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The Influence of Jihad on the Plebiscite of Northern Cameroons, 1945-1961

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Abstract

This article examines the Influence of Jihad during the plebiscite, which was sponsored by the United Nations, under the British mandate for the part of the Northern section of the former British-Cameroons, otherwise known as the former United Nations trust territory. It was once a catalogue of slaves for the Fulani and the Kanuri rulers of the trust territory, perhaps, except for the Kanuri Empire of the Dikwa emirate. Similarly, it was a German Protectorate; later transformed into a League of Nations mandate; furthermore, hitherto metamorphosed, turned out to be a United Nations trust territory, before it was finally unified with Northern Nigeria and part of the Federation of Nigeria in 1961. This paper finds that the influence of 19th-century Jihad had a very serious repercussion on the unification process, without which it would have been rather difficult in a region where most of the people remained non-Muslims. Undoubtedly, before the plebiscite, almost all the rulers of the territory accepted Islam and continued to spread their new faith, the result of which forced the minority ethnic extraction to escape the jihad for fear of being involved in the jihad, or both, thereby restricting themselves to the mountain-top. This research relies on both primary and secondary resources; the primary sources include documents, files, annual reports, archival materials, and interviews. While the secondary sources are books, chapters in books, thesis /dissertations, Articles, conference papers, and internet materials.

Keywords

Jihad, Unification, Northern Cameroons, Nigeria, United Nations

Introduction

Yola, the Capital of Adamawa state, was the headquarters of the Northern Cameroons, and Mubi headquarters of the districts in the North, while Jada became the headquarters of the

southern districts. Later renamed Sardauna, and became the second smallest province after Kaba, with about 750,000 population, which lost its identity as Northern Cameroons in 1961. Perhaps, named after the Sardauna (Sardauna is a

title given to a trustworthy individual) of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the grandson of the propagator of the Sokoto Jihad, ‘Uthman bi Foduye, (bi means bin in Arabic) who made sure that the legacy of the Sokoto Jihad was maintained.

However, this territory was formally a German protectorate when it was transformed into a League of Nations Mandate later became a United Nations Trust territory. It was under the United Nations that the trust territory was finally unified with the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1961. This territory, as earlier indicated, comprised Cameroon under British mandate and trusteeship. Predominantly mountainous lay on the eastern part of the Nigerian, stretching inland for some 700 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad with an average of about 50 width miles, terminated in the North, by a gap of about 45 miles which contained the valley of the river Benue and in which the territory of Nigeria and Camerouns formerly under French trusteeship met.

THE INFLUENCE OF JIHAD

The influence of Jihad under the leadership of Modibbo Adama had a serious repercussion on the unification process, as their rule was based on Islam and Sharia, particularly in Adamawa, where most of the people remained non-Muslims. Certainly, this may be attributed to the fact that

quite a number of them accepted (a man) that is a non-Muslim's protection under Muslim rule (Protect – non-Muslim). This enabled them to live and remain protected, people retaining also their traditional religion. The Chamba, Kaka, and Baisa were among such groups, while the Gwoza, Kona, Fali, and other tiny ethnic extractions, each under their leader, in fear of Islamization, restricted themselves to the hilltop. It was because of the colonial administration intervention that reduced the mass-Islamization by putting an end to the extensive Islamic probation by reducing the mass-Islamization.¹ In 1961, with the successful unification of Northern Cameroon and Nigeria, and the achievement of independence, the premier of Northern Nigeria, the Grand Son of ‘Uthman Dan Fodio, made it a duty to accomplish what his great-grandfather had started. The premier vigorously embarked on the massive conversion of the ‘animists’ to Islam. At the end of the exercise, more than fifty-five thousand had been converted to Islam.²

However, there are two views about the motives of the Premier of Northern Nigeria. The first school of thought maintains that the campaign of the Premier was motivated by Islamic teachings. This view claims that the Premier championed the cause of the jihad or Islam because he felt that it was his responsibility as a Muslim leader to spread his religion more especially since he was

¹ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983* (M.A. Dissertation University of Maiduguri 1990)

² Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

a direct descendant of the Shehu, Uthman bin. Foduye, the propagator of the Sokoto Jihad, made it mandatory for him to maintain the legacy of the nineteenth-century jihad. As a result, the unification of the territory with Nigeria, with a predominantly non-Muslim majority, compelled the premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, to take it upon himself the responsibility of making sure that Islam was spread, hence the premier succeeded in converting over fifty thousand non-Muslim into Islam within the shortest period.³ The second view had it that the Premier was motivated not by religion but rather purely on political grounds.⁴ By this, it argued that the Premier only showed interest in Islam by converting people to Islam and building mosques in several places in the territory, so that the Premier remains in power; probably, he was conscious of the fact that his party, the NPC, got support mainly from the Muslim community. He sometimes aimed at making sure that several numbers were converted such that the population of the party and the Muslims was increased. This view further maintains that the Islamization campaign was no other than the Premier's aspiration to be the sultan.⁵ In any case, a serious campaign on Islamization took the centre stage in the new province, which was supported by almost all the

traditional rulers, and this is because the political hegemony of most of them has a pan-Islamic base. Thus, they were at the forefront of the conversion campaign. In 1963, for example, the primer made it abundantly clear to the chief of Mubi when he introduced what he calls the Jama 'Atul-Nazrul-Islam (organisation for the Muslim).⁶ He appealed to the chiefs not only to join the organisation but also to encourage other Muslim Uma (brothers) to join, the Premier says:

*You know, many of our people live with us and do not believe in any obligation. And some people are trying hard to convert them into different kinds of religion. But, we as Muslims of the north have not made any provision (for this), whereas it is a responsibility bestowed upon us by God to try to teach them Islam, to those who do not understand it.*⁷

The Sardauna and Premier continued to say: "This is not a political undertaking; it is not a government or Native Authority Duty, it is the duty of all Muslims, whatever their political inclinations and whatever their tribes".⁸ The Sardauna ended by putting this. "We should cooperate to fulfil this task with the support of the prime minister and the sarkin Musulmi (leader of

³ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁵ Ahmed A. K, *late Alhaji the right Honourable Sir Tafawa Balewa* (unpublished Bauchi 1984).

⁶ Ahmed A. K, *late Alhaji the right Honourable Sir Tafawa Balewa*

⁷ Ahmed A. K, *late Alhaji the right Honourable Sir Tafawa Balewa*

⁸ John, N. Paden (1956) *Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Values, and Leadership in Nigeria*. Richard Clay Press, Bun gag.

the Muslims).⁹ Certainly, the Sardauna was not motivated by political heteronomy, but rather by the Islamic religion, for those who believe that it was politically motivated and that the Sardauna wanted to remain in power did not get it right. It is interesting to note that the first people to be converted in the communities were the traditional leaders. All the chiefs and emirs had to be Muslims. Thus, Gwoza had a Muslim chief and Ganye, irrespective of whether their subject were predominantly non-Muslims. The first in the row of conversion were the Fama Tenuwa, Giki Jaggu, Sapeos, Duhu, and Jama'are, all the converts got traditional gowns, some textile clothing materials, rosaries, and a token of five (5) pounds at the time.¹⁰ Now, as the practice of giving money to the converts continued, it became a source of making money for many traditional rulers and Muslim officials of the Native Authority or the regional government. This is because the government had to appropriate funds to meet the increasing challenges. In 1965, for instance, that is at the peak of the campaign, gross misappropriation was recorded on the part of the officials of the Native Authority. Not only that, apart from the large amount spent in the process of the

convertase, another large amount was set aside annually, which was used for the payment of teachers and preachers appointed on the directive of the premier by Muslim rulers.¹¹

However, Sardauna, Sir Ahmadu Bello who was also the premiere of Northern Nigeria, one of the leaders of (NPC), Northern People's Congress the propagator of Islam who campaigned for the proselytization, was regarded by all most all people of the area as promoting his party, thereby made the NPC not only a political party but synonymous with Islam and a Fulani and Kanuri party.¹² This was since the traditional rulers, or rather the Native Authority (NA), were the strong bedrock of the party because it was through them that the campaigns were carried out, and eventually succeeded.¹³ This development had a very serious repercussion on one hand, as it made it more convenient and possible to convert people into Islam. And, on the other hand, the opposition of the party and the ruling class was aggravated. Ethnic confusion began to develop, thereby making it so pronounced in the territory, particularly among the minority ethnic stock.

