

THE HAUSAS: ALIENS OR INDIGENES IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON.

A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

The Hausas are a people who traced their origin from the Baghdad area of the Middle East. From there, they started migrating, passing through Sudan and arriving the Kanem Bornu area around the 16th and 17th century. Taking into consideration that they were town dwellers who engaged in commercial activities, they continued their migration and arrived Nigeria in the 17th century. During the 19th century when Uthman Dan Fodio launched his jihad, the Hausas were also involved. In the course of spreading the Islamic faith, the Hausas migrated to the Adamawa region of Cameroon. While in the Adamawa, many of the migrant traders continued their Southward March to the North West Region in the 1900. They established their settlements there.

Despite the number of years spent in the region, the Hausas are perceived as aliens and migrants by local North West groups who consider themselves their hosts and land lords. This article therefore tries to ponder on the question of whether the Hausas are ‘aliens’ or ‘indigenes’ in the North West Region of Cameroon. In other word, are the Hausas still ‘strangers’ or have they acquired the status of ‘Nationals’ in North West Cameroon?

The British colonial administration integrated the Hausas as subordinate members of the Ngemba Native Authorities in the late 1920s. By the 1950s, the Alkali court was created still by the British and the Hausas gained full membership into the Native Authorities in the mid 1950s. Beginning from 1961, the Hausas were eligible to vote so as to decide on the reunification of the two Cameroon’s. Thanks to the liberty laws of the 1990s, they changed their political strategies, aiming at direct representation to the state. In 2001, the Hausas founded the Cameroon Hausa Cultural and Development Association (C.H.C.D.A.), which

gradually developed into a nationally influential ethnic elite association. While confirming the Hausas as regional citizens, it successfully portrayed them as an ‘indigenous minority people’ in the North West Region of Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

The Hausa community in North West Cameroon migrated to the area in the late 19th Century. The exact date of their arrival is not known. But according to reliable sources, the Hausas started their settlement in the area around 1900. The Hausas are a community of people who live together and constituted a minority group anywhere they settled in the North West Region of Cameroon.¹ The Hausa community in the Western Grassfields is ethnically heterogeneous. It is comprised of the descendants of early Hausa Traders as well as Town Fulbe from Northern Cameroon and Nigeria, and Grassfields individuals who converted to Islam. The Hausa constitute the main population of Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. Hausa immigrant communities are found through out Western and Central Africa.² Their main point of attraction to the Grassfields was trade. Others came for the purpose of spreading the Islamic religion. Majority of them migrated on foot while a handful came on horsebacks. With the increase in the number of Hausa population in the Grassfields, there was a need for a Hausa settlement as a result, the founding of the Abakpa-Mankon settlement area. With the passage of time, the Abakpa-Mankon settlement became very small to accommodate the ever increasing Hausa population. As a result, the founding of new Hausa settlements in other regions of the Bamenda Grassfields.³

Objective of the Study

This study try to ponder on Whether the Hausa community found in Northwest Cameroon, an area also known as the Bamenda Grassfields, are aliens or real indigenes of the area. We also intend to examine the coexistence and interrelatedness of Hausas and groups of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in North West Cameroon.

¹ A.S. Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon, Second Edition*, Camden, Neba Publishers, 1987, pp. 170-171; J.M. Amadou, *The Hausa Community in Abakpa-Mankon Town from late 19th century till Present*, Bamenda, Islamic Propagation Centre, 2007, pp. 1-5.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Geographical Location of the North West Region of Cameroon.

Our study area is the North West Region of Cameroon. North West Region of Cameroon constitutes parts of the territory of Southern Cameroons. The North West Region is found in the Western highlands of Cameroon. It lies between latitudes 5° 40' and 7° to the North of the equator, and between Longitudes 9° 45 and 11° 10' to the East of the Meridian. It is bordered to the South West Region by the Southwest Region, to the South by the West region, to the east by Adamawa Region, and to the North by the Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁴

The North West Region is one of the most populated Regions in Cameroon. It has one major metropolitan city: Bamenda. The Region saw an increase in population from about 1.2 million in 1987, to an estimated 1.8 million people in 2001. The population density, at 99.12 people per square Kilometres is higher than the national average of 22.6 people per square kilometre. The region urban growth rate is 7.95%, while the rural growth rate at 1.16%. The North West Region is made up of administrative divisions. The region formally known as province was created in 1972 with five divisions. These were Mezam, Momo, Bui, Menchum and Donga and Mantung Divisions. Today it has seven divisions, Boyo carved out of Donga-Mantung and Menchum and Ngo ketunjia carved out of Mezam. There are thirty-one Sub-division in the North West Region.⁵

Historical Presentation of the Hausas in North West Cameroon.

