

# THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETHNIC QUESTION IN TAFAWA BALEWA AREA OF BAUCHI STATE

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## **Abstract**

Ethnicity is a complex phenomenon. The Analysis of the ethnic-related conflicts all over the world has proven to be a very difficult enterprise. The issues of ethnicity in Nigeria and Tafawa Balewa in particular have created conditions for the initiation and resurgence of conflicts. The 1991, 1995 and 1998 conflicts in Tafawa Balewa have left an almost indelible mark on inter ethnic relations in the state. For example in 1991, 500 people were officially reported killed and 34, 000 others rendered homeless. In 1995 the resurgence of conflict left about 1, 400 people killed and 38 villages and 77 churches destroyed. The issues relating to these conflicts, for example, the question of citizenship and identity, particularly, the issues of a separate chiefdom for the Sayawa ethnic group have remained almost totally unresolved. The historical development of the ethnic question in Tafawa Balewa is aimed at identifying the specific basis of antagonistic relations between the Hausa- Fulani on the one hand and the Sayawa ethnic group on the other.

## **Introduction**

The literature of recent years on political development in Africa gives a prominent place to the twin themes of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. These issues have accordingly dominated academic research (see for example, Egwu 1998, 1999; Otititi 1999; Osagie; 1994 Nnolt 1978; Ake 1993). Ethnic conflicts pose fundamental threat to political stability and national integration especially in plural societies of Africa. In particular, the resurgence of ethnic entities in parts of Nigeria, Rwanda Liberia and so on, have led to state collapse and huge human and material destruction. For example, in Zangon kataf in Kaduna State of Nigeria, two days of intensive ethnic violence between the Katafs and the Hausa- Fulani in 1996 resulted in mass killings and destruction of properties of inestimable value. The protracted Ife/Modakeke Communal strife, Ofa-Ibeku disturbances of September, 1998, the age-long Urhobo / Itsekin and Ijaw communal strife have also left huge human and material losses. The list which has become legendary also include the ten year old dispute between Garbawa and Dala villages in Yobe State in which 5 people were killed in 1992; the Kaduna ethnic/religious crisis of 2000, as well as the age long ethnic feud between the Jukun and Tiv communities. All of these have led to the redefinition of ethnic relations in these areas.

The resurgence of ethnic identity and conflicts in Nigeria could be attributed to many factors. Some of these factors include. The colonial heritage, the post colonial economic conditions in the country with struggle over scarce resources particularly after the introduction of the structural adjustment programme. Others may include the emerging democratization processes; the pattern of class formation and its consequences on the distribution of the nations wealth, the weak nature of the state, and the citizenship question.

The focus of this paper is the historical development of the ethnic question in Tafawa Balewa area of Bauchi metropolis. The recent political development, particularly the local government creation in 1997, split the Tafawa Balewa local government into two, namely, Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro. The entire area was called Lere district during the colonial period.

Tafawa Balewa shares boundaries with plateau State in the South and Dass Local Government of Bauchi State in the North. The most prominent natural features in the area include the massive Mbula rock, and the Gongola River, which together with its numerous tributaries such as Lere, Maijuju, Jarawa and Bagel Rivers form the main drainage pattern of the place.

Various ethnic groups inhabit the geographical area called Tafawa Balewa. These include, the sayawa, Hausa-Fulani, Jarawa and Sigidawa. Driberge (1931) reports that Nine settlements emerged in the area in the pre-colonial period where the people settled, the clan settlement pattern was supposed to have its own grinding place called "Vim Tonga."

### **Political Organization of the People**

Balandier (1970), has provided a three-fold typology which will enable us to come to grips with the political structures of the various people in the area. The first is the 'Chief Priest' system in which the political sphere is part and parcel of the social and religious structure. Second, is the Territorially Defined-Chieftainship, in which the members of the Community live in compact villages and give their allegiance directly to the chief in whom territorial, secular and religious authorities are combined. Here Communal ties override lineage ones as principles of political allegiance and organization. Third, the existence of bureaucratic machinery for the implementation of decisions on behalf of the society.

In the area of study, the type of political structure that emerged was the Territorially Defined-Chieftainship, while in the chief-priest system members of the Community lived in scattered villages and relate to the total Community in terms of their individual lineages.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the people lived in compact villages and gave their allegiance directly to the chief in whom territorial, secular, and religious authority were combined. The chiefs were responsible for the administration of justice and the settlement of disputes between lineages. Most of the settlements of the Sayawa had these features. (Dauda, 1999). In this case they were never at any period brought under any centralized administration.