⁹ John, N. Paden (1956) *Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Values, and Leadership in Nigeria*. Richard Clay Press, Bun gag.

¹⁰ Charles, K. Meek (1957) *Land Tenure and Land Administration in Nigeria and the Cameroons*, H.M.S.O. London

¹¹ Charles, K. Meek (1957) *Land Tenure and Land Administration in Nigeria and the Cameroons*. 23

¹² Isa, Alkali Abba (1980) *Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto's Conversion Campaign 1964-1965 in Adamawa Division and Northern Sardauna Province*. Paper Presented at a Post- Graduate Seminar, Bayero University, Kano.

¹³ Mubi Local government official file No.mub/22/18 (Restricted) on the colonial masters, undated.

Many among whom were the non-Muslims, regarded the NPC as a Muslim party.¹⁴

In the circumstances, many non-Muslim of the minority ethnic groups shifted their loyalty to the opposition party; they also felt that by staying in the NPC, they were not secure, therefore considered the alternative to joining the opposition party “as they could not compromise their religion for a political party”.¹⁵

Furthermore, this action of the minority ethnic stock decision to join other parties like the Action Group (AG) and UMBC was undoubtedly an indication of their rejection of Islam and, at the same time, the Fulani and Kauri domination. Now, this protestant ethnic minority became more pronounced towards the end of 1961. And brought to it a strong hatred for Islam and a dislike for the Fulani and Kanuri traditional rulers, and the Native Authority.¹⁶ Prominent among such Protestants were the Chamba, Njanyi, Higi, and the Mambilla ethnic minority stock. Nevertheless, others remained non-Muslims, but still with the NPC for the benefit they got from the Northern Government, either in

the form of a political appointment or remuneration.¹⁷

Yet another important influence of the jihad was that it became a bottleneck to the Christian missionary organisation in the province. However, it should be noted that during the colonial era, the missionaries had enjoyed considerable support from the colonial administrators in their efforts to convert people to Christianity. At one point in time, the ‘animist’ areas were reserved purposely for them.¹⁸ Hence, most of their settlement was within the minority areas. But for the first time since the European domination of the territory, the Christian missionaries had been faced with some challenges. Especially, the premier’s jihad campaigns in the territory became extremely unbearable and alarming to the Christian missionary, particularly the Lardin Gaba’s Missionary organisation, which intensified are activities, which were perhaps aimed at countering the Islamization campaign.¹⁹ Many among the Muslims and non-Muslims regarded the premier’s campaign as a grand design to accomplish the ‘Uthman Dan Fodio jihad, which emanated from the Sokoto caliphate. Certainly,

¹⁴ B.M. Macfarlane, “Report on Gwoza and Ashigashiya hill-pagans’. No. 229(TCL) Gwoza, National Archive Kaduna (NAK)

¹⁵ H. R. Palmer, Borno Province- Resident, Report National Archive Kaduna No. 68, for the year ending 31st December, (1923), National Archive Kaduna (NAK)

¹⁶ R. B. B. Eustace (1939) “Report on hill-pagans of Gwoza and Ashigashiya, “F. No. 414(TCL) Gwoza, NAK

¹⁷ Lugard, Annual Reports, 1906 National Archive Kaduna (NAK)

¹⁸ Tarihi Addinin Musulunci” Mubi file no. 28. Aliyu A.Y. Koehn P.H and Hay R. pp. 16 –17.

¹⁹ Borno Province of Nigeria Annual report 1934 (NAK) ACC No. 1756

the premier aimed at that, undoubtedly, who aimed to launch his final drive within the non-Muslim communities within the Sokoto caliphate and beyond. It was in this contest, however, that the Northern regional government under the leadership of the premier and Sardauna, which the jihad depended on, protected and promoted the values of the former Sokoto caliphate.²⁰ It is this development that has been maintained to date.