The Hausas are said to be a people of mixed ancestry, having descended from a Union of an Arab husband and a Sudanese woman. They had kingdoms in between the Niger River and eastern Sudan; these kingdoms were said to be very powerful and extensive in the 16th and 17th centuries. These kingdoms were destroyed by the Fulani who themselves established a Feudal empire extending from present day Northern Nigeria to Northern Cameroon.⁶

⁴ P.S. Ndele, "Inter-tribal Conflicts in the North West Province of Cameroon: Causes, Consequences and Perspectives", Maitrise Dissertation, Catholic University of Central Africa, 1998, pp. 1-10.

⁵ Neba, *Modern Geography*, P. 171 : N.N. Emmanuel, "Settlement, Grazier or Agricultural land: A Confrontation of Interest in the North West Province of Cameroon", *Annals of the Faculty of letters and Social Sciences*, University of Yaounde, No 10, 1981, P. 175.

⁶ H.R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914, A case study of Modern Imperialism*, New York, Greenwood Press Publishers, 1938, p. 109.

The legendary story concerning the origins of the Hausas claims that they came to the Western Sudan from Baghdad in the Middle East. The precise date of their departure or arrival is however not given. But it is alleged that a certain Bayajidda migrated from Baghdad to Kanem Bornu. From Kanem Bornu he crossed to the Hausa country where he was said to have killed a sacred snake which for years deprived the people of water from a well, except on Fridays. In appreciation of this deed, the Queen of Daura, the first Hausa state, married Bayajidda. Out of this Union was born a son called Bawo. Bawo had seven children who became the founders of the original Hausa states called Hausa Bakwoi.⁷

The Hausas are a people who mostly inhabit the North-western and North-central parts of Nigeria. The Hausas were more of town dwellers, who engaged in commercial activities and had well organised political institutions. The Fulani on the other hand were pastoralists usually found in the rural areas with their herds.⁸

In 1804, Uthman Dan Fodio, a Fulani Muslim Scholar declared a holy war, jihad, against the Hausa state. By 1807 the Hausa states of Zaria, kano and katsina had fallen to the jihadists. This means their conversion into the Islamic faith. Some of the Hausa Muslims, who later participated in the Jihads of Modibo Adama entered the Adamawa region in 1809 for the purpose of spreading Islam.⁹

The Hausa have a writing which was borrowed from the Kanuri, which has some similarities with the Arabic script. The Hausas are mostly found today in greater numbers in Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Gabon and Cameroon. Hausa communities can also be found in the Maghrebian Countries of North Africa and parts of the Middle East.¹⁰ Our major concern is the Hausa communities found in Cameroon, more precisely that of the North West Region.

Body

Background to the Coming of the Hausas to Northwest Cameroon

During the 19th century when the jihad wars were being undertaken by Uthman Dan Fodio, the Hausas were also involved. In the course of spreading the Islamic faith, the Hausas migrated to Adamawa. Another motivating factor that led to the influx of the Hausa

⁷ H.A.S. Johnson, *A Selection of Hausa Stories*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 9.

⁸ A.T. Grove, *Africa*, Third Edition, London, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 183; J. Tazifor, *A Junior History for Secondary School*, Yaounde, 1982, pp. 2-15.

⁹ P.N. Nkwi and J.P. Warnier, *Element for a History of the Western Grassfields*, Yaounde, Publication of the Department of Sociology, 1982, p. 84.

¹⁰ J.H. Greenberg, "Linguistic Evidence for the influence of kanuri on the Hausa", *Journal of African History*, No 12, 1960, p. 205; Polly Hill, *Rural Hausa: A Village Setting*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1972, P. 2.

population to Adamawa was trade. Many of them from Nigeria and other areas entered Adamawa to trade in Ivory, Kolanuts and slaves.¹¹

