THE MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF THE SOCIETY OF MAIHA DISTRICT, ADAMAWA PROVINCE C. 1903-1960.

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Abstract

This Paper attempts to discuss the peopling, migration and settlement in the Fombina area: A case study of Maiha District c1903-1960. Maiha is located between the latitude 9º59'44N and Latitude 13º13'E, a border to Cameron. Maiha is made up of a number of towns and villages, among which include; Paka, Hudu, guli, Belel etc. It is significant to note that there are scars literature on the area of study hence this paper intends to fill the gap of such lacuna. Maiha witnessed the peopling of the area from the opening decades of 20th century because of colonialism and economic opportunities that the area present. Some of the migrants served alongside the Europeans while others were merchants and traders. Migration and settlement in the area brought transformation in the social and economic aspect of the area. Urbanization, explanation and social amenities which this paper intends to study. This paper adapts a historical methodology or oral and written sources.

Key words: Maiha, District, Migration, Colonialism, Settlement.

Introduction

Maiha District is situated in the northeastern part of Adamawa State, in the northeastern region of Nigeria. The district is bordered by Mubi to the West, Hong to the South, and parts of Cameroon to the east. Maiha is made up of a number of towns and villages amongst which includes Hudu, Paka, Nguli, Belel etc.

It is an area located between latitude 9°59'44N and longitude 13°13'5E.[74]The term ***Maiha*** is a *Nzayi* word "which means where is the place"[75] the migration into Maiha,was neither random nor uniform, it reflects a complex interplay of traditional authority systems, colonial and land policies, and inter-group relationship.

74 Musa M Idrisu, Maiha,(accessed through Wikipedia.org on 2nd January 2025)

75 Oral interview with Alhaji Abubakar Abdullahi (Modibbo)age 70 Mahia, January. 10th 2025

The economic activities of the district primarily revolved around agriculture, animal husbandry, craft, ceramic and hunting.

The Berlin Conference of 1884 -85, laid the effective foundation for the occupation of the territory as a necessity for the British claim and control.[7677] Following the travels of Henrich Barth in the area, which exposes the economic and commercial richness of the region to the colonial powers, as such, the Fombina became one of the area with which both the British and the Germans were at loggerheads, over control. This led to the signing of the 1893 treaty between Britain and Germany in which they both agreed to share the emirate of Fombina among themselves.

Following the British Government proclamation of the Northern Protectorate in

1900 and the total subjugation of the area, including Fombina Emirate by 1903.[78]The colonialist established administer structures on the existing Emirates. Such were the creation of Provinces, District, and Village groups.

This paper explores the migration and settlement pattern of Maiha society between 1903 and 1960 situating these movements within the colonial context. These study therefore examine how traditional authority, geography, economic opportunities, and colonial interventions collectively shaped the human geography of the district. The paper relies on oral tradition, archival materials, and secondary literature to reconstruct the demographic shift and reorganization that defined the colonial era in Maiha District.

Migration and settlement pattern in Maiha.

The initial immigrants To this region selected a significant mountainous location for settlement due to strategic consideration and as refuges for their religious practices**.**[79]According to oral tradition, a group of people with common cultural tradition and sense of identity which exists as a sub-group of larger society. The members of an ethnic group differ with regards to certain cultural characteristics from the other members of the society.[80]

Migration played a significant role in attracting settlers to Maiha. However, there are different narrations as to how the people of Maiha District came to settle.

According to Alhaji Modibbo Abubakar Abdullahi, the people of Maiha also known as Maihawa are migrants from Mandara mountains in Cameroon whom happened to be six(6) brothers that left

76 Adu Boahen, A. (Ed.), General History of Africa (viii) Africa Under Colonial Domination 188-

77 , (California: Heinemann- Unesco press, 1985), p. 19-21

78Alkasum, A. History of Yola 1809-1914: The Establishment and Evolution of a Metropolis, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2003

79 Johnson H. Pongri. Political Developments in Adamawa 1900-1960: Settlement pattern (Bahiti and Dalila publishers Lagos 2017), p. 71

80 Johnson H. Pongri. "Political Development in Northern Adamawa 1809-1960: A study in the historical development of Inter-Group Relations" (PhD Thesis Ahmadu Bello University Zaria,1987).

their fathers house and came to settle binit the mountains of Magara.[81] There are Myth as to how the people of Maiha migrated and settled where they are found today. Some according to narrations, they are migrants from Damagaram in Niger due to push and pull factors during the colonial era such as slavery and slave trade, the availability of water and agricultural practices. The mountain of *Magara* got its name from from the migrants from Damagaram whom settled on the mountain.[82]

The migrants from Mandara mountains in Cameroon it is believed they are six brothers whom came and settled at different places which represents different towns and villages around Maiha District which are *Paka*,*Hudu,Nguli,Dede,Belel,and Lugdira.* These different settlements represent the different clans of Maiha.