The Plebiscite and Unification Process

As earlier indicated, the administration and development of this territory were done along with Northern Nigeria. As a result, the economic and social service of the people was also provided during this time and within the same context, including the political progress of the area that took place within the same framework and in the Nigerian colony.²¹ It is interesting to note that the representatives of the territory in the Northern Nigeria House of Assembly and House of Chiefs were the spokesmen of the territory. The former representative included among others the Minister for Northern Cameroun Affairs, Alhaji Abdullahi Danborom Jada, the then chairman and aristocratic Fulani by birth and Fulani from Adamawa, Southern part of the territory, the chairman of the consultative committee for the

Northern Cameroon, Alhaji Abba Habib, a Kanuri from Borno, Northern part of the territory. These meaningful individuals were among those who advocated for the unification of the trust territory with Nigeria.²²

However, the result of the 1959 Plebiscite shows that the views of the representative of the so-called people of the territory were not the wishes of the people who were supposedly being represented. The plebiscite was done under the careful supervision and close collaboration of the United Nations and the British Colonial Government. The plebiscite was organised in a very simple way for free and fair voting during the period. There was an organised campaign on how to vote; the most organised one was the film that was introduced by the Northern Nigeria information service, which demonstrated to the eligible voters how voting should take place during the plebiscite. Three languages were used in the film: Fulani, Hausa, and English. This was to make sure that nobody was left behind and perhaps to avoid being accused of any possible bias in the voting. Dr. Jalal Abdoh was the commissioner, who was appointed for the assignment in the meantime. Abdoh chose Yola as the Plebiscite headquarters for the 1959 Plebiscite. Sir John was the Plebiscite

²⁰ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983* (M.A. Dissertation University of Maiduguri 1990)

²¹ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983* (M.A. Dissertation University of Maiduguri 1990)

²² Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

administrator in Togo land for the 1956 Plebiscite
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Abdoh and John took various tours of enlightenment, which took them to different parts of the territory to make sure that all was well and set for voting. Sir John had under him three assistants, each appointed for Mubi, Bama, and Jada; these people were engaged in the preliminary organisation of the plebiscite. All were drawn from the Civil Service of Nigeria.²³ The administrator undertook a tour on his own occasionally and by so doing, nine additional returning officers and centres were established for another District. The large district for Adamawa South had two returning officers, Sarti had one who was in charge of the plain, while the one for Gembu covered the Mambila Plateau.²⁴

The plebiscite administration, in conjunction with the Nigerian regional government, deployed a total of about one hundred and forty-seven Nigerian policemen to the territory.²⁵ Now, with most of the arrangements put in place for voting by mid-November 1959, the General Assembly recommended the following question:

Do you wish the Northern Cameroons to be part of the Northern region of Nigeria when

the Federation of Nigeria became independent? Or are you in favour of deciding the future of the Northern Cameroons at a later date?

However, voting peacefully took place, with a minimal hitch from the political parties, especially during the campaign period. The arrangement for the party representatives was abundantly clear by the plebiscite, the Nigerian authorities entrusted to the army and the Federal Department of Telegraphs the responsibility of transmitting the result in good time.²⁶ In this connection, telegraphs were installed at each of the voting stations.²⁷ This included Mubi, Jada Sarti, Michika, Bama, Baisa, Dikwa, Gwoza, and Gembu. The reason for this was to make it fast; the result was sent to Yola with a minimum delay.²⁸ Besides, the post and telegraph departments also set up Radio-Telephone apparatus at Bama, Gwoza, and Mubi, which communicated with Maiduguri and Yola, thence Kaduna, to maintain law and order during the exercise. The administrator, the authority conferred on him, and the commissioner

²³ Gardiner D.E. (1969) *“British Cameroun” The Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*

²⁴ .H.M. Kirk-Green (1958) *Adamawa Past and Present* Orford University Press, London.

²⁵ The General Assembly Resolution 1608-1350 concerning the Future of the Trust Territory under the United Kingdom Administration.

²⁶ The Mandate Committee Report of 1922.

²⁷ General Assembly Resolution 224 concerning Administrative Union of the Trust Territory.

