

Hausa Traders in North West Cameroon from the 19TH to the 20TH Century a Historical Investigation

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Abstract

Gold and ivory were the products of old West Africa that were desired above all else by the traders of North Africa. Trans-Saharan commerce in these items helped to build the comfort and splendour of large North African cities. But the main expansion of the trans-Saharan long distance trade came after the Muslim conquests of North Africa in the eighth century AD. It was from this time onwards that the trade began to have important results for the Western and Central Sudan. The peoples of West Africa, among which the Hausas, had one great need which the people of the Sahara could help to supply, this was salt exchange for gold. Sahara Berbers sold the goods they bought from the Sudan to the Arab traders of North Africa, and the traders of North Africa sold them again to Europeans and Asians. European and Asian goods came down into West Africa by the same methods. The Hausas supplied ivory and kola nuts. 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. The Hausas were principally long distant traders who supplied kola nuts and ivory from the Bamenda Grassfields to merchants in the lower Benue and other areas of the Adamawa region. Each Hausa settlement in the Northwest was a market place for the nearby countryside. Each Hausa settlement also became gradually a centre for long distance trade. It became a place for the exchange not only of locally-produced goods but also of goods brought from Nigeria, North Africa and Egypt, from the rest of the Sudan. Not all Hausas in the Northwest engaged in long distant trade.

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Those who stayed back home traded with the different tribes in the Northwest region. Thanks to Hausa traders, the Northwest region greatly prospered to the extent that Bamenda grew up to become a cosmopolitan and commercial town. This article therefore set out to examine the commercial activities carried out by Hausa traders in the Northwest Region of Cameroon during the 19th and 20th century. We also intend to analyse how those commercial activities were organised and what were the benefits behind those trading transactions. It is worthwhile noting here that the gains gotten from those businesses were enormous. Both Hausas and non-Hausas benefited so much from the prosperous long and short distant Hausa traders. To crown it all, the Northwest Region of Cameroon owed much of its developments to the commercial activities carried out by the Hausas resident in that region.

Keywords: Hausas; Traders; Jihad; Adamawa; Kola nut; Ivory; Bamenda Grassfields.

1. 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 author in [1] noted that 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. 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 author in [2] noted that the Hausa constitute the main population of Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. Hausa immigrant communities are found throughout Western and Central Africa. 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. The author in [3] concluded that with the passage of time, the Abakpa-Mankon settlement became very small to accommodate the ever increasing Hausa population, thus, the founding of new Hausa settlements in other regions of the Bamenda Grassfields.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the commercial activities carried out by Hausa traders in the Northwest Region of Cameroon during the 19th and 20th century. We also intend to analyse how those commercial activities were organised, who were the actors involved and what were the benefits behind those trading transactions.

1.2. Geographical Location of the North West Region of Cameroon

Our study area is the North West Region of Cameroon. The author in [4] noted that the 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.

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. The author in [5] noted that, 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.

1.3. 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. The author in [6] noted that these kingdoms were destroyed by the Fulani who themselves established a Feudal empire extending from present day Northern Nigeria to Northern Cameroon.

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. The author in [7] noted that 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.

The author in [8] noted that 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. Fulani on the other hand were pastoralists usually found in the rural areas with their herds.

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 as noted in [9] by the two authors.

The Hausa have a writing which was borrowed from the Kanuri, which has some similarities with the Arabic script. The author in [10] noted that Hausas are mostly found today in greater numbers in Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Gabon and Cameroon. Hausa communities can also be found in the Maghreb Countries of North Africa and

parts of the Middle East. Our major concern is the Hausa communities found in Cameroon, more precisely that of the North West Region.

2. Body

2.1. Background to the Coming of the Hausas to Northwest Cameroon

The author in [11] noted that 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 population to Adamawa was trade. Many of them from Nigeria and other areas entered Adamawa to trade in Ivory, Kolanuts and slaves.

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. The author in [12] noted that 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.

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 author in [13] concluded that the coming of the British after World War One witnessed the establishment of the big Hausa settlement in Abakpa-Mankon. 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 author in [14] noted that 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.

2.2. 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 author in [15] noted that 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 extensive Adamawa plateau around the 17th and 18th centuries. 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. The authors in [16] noted that it was from Banyo that a handful of Hausa traders made their way to the North West Region of Cameroon.

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, as concluded in [17] by the archival source.

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. The author in [18] noted that 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.