While in Adamawa, many of the migrant traders continued their southward March to the Bamenda Grassfields. This was purposely to spread Islam and also to take advantage of the trading opportunities in the region. When they arrived in the Bamenda Grassfields, they established trading links with the local inhabitants. Among the villages in the Bamenda central area with which they traded were Santa, Bafut, Mankon and Nso. They frequently bought goods from the Grassfields villages and in turn traded them in Nigeria. In the course of time, the number of Hausa traders coming to the Bamenda Grassfields increased enormously. This necessitated the establishment of Hausa settlements. The first of such Hausa settlements was in the Medankwe area in the year 1900.¹²

The advent of German Colonialism created more assurance of security for the Hausas. This led to the influx of Hausas to the Bamenda Grassfields. The coming of the British after World War One witnessed the establishment of the big Hausa settlement in Abakpa-Mankon.¹³ Since then, the population of the Abakpa community at the time had increased considerably; there was need for organised political, economic and socio-cultural structures to be set-up. This Abakpa settlement, because of its commercial activities and cosmopolitan nature, finally grew to what later became known as Abakpa-Mankon Town. The Hausa community under the leadership of a Sarikin Hausawa kept on increasing, in population and size, and eventually constituted what is today the Bamenda Urban town.¹⁴

Routes used in Migrating to the Northwest Region

Almost all of the Hausas who settled in the North West Region came from Nigeria. They came using different routes in the course of migration. The very first contingent of Hausas who arrived in the North West Region was made up of traders. They came trekking although a few came on horse backs and donkeys. They entered Cameroon through the

¹¹ M.Z. Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony in Yola (Old Adamawa) 1809-1902*, Yaounde, Ceper, 1978, pp. 1-19; Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, p. 109.

¹² M.P. Pelican "Getting along in the Grassfields : Interethnic Relations and Identity Politics in North West Cameroon", PhD thesis, Martin-Luther University, Halle-Witterberg, Germany, Halle, 2006, pp. 254-256.

¹³ Ibid; Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, p. 7.

¹⁴ P.M. Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields: A Study of the Economic Position of Women in Bamenda*, London, Routledge, 2004, p.20.

extensive Adamawa plateau around the 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁵ Having arrived in the Adamawa, most of them went to Tibati while others went to specific towns like Banyo. Most of those who went to Tibati settled there. In each settlement, the Hausas established trading links with inhabitants of the neighbouring villages. It was from Banyo that a handful of Hausa traders made their way to the North West Region of Cameroon.¹⁶

By the late 19th century, Hausa settlements had already been established in the Bamenda Grassfields. As a result, large contingents of Hausas continued to arrive in the region from Nigeria. They came in groups, each under a leader, through Takum, Ngaoundere and Fumban to the Bamenda region. These contingents added to the already settled contingents and swelled the Hausa population in the North West Region.¹⁷

Prominent among the group leaders who arrived in the North West Region were Mallam Balarebe and Mallam Baba. As concerns Mallam Balarebe, he was a trader and a hunter like Mallam Baba. The two were familiar with the North West Region as they used to carry out trading activities with the indigenes or earlier settlers of the area in the early 19th century. As such, they were more familiar with the area than the other Hausas. Thus, they acted as leaders during Hausa migration to the North West Region. A contingent of Hausa migrants was made up of almost 50 persons. In the course of their migration they encountered a few problems amongst which were attacks from thieves, hunger, fatigue and hostilities from some local inhabitants.¹⁸

Areas of Settlement in North West Cameroon

Hausa migrants on arrival in the North West Region found the area suitable for commercial transaction. As their numbers continued to increase they decided to form settlements. This explains the reason for the formation of the first Hausa settlement in the Medankwe area. A small group of about thirty to fifty people started the Medankwe settlements around 1900. Among the early settlers were some Hausa Islamic scholars. They carried the title of Mallam. Some of the Mallams were chosen by the community to lead them.

¹⁵ F.Lawrence, “The Bamenda Urban Space Evolution and Organisation”, Maitrise Dissertation in Geography, University of Yaounde, 1983, pp. 3-5.

¹⁶ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 5-8.

¹⁷ NAB, cb 1916/16 file 110//17, Bamenda Division, Annual Report for the year ended, 39 : 12 : 1916.

¹⁸ N.F. Awasom, “The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grassland (1903-1960)”, Third Cycle Doctorate in History, University of Yaounde, 1984, pp. 10-50.