²⁸ Dr. Adoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria

announced the result on the 10th November 1959 with the following results.²⁹

Plebiscite	Vote for Nigeria	Vote for Cameroons	Total Votes
Dikwa North (Bama)	7,575	7,197	14,772
Dikwa central	8,891	11,988	20879
Gwoza	3,336	6773	10,109
Modagali/Chubanawa	4,247	9818	14,065
Mubi	6,120	13578	19,698
Chamba	4539	11651	16,190
Tongo/Gashaka	2252	2099	4351
Mambilla	2745	7353	10,098
United Hills	3063	89	3152
Total	4,2788	70,546	113,334

Source: Trusteeship Council/Report 1959 Plebiscite

Under the plebiscite regulation of the Northern Plebiscite of 1959. Section 10(2) of the same regulation. The political parties could appoint this agent to the polling stations to detect any possible fraud during the voting exercise. The major political parties were (NPC, Northern People Congress (AG) Action Group, UMBC, United Middle Belt Congress, and NCDP, Northern Cameroun Democratic Party. Among all the political parties, only the NPC, which was the

ruling party of Northern Nigeria, was in favour of the first alternative. The remaining parties were all in favour of the second. Each of the political parties appointed one polling agent for each polling station for which it wished to be represented.³⁰ Thus, the total to four pulling agents per station. The alternative, these political parties, to make things rather unbearable for the ruling party, succeeded in translating the alternative into Fulani and Kanuri, that is, Fulani and Kanuri terms. They maintained that with the territory being controlled by the Adamawa and Borno provinces, its unification with Northern Nigeria was to amount to the minority groups remaining permanently in the hands and rule of the Fulani and Kanuri.³¹ Very active among them was the NKDP, which pushed hard and vigorously campaigned within the minority ethnic groups of Mubi hill pagans, Michika, and Mambilla, Plateau. Ethnic tension became dominant after 1959, the Plebiscite, because most of the people who voted for the second alternative were the minority pagan groups. Notwithstanding the outcome overwhelmed more especially the ruling (NPC) Northern People's Congress was overwhelmed.

²⁹ The Administration of the Trust Territory under Mandate and the Report of the Permanent Mandate Commission as approved by the General Assembly.

³⁰ Levine, T. Victor (1964) *the Cameroons, from Mandate to Independence*. University of California Press, California

³¹ See also Summary Record of the General Assembly First Session, Fourth Committee Part 2 pp. 118-119.

However, these results from a table (1) above show that the total votes of about 113,334, a reasonable number, of about 70,546 voted against 42,788. By this Plebiscite, the result indicates that most of the people were not in favour of the first alternative; therefore, they voted for the second alternative.³² The implication of this was a concentration of the territory under the trusteeship. Not only that, women were not given the right to vote; only a male adult was by law allowed to vote. The outcome of the plebiscite was a great blow to the ruling party, which was confident that the results of the 1959 plebiscite would be in their favour.³³ But turned out to be the reverse, barely, three days after the plebiscite, the three political parties that the second alternative went for waged a serious campaign among the pagans who voted for the second alternative. One of the reasons why the outcome was a surprise, that, in one of the visits of the United Nations Visiting Mission, which visited the territory on an administrative survey in 1959, made blatant mistake was made and discussed only with the dominant Fulani and Kauri rulers.³⁴ They never talked with any groups or individuals to ascertain the situation of things. Instead, they went back with the impression that the unification

of the trust territory with Nigeria was almost unavoidable. It would be recalled that both Habib and Danboram Jada gave the same impression to the visiting mission. In this regard, the members failed to consult with the politically submerged, but numerically superior pagan populations in the plains and the hills.³⁵ None of the opposition parties was consulted by the members who claimed to be representing the interests of the minority groups. The minority pagan had all these periods harboured long-standing grievances against the Fulani and the Kanuri rulers, especially the Fulani who enslaved them, seized their farmlands, converted some into Islam by the sword, thereby chasing many and restricting them to hilltops.³⁶ As we have seen, the colonial government, with its policy of the indirect rule system, had strengthened the pre-colonial political and social system that left these minority extractions under the rule of both the Fulani and Kanuri.

