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Research Paper

A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF SOME SELECTED GROUPS IN BORNO STATE

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ABSTRACT **The study of the social and political organization of some groups in Borno examines the emergence of Shuwa Arab, Fulani, Babur-Bura and Marghi. It also give and insight of their ght of their political and administrative structure by analyzing all their activities, interms of politics, leadership, revenue generating and structural development. It went further to discuss socio- cultural and socio-economic organisations of the tribes under review. Primary and secondary sources of data were considered. Oral interview and focused group discussion (FGD) served as the primary source of data. While referred text books, Journals, magazines and internet materials are considered to as the secondary source of data, the findings revealed that these four tribes played a significant role towards the developmental spheres of Borno and made it what it is today. The contributions of these tribes has a great significance *interms of education, and social development of Borno as a whole.***

KEYWORDS :The study of the social and political organization of some groups in

INTRODUCTION

Brief History of Borno

INTRODUCTION

Borno is one of the most powerful polities to have emerged in the central Sudan. The Empire had under gone several political transformations under the Saifawa rulers. Historically Borno was linked with Kanem, the region lying east of Lake Chad inhabitated, according to Abdullahi Smith, by the numerous Teda-Daza speaking language groups.1 The physical environmental condition and location of Borno differed from that of Kanem.2 The derivation and antiquity of the term while as a regional title is open to many questions. The earliest reference to the region in written sources appears in the writings of Ibn Khaldum in the late 14th century, who simply said Borno was a province of Kanem.3 The kingdom of Borno covers an area extending from the River Shari in the East to Nguru Ngilewa in the west. This area about 51,200 square kilometers, and formed a political base for Saifawa

where the Mais exercised their direct control over the people in distant territories.4

1 Abdullahi Smith (1974). "*The Early State of the Central Sudan in the History of West Africa* Vol, 1 ed, Ade

Ajayi and Micheal Crowther, Longman, Ibadan P158.

2 Ibid .

3 Ibrahim Modu (1989) "*The Shuwa Arabs in 19th Century Borno Politics, 1808-1902"* M.A Dissertation, University of Ibadan P3.

4 Ibid.

Borno State has borders with Yobe (West), Gombe (South) and Adamawa States and also with the Republic of Niger, Chad and Cameroun (East). The state occupies a large part of the Chad Basin and has a population density of about 45 inhabitants per square km. The vegetation is a mixture of Sudan Savannah and Sahel Savannah, the former stands in area close to the Northern limit of Sudan vegetation in the country and the latter the southern part of the Sahelian vegetation in the West Africa. The vegetation includes Acacia nilotica Senegal, and Acacia seyal, the last two are the major sources of gum Arabic and grown in semi-arid areas. The vegetation also includes the non-leguminous ziziphus and balanitesa egyptiaca, though between 1975-1995, the acacia woodland suffered mild depletion. The state witness rainfall around June/July to September and from December to February, it undergoes the dry harmattan season. A large portion of the state is classified as semi-arid or arid. Major geographical features of the area include the Borno plains, Biu Plateau, and the swamps located south and west of Lake Chad.5

Borno has an estimated population of

4,071,104 million people, with male 2,163,358 million and female 2,007,746 million according to the 2006 census (National Population Commission 2006).6

Climate and Vegetation

Three seasons have been identified: the cool dry (Harmattan) season (October- March), hot dry season (April-June) and rainy season (July-September). Temperatures are high all the year round, with hot seasons temperatures ranging between 39C and 40C under the shade. In the Southern parts of the state, the weather is relatively mild. The rainy seasons lasts for less than eighty days in the extreme North, but is as high as 140 days in the extreme South. The mean annual rain falls is over 800mm on the Biu plateau but less than 500mm in the extreme North around Lake Chad. Droughts are endemic and rainfall tends to have been in decline since the 1960s7. Relative humidity is generally low throughout the state, ranging from as low as 13% in the driest months of February and March to the high east values of seventy to eighty percent in the rainy season months of July and August.

Economic Activities

The people of Borno produced crops such as groundnuts, beans, millet, guinea corn, rice, wheat, soya beans etc. Vegetable such as tomatoes, pepper, onion and spinach amongst others. Besides agriculture and fishing, there also exist elaborate local industries. These include pottery, mat making, tannery, blacksmithing, calabash production and decoration, cloth embroidery, cap making and embroidery, making mortar and pestle and so on.8

Livestock investment and social values varies according to local situations and historical

5 www.briefhistoryofborno.com

6 National population commission (2006). Annual report 12th edition.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

circumstances. A third element, fishing can be added to that fundamental pair, but its position within the system is slightly ambiguous as most of the catches are sold in town market as sun-dried fish. Fish is nonetheless an important component of the peoples diet. Borno State consist of many ethnic groups amongst which are Shuwa Arab, Fulani, Babur-Bura, Margi and so on.

The Emergence of the Shuwa Arabs in Borno

The Shuwa Arabs originally came from Arabian Peninsula and are

the only speakers of the Semitic language in Nigeria. They are predominantly found in eastern and central Borno state. Since their arrival in this part of Africa almost seven centuries ago, they have gradually become very important in the history of Borno in particular and Nigeria in general.