2.3. 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. The author in [19] concluded that 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. 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. The British later on help the Hausas in 1918 in founding the Abakpa-Mankon Town settlement. With an increase in the number of Hausa population in the Northwest Region, other Hausa settlements will be established. Before then, what was the role played by the Hausas in the slave trade activities that took place in the region.

2.4. Hausa Slave Traders in Northwest Cameroon

The trade in slaves across the Sahara reached its peak in the 8th century when the Muslims conquered North Africa and became the overall rulers. They needed labour supply which was relatively cheap and comparatively resistant to the hard climatic conditions, and suitable to the needs of the Arab masters. Slaves were highly sought after as house-servants, wives or farm-workers. The author in [20] concluded that a high demand for slaves existed in the Sahara Desert itself, where they worked in the salt mines of Taghaza.

There is historical evidence that, in the late 18th century, the Hausas, who spread from Northern Nigeria to Northern Cameroon, also encouraged and took part in the slave trade. They organized raids and those captured were sold in the North African markets of Marrakesh, Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli.

The author in [21] noted that by the second half of the 19th century, the Hausas were the chief slave traders in North Cameroon. They travelled as far as the Bamenda Grassfields to buy and raids for slaves, which they in turn sold to waiting Arab slave dealers in the Lake Chad region. It is also recorded that the Emir of Yola

received over five thousand slaves a year from the vassal chiefs of the Adamawa region. He in turn paid tribute to his overlord, the sultan of Sokoto before selling the rest to the traders of North Africa.

The archival source in [22] noted that the Hausa slave dealers in the Bamenda Grassfields played the role of middle men in the slave trader business. They went into the hinterland and dealt with local chiefs, who sold those slaves in exchange for Arab and later on European goods. The author in [23] noted that Arab and European slave dealers operated a system of "Trust" which was credit in goods given to their Hausa agents for them to supply the slaves. The Hausa slave dealers made enormous profit from the slave trade business.

When the slave trade was abolished in Cameroon, the Hausa slave dealers were persuaded to abandon the slave trade in favour of legitimate trade. The Germans and later on British colonial masters convinced the Hausa slave dealers to stop the trade in slave and take over legitimate trade. The archival source in [24] concluded that, the Hausa slavers after much reluctance ended up abandoning the slave trade. Nonetheless, they continued keeping slaves to work for them as servants, housekeepers and wives.

2.5. The coming of the Germans

The author in [25] noted that the advent of the German Colonialism in the North West Region led to the opening of their administrative station in Mendankwe 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.

The author in [26] noted that 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.

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. The archival source in [27] noted that 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.

Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the ousting of the Germans from Cameroon, the Hausa settlement in Mendankwe scattered. The author in [28] noted that 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.

2.6. 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 archival source in [29] noted that two powers decided to partition the territory into British Zone which later became known as the Southern Cameroons, included the North West Region. 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. The authors in [30] noted that, 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.

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. The author in [31] noted that 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.

The archival source in [32] noted that 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.

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. The author in [33] noted that each prayer was usually preceded by the calling of the faithful to prayers. This calling was done in a loud voice.

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 as concluded in [34] by the informant.

2.7. 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 author in [35] noted that 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.

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, as noted in [36] by the author.

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. The author in [37] noted that, 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 patron client relationship. 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, as concluded in [38] by the author.

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, as concluded in [39] by the archival source.

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. The author in [40] noted that, 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.

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 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 author in [41] noted that 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.

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, Ndop 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 as noted in [42] by the author. 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 as concluded in [43] by the archival source.

As already stated, in 1903 the first election of a Sarikin Hausawa held in which Mallam Balarebe was elected. The author in [44] noted that Balarebe 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]. How were the commercial activities of the Hausa traders organised in the region?

2.8. The Organisation of Hausa Trade

The settlement of the Hausa in 1903 in the Bamenda Grassfields increased trade between Bamenda region and the North and North Western neighbours that is Benue and Adamawa. All this was due to increase in production and consumption of goods such as salt, and cloths by European factories in the interior especially factories of Ibi and Akwana on the Benue river. Trade was also made possible by the existence of peace made possible by the British in Nigeria and Germans in Kamerun.