So, the outcome of the plebiscite clearly shows the discontent and reaction of the minorities to the dominant power of the Fulani and the Kanuri, during the pre-colonial structure through the Native Administrative system.³⁷ Sir Andrew Cohen, a onetime British Official at the United

³² Charles, K. Meek (1957) *Land Tenure and Land Administration in Nigeria and the Cameroons*, H.M.S.O. London

³³ F.O. 84/2109, Macdonald's report on the Administration of the Royal Niger Company (RNC) Library ABU No. 1890 NHRS

³⁴ Temple Oliver: Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates, States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria

³⁵ Azariuya, Victor (1978) *Aristocrats Facing Change: The Fulbe in Guinea, Nigeria, and Cameroon*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago

³⁶ Crowder M. *Pagans and Politicians* (London 1959) and *the Story of Nigeria* (London 1978).

³⁷ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

Nations, who in his mind had a requisite perception towards the plebiscite, explains it as a reaction against some abuses, he says:

*Whereas the premier of Northern Nigeria, who was also the National Leader of the NPC, erroneously attributed them to “subversive activities of the British officials. Thus, the negative outcome of the plebiscite suggests that the position that the people took to stay clear from the unification process originated not from grievances they had with the Northern Regional Government, but rather from their dissatisfaction with the system of administration of the Adamawa Native Authority. On the contrary, the result of the plebiscite of 1961 shows that the people were ready to remain in Nigeria so long as they were allowed to form a Native Administration of their own, with the independence of Adamawa and Borno States”*³⁸

Yet another explanation during 1959, plebiscite results had to do with the inclusion of the second alternative made it possible for the opposition of those who favoured the first alternative, that is, NPC Adamawa and Borno native Authorities, to focus their campaign on local issues. Such issues as noted differ from one place to another. For example, it was objected for control from Yola, and the campaign was mainly supported by the Fulani ruling class in Chamba of Ganye area, it

became clear a contest between the Chamba and the Fulani, while in the Mamibilla Plateau, it was objected to remote from Yola, with underlying hostilities of the former for grazer, who it seemed, was protected by the Native Authority.³⁹ In Borno, it was objected to the control of the Kanuri over the Gwoza people.

Certainly, one of the factors that contributes to the resistance to the political and social set-up because of western education through western education came rather late; notwithstanding, it nevertheless had an impact on the people. In 1938, the Sudan Mission was introduced. This Christian Missionary Organisation established a primary school in Gwoza. By 1942, their members moved to the Shuwa, Michika areas and opened yet another school. This was followed by a Bible School opened in Mapeo, Sugu, and Dashen in 1946, all within the Chamba region. This organisation became known as Lardin Gabas.⁴⁰ Also, the colonial Government built six primary schools in the territory from 1949-1959, which were situated in the minority areas. The pagan ethnic groups are one to accept the schools ' demand for more, especially their Western culture.

As a result, many ethnic groups began to challenge the traditional rulers' position, thereby considering it irrational. The NKDB emergence

³⁸ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

³⁹ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴⁰ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

was behind such an organised behaviour of the ethnic minority towards the traditional institutions. This organisation was formed by the educated elites of Madagali and Michika Districts, with followers all over the territory. As indicated earlier, the party played a position of a dominant role in determining the plebiscite result of 1959.

The acceptance of Western culture by the pagans became a matter of concern to the ruling class; it was considered that pagans were far superior, numerically, to the Fulani and Kanuri rulers.⁴¹ While it is of political significance to the pagans, for the Kanuri and Fulani, it was a serious concern and a minus to the rulers.⁴² The reason why the Fulani and Kanuri saw it as a threat, perhaps, if the pagans were allowed to use the franchise available at their disposal, the Fulani and Kanuri domination in elective positions, particularly offices, would be seriously threatened.