The term Shuwa has been given different and various meanings by both foreign and

local observers. One interpretation is that the word is derived from Kanuri 'Shawa' meaning fine or beautiful, in recognition of the Shuwa Arabs distinctive features from the predominant groups in Borno. A second interpretation is that the term originated from 'Shuwaiya' denoting few in Arabic. This implies that the Shuwa Arabs are few in number.9 Thus, to distinguish the Judham and other related group from other Arab groups that had found their way to Kanem Borno mainly as traders such as the Jellaba (from Nilotic Sudan), and Wassili (from North Africa), the term Shuwa (a variant of sha or shoa) was applied to the nomadic pastoral Arabs. Another rendition (though not very common and which seems to suggest the Kanuri image of Shuwa Arabs, is that the term stemmed from the Kanembu or Kanuri ashi, implying "the strong headed man, willful or disobedient man". (Ashi denotes here "obstinacy" and suffix-wa, quite common in Kanuri, means simply the people of"). Thus, the word ashiwa or ashuwa emerged allegedly because the original bearers are said to have been so obstinate that they refused to follow the Prophet Muhammed, turning instead into a wandering tribe.

The immigration of ancestors of the Shuwa Arabs into the Chad Basin area dates to the late 14th century, when the group usually referred to as the Judham Arabs appeared in Kanem, the region immediately northeast of Lake Chad. This Arab group, which originated in Yemen, invaded Egypt in the early Islamic expansion, and the bulk of whom reached the Christian Kingdom of Nubia by the middle of the 7th century. The arrival of the Judham Arabs in the Chad Basin region is widely viewed as a gradual process closely linked with the diminishing pastureland along the valley of the Nile as well as hostile policy against them from the Mamluk rulers of Egypt. Thus, under what appears to have been ecological and

political pressures, the Judham Arabs were initially forced to move southward along the Nile

9 Yakubu Muhktar, (2002) Musa Daggash. *The Story of a Shuwa Arab Boy, Heinemann Education Books*
(Nigeria Plc), Ibadan p3.

lley and then westwards into the Lake Fittri, Bahr al-Ghazal, and Lake Chad area.10 Their westward migration brought them to as far as Kanem, but they became more concentrated in

Wadai.

Subsequently, mainly Arabic-speaking tribes or groups gradually occupied the entire belt between the white Nile and Lake Chad, with the Shuwa Arabs constituting the westmost clusters.11 The dispersal of the Judham and other related Arab groups westwards from the Nile Valley was instigated chiefly by political events and conditions in socio-ecological environment rather than by deliberate action of individual rulers. For instance, the first significant wave of Arab immigration unto northeast Africa and beyond in Islamic history was prompted by the Muslim conquest of Egypt in the 7th century A.D. This event in its turn set the stage for consequent movement of Judham Arabs southwards. Their way of life as nomadic pastoralists might have made them unwilling to accord with the centralizing authority of a statum system.

The fall of the powerful Nilotic Alwa in 1316 and 150 A.D. respectively removed an important barrier previously hindering the influx of the Arabs.12 Since their advent in Kanem and later in Borno, the Arab (called Shuwa by the Kanuri)13 had for long Maintained their nomadic pastoral way of life, which had partly influenced their outward unwillingness to assimilate cultural traits of the predominantly sedentary Kanuri of Borno. Interestingly, the Shuwa Arabs prefer calling themselves simply Arabs. For whenever a Shuwa Arab is asked for his identity, he will unequivocally say *Ana-Arabi*, meaning he is an Arab.

Physically, the Shuwa vary broadly, in accordance with the extent of their admixture with the indigenous elements, the only common denominator for the whole tribes being their fluency in Arabic language. Where they had been able to live together in larger section and close to other Arab tribes, they had preserved the light skinned complexion and other features of their forebears; otherwise they had become almost like the autochthons, except for some fluency in Arabic as already stated.14

Political and Administrative Structure of Shuwa Arab people in Borno

During the period of Mai Idris Alooma, the Saifawa dynasty sought for the assistance of the Arab leaders in overthrowing the king of Bulala, Abduljalil who annulled the agreement signed by his predecessors. Thus, these mark the beginning of the Shuwa Arab

10 Bahr-al-Ghazal, refers here to the stream connected to Lake Chad through the river Shari, and not the one linked to the Nile.

11 Ulrich Braukamper (1994), "*Note on the History and Culture of the Shuwa Arabs"* in B.M.S newsletter, Nos.

17 & 18 Pp.46-47

12 Zeiltner, *"Installation des Arabes*," Pp. 132-133.

13 G. Nachtigal (1987), "Sahara and Sudan Vol. III (London) P. 174.

14 Ibrahim Modu (1989), "*The Shuwa Arabs in the 19th Century Borno Politics C. 1808-1902"* (M.A. Dissertation University of Ibadan), Pp. 15-18.

leaders meddling in the politics of Borno.15 At that particular period Arabs exercised an autonomous administrative system where every clan of Shuwa Arab had their Sheikh who oversee the affairs of his community. For example, Sheikh Ibrahim Wadaima was in charge of Wuluk-Himet Arabs. Sheikh Terab in charge of Wulad Arabs, and Ahmed Gonimi in charge of Wulad Salum. These Sheikhs were assisted by the Shura (council members), known as Ajawid. They are appointed by a ten-man council and their appointment will be later confirmed by the Mai of Borno.16 These system of autonomous administration extended up to the time of Sheikh Muhammed Al-amin El-kenemi.

