

Re-examining the history of migration and resettlements in the modern Borgu Emirate of Niger State since 1954

*Usman Yusuf **Bako**, Mohammed Lawal **Salahu**
Dawood Omolumen **Egbefo**

Department of History and International Studies, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida
University, Lapai, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author: ubako@ibbu.edu.ng

Abstract

The history of the Borgu people is traced to a series of migrations from 700 AD through the 19th century to the 21st century. The study revisits the history of the Borgu people of Nigeria, their resettlement, and emirate formation. It explores how the migratory and resettlement patterns shape the political, economic, and social developments of the modern Borgu Emirate. Data for the study were obtained from documented sources, oral interviews, and a reconnaissance survey to reach a conclusion. Findings reveal that migratory and resettlement patterns have led to political restructuring and harmony among the people of Borgu Emirate; occupational dislocation and new means of livelihood; intergroup relations and social integration; environmental changes, among others. Thus, the growth and development of the modern Borgu Emirate rest on its unity in diversity, alignment of rural-urban migration, and sustainable natural environment, among others.

Keywords: *Migration and Resettlement, Kisra Legend, Borgu Emirate, Rural-Urban Migration, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Borgu Emirate is an age-long traditional political entity located in north-central Nigeria belonging to the people of Bariba and Borgawa (Jones, 2005). The Anglo-French convention of 1898 led to the partitioning of the pre-colonial Borgu Kingdom between Britain and France (Lupton, 1985). Given the division of the region by the colonial powers, the section of Borgu in Nigeria became an emirate or a traditional state in 1954, with its capital in New Bussa, when Bussa and Kaiama emirates were merged. Borgu Local Government Area became part of Niger State on 27 August 1991. Borgu Emirate is divided into 18 districts with over 26 major towns in the western part of Niger State (Damisa & Eze, 2004).

Available historical documents show that the Kisra migration is the foundation of the Borgu Kingdom and the formation of the Borgu Emirate (Mathews, 1950; NAK, DOB/HIS/38). The present-day Borgu Emirate is a product of many centuries of migration and decades of resettlements by the descendants of Kisra and native communities around the Niger area (Jones, 2005; Mangut, 2013). Until recently, scholars have concentrated their research efforts on Nigeria's core northern emirates, leaving out the mini

emirates/states in the Central Nigeria Area (CNA). The literature revealed that the 'cluster' of the emirates of the CNA with those of the core northern emirates have been examined, especially their economic, political and socio-cultural beliefs and practices from the introduction and consolidation of the famous Usman Dan Fodiyo Jihad of 1804-1817. Despite the consensus among scholars in available literature concerning the centrality of migration and resettlement in the history of modern Borgu Emirate, historians and some other scholars have given little attention to the impact of a series of migratory events that culminated in the political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions and practices of modern Borgu in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, particularly from 1954. The modern Borgu Emirate assumed a traditional political status in 1954, prior to the political independence of Nigeria in 1960 (Damisa & Eze, 2004).

Given the above background, this research focuses on the history of the modern Borgu Emirate and its people since 1954. Previous research has focused on how migration and resettlements led to modern Borgu. The study further examines the impact of migration and

resettlement on the growth and development of modern Borgu. Thus, it answers how the pattern of migration and resettlements in the modern Borgu Emirate has brought changes to the political, economic, environmental, and socio-cultural structures of Borgu and its effects on the lives of the Borguans in Niger State. It re-examines the Borgu history of migration and resettlement to echo the transformation in the modern Borgu Emirate. The study gives a revealing account of migratory patterns and resettlement dynamics influencing the people of Borgu as part of the larger examination of Borgu's history. It also provides referential value to the nation's aspirations and searches for cultural heritage to preserve modern history.

A review of the historical background of Borguans

According to historically documented and oral sources about the people of Borgu, the first wave of migration from the East is said to have settled in Borgu while the others continued their journey southward. One of these groups is said to have extended South West to form the Oyo Kingdom and its outlining states, while the others continued in the direction South West – West to the three original Borgu towns of Illo, Nikki, and

Bussa (Damisa & Eze, 2004; Jones, 2005; Agwara, 2014).

The Migratory legend and myths of Kisra are the most popular narrative about the history of the Borgu people (Mathews, 1950; Stevens, 1975). Under the leadership of Kisra around the 7th Century AD, history shows that the people of Borgu are believed to have arrived from the Middle East and settled in places around their current location in Nigeria and the Benin Republic.

Historians believe the Kisra group was among the first people to settle in the area (NAK, DOB/HIS/38). This group is believed to have settled in Swanla for hundreds of years. Swanla town became a city and the first headquarters of *Borgawa*. According to the oral source, the word "swa" means 'place of abode'. The suffix "La" completes the word 'swanla', meaning 'here is our place of abode' (Damisa & Eze, 2004, p.4). The competitive nature of the royal house led to the split of the town to form a new settlement and become autonomous of each other. The split led to the creation of two principal towns of Bussa and Nikki, while the two brothers went in different directions. *Sabi* created the Nikki town in the Benin Republic, and *Woru*, the oldest established Bussa, now

Borgu Emirate in the Niger area (Jones, 2005). The youngest son, *Biyo*, moved only a little further to the north of Bussa and then established Illo in present-day Kebbi State in Nigeria (Damisa & Eze, 2004).

