

Research Article

Myth and Controversies of Origin of the Misaje People: Changing Trends in Socio Economic and Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: The 19th century in Cameroon was a period of mass movement of people from one geographical environment to the other mostly propelled by voluntary or involuntary factors. Prior to this movement, indigenous groups such as the Hausas who had earlier settled in Misaje were already involved in different socio-economic activities. The arrival of the Nchaney, Mbissa and Dumbo people into Misaje area was surrounded with a lot myth. Their presence created an avenue of alternating peace and confrontations with the Hausas who claim to be the aborigines. Thus, this paper examines the myth of origin of the indigenous people of Misaje. The paper equally argues that the evolutionary trends in the socio-economic and cultural mores implanted by the aborigines (Hausas) culminated from the myth and controversies of origin. It further explores the divers polemics manifested by the Hausas during the colonial and post-colonial period who seemed to have migrated from Northern Nigeria with their cattle which beef up colonial economy in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Keywords: Myth, Controversies, Peace, Confrontations, Dynamics and Heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The advent and establishment of the Nchaney, Mbissa and Dumbo people in Misaje around the 19th century have influenced the socio-economic and cultural activities of this area. But prior to the advent of these groups there existed the Hausas who were involved in sale of kola nuts across the Cameroon-Nigerian borders. According to Takor, they acted as middle men during the long distance trade because they had established permanent settlements around trade centres¹. Thus, the issue of integrating these indigenous groups of people into this milieu that was considered as a commercial entrepôt gradually emerged in confrontations that perturbed the peace and stability of the study locale. It is based on this premise that incorporating the people within this set-up culminated into confrontations between the so call aborigines and the incoming ethnic groups. Nevertheless, despite this perturbation, the evolution of the socio-economic and cultural transmutations has some repercussions in shaping the lifestyle of the people in this area. Aspects such as nuptial customs and traditions, dead celebration of a fon and succession are the preoccupations of projecting the evolutionary dynamics in the socio-economic and cultural legacies in Misaje.

Brief History of the Hausas and the Origin of the name Misaje

The Hausas were the earlier settlers in the Misaje area which was considered as a transitional zone during the period of the long distance trade. As far as the meaning of the name Misaje is concerned, it is a word derived from the Hausa language mai saje, which signified the “master of the beard”.² This name came as a result of a prominent Hausa businessman who operated a rest house which was intended for traders on transit to rest before they continued their journey. According to Pelican, the name Misaje was given by a prominent Hausa businessman who operated a rest house for traders coming from far off places to rest before continuing their trip to Nigeria³. Thus in this context, Misaje

¹ N.K. Takor, “The Bamenda Grassfields in Long Distance Trade c.1850-1961: Evolutionary Dynamics, Socio-Economic and Political Transmutations”, Ph D in History. University of Yaounde I, 2011, p. 5.

² M. P. Pelican, “Getting along the Grassfields: Inter-ethnic Relations and Identity Politics in North West Region of Cameroon”, Ph. D Thesis, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, 2006, p. 49.

³ Ibid, p. 20.

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signified “master of the beads”⁴. The long distant trade made Misaje to be considered as a commercial centre whereby merchants from Kom, Nso, Bamungo and other areas carried goods like salt, kola nuts, and palm kernels to Nigeria. From Misaje, these traders had to pass through Dumbo which was one of the bordering towns between Cameroon and Nigeria. While in Nigeria, they exchanged these items with goods like clothes, gun and gun powered whiskies and other basic commodities

Thus the name mai saje was later on modified and it became Misaje⁵. In addition, because of the presence of vast and available grazing land, Fulani pastoralist began to penetrate the area in the 1920s⁶. Today, Misaje is considered as the administrative headquarter of Misaje Sub Division.

The area under study like many other communities in the Grassfields has an outstanding history which can be traced as far back as the pre-colonial periods. The present Misaje Sub Division is made up of people claiming different areas of origins, even though they have similarities in culture and language. For an easy understanding of the history, the various ethnic groups that make up the sub division have been classified into three clans namely: Nchaney, Dumbo and the Mbissa. These clans are comprised of twelve villages considered to be the aborigines. The table below shows the classification of villages inhabited by the ethnic groups found in Misaje.