It was during the time of Muhammed Al-amin El-kenemi as a Sheikh of a particular clan that the Shuwa Arab generally of Kanem and later Borno were fully involved in the administration, and were recognized as political entity. They held key positions in both military and civil administration. These positions include the post of military leadership, advisers and other vital posts.17

Socio-cultural activities of the Shuwa Arab of Borno

Culture is broadly the social heritage of a group within an organized community or society. It is a pattern responses discovered, developed or invented during the group history of handling problem which arise

from interactions among its members, and between them and their environment. These responses are considered the correct way to perceive, feel, and think and act and are passed onto new members through immersion and teaching, determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong. It encompasses all learned and shared, explicit or tacit, assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, norms and values, as well as attitudes, behavior, dress and language.18

When it comes to the cultural dressing of the Shuwa women, there is what is referred

to as *Laffaya*, this *Laffaya* is believed to be the modest way of dressing as the cultural endowment of the Shuwa Arab and they all abide to it as their means of dressing. Even the poorest Shuwa must have atleast two to three different types of *Laffaya*. There is also

'*HenniDuham'. Humra* (white and black) is a type of scent used or prepared in traditional

way which they used during bed time to entice the husband. This scent is very powerful and has aromatic fragrance to make the husband feels at home during bed time hours. There are others they used during the day time19.

The traditional food of the Shuwa Arabs is known as kisre which is made from rice,

millet or Maize is a very popular food of the Shuwa Arab, *Darraba* (okro) is the matching

15 Mohammed Adam (1977). "*The Shuwa Arabs in Borno" B.A Hons Final Year Project, Bayero University Kano*
P.73.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Dibal H.B. (1982) "*Parents Attitude Towards Western Education" M.A Disertation (unpublished) Dept. of*
Education University of Maiduguri. P. 23.
19 Interview with Hadiza Abdulkarim on 7th July 2015 in Maiduguri.

soup of *kisre*. While *Khamoniaya, Shirba* is very delicate form of pepper soup made from goat or sheep intestine and *Gima* which is a combination of spaghetti mixed with grilled meat and pepper. *Basisi* is another delicacy from the Shuwa Arab food collection which is mainly done for breakfast, it is a combination of milk and cheese butter which is essentially good for the bone marrow20.

Socio-economic Organisation of the Shuwa Arabs in Borno
The Shuwa Arabs in Borno maintained their nomadic life since their arrival into Africa. They were later influenced by the sedentary activities of neighbouring principalities. According to Ibrahim Saleh, the Shuwa Arabs through their leaders Sheikh Ibrahim Wadaima who was in Kanem and later Borno, was given Ngumati area as fief by Shaykh Muhammad Al-Amin El-Kanemi. The source further indicated that there are notable areas among others used as temporary settlement where they develop numerous economic activities. For example, at the domestic level, they supplied the Monday market with grains, butter and wild rice; and especially at the great Monday market. Indeed, most of the maternal kinsmen of the Shuwa Arabs engaged in this profession. Thus, the pioneering business which had remarkably led to the growth of economic activities among the Shuwa Arabs was the livestock trade between the Chad basin area of Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon on one hand and the southern provinces of Nigeria on the other21.

The Fulani or Fulata
The other nomadic group are the Fulani or Fellata as they are known in Borno. The early history of their movement from the west is obscure. It is sufficient for us to note that they must have been present in Borno by the 15th century. Before the beginning of the 16th century they were to be found in considerable number in Baghirmi and played a role in the foundation of that state, they were grazing their herds in the so called Great Forest area. By the late 17th century there are records of their presence near Birni and by the 18th century, if not much earlier they were grazing on the shores of Lake Chad. It must have been in the 17th and early 18th century that the first parties moved south to the slopes of the Mandara hills and the plains of Kuba, before pushing on into Fombina along the routes pioneered by Borno ivory traders. Their origin has been a matter of controversy as various scholars have advanced different theories to explain their emergence. Their own tradition, however, claims decent from the famous Arab, Uqba b. Amir bin Nafi. Briefly, the tradition is that Uqba, left Arabia at the time of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) after he learnt that he was going to father a non-Arab Son,. After Sojourning in various places, he came to the western Sudan

where he married a black wife, Bajemango. Their children were the ancestors of all the Fulbe

20 Ibid.

21 Ibrahim Saleh El-Hussain: (1976) Islam Tarikhal Arabs Watiayatul Fi Imbiratoriyyat Kanem Borno: Cairo, Maktabat-Mustafal Babi Al-Halabi p. 33.

except the Mbororo of the children, Deita became ancestor of Songai Fulbe, Woya that of Fulbewoya, Roroba the ancestor of the wolaba'en, and Nasi that of Fulbe Baowina and the Wollarbe. According to tradition, the Mbororo were descendants not of Uqba but of a water spirit or of Uqba's slave born of Bajemango after she was ravished22.