2.9. Kola Trade

One of the most important sources of income in Bamenda was the production and sale of kolanuts by Hausa traders. The Hausa traders in the Bamenda station region, Bali, Bamunka, Kumbo and Sabongari were the principal long distant traders supplying kolanuts and ivory from the Bamenda to Hausa merchants in the Adamawa and the lower Benue regions. The Hausas in Mendankwe and Bali dealt principally in kolanuts which they purchased from the natives of Mendankwe, Bali, Mankon, Menemo, Moghamo and Bambili. The medium of transaction was the German mark, salt or beads. Once the kolanuts collection was sufficient, the Hausas

usually left in a group for Banyo via Fumban. At Banyo they usually met Hausa merchants with Jackals and horses carrying loads of salts, hats, beads, cloths guards, potash, leather bags, slippers, gowns and so on. Business was then transacted with the merchants who were usually from different parts of the Hausa land. Some times the Hausa traders from Bamenda were forced to go further north if the prices offered at the Banyo markets were not very favourable.

Not every Hausa trader in the Bamenda Grassfields was a long distant trader. Some of them were craftsmen and blacksmiths involved in the manufacturing of mats, cutlasses, kitchen knives and pots. The Hausa settlers engaged in long distance trade often travelled in sets ranging from ten to fifty people including some natives. Once a reasonable number of people had acquired sufficient quantities of kolanuts, they would agree upon a leader *Madugu* who would arrange for the date of departure of the group for the market after consultation with the Mallam. During the course of the journey, the *Madugu* led the group in prayers at appropriate moments and negotiated and purchased food for the entire caravan.

The archival source in [45] noted that the caravan was exclusively made up of males and most of them were well known in the village, they greeted the natives and inquired from them about the security situation in the next village through which they could pass. If a climate of insecurity was reigning there, they would divert the course of their journey. Generally the Hausa caravans were hardly attacked on their way to a distant market by an entire village or by isolated robbers. Most of the members of the expedition were armed with sword, sticks and bows and arrows to protect themselves from any attack by humans or animals. On the return journey, the *madugu* gave presents to the people through whose village they passed in order to maintain good relations with them. If they wanted more of the goods, they would have to buy them. Every member of the caravan contributed to the presents, which the *madugu* made to the villagers. When the Hausas returned to the Bamenda Grassfields, they sold their commodities to the natives and the Hausas who did not go on the long-distance trade.

The Hausa women were involved in petty trade within and without the Hausa settlements. They bought food items such as cassava, maize, beans, groundnuts, oil and cocoyam from the natives. Some of these food items were transformed into chewables such as *bakuru*, *maimai*, and *accra* which they sold to other Hausa people and the natives. They extracted oil from groundnuts, which they used in cooking and in making a variety of cakes from corn flour. In order to produce groundnuts oil, the Hausa women fried groundnuts paste and thoroughly mixed it. This made the groundnuts oil to float on the water and it was carefully drained into containers. The groundnuts chaff was used to make *bakuru* and *dakwa* which were sold. The production of groundnuts oil as an economic item was introduced and popularised in the Bamenda grasslands by the Hausas.

In the 1934 Re-Assessment Report, Mr. W. Bridges estimated that, out of 6.728 adult taxable males, 2.339 or 34.7% were engaged in this occupation. The author in [46] noted that in villages where there were many trees the percentage was even higher, many of the young unmarried Hausa men and those with small families headloads a thousand nuts from two to four times a year to Mayo Daga in Mambila or to Yola, and make about 100% profit. They buy small quantities in Nsaw and sometimes the French Cameroons and retail them. The journey was a long one involving some three weeks absence if to Mambila, and as much as six or seven weeks to Yola. They could make up to three trips a year.

The author in [47] noted that while in Mambila, they bought rock salt or blankets, and from their sale made another gain. These earnings were inadequate to meet all his commitments and were supplemented by the sale of small quantities of kolas in Kimbaw, Nkambe, Wum, Meta, and the disposal of bundles of firewood and thatching grass collected in the dry season.

The main imports (excluding European articles) from outside Bamenda were cam wood (from Mamfe forest); a little tobacco from the French Cameroons and Nigeria; *Kamwa* or rock salt from Nigeria; and especially important, Hausa cloths some of which was sold by Hausa traders in Bamenda, Adamawa and Northern Nigeria, taking with them oil or kolanuts. The Hausas also used to purchase few head of cattle from the Fulani and driving them to sell in Nigeria, as concluded in [48] by the author.

