hallmark of civilisation. He, however, suggested that every rational British colonial officer ought to be remorseful after using rifles to kill animals.⁶⁸ The tendency of utilizing superior firearms, especially rifles, for recreational shooting suggests that one of the uses of firearms during the colonial period was for the engagements in recreational shooting.

Consequences of the Uses and Users of Firearms in Calabar Province 1917-1960

The technical potency of firearms appeared to have captivated the attention of some indigenous people of the province, resulting in a significant number of users of firearms who utilised firearms for varied political, economic and socio-cultural purposes, during the colonial era. This led to some intentional and unintentional consequences, especially as it led to social stratification in the province, as some indigenous people of the province appeared to have been marginalised, regarding their inaccessibility to some classes of firearms, during this era. The social and economic status of some indigenous members of the province shaped their access to firearms as some British colonial officers, including some indigenous elites, were given preferences to access some classes of firearms, believing they would not leverage those superior firearms in their possession to subvert the authority of the colonial government, as they were considered beneficiaries of same government.

The overzealous nature of some members of the police and the troops, wielding superior firearms, left enduring psychological effects on the minds of the people of the province. Similarly, some users of firearms misapplied firearms in their possession, which often resulted in firearm accidents, either through the overloading of their firearm or through unprofessional usage of the device. Firearm accidents left unintentional effects on the psyche of the people of the province. A case of firearm accident in the courtroom, while a suspect was being cross examined in April, 1942,⁶⁹ as well as another case that occurred in April, 1942 which involved a steward that mistakenly pulled the trigger of his master's firearm, while attempting to place his master's firearm in a taxi, led to the killing of the taxi driver,⁷⁰ highlighting enduring effect of firearms accidents through the misapplication of firearms, during the colonial era.

⁶³Walter Crocker. *Nigeria: A Critique of British Colonial Administration*. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936), p. 111.

⁶⁴64Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), pp. 129-130.

⁶⁵Margery Perham. *Lugard: The Years of Authority, 18-1945*. (London: Collins, 1960), p. 182.

⁶⁶Perham. *Lugard: The Years of Authority*, p. 182.

⁶⁷Richard Oakley, *Treks and Palaver*, (London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1938), pp.127-128.

⁶⁸Oakley, *Treks and Palaver*, pp.127-128.

⁶⁹"Pandemonium Reigns and Cowards Flee," "Man is Shot Death while taking Bath at Night." *The West African Pilot*, 10th April, 1942.

⁷⁰"Gun Accident in Birney's Lard Ends Life of Taxi Driver" *The West African Pilot*, 21st February, 1942.

The utilisation of firearms for hunting remains an enduring effect of firearm usage in the province. G. Basden,⁷¹ posits that some hunters engaged indigenous blacksmiths to reinforce their projectiles, suggesting that the use of firearms by indigenous hunters left an enduring effect on the province. Interestingly firearm was considered ‘a destructive implement of European ingenuity’⁷² and was subsequently utilised by some indigenous people of the province for the escalation of intra and inter-ethnic clashes, which appeared to have left an enduring effect on the province as the use of firearms during intra and inter-ethnic conflicts by interested parties to those conflicts persists. A case of Marina market riot of 1925, between indigenous Efik traders and Ibiriba traders (settlers) witnessed the use of firearms by the colonial police to suppress the riot.⁷³ Similarly, the use of a Dane gun by one Efik man during an inter-ethnic clash between some indigenous Efik people and some Ibo people in Calabar Province led to one Efik man utilising his Dane gun to kill an Igbo man during the conflict in December 1949.⁷⁴ This suggests that one of the detrimental effects of firearms usage was the engagement of firearms during intra and inter-ethnic clashes.

During this era, possession and use of firearms in the province led to some dislocation and changes in the traditional settings of some communities, leading to the culture of impunity by some indigenous people of the province. A case of the attitude of some Warrant Chiefs in the province, who were appointed by the colonial government, highlights the various forms of disregard for the traditional forms of governance, while negating the peaceful conflict resolution processes. The use of firearms to incite public spectacle during ceremonial shooting in the province left an enduring effect on the province. The firing of gunshots to announce the death of important members of the community, including the death of some traditional chiefs and other prominent people in the province, left an enduring social effect on the province. Dane guns were not only used for ceremonial shooting during burial activities but were also used to herald other festivities, including birthdays, naming ceremonies, marriages and other important ceremonies in communities.⁷⁵

One of the most detrimental effects of firearm usage in the province appeared to be the use of firearms for armed robbery activities. Unlawful usage of firearms in the province led to a surge in armed robbery incidents, especially during the monetisation of the economy between the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s. Lugard’s,⁷⁶ “Political Memoranda” examines the psychology of possession of firearms, suggesting it often emboldens the holder of firearms to do what he may not have done without the possession of firearm.

Conclusion

Despite the assumption that firearms were destructive tools that provided a means through which the various forms of European intrusion into Africa, including Calabar Province, ranging from slave trade through imperial pacification to colonisation, some indigenous people of the province appeared to have found constructive uses of firearm which resulted in a significant number of firearm users.

Over time, firearms evolved as an “object of material culture”, implying that they provided a means through which indigenous people of the province satisfied their daily livelihood, during the colonial period, though pockets of indigenous people of the province appeared to have utilised firearms for destructive engagements. However, the technical potency of firearms appeared to have captivated the attention of some indigenous people of the province, resulting in a significant number of firearm users who utilised them for varied purposes.

⁷¹George Basden. *Niger Ibos*. (London: Frank Cass 1938), p. 306.

⁷²Garvin White. “Firearms in Africa: An Introduction” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 12, No.2, (1991), p. 173.

⁷³Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 84.

⁷⁴“Efik Versus Ibo Riot: One Ibo Killed.” *The West African Pilot*, 19th December, 1949.

⁷⁵Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture and Public Order*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 85.

⁷⁶Frederick Lugard. *Political Memoranda* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), pp. 36-37.

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