Table-1. The 1987 Population statistics of Misaje Sub Division

ETHNIC GROUP	VILLAGES	POPULATION
A. Nchaney	Nfume	2.489
	Bem	1.378
	Nkanchi	10.887
	Nchunghe	818
	Kibbo	935
SUB TOTAL		16.507
B. Dumbo	Dumbo	4.976
	Kwei	524
	Bebejatto	1.384
	Bebekette	1.760
SUB TOTAL		8.644
C. Mbissa	Mbissa	1.502
	Kamine	3.179
	Akweto	3.420
SUB TOTAL		8.101
TOTAL		33.252

Source: Misaje Rural Council Record, file No. 20, Population statistics, 1987.

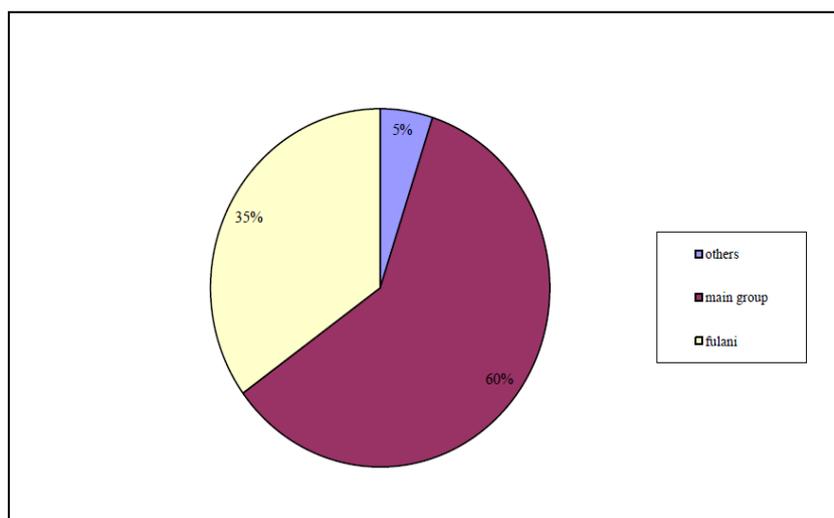


Figure- 1Population Distribution in Misaje Area in Percentage (%)

Source: Constructed from table 1 above

⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

⁵ Ibid. p.52.

⁶ Takor, “The Bamenda Grassfields”, p. 23.

The table figure above illustrates the distribution of population in the study area. The official sources according to the 1987 population census revealed that the total population of Misaje was at 33000 people.⁷ From this period up till date, there has been considerable population growth. Generally, population statistics are usually based on estimates. This is because it is always difficult to assess the size of each group in a community or that of a country at large. The figure above is a representation of population distribution in the Misaje area. But however, in terms of percentage the above mentioned villages account for sixty percent of the entire population, the mbororos and Hausas constituted thirty five percent while five percent was composed of others.⁸ The others here refer to foreigners like the wimum, pinyin, Banso, Bafut, Bali, and Nkwen among others. It should be noted here that the Nchaney clan is the most highly populated because it has the largest number of villages. This is followed by the Dumbo clan with eight thousand six hundred and forty four people, which is the second largest. We equally have the Mbissa with a population of eight thousands one hundred and one inhabitants.

Apart from the indigenous people (aborigines), there also existed the Pinyin, Wimum and the Fulani. These groups of people were attracted into the area by the good economic opportunities such as trading activities, favourable climatic conditions and good topography.⁹ They also constituted a strong force towards the growth and development of the community. This can be explained by the fact that they were engaged in commercial activities like cattle trade that generated a lot of income. Also, they were involved in farming activities, fishing, hunting and wine tapping¹⁰. In the light of the forgone discussion, Misaje can be considered as a cosmopolitan town that constitutes a cross section of different people. It can be said that in the history of the area, Misaje is considered as no man's land and this is as a result of the presence of foreigners in the area.¹¹