The Abakpa Hausas purchased their Kolanuts from natives of the surrounding villages including Mendankwe, Santa, Bali, Nso, Metah, Kom and Bafut. The author in [49] noted that the traders of these villages exchanged kola nuts for various items offered by merchants including clothes, salt, leather bags and shoes. Hausa traders acted more like middlemen than as producers of the items in the trade. Once they had gathered their products in substantial amounts, for instance kolanuts they took off for the distant markets in groups. There was always a group leader chosen by partners to lead the caravan. The main market for kolanuts was Banyo. Hausa merchants generally dominated the Banyo market. Some of such merchants brought their merchandise using donkeys and horses as their means of transport. Goods like salt, hats, beads, clothes, slippers, leather bags and others were sometimes exchanged for kolanuts as concluded in [50] by the author.

In situations where Hausa traders from the Grassfields were not happy with the market transactions in Banyo, they continued their marketing to other parts of Hausa land. That was the reason why at times they changed direction, taking the Bum-Kentu-Donga-Takum road to other markets, as noted in [51] by the archival source. Takum was usually a good place to sell.

2.10. Trade in Ivory

Apart from kolanuts, Hausa traders in Abakpa-Mankon Town also traded in ivory. They generally obtained ivory from the local inhabitants of the region. Ivory was often exchanged through barter with the goods the Hausa traders brought. Each Hausa trader acquired his ivory from long establish customers to whom word had been sent to prepare and store the commodity. Ivory was often supplied in large quantities by the natives. The author in [52] noted that the Hausa traders monopolised the ivory trade in areas like Yola in Nigeria where the demand was high. Yola was one of the main markets for Hausa trade in Nigeria.

During the German period, the market was the principal means of exchange. When the Germans learnt of ivory trade in the hinterlands, they did all their possible best to destroy the monopoly of the Hausas in favour of the German traders. German traders wanted to control the colony's wealth for themselves as concluded in [53] by the author. Germans intervention in the ivory trade made the Hausa monopoly of it to start diminishing.

Whatever is the case, trading relations between the Hausas of the Bamenda Grassfields and their counterparts of the Benue and Adamawa regions kept on expanding. This was made possible by the highly valued trade goods

such as salt, clothes and shoes, which were produced by some Europeans factories in Nigeria. But the First World War of 1914-1918 affected the Hausa trade negatively. The author in [54] noted that in many places, trading activities were ended and many Hausas experienced a crisis in their economy. Many of them started to return to Nigeria. After the war, however most of them came back to the Bamenda Grassfields.

Traders from the lower Benue and Adamawa areas visited the Abakpa to sell items like beads, clothes, and salt and leather shoes and to buy kolanuts in return. The author in [55] noted that when the Hausa traders returned to the Grassfields after the First World War, some of them continued the long-distance trade to Adamawa.

When the British introduced the pound sterling as a medium of exchange, Hausa traders in the Western Grassfields faced some difficulties because of the restriction they had trading in what became French Cameroon. As a result, those traders diversified their trade and some began to trade in cattle. The cattle were acquired from the Fulani's in the coastal areas of Douala and Victoria and some from areas of Nigeria like Enugu and Abakiliki as stated in [56] by the archival source. About this time the Grassfields' people had started cash crop cultivation, as concluded in [57] by the archival source.

The Hausa traders started taking their cattle and other goods to areas like Adamawa, Nkongsamba and Douala when they began to be issued laissez-passers to cross the borders into French Cameroon. After selling their livestock, they returned with salt and other items, as stated in [58] by the archival source.

The Hausa's returned to the Bamenda Grassfields in 1916 after British took over. By the end of the 1920s, the Hausa had successfully created twenty-five settlements through out the lengths and breaths of the Bamenda Grasslands. The author in [59] noted that traders from Adamawa and lower Benue region regularly visited the various Hausa residents and settlements in the Bamenda Grasslands to purchase kolanuts and to sell in turn cloth, salt and beads. When the Bamenda Grasslands Hausa traders came back, they continued their distance trade either to Banyo kola market or elsewhere. The organisation of Hausa trade within the Bamenda Grasslands was more sophisticated in the post war era than was the case during the German period in Kamerun. The Hausa settlements organised trade on the basis of what Cohen refers to as the "*mai gida*" or landlords system of business. The word *mai gida* in Hausa can literally be translated as landlord or head of household, but it refers among the things to the head of a business house that played the role of an hotelier middleman, insurer, risk bearer and creditor.