On the other plain was the type of political organization called a "State." This refers to the area in which centralized political system existed before the establishment of the emirate system of government. In this area, the machinery of governance was noticeable. In such areas political leaders exercised their powers and authority, not on the basis of ethnic or genealogical connections, although this may be relevant, but on the basis of coercive powers which enable them to maintain their positions. The state that emerged in this area was Lere, founded by the Hausa immigrants who traced their origin to Zazzau (Zaria). They were also referred to as Zage-Zagi (Dauda, 1999). Lere had a chief called Sarki and a number of officials (all of them hereditary) under him. These chiefs included; Ciroma, Madaki, Sarkin Noma, and Galadima. Thus a centralized State had emerged in Lere but it could not use its military superiority to subdue the whole of Tafawa Balewa and bring it under its tutelage (Garba, 1984; Howard, 1908).

### **Economic and Social Relations**

The most important economic activity of the people of the area was farming. In the culture of the Jarawa, Sayawa, Gerawa and Sigidawa, there existed two types of farming, namely, the 'Kidn dihn' (Backyard) farm. This type of farming was done very close to the house. The second type of farming was the 'Kidn namtsih' (country farm). This was usually located very far from the homes. The proximity of the Kidn dihn to the home made it very suitable for women to cultivate. Maize, Okro and vegetables were found in the Kidn dihn (Aliyu, 1974). Men cultivated the more distant country farms.

The Hausa Fulani were cattle rearers who were involved in seasonal transhumance. Apart from those Fulani who lived in 'Ruga' (make-shift residence) and provided 'nono' (milk) for the other groups in the area, the main economic activity of the Fulani was cattle rearing. There was therefore a symbiotic relationship between them and the farming community, as they required the cow dung for manure, while the other provided foodstuff. It was exactly this kind of understanding that existed between the various groups that was referred to as very cordial. It is agreed that the Jarawa and Sayawa regarded themselves as playmates. Sayawa/Hausa-Fulani relation was equally cordial. The nomadic Fulani mainly concerned themselves with acquiring some form of guarantee for their right to graze their cattle, which was never denied (Dauda, 1999).

### **Ethnic Formations and Inter-Group Relations**

The problem associated with the pattern of ethnic relations in Tafawa Balewa revolves around the question of the ownership of the place. This places a big border on the question of the foundation of the place, the origin of the name 'Tafawa Balewa'; and citizenship.

### **The Origin of Tafawa Balewa**

A lot of controversy surrounds the history of the area of study, Tafawa Balewa. The Bauchi Emirate Council and the Sayawa people agree that the name Tafawa Balewa came from a dome of

granite about 200 meters high, situated by the riverside on entering the town. However, both of them disagree that each inhabited the area before the other. Tafawa Balewa is a Fulani word meaning 'black stone'. The Fulani used the name to describe the huge black rock found in the town. (Bauchi Emirate Council, 1991). According to the council, in a submission to the Bauchi State Committee on the Creation of Sayawa chiefdom in 1991.

The leadership of Tafawa Balewa town should have been rested in the Fulani, its founders. However, because every dry season, they have to travel southwards with their cattle in search of pasture and water it became difficult for them to give meaningful leadership especially for their sedentary neighbours. The leadership went to their next earlier settlers, the Kanun. Tafawa Balewa witnessed six Kanuri warheads, often, succession to thrones break when there is no suitable candidates from the ruling family. It was this circumstance that the Kanuri "dynasty" in Tafawa Balewa was interfaced with that of Angasawa "Dynasty" but NEVER the Sayawa who were in fact not in Tafawa Balewa until the 1970s.

The Sayawa have equally laid claim to Tafawa Balewa as the earliest inhabitants, tracing their migration to the area to the 13<sup>th</sup> century from the south of Tchad, and the Kanem Bornu Empire. They claim to have settled first at the foot of the black stone, which was then called Puji. They refer to the Fulani as the second settlers who co-habited the place as pastoralists (Bukata, 1991). Therefore, the present Tafawa Balewa was originally called Puji, derived from Sayawa Language, "Pus" - meaning stone, "ji" meaning black. The two words put together formed "PUSJI" - meaning black stone. The Fulani settlers were to hterarily translate Pusji to Tafawa - Balewa, a Fulani word for black stone. The name was to be changed by Hausa traders to "Tafawa Balewa" (Dauda, 1999).