The subordination of the interest of the local ruling class became clear after the plebiscite of 1959. As a result, the Northern Regional government launched a vigorous campaign and brought about a radical change in the administrative setup. In preparation against the final plebiscite of 1961. When the people of the territory would decide whether to join the

independent Republic of Cameroon or the independent federation of Nigeria. Moreover, with the Nigerian federal elections expected in the same year, the plebiscite was a crucial matter, particularly to the NPC, the ruling party.⁴³ The reason for this was that, if by any chance the territory voted against joining the Federation of Nigeria, the region would lose the seven seats they had in the federal legislature.⁴⁴ This made NPC double their efforts towards the two elections, especially the plebiscite, which was to be held earlier than the federal elections. The regional government expected the local branches of its party in both Adamawa and Borno to handle the plebiscite effectively, but the plebiscite result jolted the government out of complacency and made to realise that the problems were too complex. It found out that the local party members were not capable of solving the problems, and that they were part of the problem.⁴⁵ Therefore, they decided to deface them at least on a peripheral basis, for the second attempt of the plebiscite. For this reason, Danborom Jada was removed and replaced by Mamman Bashir as Minister for Northern Cameroon affairs. Bashir, a Hausa by birth, though a Fulani member of the aristocratic class and the Emir of Daura, was also considered, probably because of his neutrality and being an outsider. Muhammadu Ribadu, an influential

⁴¹ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴² Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴³ Amadu K. *The Nigerian general elections 1959 and 1979 and the aftermath* (Lagos 1983)

⁴⁴ Zakari Njema M. (1969) *The Rise and fall of Fulani in Adamawa* (Ph.D. Thesis) London.

Fulani politician from Adamawa, was not initially involved in the campaign but participated in the planning and strategies.⁴⁵ Britain and the United Nations organisation, in consequence of the 1959 plebiscite, the regional government, on the recommendation of Britain and the United Nations, set up a commission of inquiry, known as the Muhammad Tukur commission of inquiry. The purpose of this commission was to consider a new administrative setup and reorganisation. The commission was to look for ways that would allow for greater autonomy to the people in the territory at the local level.⁴⁶

With this new arrangement, the government seemed to recognise the subservient position of the local people to both Adamawa and Borno potentials. This led to a radical change in the administrative structure. In 1960 May 1960, the territory became a province, known as the Northern Cameroun province, to be administered by the European provincial commissioner, Sir E.D Muffet. Two new provinces were created within the province, with an additional six new Native Authorities. The two divisions were the southern Trust Division, which consisted of the District of Nassarawo Yelwa, Sugu Tongo, all within the local problem area during the plebiscite, that is, the Chamba area, Gashaka, and Mambilla. With the Headquarters of the division

at Ganye, but temporarily at Jada. The North Trust Division consisted of the Districts of Mubi, Bello, Chubanawa, Bama, Gwoza, and Madagali, with headquarters at Mubi and the principal headquarters.⁴⁷ The six native authorities were Chamba, Gashaka/Mambilla, and United Hill subordinate Native Authorities: Mubi, Gwoza, and Bama.

Moreover, to these, a new policy was also introduced, all village heads were to be elected (among members of the aristocracy) and not appointed as was hitherto. The unpopular court based on (Siyassa) in the southern division was abolished, thereby replaced by Sharia courts in which non-Muslims, for the first time, had access to representation.⁴⁸ The reason was to remove the ethnicity problems and partly for administrative convenience, the government, in its continued efforts to make things work, abolished the Cameroun consultative committee, which was headed by Abba Habib. It was replaced by an advisory committee, with members drawn from the newly created native Authority councils of the territory. By these arrangements, Habib is now set to be an active member, especially in the affairs of the Northern Cameroons. The responsibility of this rested on the premier and his office; this means that he was in charge of all executive matters of the province. Sir Muffet

⁴⁵ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴⁶ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴⁷ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁴⁸ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

played the role of administrative officer and provincial commissioner.⁴⁹

Certainly, the regional government had taken the bull by the horns, Ardo says: the premier himself saw the incorporation of the Northern Cameroon to the north as a personal challenge beside the administrative setup, and a way to entice the people perhaps to vote in favour of Nigeria, the government established more hospitals in the province it became the only province that had such several hospitals and equipment. Those who benefited were Ganye, Mubi, and Bama, with well-equipped hospitals required.⁵⁰ In addition to these, a thirty-four-bed space missionary hospital at Gwoza. The period from 1959 to 1960 witnessed, for the first time in the history of the Vere and Fali areas, the establishment of schools and a post office in Mubi.