The tradition of Fulbe origin, just as that of the Hausa (the Bayajidda legend), Yoruba (Oduduwa), Nupe (Tsoede), and the Kanuri (Saif b. Dhiyazan) was a mere legend. Uqba b. Nafi, a historical personage, was also cited with the Arab conquest of North Africa during the early expansion of Islam. It is a fact that he had never been to the western or central Sudan. However, one can speculate on the significance of the legend. It is possible that, following the activities of this Arab general in North Africa, a number of Berber and related groups, probably to escape Arab conquest or islamization or both, migrated to the south, across the Sahara Desert where they encountered the black peoples of the region. Some of the Berbers were nomadic and so when they began to infiltrate into the south many of them may have gradually intermarried with the Negro farmers. Moreover, the whole Senegal valley, which the Berbers Nomads crossed from the north to pasture their herds on the ferlo plateau, functioned as a permeable membrane. However, having found good pasture, the Berbers immigrants became culturally isolated from the Northern groups whom they had very little motive for rejoining. Gradually, they intermarried with their darker, southern Negroid neighbours and the products of such unions may probably have been the Fulbe. It was from the Senegal River Basin that the Fulbe started to spread gradually eastwards within the Savannah belt of Africa and after into Northern fringes of the equatorial forest zone free from the investigation of tsetse fly23.

The entry of the Fulata into Borno was of some antiquity, the first mention of their presence being in the reign of Mai Abdallaha Ibn Dunama (C 1564-1570). According to the accounts of Ibn Fartua,

these new immigrants into the Sayfawa kingdom had quickly established themselves as warthy of the protection of the state, for during the first twelve years of his reign, Mai Idriss Alauma (1580-1616) had personally led three campaigns against the Tuareq in defense of the Fulata. Ibn Fartua wrote:

"they (the Tuareq) were wicked doers and robbers on who wrought ill to the Muslims and did evil on earth. They did not act justly, but harried the Fulata by night and day when they least expected them. Our Sultan Hajj Idris made three attacks on the Tuareq in person when God granted him a great slaughter of his enemies and not counting the expeditions of his captains and Amirs and others among his people such as the tribe of Kileti. After these

expeditions, the Barber were downcast and sought virtue."

22 S. Abubakar, (2008), *Lamibe Fombina A History of Adamawa Emirate 1809-2008,* Book wright Nigeria

Ibadan publishers, P. 48-49.

23 Ibid P. 50.

At that time, the Fulata must have been settled to the west of Lake Chad to have come into raiding contact with the Tuareq. Temple suggests that there was a pell colony in Birni Kafela since the fifteen century, possibly the group that attracted Mai Idris Alauma's protection against the Tuareq. This particular group seemed to have opted for a more settled life, for about the middle of the eighteenth century, the first Shuwa group to have crossed into Borno, was a fighting war between the Fulata of Kefela and the Shuwa immigrants in which the Shuwa reportedly chased out the Fulata recaptured and reoccupied their town24.

Socio-Economic and Political Organisation among the Fulata

The Fulbe society was essentially Nomadic, and *Lawal Pulaku*, (Fulbe way of life) was central to the perpetuation of their social and political organization. The largest social group among the Fulbe was the clan (*lenyol*), the smallest was the single lineage family, an independent group whose cohesion was dependent on possession of sufficient cattle, interest in the herd bound together sons, daughters and parents, as well as wives and husbands. The sons, as dependents, were cattle herdsmen while the womenfolk marketed the bovine products and built hurts when they migrated. The degree of respect accorded to a head of family by his sons and the wider community was proportional to the size of herds heads. As far as his family was concerned, he was *Ardo* (leader) and the cohesion of the family remained as long as cattle stayed under his control. His sons would render their services to earn reward with sufficient cattle to begin their own independent lines. Ownership of cattle began at birth, usually as gifts from relatives, emphasizing the importance of cattle in the society. These gifts (*Sukkilol*) were on important occasions, and by the time the child had grown up, he possessed some cattle within the family herd. Finally on marriage, he received more cattle from his father to support his family. From then onwards he had two alternatives; either to settle alone as an independent herds-owner or continues to live with his parents in a large lineage family. The size of the family herds determined what option to choose, where the cattle were few, reliance upon parents two relatives was ineveitable.

The two major classes in Fulbe society were the *bikkol* and *Maube* (youths and elders,

respectively). Children below the age of puberty are *bacci*, boys and girls above them are *Sukabe* and *Iwaibe*, respectively. Another important social group in the Fulbe society was the *Kori'en*, which was a step above the *sukabe* class. While the latter embraced all the unmarried youth, the former was a sort of an association of the newly wed. The latter shave off their hair looks after marriage, usually in the twenty-fifth year, and after three years the *kori'en* formally joint the maube class. The Maube class was in two categories, those below the mid-forties and those above. The latter were *naye'en* (single *nayejo*) or (*ndottien*, (single,

ndottijo). The famine equivalent was Fuloreube (single *puldebbo*). Each of the several social

24 Kyari Tijjani (2010) *Dynamic of Administrative Change in Pre-colonial Borno.* Borno Sahara and Sudan

Series. Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences; P 278.

groups look up to its immediate senior for guidance and leadership. The most senior class, the

ndotti'en, enjoyed the respect and absolute obedience of every individual in the society25.