Having firmly established commercial trading commodities like salt, potash, hoes, which they sold to the Sayawa people for which they exchanged goats, rams, guinea corn, cotton, rice, the Hausa gradually increased in population. This expansion in population enabled them to settle in the various hamlets, which they also renamed.as follows:

Gill	-	Bogoro
Marsmg	-	Lusa
Keser	-	Sarah
Kimsi	-	Boi
Tiri	-	Lere
Borshi	-	Gyara

Apart from changing the names of the various settlements, the Hausa also changed the indigenous name the Sayawa called themselves, from "Zar" to "Sayawa" (Bukata, 1991). The Hausa-Fulani came into Tafawa Balewa as Muslims and have remained so till date. The Sayawa were originally pagans until the advent of Christian missionaries in the area. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigerian first Prime Minister corroborates this:

Above all the pagans are very honest people because they do not yet know the modern man's cunning ways of cheating and deceit these pagans we will take as the original owners of Hausa land(Trevor; 1991). The Sayawa have also made reference to the presence of their ancient grinding stone. (Vun tonga) in Tafawa Balewa, which they consider as an "incontrovertible archaeological evidence".

The central evidence presented by the Bauchi Emirate Council for the historical claim to Tafawa Balewa is that of the establishment of a central authority by Yakubu I, the first emir of Bauchi, in Tafawa Balewa after subduing the people in the absence of any central authority.(see the pedigree of Bauchi emirs marked *Appendix "A "*) After this, Yakubu was said to have assigned five lieutenants (Hakimai), namely, Galadima, Ajiya, Sarkin Yaki, Madaki, and Wambai, to supervise the

newly created emirate with headquarters at Bauchi (B.E.C 1996). Lere district, which included Tafawa Balewa, was assigned to the Ajiya House and remained under its administration until 1991 (See Appendix "B").

There were three administrative districts in 1997. These included Lere, with headquarters at Tafawa Balewa; Bula, with headquarters at Bununu and Bogpro with headquarters at Bogoro. With this classification, and according to the 1963 census, the geographical and demographical account of the local government area can be presented as follows (*See Appendix "C"*). It is based on these calculations that the Bauchi Emirate Council came to the following conclusions: First that the whole area presently known as Tafawa Balewa local government has been under the Bauchi emirate for centuries. Second, of the three districts in the local government, the Sayawa are dominant only in Bogoro District. Third, that no Sayawa man ever ruled Tafawa Balewa town as hamlet. Fourth, that Tafawa Balewa is not a Sayawa town.

However, Mallam Aliyu, Wullumba, Dadi (the Dallatun Bauchi,) who is a Sayawa Muslim disagrees. According to him, the area was zoned into nine and known as Sayawa land before the migration of some ethnic groups. Migration therefore created the conditions for the regrouping of villages, which were renamed by the people of Bauchi. For example, Bogoro was renamed Nwan, Iusa - Dunga, Sigidi, Tin, Kulung, Bijin, Sur settlements were also merged and called Lere village. A similar regrouping of settlements was experienced in Jarawa land, which later became Bula district (Dadi, 1991).

## **Establishing the Arena**

### **The Caliphate and the Emergence of the Emirate System in Tafawa Balewa**

The issues associated with ethnicity in Tafawa Balewa revolves around the question of the ownership of the area. This creates a big problem on the question of the foundation of the place, the origin of the name Tafawa Balewa and citizenship. However, the genesis and the decisive events of the establishment of the arena of conflict are to be found, first, in the advent of the Sokoto jihad, the caliphate and the emergence of the emirate system in Bauchi. Second, is the colonial system; and third, are the activities of Christian Missionaries in Tafawa Balewa.

Temple noted in 1919, that a major consequence of the jihad movement led by Usman Danfodio was the creation of a political community larger than any that had existed in the area before. And that the polity known as the Sokoto Caliphate, extended over an area of about 150, 000 square miles. The process of its emergence involved the super-session of over two dozen sovereign polities, many of which had developed over several centuries a high degree of coherence. One of those polities was Bauchi. The caliphate lasted between February 1804 and July, 1903 after the British invasion of I lausa land.