Different Narratives about the Origin of the People of Misaje

The nineteenth centuries were marked by massive population movement in Cameroon. Many reasons were responsible for these movements which can be viewed from diverse perspectives. They include inter-tribal wars, Fulani raids, Jihads (Holy wars) and natural disasters, the search for fertile lands and good water supply, the quest for secured environment and grazing land. Misaje cannot be neglected because by the nineteenth century, the present Misaje Sub Division used to be an empty vast land that hosted a lot of wild animals and this attracted hunters into the area. But as time went on, people started settling in the area. This was precipitated by merchants who were engaged in long distance trade which was marked by the commercialisation of slaves, kola nuts, and palm kernels to name these few. These items were most often exchanged in Nigeria with goods like salt, limestone, clothes and gun.¹² These merchants established settlements in Misaje which was considered as their resting area before they continued their journey to Nigeria.¹³ Businessmen from the Adamawa area and other parts of the Grassland made a stopover in Misaje. The long distance trade did not only influence the lives of those who were involved in it but also that of the indigenous people as some of them acted as middle men in the trade. Thus Misaje became a commercial centre that embraced merchants from almost every area in the Grassfields region.¹⁴

The Myth Surrounding the Nchaney Narratives

The history of origin of ethnic groups in the Grassland area with focus on case of Misaje area is worth studying. The different ethnic groups that make up the Misaje Sub Division have as complex myth pertaining to their history of origin. For a better understanding of the complexity of the history, the twelve villages that make up the Misaje Sub Division are classified into three different clans. These include the Nchaney, Mbissa and the Dumbo clans. As far as the Nchaney clan is concerned, a lot of myths surround the history of origin. They belong to the Tikar group and they claim to have migrated from Kimi in the Banyo area in the Adamawa area.¹⁵ Some sources hold that it was as a result of the Fulani raids and jihads in the first half of the nineteenth century that precipitated their migration. This movement was under the leadership of Ngungu, who was afraid that his children would be killed during the war.

According to an oral interview with Ayaba Cyprian, Ngungu transformed into a bee and swallowed his children. When he arrived Nkanchi village, he vomited his children and in the course of time, he changed his name from Ngungu to Mbene, which signified the "place of Mbene".¹⁶ When Mbene died, he was said to have transformed into a rock.

⁷ Misaje Rural Council Archives, file No. 22, Population Statistics in Misaje Sub Division, 1987.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Interview with Richard Chefon, 57years, Fon of Nkanchi village, Misaje, 11th September 2015.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Interview with Thomas Sjunkwe, 66 years, Business man, Nfume village, 12th September 2015.

¹² M. J. Rowlands, Local and Long Distance Trade and Incipient State Formation in the Bamenda Plateau in the Nineteenth century, 1979, Ph D Dissertation in history, University of Yaounde, pp. 1-20.

¹³ Ibid. p. 45.

¹⁴ Interview with Fon Richard Chefon.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Interview with Ayaba Cyprian, 70years, Fon of Nfume village, Nfume, 26th November 2015.

Disputes erupted as to who would be the successor.¹⁷ After his death, many fons have ruled the Nchaney clan and they include the following, Fon Mbene II, Fon Kabo, Fon Kirine, Fon Kimenchung, Fon Chimbang, Fon Bamine, Fon Fimban, Fon Massa, Fon Nchenghe, Fon Fuma I, Fon Ngong, Fon Sale, Fon Micheal Fuma and lastly the present fon Richard Chefon who succeeded Fon Micheal Fuma in 1997.¹⁸

The Dumbo Version

With regards the origin of the Dumbo people, Fon Jebo Augustine asserts that the people claim their origin from Northern Nigeria, precisely from Kano around the 19th century.¹⁹ Furthermore, he holds that they migrated as a result of Fulani raids and jihads that plagued the area by then. This was because they were afraid to be converted into Islam since they were considered as infidels. They entered Cameroon through the Northern Region, precisely, Adamawa, passing through the Grasslands area and moved further where they finally settled at the present site in Dumbo. Kemazung is the language spoken by the Dumbo people while the Nchaney people speak the Nchaney language. These local languages are similar to that spoken by the Noni people in Bui Division.