An important social code, the *Pulaku*, regulated the day – to day life of the Fulbe, in the olden days. Its essential elements were sermtende (*shyness*), *munyal* (patience), *hakkilo* (care and forethought), *doutare* (obedience), *endaam* (compassion) *manginki* or *mangitineare* (respect for elders), yerduye (trust), *chusu* (courage) and *ainoldina* or dewal (strict observance of religious duties). All the elements of *Pulaku* were important for daily observance by all Fulbe, especially when dealing with relatives, parents, and elders (*Maube*). Strict adherence to the code was essential so that everybody could enjoy the materials and moral benefits of living with his clansmen. The flouting of any element of the code has serious repercussions. Any offender was liable to *homboundu* (ostracism or *nyamto* a fine) payable in cattle or in kind. Partly because of these and partly because the principles of the code were inculcated in the minds of children right from birth, the code was rarely flouted. Traditionally, the belief was that *pulaku* resided only in a *pullo* of pure descent, because its characteristics passed from generations of Fulbe parents. Therefore, an *Ardo* was an embodiment of *Pulaku*, he was thus its head (*maudo*) and guardian. It was his duty to order *hombondu* or *nyamtol* in the event of breaches of the code. Undoubtedly, the code of *Pulaku* was the Main agency behind the support and respect enjoyed by the *moube* and the *Ardoen* within any Fulbe group. Indeed, *Pulaku* was synonymous with Fulbe law, if not constitution.26

There was also an important social unit among Fulbe youths, this was *walderu*, a kind of age group association, whose members addressed one another as *Ngorgi*, or *Sappa* in the case of the females. Age-mates usually played together grew together, and paired during the *soro* festival. *Walderu* was of profound importance. Apart from generating love, goodwill and the sense of belonging in the youths, it fostered strong kinship ties, which were essential for the continued existence of Fulbe society.27 The Fulbe were pastoralists, with cattle husbandry as their most important economic activity. Families were independent economically as the herds provided for their daily needs. Milk was part of the diet, but marketed or bartered to the non-Fulbe by the woman-folk for foodstuff in the wet season when milk was plentiful. Indeed it was cattle that united the Fulbe as a group within the plural society and with a degree of solidarity, which transcended both kinship and clanstrip. Therefore, the cultural and ethnic identity of the Fulbe, as well as their socio-economic structure, dependent upon possession of cattle.

According to Myers, pastoralism is a mode of life, in which a

"human community is enabled through its control of domestic

animals ad through its own dependence on them, to dispense with

25 Ibid P 64.

26 Interview with Ardo Salih on 8th August 2018 in Maiduguri.

27 S. Abubakar opcit. P. 66.

the cultivation or even the necessary collection of plant or plant food, or any deliberate interference with the natural vegetation of a region"28

Fulbe generally depend on the cows, their economic livelihood depended on their cattle that

is why they are referred to as cattle Fulbe or caw in the sense that all what is needed by the postural Fulbe is derived from their cattle. It is therefore pertinent at this juncture to look at the individual function of children in the Fulbe society. Young children from the age of 4 – 6 years are introduced to take care of calves and tie them every evening. By the age of 7 years they start active rearing of the cattle. They are also taught on how to make cheese and yoghurt by the adults and elders *Iwalde* and *derkeen*, which they take to the market for sale. Economically, farming is beginning to take root among the Fulbe especially the semi- nomadic groups. This is so because of population growth and high rate of birth, the Fulbe people can no longer depend on herding alone. Crops cultivated include cereals, e.g Maize, rice, guinea, corn, milet, beans and groundnut. Most of these cultivated for local consumption only. Relations are involved to assist on the farm (*surge*). Food and milk is prepared for work on the farm during *surge*. Market days are very important to the life of the Fulbe table, because women go there to sell milk and buy their provision while men go there to sell cattle.29

The Babur-Bura

The Babur is one of the largest ethnic groups with different clan names who traced their tradition of organs from Birni Ngazargamu. Oral tradition and documentary evidence suggest that the founder of Babur people was Zargamu as a result of dynastic struggle from the family of Mai of Ngazargamu and moved to Biu area and settled at Limbur between Chukurkul and Mandaragarau with his followers or a numbers of forces30. They speak a common (Chadic) language Bura or Babur and practice many of the same beliefs and customs interms of local economy, religion, and other aspects of social life. The Babur are Muslim, to south, the Bura are predominantly Christians. Another royal origins story was that of Yam ta-ra-wallla, the founders, was born of a Kwaki (a kinless) woman, who either came from Buraland or who came from elsewhere and wondered about there. She found her way to Borno court at birni Ngazargamu, became consort to the monarch, and produced two sons for him. Yampta and his two half-brothers grew up in the palace, but because Yampta was not Muslim, he was passed over for the royal succession. (He slaughter a bull in the non-Muslim way at the burial succession ceremony).

Yampta then wandered southward towards Biu and settled near Miringa, a chiefly and

powerful town (just north of Biu) with a group of airmed followers. He tried to increase the

28 Ardo Salih Opcit.

29 Kyari Tijjani Opcit P 281.

power of the local town chief, telling him to have many feasts, so people would came and give their respects and tribute gifts. The chief resented yampta's telling him what to do and ardered him to leave Miring territory. Yampta replied by saying that this area, or some of it, was not his territory by right of use31. Yampta then conquered Mirnga by stealth and strength. In stealth he seduced the Chiefs daughter and obtained the secret of the towns talisman, a sacred horses horn, which he got to come out of the ground, using secret words he seduced the chiefs daughter into telling him. Without its super natural protection, the town fell easily to yampta. The chief of Mirnga, finding himself in a defeated town, chased after yampta to a stream called Mshelasawa (a prince cannot drink this water) and crossed it. Yampta then shouted to the chief go back, no man has ever chased me. If you were not my father in-law, I will not be so lenient. Do not cross the stream or you will be in great danger. And the chief never returned. Yampta established himself in the area in his own town which soon became very powerful amongst all others.