The extension of the caliphate to Bauchi followed the presentation of the staff of office to Mallam Yakubu by Danfodio. Yakubu's expedition southwards Bauchi resulted in the conquest of the state of Lere in C.1815. Other areas conquered included, Bijinawa, Barawa, Jakawa and Bankalawa, all sub-groups of Jarawa. Eastwards, the attack on the Sayawa settlements met with stiff opposition owing mainly to the nature of the terrain and the segmentary pattern of the Sayawa settlement (Aliyu, 1974). Ikimi (1970) reports that the Sayawa sealed a friendship treaty with Yakubu at Inkil town with the breaking of bows and arrows.

The administrative structure established by the emirate of Bauchi, created fifteen offices to administer 'conquered' areas. Five of these offices become very important: Galadima, Madaki, Sarkin Yaki, Wambai and Ajiya. The entire area was divided up as 'fiefs' among these five important offices. The Ajiya was given charge of territories covering Bununu and Lere, both of which were located within the present Tafawa Balewa. All the offices had executive powers as each represented an autonomous unit of administration within the emirate, subject only to the discretion of the emir. They resided in Bauchi from where they administered their fiefs through representatives known as *Jakada*.

The Caliphate thus, established a very effective functioning system of government which offered such additional advantages as religious justification for authority, a formal code of law (the Islamic *Sharia*), specialized judicial institutions and a custom of taxation. The people's habit of obeying State authority was influenced by Fulani despotism (Whitaker 1970).

### **Colonial Rural and the Transformation of Ethnic Relations in Tafawa Balewa**

The conquest of the Sokoto caliphate in 1903 by the British heralded the introduction of Indirect-Rule. The British colonial power built up its administrative system on the residue of the Sokoto caliphate in Northern Nigeria. The main principle was that the administrative system established by the Jihad was left intact and the colonial administration was therefore built on this foundation. The powers conferred on the emirs and the levying of taxes was particularly in conformity with the colonial indirect rule system. The adoption of the existent political system by the British played a substantial part in determining the outcome of the initial encounter with the colonial power in fixing boundaries between the groups. Within some of the individual main groups in Tafawa Balewa, linguistic difference was the deciding factor before colonial rule. The criterion of obtaining administrative units of reasonable size played a part in the amalgamation of small groups to form single units, or attaching small groups to larger ones. The consequence was the establishment of an unequal relation among groups based on dominance and dependence, which was also reflected in stratification along ethnic lines and fragmentation into hierarchized ethnic and or racial groups. Thus, between 1900-1945, the British forcefully and administratively incorporated the non-Muslim groups into the emirate system. According to Logans (1987:33),

It was the British therefore, who salvaged a tottering Fulani clique which developed to become a Northern oligarchy, acknowledging territorial areas of conquest and seemingly established religious and political authority that was compounded by further jurisdictional claims of control on partially conquered and unconquered areas.

In Bauchi Emirate, as in other parts of Northern Nigeria, the British extended and strengthened the control of the officials through the creation of 'homologous districts'. This was meant to increase the efficiency of revenue collection. For this reason some chiefs and groups were subordinated to the others since the necessary corollary of the territorial rationalization was a reduction in the number of district chiefs. By 1914 the emirate had been consolidated into fifteen districts. The officials of the districts were now to reside in their districts instead of the capital, Bauchi. Thus, Ajiya became the district head of here. Trevor Clark wrote about these titleholders as follows:

They had been hangers-on at the emirs palace court who collected what they could from their scattered feudal lands through the *Jakadas*. They were now turned into institutional Hakimi, district head who actually lived in their districts. (1991).

The British indirect rule system that led to the arbitrary regrouping of the various peoples, and the adoption of the Islamic legal system for all the groups in the area may have eased administrative problems, but they had their implications for ethnic relations. First, it meant that the native administration was the prerogative of the Hausa-Fulani and Jarawa Muslims. Hence, in Tafawa Balewa, titles like Galadima, Madaki, Ciroma, Wambai were conferred on people who were converts to Islam or those who become loyal to the Ajiya. Second, the 'alien' district head (Ajiya) was maintained and protected by the colonial state. Third, the peoples of the area, including the unconquered Non-Muslims were subjected to the Islamic legal system, the Sharia.