In that respect, such Mallams acted for the time being as settlement leaders. Among these were Mallams Balarebe, Mallam Baba, Mallam Hamidu, and Mallam Aoudou.¹⁹

The coming of the Germans

The advent of the German Colonialism in the North West Region led to the opening of their administrative station in Mendandwe area, not far from the Hausa settlement in 1902. Since the Germans were facing some resistance from the local inhabitants of the region, they quickly established friendship ties with the Hausas. This was partly because some Hausa settlers knew the region well. Such settlers were easily employed by the Germans as guides, carriers and interpreters. This cordial relationship between the Hausas and the Germans earned the Hausa community more security.²⁰

The creation of the German station in 1902 at the Mendankwe area encouraged more Hausas to migrate to the North West Region. There were made up of men, women and children. There were about seventy of them who arrived the Bamenda station in 1903.²¹

The Hausa community in their Mendankwe settlement increased to about one hundred inhabitants in 1905. The number kept on increasing as other Hausa migrants joined the settlement. As the Hausa population was increasing in size there was need for some one to lead them. The Germans authorities even suggested to them to choose a leader. As a result, Mallam Balarebe was unanimously chosen by the Hausa community to lead them; He was given the title of Sarikin Hausawa. Mallam Balarebe headed the Hausa community at Mendankwe until the outbreak of the First World War.²²

Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the ousting of the Germans from Cameroon, the Hausa settlement in Mendankwe scattered. Since most of the Hausa were friends of the Germans, some of them followed the Germans and took refuge in Fumban, others in Bafia while the rest went back to Nigeria. It is worth noting here that Sultan Njoya of Fumban welcomed the Hausa community from Bamenda and provided them security. He took charge of them and gave them land to build and stay.²³

¹⁹ Ibid; Pelican, “Interethnic Relations”, pp; 254-256.

²⁰ Ibid; Lawrence, “Bamenda Urban Space”, pp. 3-10.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Pelican, “Interethnic Relations”, pp. 254; Awasom, “Hausa and Fulani”, pp. 20-50.

²³ Ibid ; V.G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges From Prehistoric Times to the 19th Century*, London, Macmillan Publisher, 1989, pp. 80-90.

The coming of the British

At the end of the First World War in Cameroon in 1916, the Germans were defeated and ousted from the territory. Cameroon henceforth became under the control of Britain and France. The two powers decided to partition the territory into British Zone which later became known as the Southern Cameroons, included the North West Region.²⁴ Following this partition in 1916, the British military officer, George Macauley, who was to administer the Bamenda region had difficulties gaining access to the interior of the British sphere. Having been used to the German colonial authority, the inhabitants of Bamenda were not at all welcoming to the British. As the story goes, the British eventually relied on the Hausas who had earlier collaborated with the Germans, but had taken refuge in Fumban.²⁵

George Macauley who had now gained access to the interior eventually sent for the Hausas in Fumban to come back to the Bamenda station, but Sarki Balarebe refused. The four British soldiers sent to bring the Hausas instead succeeded in convincing but Balarebe's assistant, Mallam Baba, to go back to their former settlement. Mallam Baba together with a large Hausa following decided to return to Bamenda. Before they departed, Sultan Njoya of the Bamums sent fourteen Fumbanese envoys to accompany Baba and his people. Sultan Njoya also gave numerous gifts to the departing Hausa community made up of men, women and children. They generally trekked to Bamenda while a handful came on horse backs. They travelled to Bamessi and Bamessing to the Bamenda station.²⁶

When the Hausas arrived, the British resettled them at Ntamulung and Bafrend areas. As time went on, the Hausas found these new settlements not conducive. As such, through the efforts of their headman, Mallam Baba, they asked the British for the change of settlement area. George Macauley settled them in a place known as poto-poto. These developments were in 1916.²⁷

The bringing of the Hausa settlement closer to the British administrative area did not favour the British. This was as a result of the noise regularly orchestrated by the community. What happened is that the Hausas, as Muslims, prayed five times a day. Each prayer was

²⁴ NAB, cb 1916 /16 file 110/17, Bamenda Division Annual Report for the Year ended, 1916 ; V.G. Ngho, *Cameroon 1884-1985, A Hundred years of History*, Yaounde, Navi Group Publication, 1987, p.81.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 16-17.