A Bura version of the story was that yampta-ra-walla was a political leader whose power did not reach to this village. He was an illegitimate child of Mai of Borno. His mother was found in a bush near Gazargamo left there by slave dealers because she was pregnant. She was then taken to the palace and delivered the baby there. Yampta grew up in the Mai's palace as a son of the Mai. When the Mai died Yampta wished to be chosen successor but wasn't and so he left Borno disappointed at being passed over for the Maiship. He was accompanied by some followers and they all settled in an area near present-day Mandaragirau. He was a widely known very successful hunter and sold animals to people for his living. He and his men intermarried with local and were accepted. One day he killed an animal but no one would buy the meat, so he took it into the village, but people still refused. He insisted, even tried to force them to buy, but the people still refused and tried to force yampta and his men out of the village. Yampta asked them why they fought so fiercely were they 'Bura' (a fierce insect that gives painful bite). From that day forward they were called Bura. Yampta was a fierce and skillful fighter and a well-known medicine man (sorcerer). He learned these skills from the Bura who he first settled among, he tried to find the secret of their successes and could not until he met a girl, who befriended him. She told of a secret charm that help the people to win in war. Yampta-ra-walla, stole the secret charm became famous, moved to a village closer to Biu and became a learder of the babur people. 32

Socio- Political Organization of Babur-Bura

According to C.K Meek, the Bura are composed of clans which are really engaged in patrilineal families of 15 to 500 biological families. These clans are exogamous and frequent totemic. Large clans split into smaller clan marrying each. An example been the Bwala class

now split into six (6) clans. The clans are usually localised but most villages have two or more clans. The civil and religious authority being vest in the senior member of the oldest established clans, some clans are associated with totems. But for the most part this association is vague and many clan disclaim it's a number of the instance of how the relationship between a clan and a totems has risen are given by meek.33 Clan are exogamous except for the *woviri* of the Babur chief which married into it and practices cross-cousin marriages. The clan head is responsible for many religious rites. The Bura have a clan organization, a lineage where men with a common ancestor and about seven (7) generations back are the true genealogical structure.

A maximal lineage in these who knew that they are related to each other and who possibly do not intermarry and worship at a common shrine. A minimal lineage is a biological family of father wives and children. The head in lineage is the senior person, senior by generation and within his generation by age, so that he is not

necessarily the oldest man. The lineage head has authority over his lineage and also responsible towards them in addition to the lineage (or clan) organizations; there is a second principle affecting the social organization, namely the principle of locality. People who lived together naturally work and fight together and have bounds of association. Early localities or villages, almost certaintly contained only one clan. The locality has a head, that is a village or hamlet head and he is a person with the largest backing in the Bura area, this is normally the senior member of the clan that founded the village. In Bura area the principle of locality may be more important than the clan organization for a large extent each village was separated and even 9 village might not come to each others rescue. The unit is the family among whom each hamlet is independent of its neighbours and co-operation is only possible in the events of grave tribal danger. It is to be particularly noted that the sense of clan kinship is weakening (partly as a result of the abolition of blood feud) and that is not as it used to be.34

Politically the Babur-Bura, were however, devoid of any cultural government. Each village area constituting an independent political unit under the headship of the senior member of the family. They have no tradition of loyalty or subservience to any chief of the status higher than hamlet or village head. The only man with authority is the head of a family and his authority is only recognized as long as he is able to back it up by force. They openly say that they will not obey any Bura put over them. The Babur-Bura political organization was based on village unit, village were independent of each other. Each head its *Olirdi* (a village head) a village consisted of several (*Dur*) or clan. All clans live in (*Zara*) ward separately, that is each clan head its ward, each clan had its *Olirdur*, (clan head). The *Olirdu* or village head was usually the Olirdu of a clan of the first clan to settle on the land and the clan heads of new or late comers were incorporated into the village council.

Those who came late observed the rites and religious practices of the people they met and obeyed their laws. The village was the person with political and religious authority. However, this was not always the case as the new comers into the area would have more powerful shrine or *haptu* (Idol). The *olirdi* control the land and treated all matters related to it. The inheritance of *Olirdi* was a close system. A senior member of the ruling clan could inherit the *Olirdu* if he died. The clan head settled the matters or case could arose between their members who contested for the post of the *Olirdu.*35

Economic and Cultural Activities of Babur-Bura

The principal occupation of the Babur-Bura people is farming and gardening. Apart from farming and gardening, there are other occupations which they practiced. They include blacksmithing, hunting, fishing and craft. About 99.5% of Babur-Bura people are farmers. Land has never been a problem as there was always abundance of it. In case of any rearing of animals on a particular land, a group can always break away and find a new settlement somewhere else, this has been an aged long solution to over population problems for security purpose. They live on hilly area. These hilly areas are dependent of volcanoes lava which forms out to be fertile for the production of variety of crops. These crops include the guinea corn, Maize, groundnut, beans, pepper, tomatoes, garden egg and millet. Trade form another important aspect of the occupational activity of the Babur-Bura people. The people also participated actively in local trade. The trade was essentially on farm produce like sorghum, millet, Maize, groundnuts, etc. The industrial products that are traded locally among the people include hooks, bow and arrow, cutlass, fishing implements such as net, hugs, wooding implements such as spoons, calabash also serve as items of trade. This level of trade was conducted within individual village or among groups of villages usually in small market in other wards known as short distance trade.36