In the history of Dumbo, eight Fons have ruled in the area and these include Fon Tsah who was later on succeeded by Komfor, who during his reign, the village was ravaged by a small pox epidemic.²⁰ This was alleged to be a curse directed against him by his elder brother Faho, who had been exiled. But as time went on, Faho was called back to the village and enthroned and was later succeeded by Akaho. He was followed by Solomon Jang who headed the local administrative affairs at that time. Fon Fiabo Emmanuel who succeeded Jang Solomon was reputed to be the youngest chief Dumbo had ever had. His reign lasted only for four years (1966-1970) when he was replaced by the present Fon Jebo Augustine. Before his enthronement as Fon, he was serving as an Ardo in the Dumbo cattle ranch.

The Mbissa Perspectives of their Myth of Origin

The Mbissa clan originally known as Besah is made up of villages like Akweto, Kamine and Mbissa. It is believed that they migrated from Kano in Niger around the ninetieth century. This was as a result of a war of supremacy between the people of the Ussa clan and the Kano people in Nigeria that forced the Mbissa people that constituted part of this clan to split off. As such, they left Nigeria and came to Cameroon through the Adamawa Region and finally settled in their present site found in the Misaje area. But before their arrival in the area, the Bembo and the Moh people who were the original settlers claimed to be the aborigines of a small settlement found in the Leseh hill.²¹ It was believed that the Bembo and the Moh people came from an unknown land where a mighty tree was seen as their source of origin.²² Immediately after their settlement in the Misaje area, the Ussa chief of Nigeria who considered the Mbissa people as an integral part of his chiefdom went out in search of the runaway faction. The efforts of the chief went in vain as his team men were unable to know exactly the new settlement of the Mbissa people.

Misaje was made a Sub Division in 1992 by presidential decree No 92/187 of 1st September 1992²³ and this was followed by the creation of the Misaje Rural Council in 1993 by presidential decree No 93/321 of 25th November 1993. Misaje is the Head Quarters of the Misaje Rural Council and Misaje Sub Division. But before then, Misaje was administered as part of Ako Sub Division in Donga Mantung Division. According to the population statistics of 1987, Misaje Sub Division has an approximate population of 33000 people.²⁴ It has twelve villages and each headed by a Fon and is in charge of local village administration. These twelve villages included Nkanchi, Nfume, Bem, Chunghe, Mbissa, Kwei, Kamine, Akweto, Bebekette, Bebejatto, Kibbo and Dumbo.

Socio-Cultural and Political Organisation

In many areas in the grasslands region of Cameroon, the people of Misaje had a well organised socio-cultural and political system. It is a well stabilised community with all the tribes having fons or chiefs. They are the highest traditional authorities and constituted a strong force as far as leadership was concerned. The fons are the custodians of tradition and culture, hence enabling them to wield a lot of power. In so far as the social and political organisations are concerned in the Misaje area, there exist traditional institutions such as the Ngumba or Kwifon. They are in charge of making traditional laws, settling of disputes and at times they serve as traditional checks to the power of the fon. There exist the Council of elders and quarter heads. Equally, in the Nfume and Bebekette villages, there exist women with titles like the yaah's and nji's and are the close collaborators of the fon. This shows how instrumental and vital women

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ MRCA, File No. 3Ad 2012, Misaje Council Development Annexes, 2012, P. 88-150.

¹⁹ E.N. Tata., A Concise History of the Kemazung People 1861-1997: Over 100 Years of Amazing Historical Evaluations, No publication place, No publisher, 1989, p. 19.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 23.

²¹ Interview with Ngwang Kiwajo Christopher, 60 years, Fon of Mbissa, Misaje, 11th September 2015.

²² Ibid.

²³ Misaje Rural Council Archives (MRCA), file No. 201, Administrative Affairs, Decree No. 92/187 of September 1992 gave Misaje the status of a Sub Division, 2009.

²⁴ MRCA, file No. 20, Population statistics of Misaje Sub Division in 1987, 26th September 2009.

occupied an important position in this community. They are highly respected by the traditional councils of elders and are not greeted by hand shake. We also had the nchindas who are the messengers of the fon. The traditional institutions like the kwifon and the Ngumba had a special place in the palace usually decorated with juju lodges. It is a common characteristic of the North West and the Western Regions of Cameroon. This body has the power to impose sanctions on crimes committed.