²⁷ Ibid.

usually preceded by the calling of the faithful to prayers. This calling was done in a loud voice.²⁸

Secondly, Hausa women used to pound maize early in the mornings and late in the evenings for corn flour. Thirdly, some Hausa men who played the local drum, *kalangou*, in praise of the wealthy made much noise in the process. All these activities made the British to feel uncomfortable with the community near the station.²⁹

The Abakpa Settlement in North West Cameroon

The discomfort obliged the British to look for a new settlement for the Hausa community away from them. They subsequently found a bushy and an unoccupied area full of wild animals down town. The Hausa community leader, Sarikin Hausawa Mallam Baba requested the British administrators to help them prepare the settlement. The Hausa population then began to construct houses on the site. The settlement was officially declared by the British Authorities in 1918.³⁰

According to other sources, the Hausas contacted the head of Mankon village for permission to settle there. Fon Angwafor II of Mankon accepted and ordered his tribes men to build houses for his guest. Seven mud houses were erected in a single day. The new Hausa settlement was in one of the most fertile parts of Bamenda. As such the Hausa community also used the area for subsistence farming.³¹

Worth noting is the fact that, the chiefs of Mankon and Bafut from the on set were reluctant to receive Hausa settlers whom they saw as allies and prospective spies of the Germans. It was only when the British came and pleaded on latters behalf that those chiefs change their mind. Nevertheless, they kept on being suspicious of the Hausas not to end up usurping their lands from them. This was typical of Fon Angwafor II of Mankon who kept on reminding the British and Hausas that Abakpa settlement was an integral part of rural Mankon. He and his people refer to the Hausas as a stranger population whiled they were their host. To Angwafor II, the Hausas were his guest living in his land as such it was more of a

²⁸ Awasom, "Hausa and Fulani", pp. 30-60.

²⁹ Ibid; Interview with Alhaji Zakari and Baba Ali, Hausa Elders, old Town, Bamenda, 25th and 30th December 2001.

³⁰ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 18-20.

³¹ Awasom, "Hausa and Fulani", pp. 30-60

patron client relationship.³² The Hausas kept on contesting the status of stranger-guest given to them by the Mankon Fon and his people.

The Hausas were virtually the sole occupants of the area in 1918. Having settled there, the British administrators requested the Sarikin Hausawa, Mallam Baba, to give the settlement a name. It was then that the area was named Abakpa. It is important to note that the people's diverse ethnic origin in a single area performed mostly territory and secondary occupations like administration, trading, building construction, brewing, shoe manufacturing and so on in contrast to a rural area which is dominated by a single ethnic or tribal group and is engaged mostly in primary activities such as farming, fishing and hunting. Thus the ethnic composition of an area and its activities constitute the determinants of a town. Abakpa quarter in Mankon developed into a township and commercial centre.³³

The Hausas in Abakpa were traders dealing in beads cloths, blankets, enamel plates, salt and kerosene. Other Hausas posts as Mallams, healers, magicians, soothsayers, tailors and barbers. During the day, hired Hausa drummers and praise singers acted as advertisement agents to butchers and other traders by drumming and singing around their market sites in order to attract customers. In the night the Hausa women busied themselves preparing items for the market. The Hausas in Abakpa were therefore indulged in tertiary activities there by giving the area an urban outlook, but what is more significant is that these activities of the Hausas attracted other immigrants into Abakpa area.³⁴

Abakpa is a name of Hausa origin. It signifies a town composed of Hausa engaged in socio-economic and cultural activities. Abakpa, also signifies what can be termed "a stranger settlement". This Abakpa settlement was the main off spring of what would later come to be known as Bamenda Town. Prior to the commencement of commercial activities undertaken by the Hausas, the settlement attracted other non-Hausa people to come to it. These included the Mankon, Bafut, Bali, Mendankwe, Bansa, Nkwen, Santa, Ndop, Wum, Mbum, Nkambe, Kom and even the Bamilekes from the Western Region of Cameroon. The outcome was the cosmopolitan nature of the settlement.³⁵

Abakpa has since then grown to a modern town. It is worthwhile noting here that the traditional and administrative authorities of Abakpa town after a long period of consultation

³² Pelican, "Interethnic Relations", pp. 250-256 ; Interview with Sarikin Hausawa Usmanu, Hausa Chief, old Town, Bamenda, 20th November 2001.

³³ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 19-20.

³⁴ Ibid; Awasom , "Hausa and Fulani", 50-51.