Nevertheless, it is paramount to note that there are different perspectives on the origin of the Borgu people, who are referred to as Borguans. For instance, Frobenius claims that the Borguans might have originated from Persia across Arabia to Africa. A group of large military forces was said to have travelled across Sudan to the Niger area, where they split into many groups. Kisra was the migration leader whose descendants founded the Borgu kingdom (Frobenius, 1913). Frobenius believes that many Borgu people settled under the leadership of three brothers, Bussa, Illo, and Nikki. In Agwara's (2014) view, Borgu, Illo, and Nikki, the three major towns of the Borgu kingdom, were based on the series of waves of migration from Kanem-Bornu before the 13th century. It is fascinating to note that the Kisra dynasty forms part of the traditional origin of the people of Borno, Jukun, Yoruba, Benin Chamba, Achifawa Oyo, Idah, and Nupe (Mohammed, 2013).

Another version of the origin of the Borguans is the one given by Jones (2005), who described Kisra as the head of a small clan in Mecca who refused or resisted Prophet Muhammad's plan for reform and kicked against the idea of converting to Islam. After being defeated by Prophet Muhammad, Kisra ran with his people to Africa, crossed the Sahara, and finally settled around the River Niger. The river was important and significant to the people for economic and strategic reasons (Jones, 2005). In a similar version, Temple (1919) gathered that the people of Borgu came from Badar and left the vicinity because of the force of Prophet Muhammad's quest to bring them under his control or leadership. Mathew suggested that the relationship between Prophet Muhammad and Kisra may have been later added by people who inherited the Kisra legend and yearned to give it the respect Islam has won for itself and among pagans in Western Sudan (Mathews, 1950). However, Mathew concurs with Meeks's conclusion, who shares the view that some of the written records are based on historical facts and may embody genuine tradition and shreds of evidence (Meek, 1925).

The Borguans decided to settle down along River Niger, where they established

the town of Bussa on its bank as their headquarters. Subsequently, the kingdom of Nikki was established by the brother-in-law of Bussa chief, *Sheru*, while Wuru founded Illo, and the two states paid allegiance to Bussa (Temple, 1919). Even though the detailed early history of Borgu remains incomprehensible due to insufficient research, it is nonetheless

certain that by the 16th century, Borgu had established a structure and organized a formidable kingdom, which other powerful neighbours viewed as a threat (Jones, 2005). In support of this, Stewart (1993) provided the kings' list of Borgu kingdoms from 1730. The followings are the kings of Bussa and their years of reign.ⁱ

Table 1. The kings of Bussa and their years of reign

<i>Ruler/Kibe/Emir</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Yerima Busa</i>	1730 – 1750
<i>Kigera II</i>	1750 – 1766
<i>Jibrin I</i>	1766 – 1791
<i>Yerima Ibrahim</i>	1791 – 1792
<i>Kitoro I</i>	1792 – 1825
<i>Kisan – Dogo I</i>	1835 – 1843
<i>Gbello Ankali</i>	1843 – 1844
<i>Gajere</i>	1844 – 1862
<i>Kigera II Dantoro</i>	1862 – 1895
<i>Kissan – Dogo II</i>	1895 – 1902
<i>Kitoro Gani II</i>	1902 – 1915
<i>Jibrin Kpandara</i>	1917 – 1924
	1924 – 1935
<i>Muhammad Sani (Ba-Baki)</i>	1935 – 1968
<i>Musa Kigera III</i>	1968 – 2000
<i>Haliru Kitoro III</i>	2000 (February 2002) ⁱⁱ – 2015
<i>Muhammad Haliru Dantoro, Kitoro IV</i>	2015 – date

Source: Adopted from Damisa and Nze (2004) and updated from field survey, 2021

Borgu has existed as a political entity under the Kisra lineage for centuries. Historians have established that the Kisra dynasty of Borgu is one of the longest dynasties in Nigeria. According to Adekunle (2004), the impact of *Wasangara* (the ruling aristocracy) on the economic growth and development of the kingdom was a significant factor in its greatness. Mohammed's work demonstrated that the history of the Borgu people had been fragmented due to migrations, wars, and contacts with the Europeans. Though the Borguans are separated by the colonialists, they still maintain economic, spiritual and traditional links, cultural affinity, and relationships with the Nigerian Borgu and the Benin Republic Borgu. For instance, in a cultural festival, titled the International Gani Festival, held in New Bussa 2013 and Kaima 2014, some traditional rulers and their contingents from the Benin Republic were in attendance in a good number.ⁱⁱⁱ

Pattern and waves of migration on the Niger River (around the Kainji Lake)

Samir (1974) opines that migration in West Africa could be seasonal or permanent movement of people. In our area of study and indeed the entire Sudan, such movement was common

from around the 15th century to the early 20th century. Migration led to the influx of people along the bank of the Niger River, from the Great Lake to the lower Niger (Wara, 2016, pp.36-37). For this study, resettlement is defined as the forced displacement and relocation of a population, such as the Kainji Dam resettlement scheme, by higher authorities to establish another permanent home/residence for the displaced people (Frank, 2017). The Kainji Dam resettlement scheme led to the relocation of many communities along the River Niger to new settlements between 1964 – 1968 (Mahdi & Wara, 2018; Oyedipe, 1983; Roder, 1994; Niworu & Bako, 2012).

Despite the acceptance of Kisra Legend as the official history of the origin of, at least, the ruling clan, there has been a wave of migration and resettlement in the area. The major reason why people migrate to the area is for economic opportunities which are centred on fishing, cultivation of crops, and trade (Prothero, 1959). Even though the area has been playing host to several migrants, it was difficult to ascertain the first group that settled there and when they moved in. However, it was believed that Gungawa (*Rashe*) Island dwellers were

indigenous to the Yauri region and had their settlements on the same islands in both Yauri and Borgu areas of Niger (Wara, 2016). Other groups of indigenous communities are the Kambari, Akimba, Laru, and Lopara (Wara, 2019).