Archival sources states that the people of Maiha are migrants from Mandara* whom settled in Maiha, they are eight (8) people from Same father whom moved and settled as a result of political crisis were a new king was made but they killed him because he was not from their clan and so because of these they left their fatherland and move down to Maiha and settled.[83]

On arrival to Maiha,they sat down and decided on a place to place their idols (for religious practices), and they placed them at Wango Maiha because that is where their eldest remains to this day, and that mountain is a mountain in Maiha,that no one has climbed it to this day. At the of the year, they all gather and come to Wamgo Maiha to greet him and pay him homage and respect him.

Ngura'a the oldest amongst them, remained there and continued to live on it until Ngura'a died. His son Kangtinding succeeded him as king for 5 years, and Kangtinding died. Then his son Jugurali succeeded him as king for 5 years, and Jugufali died. Then his son Justnadu succeeded him as king for 10 years, and he died. Then his son Sukuburu succeeded him as king for 10 years, and he died. Then his son Makasa succeeded him as king for 7 years, and he died. Then his son Makesekesa also came to rule and rule (8) years and died. Then his son Bam Tam also ruled and died. Then his son Amadu succeeded him. Amadu was the one who converted to Islam in the year 1810.He accepted Islam from Buba Yero Gombe and many of his people converted to Islam.[84]

These people whom migrated from different parts of the world, interestingly are all from the same tribe called the Nzanyi.

81 Oral interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Chiroma,Maiha, age78 December 20th 2024

82 Oral interview with Ardo Mammadu Maiha age 90 Maiha gari, January. 10th 2025

*Note: other sources are of the believe that some of them are migrants from Kanem Borno Empire others from Cameroon, Damagaram in Niger,and are all from the same tribe but just the dialect that differ. There are the Hausas, whom their origin of migration is not know then the Fulanis whom migrated from different parts of the Nigerian area some in search of grazing land for their animals, and others as a result of Sokoto Jihad of Uthman bin Fodio.

83 NAK/Maiha District Admin/

84 NAK/Maiha District Admin/

The Nzanyi people did not migrate and settle in the Cameroun Republic and the Federal Republic of Nigeria by chance; rather, their migration and settlement were the consequence of a careful and daring search for an equal piece of land for farming. The fact that the Nzanyi in the Nzanyi kingdom have shown a very friendly and understanding relationship both inside and outside of their borders over the years is noteworthy. Regarding economic and cultural interactions, they have maintained a reciprocal relationship with everyone they have encountered.[85]This is in addition to the fact that they are a group of people who were involved in the colonial administration of Germany, followed by the British and French governments. The Nzanyi people continued to live in harmony with the Fali, Gude, Bata, Bachama, Holma, Kofa, Ngwaba, Jeril, Kilba, Fulani/Hausa, and others in spite of all these events. Since none of these ethnic tribes and groupings raised eyebrows or engaged in confrontation, they all coexisted and maintained friendly relationships; as a result, everything is settled in a mutual agreement that advances meaningful progress.[86]

The Establishment of Colonial Administration

The colonial history of Maiha District cannot be fully understood without reference to the broader imperial rivalry between Germany and Britain in the early twentieth century. Prior to British occupation, Maiha fell under German control as part of their protectorate in Kamerun. The German presence in the district was part of their broader expansion into the Adamawa region following agreements and boundary negotiations with Britain and France.[87]

However, German administration in Maiha did not last for a long period of time due to the outbreak of the First World War.

Oral tradition has it that despite the short -time that the Germans lived in the Maiha area, they were the first to establish colonial administration and structures through the use of indirect rule like the British did in the northern region. They constructed roads, built hospital, school, court and prison.