³⁵ Ibid, Pelican, "Interethnic Relations", pp. 250-256.

and meetings decided to change the name Abakpa to Abakwa-old Town-Bamenda. The reason behind this change of name was that the town started in that area. As such, the name Abakwa-old Town will always remind everyone of the fact that the town saw its inception from that area. More to that, they wanted to modernize the name Abakpa to Abakwa-old Town which was earlier referring to a stranger or commercial settlement. The Hausas who began this settlement also argued that if the area was not more a settlement but a town, and taking into consideration that they founded that area, they should not more be referred to as strangers, or aliens. They should be recognised as full indigenes of the region.³⁶

With the increase in the size of the Hausa population in Abakwa-Bamenda, the area started proving to be very small to contain the whole community. In 1923, the Hausa population of Abakwa was estimated at 752 people. This made it possible for some Hausa residents to start looking for other settlements to move to in the North West Region. Subsequently, first off-shoots of the Bamenda Hausa community were set in Bali, Nso, Ndog and Sabongari, whose rulers welcomed the stranger population for economic and political reasons. Others migrated to the following villages: Santa, Bamunka, Wum, kom, Bafrend, Esu Wum, Bamessing, Bafut, Nkambe, Jakirii, Kumbo, Misaje, Mbem, Ndu, Mbiame, Babungo, Balikumbat.³⁷ With all these Hausa settlements established in the North West Region, the Hausas were no more aliens but true Grassfielders who have come to stay. Following census data of 1967, the Hausa population of the North West Region comprised of 2.700 inhabitants out of whom 1.350 lived in rural areas, 700 in major villages and 650 in the urban centre of Bamenda.³⁸

As already stated, in 1903 the first election of a Sarikin Hausawa held in which Mallam Balarebe was elected. He was the Sarikin Hausawa of the Hausa community from 1903 to 1915. Mallam Baba was made the new Sarikin Hausawa of the Hausa community in Bamenda from 1916 to 1918. His able Leadership attracted both Hausa and non-Hausa settlers to Abakpa-Bamenda.³⁹

The British and the Administration of the Sarikin Hausawa

The British colonial administrators used the system of indirect rule to allow and to encourage the traditional administration of the Sarikin Hausawa in Abakpa. Through indirect

³⁶ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 21-23; Lawrence, “Bamenda Urban Space”, pp. 3-10.

³⁷ Ibid; Awason, “Hausa and Fulani”, pp. 50-60.

³⁸ Pelican, “Interethnic Relations”, pp. 250-256.

³⁹ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 20-23.

Rule, the British were able to spread British rule and law indirectly to the colonial subjects of the North West generally and those of Abakpa-Mankon town in particular.⁴⁰

In order for the British to apply their policy of indirect rule in the North West generally, they made use of the traditional institutions of chiefs and Sarikis. Through various studies and intelligence and assessment reports of the North West, they divided the Bamenda division into native authorities where both indigenes and British law and order were maintained by village heads and councillors.⁴¹

The British administration used the local Native Authorities as their administrative agents. As such, on 4th of February 1927, the chiefs and selected councillors of the Ngemba Villages were grouped together to constitute a composite Native Authority known as the Ngemba Native Authority which also served as the Ngemba court. The British appointed Sarikin Hausawa of Abakpa as a member of the Ngemba Native Authority.⁴²

The Native Authorities had the role of collecting taxes from their people. When it was collected, 10 percent of the amount was kept by the Native Authority members as commission or compensation. The Sarikin Hausawa of Abakpa-Bamenda collected taxes from all residents of the settlement, both Hausa and non Hausas. He kept 10 percent of it and paid the rest to the British treasury in Bamenda. Mallam Baba exercised this duty for the British until his death in 1936. He was succeeded by his son Gandaw.⁴³

Sarikin Hausawa Gandaw administered Abakpa-Bamenda from 1936 to 1945. Unfortunately, he died in 1945 and was succeeded by his brother, Sule. Sule was recognized by the British administrators as a member of the Ngemba Native Authority. During the rule of Sariki Sule, he re-organised his administration as a result of the rise in the population of the Town. He appointed both Hausa and non-Hausa elements as quarter-heads and others as clerks.⁴⁴

In 1949, Bamenda division was raised to the status of a province. A Native Authority for the Abakpa Mankon Town was constituted under section 35(1) of the Native Authority Ordinance, with the approval of the Resident. The Hausas in Abakpa-Bamenda. Town was fully made members of the Mankon Subordinate Native Authority in 1954. The Hausas thus gained voting rights. They were then enrolled to vote in the plebiscite of 1961 as

⁴⁰ NAB, R. Newton, A.D.D., Intelligence Report on Ngemba Area, 1933, Ab27 (a) File No B 3064, 1933.