From the 15th century, individuals and groups of Hausa migrant traders began to penetrate the area, with some settling permanently. Later, they gained hegemony over the indigenous people and established their kingdom over them. Much later, in the 16th century Muhammad Kanta, the Sarkin Kebbi, reached a truce with the leaders of Yauri to allow for free passage of traders across the trade routes to Nupe-land, opening many *Sorko* influences on the waters of Yauri and Borgu kingdoms. The *Sorko* group, who now gained free access to the waters, began to fish with many settling along the banks of the River Niger (Mahdi, 1968, cited in Wara, 2019). In furtherance of the movement of people into Borgu Emirate, the early 19th-century agreement reached between Gwandu and Yauri during the reign of Sarki Albishir Dan A'I facilitated the free passage of different communities. The *Sorko* fishermen were the major beneficiaries. They moved to Yauri and drifted into the Borgu kingdom, where

they established strong relationships (Mahdi, 1968, cited in Wara, 2019).

Among the indigenous tribes around the Kainji Lake is the Kambari. They were farmers and fishermen who migrated to Old Bussa and later resettled in their present locations in Borgu Emirate from the neighbouring Yauri Emirate. Shortage of farmland among the Kambari people in Yauri Emirate and the search for fertile farmlands around the Kainji Lake were major factors for migration before and after the Kainji Dam construction. Many communities, such as Ganekasaye, Karabonde, Shagunu, and Yumu, are host to the Kambari and other tribes such as the *Lopawa*, *Laru*, *Yalawa*, and *Gumgawa* (A traditional title holder, personal interview, August 15, 2022).

With the British conquest of the Nigeria area and fostering of colonial administration from the 20th century, another wave of migration began. In Borgu emirate, the influx of more Nigerian communities, such as the Hausa, *Sorko*, Zabarma, Nupe, Yoruba, Igbo, Esan, and Igala was witnessed in large numbers (Wara, 2019). They settled on both sides of the banks in places such as Wawa, Gungun Bussa, Shagunu, and Agwara,

among others. The movement of the people into this area enhanced the economic activities of trade and fishing. The host communities have their population swelled up into towns and diverse ethnic groups (H. Dalhatu, personal interview, August 14, 2020).

The increase in the wave of migration into the Borgu Emirate in the second half of the 19th century was influenced by two significant developments. Firstly, it was the establishment of the Borgu Emirate in 1954 and the Niger Dam Resettlement Project. The two factors triggered the influx of people from other areas and the internal migration into the emirate and the dam's vicinity and its waterways (S. M. Niworu, personal interview, September 3, 2020). As earlier noted, the *Sorko* fishermen who had been trickling into the area began to move in large numbers along with their families and settled permanently. The movement reached its climax after the completion of the Kainji Dam in 1968 because of fishing and other economic opportunities it afforded migrants. In this process, some of these migrants established colonies at Malale, Shagunu, Tungar Gyama, Talke, Shiga, Yumu, Bunzam, and Gungun Bussa, among others. Many also came from

Niger and other neighbouring ethnic nationalities (Wara, 2016). The resettlement of the people due to the Kainji Dam project and its corresponding benefits triggered internal migration, especially into New Bussa, the headquarters of Borgu Local Government. Apart from those who officially resettled at the resettlement site, many people from different occupations, such as the *Sorko* fishing migrants, have relocated to the area because of the attractive economic opportunities that the Kainji Dam provides.

Migration and resettlement in modern Borgu Emirate

Human migration is an essential aspect of population dynamics and comes with significant consequences for the people and society. Given the relevance of migration in the origin and development of Borgu from 700 AD up to the 21st century, it will not be out of place to subscribe to the postulation that the modern Borgu Emirate is a product of migration and resettlements. Migration and resettlement have multidimensional effects on the lives of the Borgu people and their history from a different facet of life. Therefore, this section discusses how migration and resettlement impact on the people of Borgu Emirate from political,

economic, social and environmental dimensions.

1. Political impact: political restructuring and harmony among the Borguans

From 1954 when the modern Borgu Emirate was created, the area of Borgu Emirate was still under the colonial rule of a single administrative unit referred to as the Borgu Native Authority under the Ilorin province. Borgu Native Authority encompassed Kaiama, Okuta, Agwara, Babanna, and Shagunu, among others. In 1976, the Local Government reforms of the Obasanjo regime abrogated the Native Authority System and established the Local Government Council System. Borgu Native Authority thus became a Local Government Council with New Bussa as headquarters. The late Emir of Borgu, Alhaji Haliru Dantoro, became the first Council Chairman of Borgu Local Government from 1976 to 1979 (Senior emirate council member, personal interview, August 8, 2020). In 1989, Borgu Local Government was divided into Borgu and Kaiama Local Government Areas (LGAs), both in Kwara State, until August 27, 1991, when Borgu Emirate became part of Niger State (Damisa & Eze, 2004; NSG, 2005a).

The territories of modern Borgu are now divided into the following districts: Bussa, Rofia, Mago, Duma, Wawa, Shagunu, Lumma, and Konkoso, among others. Each district is divided into smaller sections. Babanna District, for example, has villages like Pisa, Kigbera, Kabe, Dekara, etc. The administrative system of Borgu Emirate is now divided into the following: Central, District, and Village Administrative Systems. The traditional political structure of the Borgu Emirate remains even though reforms have taken place and are still ongoing (S. M. Niworu, personal interview, September 3, 2020).