The settlements fell into two distinguishable categories. We had the major Hausa settlements and the subordinate Hausa settlements. There were two major Hausa settlements, namely: Kumbo Hausa settlement and the Abakpa Hausa settlement while the rest of the Hausa settlements were subordinated of the major ones. In the 1920s the major Hausa settlements had a population ranging from 100 to 300 people while the subordinate ones had a population ranging from ten to fifty people. The Hausas in the major settlements had many compounds with several rooms, which served as warehouses for goods from the Hausa settlers within the Bamenda Grasslands as well as incoming itinerant Hausa traders. The flood of itinerant Hausa traders entering the Bamenda region did not always find a ready market for all their goods in a single day meaning that they had to spend sometime in Bamenda. There was therefore the need to store their goods, sleep and eat. The major Hausa

settlements which often contained compounds with several rooms offered hotelier services to incoming traders.

Generally the Hausa traders entering the Bamenda Grasslands headed to the major Hausa settlements which offered hotel services. The Hausa preferred to lodge in the Hausas of their brethren because of cultural and religious reasons. Hotel services are run by the rich and married. The wives of the hoteliers used to prepare food and sell to strangers. The owners of hotels at times lodge Hausa strangers for nothing. Information about good markets conditions was also furnished to the traders. Kolanuts was received on credit. Wealthy settlers served as bankers to their guest. The price of kolanuts raised more than that of salt and cloths, this was because the British who administered Nigeria and Cameroon encouraged joint trade. Even during the British period, the mark was the money used as a medium of exchange right up to 1930. Kolanuts and food produced by Hausa women fetch much revenue to the Hausas and even the natives in the Mankon area. The natives by working to these Hausas were also paid. The Hausa settlers sold some goods and bought others from the natives, the natives also bought goods from the Hausas and the coming Hausas as concluded in [60] by the author. Three aspects threatened Hausa trade;

- The Anglo-French Frontier controls that is the restriction of movements between the English and French sections of Cameroon.
- There was also the great depression of 1929; it led to the fall in prices and gave way to trade by barter. The number of Hausa kolanuts traders entering Bamenda Grasslands declined.
- Finally the locust invasion of the 1930s.

2.11. Cattle Trade

Despite the odds facing trade in the Bamenda grasslands, the Hausa settlement still survived. They involved in cattle trade. The history of the cattle trade dates from 1919 when the Fulani entered the Bamenda Grasslands for the first time. The Hausas henceforth became distributors for the Fulani cattle trading. The Hausas distributed cattle to distant areas like Victoria, Tiko, Douala, Abakiliki and Enugu. The number of Hausa traders increased in the 1930s when the kola industry was affected. The Hausa traders were in a position to market Fulani cattle but they had problems raising initial capital to procure large number of cattle for distribution to distant markets, sometimes for just a single cow. This hurdle was overcome by the improvising of a credit system with the Fulani. The author in [61] noted that the Hausa trader needed some capital to serve as collateral before he was given a credit by a Fulani. The long term credit system was used by the long distance Hausa traders who marketed cattle outside the Bamenda Division in places such as Tiko, Kumba, Victoria, Umuahia and Abakiliki. The trader could be accepted to pay half the amount and complete it when he must have sold the cows in his journey. Collateral was very important before credit was given. The Sarikin Hausawa always played the role of the “shortee” to the Hausa traders. The Hausas played the role of middlemen between the Fulani and the cow buyers.

With the calling for the creation of the cattle Fulani cooperative for the burying and selling of cattle by the British officers, the issue affected the Hausa cattle traders a lot. Towards the mid 1940s, many Hausa cattle traders had made large profits from the cattle trade and were able to increase their profits margin since payments

in one instalment were lower than those in several instalments. The Hausas were able to pay taxes to the British because of their trading activities as noted in [62] by the author.

The fact that when they went to the south especially Kumba, Tiko, Victoria with the cows, they had to stay for some days before selling them, as such, Hausa traders there also bought the cows in wholesale. The archival source in [63] noted that, there was a high demand for cattle in the plantation areas of the south. As such, a system of credit was developed between the Hausas in the plantation region. The Hausas in Kumba, Tiko, Victoria acted as sales agents to the Hausa cattle dealers in the Bamenda Grasslands. They usually surrender their cattle to their agents and came back after for their money. After that a new supply of cattle will be given to the agents. There was always not a straight deal with these agents that is, disappointments. Such matters ended in court. At times in the course of journey with the cattle from the grassland to the south the cattle due to long distance trekking lost weight. Most of the cattle were even being affected by diseases and some of them ended up dying.