⁴¹ Ibid; Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, p. 35.

⁴² Awasom, "Hausa and Fulani", pp. 120-124.

⁴³ Ibid; Amadou, "the Hausa Community", pp. 99-104.

⁴⁴ PAB, ANo NW/HA 1951/ 1, File N° 1260, Chief Ndefru of Mankon application for transfer of Ngemba civil suits. N° 13 3/50, 1951.

Cameroonians, to decide the destiny of the Southern Cameroons. The Hausas in Abakpa-Bamenda town from then change their status of settlers or strangers to full citizens of Cameroon in general and North West Region in particular. They were no more to be regarded as aliens or migrants but indigenes of the region. Sariki Sule died in the 1970s and was succeeded by his brother Usmanu.⁴⁵

Strained Relations between Hausas and their Neighbours in Northwest Cameroon

The first problem concerned the person charged with tax collection between the Hausa chief and the Fon of Mankon. Both the Hausa Chief and the Fon of Mankon were considered by the British administration as Native Authorities. Either of them was the authority in his area where he and his councillors maintained law and order.⁴⁶

Each Native Authority was responsible for collecting taxes from his subjects. The amount to be collected was determined by the British administration. Starting from around 1926-1927, the Hausa Chief collected taxes in his area of jurisdiction, Abakpa-Bamenda Town, and paid to the government Treasury. The exercise continued without any problem during the reign of Angwafor II of Mankon. When Fon Angwafor II died and was succeeded by Ndefru, things started taking a different turn. Fon Ndefru of Mankon contested the authority of Sarikin Hausawa collecting taxes and receiving the ten percent commission. He threatened to take over the collection of taxes in Abakpa from Sariki Mallam Baba. The British administration was not happy with Fon Ndefru. The then D.O in Bamenda, H.E. Hunt, made it clear that Sariki Mallam Baba was the legitimate collector of taxes in Abakpa.⁴⁷

Fon Ndefru continued to agitate against the role of Sariki Mallam Baba in the collection of taxes in Abakpa-Bamenda Town. He argued vigorously that the Abakpa Township constituted part of rural Mankon and should be under his control as far as taxes were concerned. He pointed out that he was the village head of all Mankon, including the Abakpa settlement.⁴⁸

The new Divisional Officer, M.D.W. Jeffreys, still made it clear to Ndefru that the Hausa Chief was the one solely responsible for collecting taxes in Abakpa. He reminded the Fon that he also assisted in the appointment of Sariki Mallam Baba as member of the Ngemba Native Authority in charge of Abakpa-Bamenda Town. While the argument was going on,

⁴⁵ Awasom, "Hausa-Fulani", pp. 120-123.

⁴⁶ Ibid; Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Awasom, "Hausa and Fulani", pp. 120-123.

Sariki Mallam Baba died in 1936.⁴⁹ His successor Sariki Gandaw was still appointed by the British resident as the village head of Abakpa. Ndefru again protested, challenging the British appointments. Once more, he was made to understand that Abakpa-Bamenda Town did not belong to him; that it was a crown land.⁵⁰

When Sariki Gandaw died in 1945, he was succeeded by Sariki Sule, the problem of tax collection and land control persisted. Ndefru continued agitating by writing petitions against Sariki Sule of Abakpa to the Resident. He argued that Sariki Sule was his subordinate; that he alone should collect the taxes and pay to the treasury. What ever, Sariki Sule continued administering Abakpa and collecting taxes.⁵¹

The problem was solved around 1950 by the assistant D.O. of Bamenda who advised that Abakpa should constitute part of the village of Mankon, and that Ndefru should have some control over the area. The then Resident, F.A. Goodliffe, in an effort to resolve the problem, created a council which was in charged of the administration of Abakpa-Bamenda Town. This council included both Fon Ndefru and Sariki Hausawa Sule of Abakpa. In 1954, both the Sarikin Hausawa Sule and Fon Ndefru, were each made a full Native Authority.⁵² Starting from 1954, Sariki Sule was able to administer Abakpa freely; he collected taxes from his subjects without any more problems from Ndefru of Mankon. This once more goes to confirm the Hausas in the North West not as aliens but indigenes of the region.