Before reforms during the colonial period and after resettlements in post-independence times, most of the title holders influenced the day-to-day activities of the state. During an interview with an elder statesman in New Bussa, he said that certain officials with portfolios such as *Ki-Santi*, *Ki-Gbaswai*, *Kizara*, *Ki-Shwai*, *Ki-Jikina*, *Batafu*, *Ba-Beresuni*, *Ba-Durde*, *Bar-Gambere*, etc., exercised vital roles in the traditional administration. For instance, *Ki-zara*, as a descendant of Kisra, served as a councillor to the kings. *Ki-swa* was in charge of the waterways and fishing

grounds of Bussa. *Ki-Jikina* was a senior war chief while *Ba-Baresan* was a member of the owners of the land, who also served as chief priest to the king of Bussa and was in charge of the *Jakana* shrine. *Ki-Santi* was the War-Head in Bussa; *Ki-Gbaswai* was put in charge of a new settlement in and around Bussa, etc. (elder statesman, personal interview, August 17, 2020).

However, the contemporary modern Borgu Emirate witnessed restructuring after resettlements, the influx of immigrants, and influences from the Islamic political system and Hausa traditions. Certain traditional titles of traditional institutions have been changed or reformed. While most of the original titles still exist, more titles not originally part of the administration have been included. Examples of such titles as *Jarma*, *Barde*, *Madami*, *Wali*, and *Shantali*, among others, have become part of the new traditional structure of modern Borgu. The titleholders are summed up or estimated to be (68) sixty-eight in total.^{iv}

The central administrative system: is now headed by the Emir of Borgu, who is the traditional ruler of the Borgu Emirate and is being assisted by the Council of the

Emirate, which is the highest decision-making organ in the Emirate (NSG, 2005b, November 26). The central role of the Council includes the conferment of titles to the next king to ascend the throne and the settlement of disputes, among others. The Council comprises both permanent and non-permanent members. The permanent members include *Waziri*, *Ubandoma*, *Garkuwa*, *Mutawalli*, *Galadima*, *Madawaki*, and *Magajin Gari*. The non-permanent members include the chairpersons of Agwara and Borgu Local Government Areas (a traditional title holder II, personal interview, August 13, 2020).

The *Waziri* is the second in command to the Emir and oversees some key issues in the absence of the Emir, such as the settlement of disputes and administrative duties. *Waziri* is like a Prime Minister and *Liman* is the spiritual leader. Apart from the above-mentioned emirate council members, there are other traditional title holders in the modern Borgu Emirate with portfolios and those without portfolios who might be called upon for advice and special ad-hoc responsibilities like organizing the *Gani* festival.

District administration: The district administration is now headed by *Hakimi*.

The Borgu Emirate has or is divided into (18) eighteen districts, each ruled by a prince appointed by the Emir of Borgu from the male of the royal families. The districts include Lumma, Tunga Bube, Duma, Babanna, Mago, Rofia, Papiri, Agwara, Boro – Malale, to mention but a few. Each district head manages various traditional lands. Each nominated district head is confirmed in office by the Emir of Borgu and turbaned before discharging their responsibilities (J. Salihu, personal interview, September 4, 2020). Most of their administrative functions include settlement of disputes, maintenance of law, peace and order, and equally assisting the local government officials in implementing various government policies.

The village administration: The various villages have their village heads who oversee the administration and are responsible for coordinating the village activities. The following are some of the villages: Kashimi, Leshigbe, Tamanai, Monai, Gada, Oli, Awuru, etc. The villages are the government at the grassroots and serve as intermediaries between the people and the District Head. The district head appoints the village heads. Their appointment is for a life term except if

they resign or are deposed (J. Salihu, personal interview, September 4, 2020).

Thus, the traditional political structure and system of the Borgu Emirate have been reformed since 1954 due to the influences of inter-group interactions arising from adaptation to 'alien' cultural practices of major groups coming into the emirate, such as the Hausas and Yorubas, as well as ECOWAS nationals as a result of migration and Kainji Lake resettlement project. Many of the political systems and practices of the Hausa emirate system have now become part of the political system and practices of the Borgu Emirate. Other ethnic groups, such as Hausas, Nupes, Yorubas, Igbos, and Isokos, among others, enjoy traditional titles in the emirate and are consulted on issues of development affecting the people of Borgu Emirate. However, one major challenge to the Borgu Emirate's traditional political institution after the relocation of communities is conflict over territorial claims. Territorial claims often resurface because certain districts were relocated to another district, like old Bussa to Wawa district (former Borgu youth leader, personal interview, August 14, 2020).

According to the former vice chairman of Borgu Local Government (personal interview, August 7, 2021), the Kainji Dam construction resettlement scheme was a significant factor in human mobility in Borgu Emirate. After the commissioning of the Kainji Dam complex in 1969 by the then Head of State General Yakubu Gowon, the resettled communities of Borgu witnessed an influx of people from different parts of the country due to new opportunities created in the communities. The Dam project had opened the floodgates of government presence in Borgu with several government establishments and institutions sited in New Bussa. With the assistance of Mohammed Jibril (August 14, 2020) of the School of Preliminary Studies New Bussa, the establishments and institutions in Borgu were identified. The establishments and institutions include the National Institute for Fresh Water Fisheries Research (NIFFR), Federal College of Wild Life Management (FCWLM), Kainji Lake National Park, Nigerian Army 221 Light Tank Battalion, Nigeria Air Force 99 Air Weapons School and Swashi Irrigation Dam. Others are the General Hospital, NIPOST office, Customs office, and Prison Service, among others.