The Babur-Bura had many cultural festivals that dated as far back to the time before the arrival of the major religion. These cultural festivals include turbaning of a new chief and funeral rites. Death in Babur-bura is known as *mythe*: The death of an elderly person, who attained the age of 80 – 90 and above is every significant to be observed as a culture. When an elderly man died in the land, some traditional rites are observed or carried out. The elderly man was entitled for what is known as "*Batha*, Burabura or rawan gargajiya (traditional dance). People played drums and dancing while digging the grave. The strong among the youth would run to the top of the hut where he was laid and shoot an arrow. It would take about seven days of singing and dancing, of both men and women. The Babur-Bura bury their death inside the village. Another festival-inlaw is dead, a cultural activity is organized

and observed by the son inlaw. The son inlaw organized people from his village and move to

35 Samaila S. Shehu (2011), *A History of Bura Festival and Cultural Activities final year project,* Department of

History, University of Maiduguri, P 16-19.

36 Ibid P 19 - 21.

his father inlaw's house, where he present a dance. The dancing and singing could last from

4pm – 8pm.

In relation to marriage in the Babur – Bura culture, it start when a girl is born, the suitor makes his intention known by tossing a chump of leaves from a certain three into the mothers hut. If he is accepted, he gives a bracelet and later a necklace to the girl. When the girl reaches the age of seven or nine, the suitor gives out gifts to the girl's parents. This is to remind them of his intention to marry their daughter. On the day of the marriage, instruments such as *Garaya, Gulum, Molo* and *Hambutu* are played. Some common dances performed during the wedding include the *Bansuwai, banjuli, Waksha* and *chami*.

The *Su'u* or planting is another culture of Babur-Bura people. The *Su'u* is known as the first planting season being observed as a culture and tradition which exist till date. The *Su'u* is organized and done by the Bulamas of the area. They come together and elect the senior among the older Bulama to climb a tree and say "it is another period of planting so get ready to start planting by tomorrow". The senior Bulama of the whole area would be the one on the following day starts the planting by saying "everybody should witnessed I have declared planting by sowing this seed and everybody should commence planting from now henceforth37.

The Margi

The origin of the people is a matter of speculation and debate. Oral tradition suggests that in the 15th century , Kanuri people came and settle among the Marghi, people, though there was information about Marghi origin and migration, it is imperative to take a look at the emergence of the second Kanuri empire founded in 1472 by Mai Ali Gaji with its Capital in Birnin Ngazargamu. Not long after the formation of the empire, the Margi moved out of Ngazargamu to Mandara hills settling at Mcakilli in Cameroon Republic, after settling for some many years, they then moved out of the area. According to Sa'ad Abubakar, the origins of the Margi is obscure, there are reason to believe that they had been long residents within the confins of the chad basin. Probably they formed, like the Mbum, part of the so peoples of central Borno. As Schilze points out,

Mafoni, a settlement that was near modern Maiduguri, was the former stronghold of the Margi. From about the fourteenth century, the Margi appear to have lived in the region of their present habitat. Probably before the consolidation of the Borno, empire, they occupied a more northerly position. However, following the expansion and consolidation of Borno under the Sayfawa, some Margi were Kanuri-Izge while a large number of others drifted gradually why to the south and inhabited the regions they now

occupy.38

37 Ibid P 22 - 24.

38 Mairama Musa (1984) "Background to the history of Margi Udzurgu 18th and 19th century, (unpublished) B.A. A.B.U Zaria P 34.

The term Margi refers to a group of people who speak the Margi language. The people lived in North eastern part of Nigeria in the southern portion of Chad basin and extended to the Mandara mountains which form part of the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. They therefore feature prominently in four states: Borno, Adamawa, Yobe and Bauchi.39 In Borno State, the margi form the major ethnic group in five local government area. Askirauba, Damboa, Gwoza, Konduga and Kaga. In Adamawa they form the major ethnic group in five local government areas: Madagali, Gombi, Hong, Michaka and Mubi. In Bauchi they live in the present day Dambam and Azare local government area. In Yobe, margi can be located in Gujba. Certain margi groups extend beyond the boundary of Nigeria these are the Margi wandala in Gudur province of the republic of Cameroon.40

Margi language belong to the Bantu dialect, which formed part of South African language groups. Margi language does not belong to Hemitic-Semetic groups because of the six morphology of Joseph Greenberg, it is also believed that the Margi language groups belong to Afro-Ablastic language groups. The Margi have been geographically classified into four namely: Margi babal (Margi living in the plains) Margi gurngu (Margi living near mountains) Margi Tidutum and Margi putal (west Margi found mostly in Damboa local government area). Margi land is in the savannah belt and experience two seasons. The rainy season starts around April and goes onto October. During the period, there is an average rainfall of 750mm. the dry season lasts from November to march. The Margi land is fertile and that makes the people predominantly farmers and it is seasonal.41

Political Organization of Margi

Just like in Hausa land, where there is the king, and other title holders like the waziri Galadima, Turaki etc, the Margi people also have same. The only difference is that the Margi people referred to their king as chief. The chief is the overall boss in the chiefdom. His position is just like the president in the eyes of his people because he reserves the final say either death or life, he controlled the whole of the chiefdom. Any matter that cannot be settled by any other of the title holders must be brought before him to get the final judgment on the case. He has the right to suspend any sub-chief of the district who is at fault. He also promote district heads and initiate taxation especially in the olden days. He is also the overall chief security officer of his people. Next is the waziri. He was the immediate and closet adviser to the chief and constantly acted as an assistant the chief according to the custom and tradition of the Margi people, he is the most senior among the title holders. He moved along with the chief to all official assignments or invitation. He is the top among the kingmakers. Sometimes

he represents the chief inertain occasions.