### **Christian Missionary Activities, and the Consolidation of Boundaries between the Groups.**

Christian missionary activities in Tafawa Balewa started with the colonial conquest. Colonialism therefore paved the way for missionary activities in northern Nigeria (Dauda 1999). In 1904, the Sudan United Mission came to Africa with the aim of the checking the further spread of Islam to the African Sudanic belt. Dr. Kumm, the leader of the mission had warned other missionaries in Northern Nigeria, that, "unless we do our duty these wards of ours will find their nemesis in the cul-de-sac of Islam" (Boer 1964). The specific objective of the mission in Nigeria was to spread Christianity in five 'fronts' among the Jukun of Wukari and Donga; the Tarok of Fantang, the Birom at Du, the Mbula in Yola (Maxwell, 1952). A missionary station was established at Boi among the Sayawa in 1927, and later at Nwari in the area (Dauda, 1999). A great number of Sayawa people

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embraced Christianity within a short period of its introduction. Among the early converts were, Baba Peter Gonto, Samaila Ma'aji, Haruna Samari, Ayuba Gobara and others. The early converts were taught to read and write. These early literates later formed an organization known as the 'Committee of New Rule'. (Sabon Mulki) in 1945. The early members represented their respective villages. For instance, Peter Gonto represented Nvvari, while Filibus Gaduniya and Yakubu Manzo represented Sum and Bogoro respectively.

It is particularly significant that the Christian missions were instrumental to the consolidation of boundaries between the Sayawa and Hausa-Fulani in Tafawa Balewa. The missions utilized the administratively created units as a basis for their own organization. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Sudan Mission (SIM) therefore, contributed considerably to the creation of the structure, which added impetus to the organizational establishment of the boundary. The building of mission schools especially, and the use of local language attracted the Sayawa and aided the "ideological" coloring supplied by Christendom. The dichotomy thus created assumed a political dimension. For instance, when the colonial power appointed chiefs, it was forced to pay considerable heed to their religious affiliations in consonance to the operation of the indirect rule system. One, it brought together fragmenting elements in the individual settlements in the area. Two each denomination was linked to its own central authority beyond the local level. This diminished the importance of the individual villages as operative units and encouraged the emergence of superior structures within the larger arena instead. This matter assumed greater significance in a later context. It is however important that the relations between religion and politics on the one hand, and ethnicity and religion on the other, are to be understood against the background described above.

### **Conclusion**

Today the entire universe is a theatre of conflicts of diverse manifestations. The common sight is that of violence. Nigeria has not been spared the scourge of violence as it has had its share of inter and intra ethnic conflicts including internecine wars, the height of which was the Nigerian civil war, which lasted from 1967 to 1970.

A study of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria provides a clear indication that over the period since the onset of the country's economic crisis and the adoption of the *Structural Adjustment Programme* (SAP), Nigeria seems to have experienced an overwhelming increase in the number and intensity of ethnic conflicts. The protractible nature of these conflicts is another clear indication that public policies for their control or management have been grossly inadequate. The various measures put in place since the 1970s, particularly those concerned with the principles of Federal Character and ethnic balancing, elite or petty-bourgeois competitions in respect of opportunities in the state sector. All of these do not address the problem in terms of its sources and several other dimensions.

In the emergent pattern of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and Tafawa Balewa particularly, three issues have become dominant. The first is that these conflicts cannot simply be reduced to cultural differences among the groups. This is so because they usually occur among groups that have not only lived together for many years, but which have also established cross-cutting linkages. The second issue is the fact that the conflict, though local in nature and/or origin are in their consequences intertwined with the wider issues of the Nigerian political economy.