The new governance structures in Borgu Emirate promote unity among the traditionalists, provide a sense of belonging to the new class of elites, and ensure peaceful coexistence for economic and social development.

2. Economic impact: occupational dislocation and new livelihood

Before the Kainji Dam resettlement programme, in and out-migration was the contributing factor shaping the economic activities of Borgu. There were farmers, fishermen, artisans, blacksmiths, and traders, among others, in the area. These sets of occupational dwellings were determined by either commercial exchange or some series of in-and-out mobility by locals and foreigners that developed existing and created non-existing occupational practices. Eventually, the Kainji Dam was the biggest single project in Nigeria's First National Development Plan (1962 – 1968). It became the most outstanding of the projects initiated in Nigeria in the post-colonial period, estimated to cost over \$80 million (Niger Dams Authority, 1966). The construction of this dam necessitated the relocation and resettlement of several communities

(Gyuse & Gyuse, 2008). In 1963, Tungan Anfani, Komi, Dogongari, and Tungan Umaru were the first villages to resettle through cash compensation. In November 1964, a new compensation policy was launched by providing suitable accommodation for the affected communities of now New Bussa, Shagunu, Monnai, and Karabonde. Compensations were given for the loss of farmlands and economic trees (Niger Dams Authority, 1966). An elder statesman in Karabonde (personal interview, January 16, 2021) confirmed that soil conservation effort was put in place by planting trees - citrus, mangoes, guava, lemon, etc. Wells were dug to serve as a water source for the resettled communities.

Before the displacement and resettlement of communities at the commencement of the Kainji Dam construction, an enlightenment campaign was launched between 1962 and 1963 for the displaced villages. The Emirs of Borgu, Yauri and Kontagora were used as bridges to communicate to the communities about the need for people to comply with the relocation order. The campaign method was effective through community leaders. The inhabitants of old Bussa moved to the south, the East of Wawa, to a new

settlement named New Bussa (NAK, DOB/HIS/16). According to a traditional title holder and community leader in New Bussa:

The movement from Old Bussa to New Bussa was done when we were still young. I think I was at the age of 12 years. My father was a farmer, and I used to help him in his farming business because he was into cash crops farming like sugarcane and rice, besides food crops such as guinea corn, maize, etc. We continued the farming activities, even after relocation to New Bussa at a new plot of land my father acquired (Personal Interview, January 20, 2021).

The movement came with transformations in the political and socio-economic structures to improve the people's socio-economic status. For Olawepo (2006), resettled people during the dam construction were mostly peasants with little economic base. Thus, resettlement by the government or those in charge of such projects saw it as something good for the people because it

facilitates development through new infrastructural amenities accompanying the resettlement programme (Frank, 2017).

The well-being of the people was given prominence by the Northern Nigeria Ministry of Agriculture. The Agriculture Research Institute of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria was engaged to carry out a soil survey to assist the resettlement scheme through the recommendation of suitable farmlands in the resettled areas (Niger Dams Authority, 1966). Even though productive farmlands were lost to Kainji Lake, surveys were carried out in resettlement areas to help farmers with soil and land capabilities. A renowned farmer in Monnai commented that agricultural extension services and modern farming methods and tools were introduced to the post-resettlement communities (L. Danjuma, personal interview, January 17, 2021). Small dams were constructed for cattle-rearing and Fulani herdsman "at different points of an interval of 5-6 miles within the grazing area" to address the problem of overgrazing in the periphery of the Dam (Olawepo, 2006, p.10). Thus, this has also facilitated irrigation farming which has become a potential means of livelihood

for many resettled communities in Borgu Emirate.

Other benefits that accrued in addition to hydroelectricity generation and access to the modern system of farming and fishing are job creation, tourism opportunities, urbanization and social integration (Frank, 2017). The Dam facilitated the process of resolving the major problems of economic development, international navigation, flood control, expansion of agriculture (*Fadama* downstream), boosted the fishing industry, and alternative road crossing of the Niger River for cattle instead of the single-track railway bridge at Jebba (Niger Dams Authority, 1966). The Federal Parliament established the Niger Dams Act in September 1962 to ensure "the generation of power, improvement of navigation, flood control, promoting fishery and operating irrigation schemes" (Niger Dams Authority, 1966, p.16).

However, the laudable plans and objectives Kainji Dam project were not fully implemented after the relocation of communities. The resettled communities, in group and individual interviews, claimed to have been economically dislocated and forced to seek alternative means of livelihood. For instance, 10

villages that relocated to Awuro share the little land available in the area. The former Borgu youth leader (personal interview, August 14, 2020) further explained that no provision was made for fishermen to get deep-water fishing gear after the construction of the large man-made lake. The affected riverine communities were used to small fishing gear but now need bigger ones. He also claimed that the riverine areas experience flooding and land degradation due to pressure on the little available space for farming, coupled with the fact that no irrigational system was implemented as initially proposed.