With the defeat of Germany in the war and the subsequent partitioning of its African colonies, Britain assumed control over territories formerly held by the Germans in the Adamawa region, including Maiha. This shift was formalized under the terms of the League of Nations Mandate system in 1922, which placed parts of former German Kamerun under British mandate as "British Cameroons."[88]

However, even before the mandate was officially instituted, British forces had occupied Maiha during the course of the war around 1916, and administrative integration into Northern Nigeria soon

85 NAK/Maiha District Admin/

86 Mr. Audu. The History, Culture and Social Transformation of Nzanyi People.

87 Victor T. Le Vine, The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 9–12.

88 Victor T. Le Vine, The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), P42

followed.[89]The British restructured the local governance system to align with the principles of indirect rule. They retained much of the Fulani emirate hierarchy but subordinated it to British authority. Maiha was subsequently placed under the jurisdiction of the Adamawa Province with Yola as its provincial headquarters. District heads (Hakimai), usually drawn from local Fulani nobility, were appointed by the British to oversee taxation, order, and general governance.[90]

The transition from German to British rule brought administrative and spatial reorganization. The

British undertook boundary adjustments and introduced colonial institutions such as Native Authority courts and tax assessment tours.[91] These changes influenced patterns of settlement, as communities were sometimes relocated or reorganized to facilitate more efficient governance and taxation. Cross-border migration, which had been fluid under pre-colonial and early colonial conditions, became increasingly regulated by British authorities.[92]

Moreover, the British administration encouraged infrastructural development, albeit limited, to support their administrative goals. Maiha's position as a frontier district enhanced its importance, prompting the establishment of district offices, road networks, and rest stations that contributed to its transformation into an administrative center.[93]These developments attracted migrants, both from within Adamawa and neighboring regions, who settled in and around Maiha in search of opportunities linked to the expanding colonial system.

89 Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, A History of Nigeria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 137.

90 A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, The Principles of Native Administration in Nigeria (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 83–85.

91 Mahmud Modibbo Tukur, The Imposition of British Colonial Domination on the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno and Neighbouring States (1897–1914): A Reinterpretation of Colonial Sources (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1999), 204–207.

92 Haruna Dlakwa, “Administrative Reforms and the Changing Role of Traditional Rulers in Northern Nigeria,” Journal of Political Studies 12, no. 1 (2005): 32–34.

93 A. Adeleye, Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804–1906 (London: Longman, 1971), 219

Economic impact of migration to the socio-economic development of the area.

The British government's main motivation for creating a colonial state in Nigeria is widely acknowledged to be economic. Similar to other regions of Africa and Asia, Nigeria was subject to pressure to establish British colonial rule from two powerful interest groups in Britain, represented by industrial capital and merchant capital. During the final quarter of the nineteenth century, British manufacturers' interests in Nigeria's raw materials and in the Nigerian market for manufactured goods were all threatened, particularly by the Germans**.** Meanwhile, British traders in Nigeria were engaged in what they perceived as a losing struggle against other European competitors as well as a growing and bold group of Nigerian traders who were entering markets that had hitherto been the domain of Europeans. In order for the colonial authority to regularly settle the ongoing disputes between the various interest groups in favor of the British groups, British colonial control was formed in Nigeria under the pressure of these two powerful interests in Britain.[94]

Between 1903 and 1960, migration into Maiha District had major socioeconomic consequences that changed the demographic structure, land use, labor distribution, and economic output of the region. With the wider colonial transfers from German to British rule,the area was incorporated into the larger Cameroon protectorate during German colonial authority, and early administrative initiatives prioritized militaristic control and the exploitation of indigenous resources, especially through the use of forced labor and taxing schemes. Maha District Socioeconomic character was significantly altered by the colonial era migrations. They brought new social structures and landuse patterns that still influence the district's historical legacy, while also assisting in the development of infrastructure, agricultural expansion, and economic diversification.

Conclusion

The migration and settlement patterns of Maiha District between 1903 and 1960 reflect a dynamic interplay of indigenous agency, colonial intervention, and cross-border interactions. The district's population history is rooted in both myth and oral tradition, emphasizing the movements of the Nzayi people and other ethnic groups in search of security, fertile land, and socio-political autonomy. These migrations were further shaped by the imposition of colonial structures by both German and British administrations, which redefined territorial boundaries, governance systems, and economic life.

The colonial period was marked by the integration of Maiha into broader imperial networks that facilitated infrastructural development, taxation systems, and socio-economic transformations. These developments influenced settlement patterns by attracting migrants, altering land tenure systems, and introducing new administrative and economic frameworks. The district's proximity to the Cameroon border and its role as a frontier outpost amplified its significance within the colonial apparatus, making it a focal point for both governance and commerce.

Ultimately, this paper studies how local traditions, environmental factors, and colonial policies collectively influenced the human geography of Maiha. It also highlights the resilience and

94 Johnson H. Pongri, Political Developments in Adamawa 1900-1960(Bahiti and Dalila publishers) Lagos 2017, p160.

adaptability of the people, whose migratory histories and settlement choices have left a lasting imprint on the cultural and socio-economic landscape of the district. By examining these patterns, the paper contributes to the broader historiography of migration and settlement in Northern Nigeria, filling a critical gap in the literature on the Fombina region.

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