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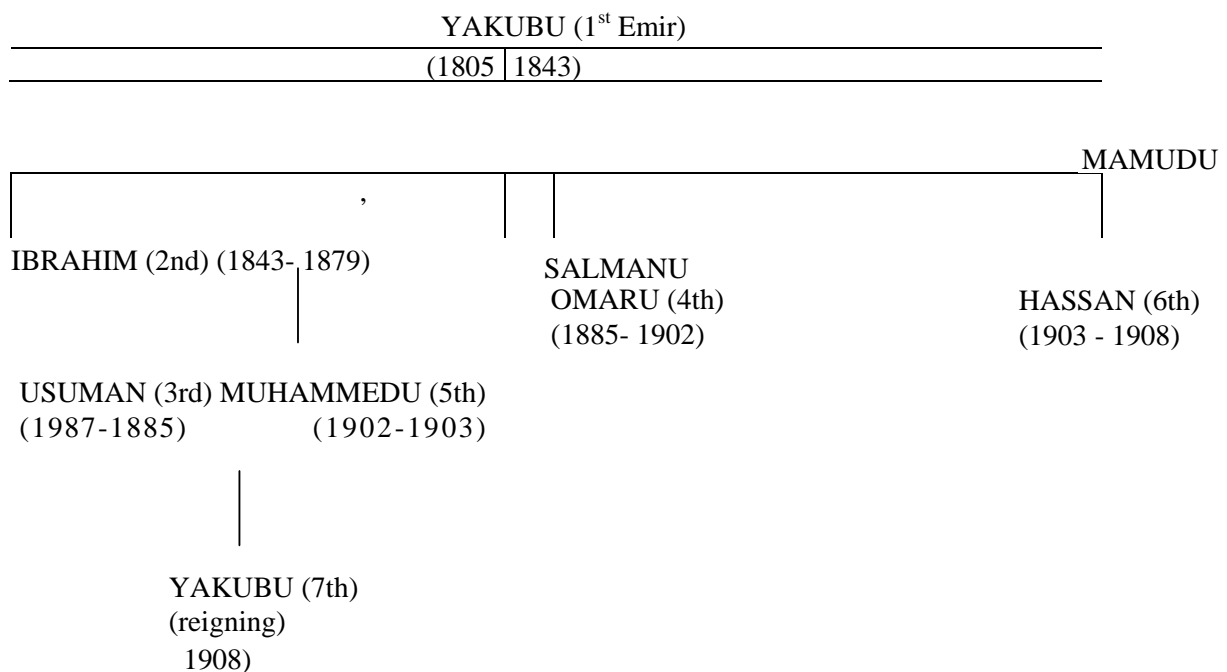
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**APPENDIX "A"**

**A chart showing the pedigree of Bauchi emirs**



SOURCE: - Bauchi Emirate Council: Memorandum Submitted to the Bauchi State Committee on the Creation of Sayawa Chiefdom (1991) Page 6

APPENDIX "B"

S No	DISTRICT	HQs	LAND AREA SQ. KM	POPULATION 1990	MAJOR TRIBES
1	LERE	T/BALEWA	937.5	128.135	Hausa/Fulani
					Sayavva Jarawa Angas
2	BULA	BUNUNU	1.0775	108.738	Jarawa/Fulani
3	BOGORO	BOGORO	755	87.719	Sayawa/Boyawa

LIST OF THE AJIYAS OF BAUCIII

S/No.	NAME	NO. OF YEAR IN THE REINS
1.	Ajiya Hammadi	40
2.	Ajiya Umaru I	3 and 2 months
3.	Ajiya Muhammed (Attahiru I)	21
4.	Ajiya Aliyu Mai Goshin Kure	31
5.	Ajiya Aliyu Mai Goshin Kure	2 and 3 months
6.	Ajiya Attahiru II	29
7.	Ajiya Yakubu Maigari	1 and 1 month
8.	Ajiya shehu Jar Kanwa	1 and 1 month
9.	Ajiya Umaru II	8 and 7 month
10.	Ajiya Zubairu	3
11.	Ajiya Isma'ila	7
12.	Ajiya Zubairu	2
13.	Ajiya Alh. Adamu T/ Balewa	14
14.	Barden Bauchi, Muhammadu Lulu	13

SOURCE: Bauchi State Emirate Council (1991) page 7

Appendix "c"

S/No	Village area	Population 1990	Dominant tribe
1	Kardam	43.768	Borawa/Jarawa
2	Lere/Tafshin	22.879	Hausa/Fulani Sayawa, Angas Tafshin
\	Wai	31.488	Hausa/Fulani Baukalawa

Each District Is Sub-Divided Into Village Areas As Follows:

Lere District

B

S/no	Village area	Popula tion 1990	Dominant tribe



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1	Bununu	32.498	Jarawa/Fulani
2	Ball	19.794	Jarawa/Baukalawa Sayawa, Angas
3	Bula	10.701	Jai awa/Baukalawa
4	Dai in	30.549	Baukalawa/Polchi
5	Dull	15.196	Jarawa/Fulani

Bogoro District

S/No	Village area	Population 1990	Dominant tribe
1	Bogoro	35.013	Burma wa/Sayawa
2	Boi	3 1.963	Sayawa/Boyawa
3	Lusa	20.723	Sayawa/Burmawa

Source: Bauchi Emirate Council (1991)