Many communities in Borgu Emirate, especially the *Sorko* fishermen, engage in fishing as an occupation due largely to their proximity to the river flowing to Kainji Dam and beyond. Some of them were full-time fishermen, while others engage in it on a part-time basis or engage in fishing as a seasonal activity. Some were among the local populace, while some are non-indigenous to the area but chose to settle there upon discovering the 'hidden treasure', abundant kinds of seafood in that area. They use small dug-out canoes, cast nets, and hooks for fishing (former Borgu

youth leader, personal interview, August 14, 2020).

Given the nature of the migratory pattern and resettlement agenda of the Nigerian government in the Kainji Lake area, the economic base of the people was affected positively and, to some extent, negatively. Farming and fishing were the two major occupations of the people of Borgu before their relocation to new settlements during the construction project of the Kainji Dam. The forced migration from old locations to new settlements came with mixed feelings for the affected communities (Gyuse & Gyuse, 2008). Some groups, especially those that lived on fishing as the main occupation, found it difficult to adapt to life on the hinterland away from the riversides. Some had to relocate to river areas after being relocated to New Bussa. Many others have changed their occupation to adapt to new challenges and available opportunities in new environments (Oyedipe, 1983; Roder, 1973 & 1994). As a result of migration and resettlement, the modern Borgu Emirate now has farmers, fishermen, traders, artisans, professionals, and white-collar workers, with a significant number of rural-urban migrants.

3. Social impact: intergroup relations and social integration

All the people interviewed and the available literature on the Borgu Emirate point to the fact that the origin of the Borgu people and that of the ruling aristocracy prominently known as Wasangari revolves around migration and resettlements. In corroboration, Levtzion (1968) argues that though the ruling aristocrats in Borgu were migrants, they dominated the political structure after enquiring about the subsequent legends obtained in the area. He postulated that the originators of the Bussa, as well as the Borgu, might be a typical situation of a group of invaders, who were horsemen with military and political power imposing their authority on the indigenous people but adopted the indigenous language because they were just a few. Linguistic studies on the area support Levtzion's account with the view that the area occupied by the Borgu kingdom in prehistoric times was home to the eastern Maude group, with languages known as Boko/Bussa in Welmer's classification of the eastern Niger-Congo language (Welmers, 1971). The Boko/Bussa language is spoken by people living in the northeast of the Benin Republic and the mid-west of Nigeria between the Niger River and the Benin border.

Given the above observation, it will be right to say that the newcomers mixed with the local Mande ethnic groups to form a well-organized kingdom superior to those surrounding groups. The newcomers became the rulers, God-Kings rather than priest-kings because of their diverse ancestry, while the Mande people, on the other hand, were owners of the land and were responsible for the worship of local bush or nature spirit (Olivier, 2012). However, the Mande people played an imperative role in the burial and installation of the Kisra Kings and the state's government.

A similar pattern of intergroup relations, social inclusion, and integration resulting from migration and resettlements in modern Borgu resurfaced in the colonial and post-colonial era among the Bussa, Kambari, Gungawa, Lopawa, Laru, and Yalawa, among others. Intergroup relations among these groups have been cordial, and they became assimilated as Borguans. The indigenous Bussa/Boko language remains relevant despite the influx of newcomers and the influences of Islam, Hausa, and other languages. This has been captured in a statement by a traditional title holder in New Bussa:

Our main language of communication is Bissan, spoken by a majority of the indigenous people, but every Borguien can hear (understand) and speak the Hausa language. We have many people coming to our native land, either as business people or workers in government organizations. We welcome them as brothers and sisters and allow them to acquire a piece of land to build houses and business premises. Many shops in this town (New Bussa) are owned by Yorubas, Igbos, Hausas, and other ethnic groups from different parts of Nigeria (personal interview, August 8, 2020).

Eventually, the resettlements programme of the Kainji Dam also attracted different sets of local migrants to the Borgu Emirate in the post-colonial period. Specifically, the *Sorko* group of fishing communities were among the major immigrants in the riverine areas of Borgu. New Bussa, in particular, has witnessed a

mass influx of people from diverse backgrounds working in different government establishments, running large-scale businesses, or engaging in petty trading. In a personal interview with a professor of Political Science who is a native of Borgu, he said:

The movement of people to New Bussa has created a Mini-Nigeria in Borgu, where a significant number of major ethnic groups in Nigeria are found there, and an average Borgu person can speak at least two of the major Nigerian languages. The most interesting part of such inter-ethnic and regional integration in Borgu is harmonious coexistence (S. M. Niworu, personal interview, September 3, 2020).

Urbanization due to migration and resettlements in the Kainji Lake area has given another dimension to rural-urban migration. There has been a flow of young people from the villages to towns and cities for education purposes and economic engagements. The study has also observed that people were leaving farming activities for towns and cities for

job opportunities. The changing character of migration in the modern Borgu Emirate is rural to urban centres. New Bussa, the capital of Borgu Emirate, is hosting many people from surrounding villages. The growth rate of urbanization and developments in the emirate were also contributed by migrants from other parts of the country as narrated by a non-native resident of New Bussa:

Even though my parents are not indigenous to Bussa, New Bussa is my home. I was born and brought up in New Bussa, and speak Bissan, Igbo and Hausa. I got married here (New Bussa) and work here (New Bussa). My parents have been in the north before the relocation from Old Bussa to New Bussa. In fact, I am a stakeholder in the community.... (personal interview, January 21, 2021).