Among the Mbissa ethnic group there existed the following traditional societies: - the Langa which animated during marriage and death celebrations. Besides, it is charged with the maintenance of law and order. There is also the Mungwa traditional society which is in charge of cleansing the village spiritually against any ill luck. It operates especially at night in cases relating to the abnormal dead of a villager. Kila and Musenghe traditional society play the role of entertaining visitors. Among the Nchaney clan particularly the Nfume people there existed several traditional societies. This includes the Minang which is opened to both men and women especially men who are compound heads. They are involved in the execution of community projects. The Bija traditional secret society is in charge of death announcements and it is equally opened for both men and women and it plays the role of a town crier. Njung is a council of king makers and has as responsibility the maintenance of law and order. Equally, there existed a women society through which rainfall is requested from ancestors in periods of prolonged dry season.

Today, there exist cultural and development associations. Among the Nchaney ethnic group, there is Nchaney Area Cultural and Development Association (NACUDA) created in 1990. It was aimed at fostering the development of the Nchaney clan. There was the Mbissa Cultural and Development Association (BECUDA) among the Mbissa people created in 1992 and Kemazung Cultural and Development Association (KECUDA) among the Dumbo people which also had as objective of enhancing development in all forms. It was created in 1995. All these development oriented associations were instrumental in mobilising their respective communities to contribute towards developmental projects like construction of community halls assist in water projects and road construction. Above all, there exists a mother association known as Misaje Cultural and Development Association (MISCUDA) created in the year 2000 and had as aim to foster development in the entire sub division. This was an umbrella developmental association for the entire sub division. These branch and mother associations were all represented in most towns of the Republic of Cameroon like Douala, Bamenda, Yaounde, Kumba, Limbe and Misaje town itself. All the above mentioned organisations emerged, thanks to the initiative of sons and daughters of the area who have identified themselves under a single banner for the purpose of development.

Today, Misaje is a multicultural town due to the presence of people of diverse background thereby making it a commercial centre where traders from different areas assemble for business venture. Thus, there exist different religious bodies which are very active and instrumental in the domain of education and health. These religious denominations include Catholics, Moslems, Presbyterians, Baptists, Full Gospel, Jehovah Witnesses, and Seven Day Adventists among others. The presence of these religious bodies influenced development through their various activities. Their effects have been felt in schools and hospitals since they have championed the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases that is causing damage on the population. Also, these churches have played an effective role in reducing witchcraft practises like the tradition of administering sasswood. This is a poisonous plant which is transformed in liquid form and given to persons suspected of sorcery so as to prove them guilty of being involved in witchcraft practises.²⁵

In addition, people have been sensitive as far as their rights are concerned and the level of illiteracy has been reduced considerably. It should be noted here that before the coming of Christianity in Misaje area, ancestral worship was very common. They had many shrines dedicated to their gods of the land. For example the renounced Tetetchi Nganko was of great significance in the Misaje area. This is a big stone that carried a smaller one created by nature. It was believed that the smaller one usually rolled down the stream to take a bath before coming back. This signifies an official cleansing of the village against witchcraft practises which is believed hinders progress and development in many ways. This is a myth that the indigenes believed so much to the extent that whenever there was a crisis be it natural or super natural, they depended on the stone for cleansing. In order to clearly understand the social setup, it is important to examine how marriage ceremony is performed in the Misaje community.

Nuptial Customs and Traditions

Generally, in most African communities and in Misaje community in particular, marriage is seen as a necessity for both men and women.²⁶ The essence is to bear children who are very instrumental in the daily activities of the society. Traditionally, before the marriage ceremony proper, the girl has to be engaged for a certain period of time. During this, period the two families concerned exchanged gifts when the need arises. Also the period, leading to marriage is marked by negotiations between the two families.²⁷ This exchange of gifts involved mostly palm oil and food items. The bride

²⁵ Interview with Ayaba Cyprain.

²⁶ Interview with Margret Kibular Sjinkwe, 50years, Business woman, Bamenda, 10th January 2015.