39 Sa'ad Abubakar Opcit, P. 33.

40 A.A Waba (1987) Margi Udzurngu past historical struggles and Achievements in the 19th and 20th centuries paper presentation A.B.U Zaria p. 47.

41 Comrade I.A Wamdulla (1994) "*History of Margi Pele and their ways of life, Grace* production, Jos, P

The Galadima is the one to be consulted for whoever wishes to take a traditional title, before tanking the person to the Waziri. He is also among the kingmakers of the chiefdom. The Galadima make sure that whoever wants to hold any title in the chiefdom must be screened thoroughly to determine whether he is from the royal family or not. The turaki is another title holder, he served as the kingmaker and also adviser to the chief from time to time when the need arises. Anything he observes either of advantage or disadvantage to the chief, he will quickly meet him and advice the chief on how to solve the matter. He makes sure that relationship between the chief and his subject is always cordial. The baitari is a special title preserved for a capable prince. His duty is to check the interest of the royal blood and matters affecting tradition within and outside the chiefdom. The makama is the bodyguard to the chief. He protected the chief from any danger and external confrontation, more especially during wars. The makama is also found at the gate of the palace to prevent any bad approach to the chief. He is also among king makers.

The Tafida helps in organizing traditional activities in the chiefdom whenever the need arises. There is also sarkin Fulani, the title was preserved only for the Fulani people in the area. His Main duty is to protect the interest of the Fulani ethnic group, and settle any local dispute among the cattle rearars and the farmers of the area, especially towards the end of the rainy season. The Danburan is the one who oversees and make sure that people living within the chiefdom are highly protected in line with their norms and values. Chiroma on his part is to receive the chief's official guests and accommodate them before he finally informed the chief about their presence. His is duty is to make sure that the chief dresses are properly kept.42

Socio-Economic Organization of Margi

The Margi people are predominantly farmers. Their most important crops include guinea corn, beans, groundnuts and vegetables, in addition to farming, they engage in some non-agricultural trade like, smithing, weaving, dying, hunting, fishing and honey collection. Their long standing trading partners have been the Kanuri's, the mange, the Higgi, and Fulani, from whom they obtained items like, salt, potash, pots, iron, fine mats, horses and beats in exchange for grains, cotton, hides and skin, groundnuts, beans, indigo and honey. In the past some of the mangi chiefs participated in the notorious trans-saharan trade in addition to supplying ivory and shield to the Kanuri traders from the north.

In relation to social events, the Margi people are not left behind. Within the family level, one of the most common and enjoyable occasion is the evening time, when the family gather around fire, in which stories, riddles and jokes are told to entertain the members of the family. Another social events of the Margi people is the communal clearing of new farmers,

erection of new compounds, hunting and fishing, thrashing of guinea-corn, village festivals

42 Ibid P 3.

and special occasions which help in bringing the people together.

Another important occasion involved the whole village, this time around and neighboring villages as well. And the festival which combine several villages is known as the yawal.43

Margi Culture

The margi people belief in Yal, that is person who has knowledge of the gods referred to as Mdur-khubu. The persons is head of affairs of the community controlling the realm of their religious rites, who was also assisted by chief priest in change of gods that were in the hills. Therefore, he was a mediator between the society and the gods. The gods were consulted, when there is calamity or misfortunes in the land. The gods will give direction through the chief priest, that sacrifices be made either by slaughtering goat or chicken. The Mbulagabdu is another place of the warship of the gods of the margi people. This was directly under the political head of the area, but the chief priest was in charge of the gods. When rain is very scarce in the land, every household is expected to contribute corn to brew beer (local beer) and some amount of money for the purchase of goats and kolanuts which will be used during the occasion. One goat will be slaughtered at the T junction of the village, while some at the shrine. After two weeks from the celebration, chicken sacrifices were also made in every household for protection, and successful bumper harvest.

The thahum festival was also another culture of the margi people. This was performed in order to maintain social order and discipline in the land. There was also festivals for training girls into women hood in preparing them for adulthood and to initiate them, this festival a lot of marriage engagement took place, young men propose to young ladies, women that were divorced also remarry while men also go for second or third marriage. Before any marriage took place on that day, every member of the village will wake up around 4:30 in the morning, with pots of meat and facing the western direction. This signifies that all bad lucks and misfortunes go away to the western direction. Every clan in margi land is known by particular type of spirits, which guide them and could also be in the form of animals, this animals includes snakes, lions, hyenas, elephant, crocodile.44

CONCLUSION

On the conclusion note, the Shuwa Arabs, the Fulani or Fulata, the Marghi and Babur- Bura encapsulated in the topic of discussion were occasioned to be all acquainted tribes in Kanem Borno and have contributed tremendously towards the Development of the state. It is no doubt that the history of Borno would be incomplete without acknowledging these aforementioned tribes.

Plan

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