The non-indigene settlers in Borgu are drawn from several parts of Nigeria and other neighbouring countries. For several years, foreigners like Malians and

Nigeriens have migrated and settled in the Borgu territories. The most populous among the immigrants are the Nupes, Yorubas, and Hausas. They have embarked on diverse inter-group relations in terms of intermarriage, with the indigenous people. Apart from the major non-indigenous settlers in Borgu, there are other ethnic groups like the Igbo, Esan, Urhobos, and Igalas. The Igbos come from the Eastern part of Nigeria, and the overwhelming majority are into various economic activities like trading. One of the oldest families of Igbo Oligun in Borgu is the Okwuogo family. The head of the family was made the Head of Igbo in Borgu, "Nna Ndi Igbo" in 1960 by the then Emir of Borgu (Damisa & Eze, 2004).

The Esan-speaking settlers are believed to be the first non-Yoruba-speaking group from south Nigeria to settle in old Bussa. The family of Emalum he stands out. The family is believed to have settled in old Bussa before the Second World War and was part of those resettled at New Bussa. The Malians, mostly traders, also settled in the area of Borgu in quite considerable numbers in the 1970s. Their major occupation is fishing and trading in fairly used clothes (a market leader, personal interview, September 18, 2020).

Another significant socio-cultural dimension to developments in the emirate can be seen in the several traditional festivals in Borgu Emirate, such as *Gani* festival, naming ceremonies, the burial of the king, marriage ceremonies, coronation ceremony and *Kpedangara man*, *kibokpeau*, deities' worship, *pappa*, *Ludo*, *Jekanna*, *ganti*, *takamalagbazah*, *swanbodi*, and *swamad*. Currently, the general and most widely celebrated is the *Gani* festival, which is usually observed annually. The festival is said to have originated from the Kisra people, who brought their traditions from Persia in the 7th century (NAK, DOB/ASR/33). The festival was originally observed at the end of each harvest season to thank God for a successful, bountiful harvest and in honour of the departed kings. With the spread of Islam in the emirate, the festival is now being observed along with *Id-El Mau'lud* which celebrates the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.^v It is equally a period of offering a gift to the king and naming new princes and princesses like *Woru*, *Sabi*, *Bio*, *Bama*, *Bake*, and *Wure*(S. Daudu, personal interviews, September 11, 2020)

The social dimension of developments in the modern Borgu Emirate is significantly

influenced by migration and Kainji Dam resettlement. The emirate has witnessed social interactions, integration and reorganization due to the influx of different sets of people from diverse origins, cultures, and religions. New Bussa, the capital of Borgu Emirate, is one of the most peaceful and accommodating towns in Niger State because of its unity in diversity. Inter-marriages, inter-faith relations, inter-ethnic consultation, and harmonious coexistence are the bedrock of social cohesion and stability in the area. This type of inclusiveness is what Nigeria needs because it contributes to effective migration management for harmonious coexistence (Greg & Anthony, 2019). Similarly, despite the large concentration of nomadic groups across the banks of the river and into the hinterland, there are no reported cases of farmer-herder clashes as prominent in other regions of Nigeria because the resettlement project also took care of grazing reserves for nomadic groups in the area to resolve potential conflicts (Ayeni, 1983).

However, in an interview, the resettled communities claimed to have been socially alienated for too long until recently when the elders and youth organizations in New Bussa and its

environment agitated for fairer treatment as stakeholders in the Kainji Lake Development Project. Until recently, the social and welfare amenities provided by the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) School, NEPA Hospital, and NEPA Club House, among others, were strictly for NEPA staff. Similarly, most resettled communities, like Shagunu, Awuro, Monnai, etc., have no modern road networks to connect with people in the emirate (former Borgu youth leader, personal interview, August 14, 2020).

Conclusion

The main contribution of this study is unlocking the various trajectories of developments in modern Borgu that migration and resettlements have attracted. The shared history of migration and resettlements among the people of the Kainji Lake area influences the formation and development of the modern Borgu Emirate. The Kisra legend has united the people towards establishing an enduring political fortress. The displacement and resettlement due to the Kainji Dam construction gave birth to new socio-economic cum political structures and systems for the modern Borgu Emirate. The Borguans are experiencing more social

integration/cohesion, diversifying their economic potential and gaining access to developmental infrastructure. Migrants and indigenes have integrated, which has shaped and reshaped their new environment. They have contributed to making their homeland a centre of attraction for tourists and investors. Therefore, the people of Borgu Emirate should uphold the existing integration process, unity among diverse groups, and peaceful struggle for the betterment of the area. Equally, Nigeria's government should return to action to reactivate the numerous initiatives in Kainji Dam to boost agriculture and inland water transportation because it is potentially suitable towards the urbanization of Borgu Emirate. Nigeria also stands to derive more benefits from tourism and the economic prospects of the area.

Conflict of Interest:

The authors report no conflict of interest

Funding/Acknowledgement:

This study was supported by the TETFund Institutional Based Research (IBR) research grant 2017(4th Batch) to Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Nigeria.

Notes

ⁱ DOB/HIS/50 Genealogical Tree of Borgu Division, 1917. National Archive Kaduna, Kaduna State.

ⁱⁱ The official date the Emir (Haliru Kitoro III) assumed office after court ruling in his favour

ⁱⁱⁱ Personal experience of events at the Annual Gani Festival in New Busa by the lead author that featured art and cultural display of socio-political and economic life of Borgu people.

^{iv} From document available with Niger State Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs Minna.

^v Personal experience and observance of the Gani Festival April 2013 proceedings at Sabuke Square and coronation ceremony of Kitoro IV on 29 November 2016 in New Busa by the lead author has added insight to the research study.

References

Adekunle, O. J. (2004). *Politics and society in Nigeria's Middle Belt: Borgu and the emergence of a political identity*, Trenton: Africa world press Inc.