²⁷ Ibid.

price is not paid immediately and when the right time comes, it is the paternal uncle who receives it. The amount levied depended on the family of the bride and most often the level of education is taken into consideration. During the traditional wedding proper, the bride also known as kwesi in the Nchaney language is escorted to the groom's resident.²⁸ This act is usually effected during weekends especially in the evening. However, the procession attracts public attention, provoking laughter, side comments and jokes.²⁹

Before the escorting of the bride, she was rubbed with cam wood by the head of the family. Thereafter, she was taken outside for the exchange of corn beer (shaa'or nkang) with the groom. However, it should be underscored here that the refusal of the bride to drink signified rejection of marriage.³⁰ This was an opportunity given to the girl to decide should in case such negotiations were done without her consent. However, there were cases whereby most girls were under pressure and such demonstrations to drink the corn beer were usually under the influence of her parents. This act was mostly common especially with girls who were ignorant of their rights. But today, with the level of civilisation and education acquired by majority of girls of marriageable age, their rights were fully taken into consideration. By this method, selection of bride or groom depended on the choice of the individual concerned and their parents had the responsibilities to approve it. As a matter of fact, bride price was usually higher with educated girls. The higher the educational level of the bride, the more expensive the bride price.³¹

Death Celebration and Succession Cremations of a Fon

Generally, a majority of the ethnic groups in the grasslands region of Cameroon conducted death celebration varyingly. This however depended on the class and rank of the deceased. Hence the case of Misaje community cannot be minimised. The intensity, duration and lavish spending depended on how influential was the person in that community. Death celebrations usually go with a lot of feasting and dancing. With the case of chiefs, the situation was a bit complicated as will be explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

As tradition holds, when a Fon dies, the news was held for some time before revealing it to the people of the community. This was because it was believed that if the news of his death was announced, animals and birds will destroy all crops. This explains why the harvest of crops was done before the burial of the fon³². Within this period, the king makers and other close collaborators of the fon were involved in the arrangement of the burial. The traditional funeral was done secretly even without the knowledge of his children or wives. He was buried while sitting on a special bamboo stool with a cap, a traditional cup (horn of a cow) filled with palm wine in his hands and kuntee (a traditional rope like plant) tied on his wrist. The corps was traditionally embalmed and wrapped in saffi (royal dress of white and blue stripes) before burial. Thus it should be noted that the fon was buried at night. This was followed by gun firing, feasting and enthronement of a new fon. In the course of his burial, arrangements for the new fon were done. Immediately the burial was completed, it was announced that the fon was back from the market. In the course of enthroning a new fon, a virgin girl was selected in random to rule while all the sons of the deceased fon were expected to stay away from the palace (ntow). At times, they were expected to stay out of the village until a new fon was chosen. After a special ritual was performed in the place where the fon was buried, the rightful successor to the throne was affected spiritually irrespective of where he was.

Succession to the throne in the Misaje community was patrilineal.³³ This implied that the son had the right to inherit all what belonged to the father (father to son). There were cases where the first wife controlled the throne until the rightful heir to the throne was matured to rule. Among the people of the Misaje community, first male child have the right to succeed the throne. This was achieved through the collaboration of the king makers of the palace.

Economic Transmutations

People in the area are agriculturalists and predominantly involved in livestock rearing. About 80% of the populations are engaged in this sector.³⁴ Agricultural activities range from farming, hunting, fishing, and palm wine tapping. Farmers do practise shifting cultivation. Bush fire burning is often used as a means of clearing farms especially during the dry season. This is intended to make the soil ready for tilling and planting of the crops. March and April are the usual planting months while July to September marks the harvesting period. It should be noted that seasonal crops such as maize, groundnuts, beans, cassava, coco yams constituted the mainstay of the economy. Legumes such as okro, pepper and tomatoes were also grown in fenced gardens around compounds. Permanent cash crops like coffee, cocoa,

²⁸ Interview with Ntoban Elizabeth, 55years, Teacher, Bamenda, 10th January 2015.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Interview with Jetrude Kimbung, 70 years, Farmer, Misaje, 25th January 2015.

³¹ Interview with Thomas Sjinkwe, 60years, retired worker of Defunct Marketing Board, Bamenda, 10th January 2015.

³² Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for A History*, p. 90.

³³ Interview with Ayaba Cyprian.