2.12. General Trade

The Hausa traders also took part in general trade which dealt with European articles such as cloths, kerosene, soap, salt, lamps, matches, thread, needles, ornaments, buckets, and a wide range of miscellaneous goods. Some of these were obtained from Abakpa-Bamenda and Mamfe, but most came from Calabar. The author in [64] noted that, besides the traffic in kola, oil, livestock, potatoes and cabbages across the provincial borders, there was also the export of coffee, castor seed and palm kernels. The author in [65] noted that, due to trade, the Hausas earned for themselves in the course, of time the reputation of being the English of the Sudan. In the interior, the Hausas followed definite trade routes; in the native towns they lived in special sections reserved for them. Their influence extended over most of the colony.

The authors in [66] noted that, it was the Hausas who controlled the trade of the interior, which was prevented by natural barriers and native monopolists from reaching the coast in the west. The diversion of this trade from its northwards flow to Yola and to the English in Nigeria became one of the goals of the Germans exploration and rule. It meant persuading the Hausas to trade in the west instead of the North, overcoming hostile native monopolists, constructing roads and stations, above all, it meant the exercise of caution and tact in regard to Mohammedanism and slavery when opinion in the European world was hostile to both.

In that part of Adamawa under Fulbe control were to be found large centres of trade, from which radiated in all directions roads followed by the Hausa trading caravans to and from regions rich in rubber, gutter-percha and ivory. The trade carried on by Hausas, whose activity extended northward toward English – controlled Yola and southward to Frenchmen on the Congo, as concluded in [67] by the archival source.

It was also argued against the Hausas traders that they took the resources from the Cameroons to Northern Nigeria, where the English got the benefit and not the Germans. Traders also made the charge that the Hausas engaged in the slave trade and that they sold human beings to the cannibals of Southern Cameroons, as stated in [68] by the author. Reports that Hausa traders carried ivory from the Cameroons to Yola in Nigeria disturbed

German traders who wanted the colony's wealth for themselves as noted in [69] by the archival source.

Traders who disliked the competition of the Hausas in the interior claimed once that these Muslims rivals sold human beings to cannibals, but the assertion was made without accompanying evidence. The administration apparently did not believe the charge; on the contrary, it stated repeatedly that it like the Hausa trade, since it brought cattle into Southern Cameroons in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular; and thus made unnecessary the cannibalism that occurred because people wanted flesh in their diet, as concluded in [70] by the archival source.

The author in [71] noted that, because these Whites traders were in competition with Hausas in the interior, they once suggested in the council that this special tax be increased to one hundred marks for their rivals. But the government with its liking for the work of these Muslims in the interior refused to adopt any such discriminatory policy. If the government refused to do the bidding of White traders in this matter, it may be said of the latter that they steadily refused to pay native workers in money as the government had long desired to make the collection of taxes simpler.

3. Conclusion

Hausas Traders migrated from Northern Nigeria and settled in the North West Region in the 1900. It should be recalled that one of the main motivating factor that prompted the Hausas to migrate to Bamenda was trade. Their settlements soon grew fast and became a commercial centre. The Hausas introduced the idea of Urbanisation in the Bamenda Grassfields. Bamenda Town under the control of the Hausa chief, 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 Hausas were long distant traders who supplied kola nuts, ivory and other products from the Northwest Region to merchants in the lower Benue, Nigeria and other areas of the Adamawa region. Not all Hausas were long distant traders. Hausa traders also introduced certain goods including leather shoes, slippers and bags, caps and other dresses into the Northwest Region. Although Hausa traders in Bamenda faced some economic problems, they nevertheless tried to diversify their commercial activities. As a matter of fact, the Hausa long distant trade contributed enormously in changing Bamenda not just to a commercial centre, but also a veritable urban centre. The Hausas introduced new goods in the region which they brought from Nigeria and other regions of Cameroon. They also brought European articles to the region which they exchange for slaves and other goods. The presence of those goods made available by the Hausa traders in the region, and the fact that the other tribes in the Grassfields made use of them greatly improved the area developmentally. The Hausas introduced the idea of a market in Bamenda town. The commercial activities that were going on in Bamenda attracted other tribes to come and settle in the area. The town grew up to become a real cosmopolitan town.

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