Agwara, M. (2014). The Founding of the Three Principal Towns of Pre-colonial Borgu Emirate. *Journal of National Development*, 5(2).

Ayeni, J. S. O. (1983). Rangeland problems in the Kainji Lake Basin Area of Nigeria. *Agric. Ecosystems Environ*, 9, 37-50.

Damisa, Y. M. & Nze, P. N. (2004). *Traditional Treasures of Borgu*, Minna: Ndunass Press.

Frank, V. (2017). Project-induced displacement and resettlement: from impoverishment risks to an opportunity for development? *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 35(1), 3-21. DOI: 10.1080/14615517.2017.1278671.

Frobenius, L. (1913). *The Voice of Africa*. Berlin.

Greg, H. E. & Anthony, C. O. (2020). Public relations, migration issues and inclusiveness in Nigeria political system. *IKENGA International Journal of Institute of African Studies*, 19(1), 200-214.

- Gyuse, R.S. & Gyuse, T. T. (2008). Kainji resettlement housing: 40 years later, *Journal of Urbanism*, 1(3), 247-264. DOI: 10.1080/17549170802532062
- Jones, R. M. (2005). *History of Borgu*, Lagos: Irede Printers Ltd.
- Levtzion, N. (1968). *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lupton, K. (1984-1985). The partitioning of Borgu in 1898 and the French Enclaves in Nigeria, 1900-1960, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 12(3/4),77-94.
- Mahdi, A. & Wara, M. A. (2018). Rethinking histories of forced movements and migrations within the valleys of Niger Province from a Kambari perspective, C. 1860s-1960s. In A. Mahdi (ed). *Practice of History: Hausaland and Beyond* (a festschrift in honour of late Mahdi Adamu) (Pp93-108). Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited.
- Mangut, B. N. (2013). Preliminary Investigations of the Origin and Historical Traditions of the Borgu in Niger State of Nigeria, *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies*. 2(2) 1-13.
- Mathews, A. B., O.B.E. (1950). The Kisra Legend, *African Studies*, 9(3), 144-147. DOI: 10.1080/00020185008706819.
- Meek, C. K. (1925). *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, London: Oxford University Press
- Mohammed, A. (2013). *Borgu Fragmented History: Issues and Challenges*, Kaduna: Ozihg Books Ltd.
- NAK, DOB/ASR/33 Customs of the Bussawa, by P. B. Diggle and J. C. O. Clarke. National Archive Kaduna
- NAK, DOB/HIS/16. Change of Bussa Town Site. National Archive Kaduna
- NAK, DOB/HIS/38. History of Borgu. National Archive Kaduna
- NAK, DOB/HIS/50. Genealogical Tree of Borgu Division, 1917. National Archive Kaduna

- Niger Dams Authority (1966). *Get the facts straight about the Niger Dams Project*. Public Relations Office, Niger Dams Authority New Bussa. Ilorin: Matanmi & Sons Printing Press.
- Niger State Government (NSG) (2005a, November 26). "Kitoro on the march again." *The Rural Newscope*, a publication of Ministry for Local Government, Community Development and Chieftaincy Affairs Minna, Niger State.
- Niger State Government (NSG) (2005b, November 26). "Kob's skin and the Borgu People." *The Rural Newscope*, a publication of Ministry for Local Government, Community Development and Chieftaincy Affairs Minna, Niger State.
- Niworu, S. M & Bako, U. Y (2012) Hydro-electric power for sustainable development: A study of Kainji Hydro Electric Dam and its impact on the resettled communities of Borgu. *NASHER Journal*, 10 (1), 61-71.
- Olawepo, R. A. (2006). Resettlement and agricultural change in a rural Nigerian environment: the Jebba scheme example, *International Journal of Rural Management*, 2(1), 57-66.DOI: 10.1177/097300520500200103
- Olivier, W.(2012). Sons of the Soil and Conquerors Who Came on Foot: The Historical Evolution of a West African Border Region, *African Studies Quarterly*. 13(1 & 2), 75-99.
- Oyedipe, F.P. A. (1983). *Adjustment to Resettlement: A Study of the resettled peoples in the Kainji Lake Basin*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press Ltd.
- Prothero, R. M. (1959). *Migrant labour from Sokoto Province, Northern Nigeria*. Kaduna: Government Printer.
- Roder, W. (1973). The Farming Economy of the Resettlement Area, *Kainji Lake Studies*, 291-120.
- Roder, W. (1994). *Human Adjustment to Kainji Reservoir in Nigeria*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Samir, A. (1974). *Modern migration in West Africa*, London: Oxford University Press.

- Stevens, Phillips (1975). The Kisra Legend and the Distortion of Historical Tradition, *The Journal of African History*, 16(2), 185–200.
- Stewart, H. M. (1993). *Borgu and its Kingdoms: A Reconstruction of a Western Sudanese Polity*, New York: Edwin Press
- Temple, O. (1919). *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, Cape Town: Argus Printing and Publishing Co Ltd.
- Wara, M. A. (2016). The contributions of Zabarma-Sarko to the development of the riverine communities in Yauri and Borgu emirates in the 19th and 20th centuries, *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities*, 1(1),35-43.
- Wara, M. A. (2019). The Sarko expansion in the waters of the Niger to the end of the 20th century, *Annals of Global History*, 1(1), 1-6.
- Welmers, E. W. (1971). *African Language Structure*, Berkeley: University of California Press.