³⁴ Interview with Jetrude Kimbung.

kola nuts, mangoes, plantains, palm trees are common in large farms or plantations. For example, there exist large mango and sugar cane plantations at Kamine and Dumbo respectively.³⁵

The Nfume and Nkanchi villages are noted for the cultivation of oil palms which are vital for the production of palm oil. The aforementioned cash crops were very significant because they generated a lot of money as buyers usually came from distant places like Bamenda, Douala, Yaounde and other neighbouring villages.³⁶ Animals reared in the locality include goats, sheep, fowls, cattle, guinea pigs. The presence of cattle in the area is as a result of the coming of the Fulani around the 1920s. This practise of cattle breeding was emulated by the local inhabitants from the Fulani people as it generated a lot of income for their wellbeing.

Apart from agriculture and livestock activities in Misaje, small scale local craft production centres exist that serve as the main occupation of some individuals. This include sculpture, weaving caps, bags and baskets, decoration and designing of traditional regalia and bamboo furniture. We also have the transformation of animal related products like the horns, skins and tails of animals into traditional items like cups, bags and dancing instruments. These items are mostly used during important events like marriages, death and birth celebrations. Other income generating activities include the extraction and sale of local constructing materials like stones and sand. There is also the sale of beer and native liquor (nkang and shaa) and these are drinks made out of corn which have undergone the process of fermentation for some days. The demand is always very high especially during market days. This is because during this day, traders from almost all the neighbouring villages usually come and sell their goods and at the end of the day, they buy their basic needs like salt, kerosene, magi, palm oil, matches. Also, traders come from other areas out of the North West Region like Douala, Yaounde and Nigeria with semi-finished products which include building materials like roofing sheets, cements, and fashion items like clothes, shoes, household goods, fuel (kerosene, gas and petrol), school materials and drugs. The incoming traders in return buy local items from the area like garri, eggusi, njanser, groundnuts and corn. It should be noted here that Dumbo is one of the renounce villages that produces a lot of groundnut, egusi and njanser and this was because of the favourable conditions of the soil.³⁷

In the early 1930s and late 1940s, Zebu cattle were introduced into the grasslands area with the arrival of the Mbororo (Fulani).³⁸ Before the coming of these immigrants, the indigenous populations were already involved in the rearing of livestock species like sheep, cattle, goats and pigs. The purpose of livestock keeping was for sacrificial ceremonies like birth and death celebrations and other events. These animals were usually held at high esteem as they were seen as being symbolic in the establishment of friendship with people and other communities and this was effected through the exchange of gifts³⁹. With their arrival in Misaje area, the indigenous population started emulating the examples of these Fulani. Subsequently, they gradually accumulated capital from this economic activity and trading of cash crops. These cash crop productions included cocoa, coffee, banana, palm oil.

However, the income generated from cattle rearing inspired some chiefs in Misaje who developed interest in this activity. Amongst these chiefs was Fon Michael Fuma who received herds of cattle as gifts and tributes from Fulani immigrants.⁴⁰ Among the other immigrants, like the Pinyin people who constituted a greater majority in Misaje, they earned the reputation of being skilled graziers and cattle traders.⁴¹ They established closed social and economic relationship with the Mbororo. Pinyin boys used to stay with Mbororo families for an apprenticeship in cattle rearing. Misaje indigenous affinity for cattle rearing can be traced from the early years of British colonial rule in the area.⁴²

During the second half of the twentieth century, local livestock breeders in Misaje started developing interest in cattle rearing. This was as a result of the influx and implantation of the Fulani herders in the area. As time went on, some individuals started keeping their own cattle. As compared to farming activities, cattle husbandry became an economic activity for the local population who depended on it for their livelihood and survival⁴³. Hence, it occupied an important position in the Misaje economy, even though it was considered as borrowed culture. According to Fon Richard Chefon, having cattle was just a means of investing money and accumulation of wealth.⁴⁴ Native graziers differed to some extent from Mbororo herders in that the former were aimed at increasing stock while the latter were accustomed with milk

³⁵ I.M. Betseke., "A Socio-Economic Analysis of Rural Activities in the Dumbo Village, Misaje Sub Division, A Monographic Study Report" Jakiri, "A Village study Report", T.S.A. Nkambe, August 2014.