The judicial system also strained relations between the Hausas and the non-Hausas in many places in the North West Region. When Hausas were tried in native courts it was the native law and customs that were applied during judgements. The Hausas and other Muslims were not happy about the application of such judgement. It was for this reason that they asked for an Alkali Court. They kept on agitating until a Hausa Chief was appointed by the British as member of the Ngemba Native Court. But this did not prove wholly satisfactory until the 2nd of April 1945, when an Islamic Court, an Alkali Court, was approved by the British administration.⁵³

Hausa Responses to New Political and Legal Avenues

⁴⁹ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 100-104.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid ; Awasom , “Hausa and Fulani”, pp . 120-125.

⁵³ Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 99-104.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Hausa Community in North West Cameroon gained much protection from the Ahidjo regime. This was thanks to the fact that he was practising the same religion, Islam, as them. Most of the molestation and insults they got from the local population greatly reduced. In 1990, the current regime under President Paul Biya introduced a multi-party system, and subsequently endorsed the formation of ethnic and regional elite associations as vehicles of political representation to the state and its resources. It is in this context that a growing preoccupation with “autochthony” and belonging emerged, which was promoted by the Biya regime. This is what was referred to as the liberty laws of 1990s.⁵⁴

As a result, a variety of established and new political avenues opened up and was soon explored by many regional and ethnic groups, including the Hausas. Most effective among them was the formation of ethnic elite associations to act as representatives to the state and to international development agencies. Thus in 2001, the Cameroon Hausa Cultural and Development Association Bamenda (C.H.C.D.A.) was created.⁵⁵ While alternative associations were created in the same period, C.H.C.D.A. advanced to the most vocal and effective organ of Hausa self representation. C.H.C.D.A. runs a number of regional programmes, aimed at the revitalisation of Hausa women’s socio-economic situation, the promotion of Hausa children’s education, the strengthening of civil awareness, and the improvement of trading conditions. The organisation’s most active branch is in the North West Region.⁵⁶

C.H.C.D.A. significantly contributed to promoting civil awareness among Hausas, and also succeeded in redefining Hausa political and legal status vis-à-vis the state. For instance, C.H.C.D.A in early 2000 encouraged Hausa citizens to register in order to obtain the new computerised identity cards. Many Hausas in the North West acquired the new identity cards and expressed their satisfaction with being recognised as local citizens. As they argued, they have grown up with the North West Children, have learnt their neighbour’s language, have adopted a number of North West customs, and don’t know any other home. Furthermore, they have integrated themselves into local North West communities, participating in Communal activities and supporting the local North West Chiefs.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ M.Pelican, “Mbororo claims to Regional Citizenship and Minority Status (North West Cameroon), paper presented at the EXAS 2/AEGIS Conference, Leiden, 11-14 July 2007, pp. 8-10.

⁵⁵ Ibid; Amadou, *the Hausa Community*, pp. 80-82.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

The Hausas thus see themselves as able members of North West Chiefdoms, and claim rights and belonging in the same way as their North West neighbours. As such, they are indigenes and not aliens in the region. Some influential Hausa communities, such as the one in Old Town, Bamenda, have developed an exceptional preoccupation with their group history as a way of endorsing their claims to power, land and citizenship rights. The Hausa community in Bamenda has produced a written document of its history that was structured similarly to the historical accounts of North West Chiefdoms. C.H.C.D.A has organised workshops to alert Hausa North Westerners and administrators to the right of Hausa citizens. Furthermore, it has offered legal advice in land and community disputes. The C.H.C.D.A has also been instrumental in redefining Hausa national citizenship.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

The Hausas migrated from Northern Nigeria and settled in the North West Region in the 1900. Their settlements soon grew fast and became a commercial centre. The Hausas introduced the idea of Urbanisation in the Grassfields. Abakpa-Bamenda Town under the control of the Sarikin Hausawa remained the most advanced political, economic and socio-cultural Hausa community in the whole of the North West Region. Other Hausa settlements later developed in other North West villages. The contributions of the Hausas to development in Bamenda Town should make the village head of Mankon to stop mingling in the internal affairs of the Abakpa community. Such attitude will surely enable the two communities, namely the Mankon people and the inhabitants of Abakpa-Bamenda Town to continue living side by side peacefully claiming regional citizenship and minority status to the Cameroonian state; they have been able to challenge local autochthony discourses. The Hausas are more than ever before indigenes and not aliens in the North West Region of Cameroon.

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⁵⁸ Ibid.

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