³⁶ Interview with Jenebayo Moses, 50years, teacher and a businessman, Misaje, 16th August 2015.

³⁷ Betseke, "A Socio-Economic Analysis of Rural Activities.

³⁸ J. Boutrais, Etude d'une Zone de Transhumance, la Plain de Ndog, Yaounde, ORSTORM, 1995, pp.58-59.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 50.

⁴⁰ Interview with Ibrahim Musa, 70years, Hausa chief, Misaje, 20th August 2015.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² J. P. Warnier, Histoire du Peuplement et Genese des Paysages dans l'ouest Camerounaise, Journal of African History, 1984, pp.395-410.

⁴³ B.W. Ojong and P. Edi., "Cattle Rearing Systems in the Misaje Area, Cameroon: Biomass Resource Pressure and Decentralisation Challenges," University of Udine, Italy, Via Sondrio 2, 33100 Udine, Italy, 2010, p. 33.

⁴⁴ Interview with Fon Richard Chefon.

production. Thus, in effect, indigenous graziers tended to practise less extensive grazing by keeping their animals closer to their compounds or within delimited grazing range.⁴⁵ This was intended to avoid cattle straying into people's farmlands while on the other hand, the Fulani people preferred to fence their farms.

The indigenous cattle breeders in Misaje learned from the Fulani breeders how to breed and care for the cattle as they taught them how to communicate with cattle in Fulfulde language. This was usually done by giving names to animals. This aspect of the local indigenes involved in cattle rearing influenced the integration and interethnic relations. Pre-existing friendship became intensified and new individual relationships were generated. This constructive potential of mutual understanding was particularly effective in the initial phase when native graziers depended on Fulani for professional instruction and assistance.

In the meantime, the situation changed and the indigenous graziers (Nchaney) decided to detach themselves from the Mbororo (Fulani) herders and this was because of administrative reasons. Farmers were required to pay poll tax whereas graziers were taxed according to their number of animals. Indigenous graziers were asked to pay Njangali tax (cattle tax) to the Mbororo Ardos who were in charge of collection. This arrangement worked out for some time but it later on changed. This was because the Nchaney graziers started complaining that the Mbororo Ardos were treating them differently and suspected them of misusing their tax money. As a matter of fact, they requested the administration for the appointment of Nchaney Ardo with whom they could work.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

As outlined in this paper, the movements of people and their belongings especially around the 19th century in Cameroon have followed a trajectory pattern and success within some communities in the country including Misaje. The three clans of Nchaney, Mbissa and Dumbo have experienced discrepancies and conflicts in the course of integrating with the aborigines (Hausa) who claim to be the original settlers. Moreover, the widely shared understanding of myth and debates of origin characterized in the socio-economic and cultural uniqueness have portrayed a strong attachment adopted by the indigenes to suit their different lifestyles. Thus, based on the context of our analysis, the claims of change and heritage in customs have gradually evolved over time and circumstances. The inclusive and integration strategies have been deplored taking into consideration a more conciliatory approach among the Hausas and the indigenes in Misaje. Nevertheless, conflicts are bound that deteriorate peaceful coexistence.

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⁴⁵ Ojong and Edi, "Cattle Rearing Systems".

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Interviews

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- Interview with Ayaba Cyprain, 70years, Fon of Nfume village, Nfume, 26th November 20015.
- Interview with Jebo Augustine, 50years, Fon of Dumbo village, Dumbo, 30th August 2015 Interview with Ngwang Kiwajo Christopher, 60 years, Fon of Mbissa, Misaje, 11th September 2015.
- Interview with Margret Kibular Sjinkwe, 50years, Business lady, Bamenda, 10th January 2015. Interview with Ntoban Elizabeth, 55years, Teacher, Bamenda, 10th January 2015.
- Interview with Jetrude Kimbung, 70 years, Farmer, Misaje, 25th January 2015.
- Interview with Thomas Sjinkwe, 66years, retired worker of Defunct Marketing Board, Bamenda, 10th January 2015.
- Interview with Jenebayo Moses, 50years, teacher and a businessman, Misaje, 16th August 2015.
- Interview with Ibrahim Musa, 70years, Hausa chief, Misaje, 20th August 2015.