In line with political parties' guidelines, the campaign allowed for all the major political parties, before the plebiscite, after the United Kingdom's administrator had concluded his public enlightenment campaigns informing the people about the unification of the territory and the implications of the alternatives.⁵¹ However, the campaign ensured that all the political parties presented their main objective and reasons why the territory should be united with Nigeria. The political parties involved were the Northern

People's Congress (NPC), the Nigerian Element Progressive Union (NEPU), the Action Congress (AG), and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), with the two alternative questions to be asked.

Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria? Or "Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon"? The political parties involved relied almost entirely on a word-of-mouth campaign, speaking through the local chiefs and leaders. The reason was that the leaders were so powerful that their subjects hardly went against their orders. And possibly, the only way the parties saw that they would succeed. "The Nigerian consortium, working unofficially through the newly created native authorities, stressed the advances made under the Northern Nigeria Government."⁵²

The politicians reminded the people of the territory of its "historical traditional economic and administrative ties with Nigeria, and of social ills that would follow in the events the people opted to join the Republic of Cameroon; such as official language, education systems, monetary system, weight and driving on the other side of the road, and most of it all a complete over the whole of the newly created administrative

⁴⁹ Muffett D.J.I *Let Truth Be Told vol.1 The Coup d'état of 1966* (Zaria 1966).

⁵⁰ Gardiner D.E. (1969) "British Cameroun" *The Britain and Germany in Africa*

⁵¹ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁵² Gardiner D.E. (1969) "British Cameroun" *The Britain and Germany in Africa*

structure which had been put in place. In the meantime, within the consortium, each party aimed at discrediting the other during their campaign to enable it to win support and get more votes.⁵³ This was a typical party's consortium character. Not only that the two Cameroun parties were also united in their choices. Certainly, it was because of this choice that the Cameroun Patriotic Front (KEP) broke from the Action Congress (AG), the party (operated mainly in the Chamba and Gashaka/Tongo District), and the (NKDP) (with uncertain members and sympathisers among the hills pagans in Chamba, Madagdi and Michika Districts) advocated for unification with the Republic of Cameroun. It should be noted that these were some of the minority ethnic areas discussed who were not in favour of unification with Nigeria, because of what they termed Fulani and Kanuri domination and misrule.⁵⁴

However, in less than two years from the first plebiscite in 1959, the people of the territory for the second time witnessed yet another plebiscite in 1961, for the people of the territory to decide on the nationhood. All arrangements concluded as easily as (7:00 am) seven in the morning. People came out very early, in fact as early as

4:30 am, four-thirty in the morning, in response to a request "to come early and avoid the rush."⁵⁵ This time around, women could vote along with men. It was the first time women could cast their votes in the history of Northern Nigeria. Pulling stations were mostly situated in schools, courts, and office premises, which were well known to the people. The rooms where the plebiscite staff and the voting booths were fenced to keep the people from a distance, it was constructed in such a way that a single queue was formed to make voting easier, each voter presented his/her voters' registration card, had the name-checked to confirm his/her registration from the list in the presence of all the representatives of the party and other officials after that the voter had the right thumb dipped into indelible ink to avoid double voting)⁵⁶ The voter was given a ballot paper and lastly sent to the booth, where there were two boxes provided, one Green and the other White. If he/she wishes to vote for Nigeria, he/she places her/his card in the green box, and if wish to join Cameroon to places the while box. Apart from the voting tension, which was usually connected with elections, the voting went on smoothly; the results were thereafter realised by the plebiscite administrator as below.

⁵³ The Trusteeship agreement for the Cameroons under the United Kingdom Administration (December, 13th 1946).

⁵⁴ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983* (

⁵⁵Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁵⁶ The Administration of the Trust Territory under Mandate and the Report of the Permanent Mandate Commission as approved by the General Assembly

Plebiscite	Vote for Nigeria	Vote for Cameroons	Total Votes
Dikwa Northern (Bama)	22765	10562	33327
Dikwa central	28697	24203	52900
Gwoza	18115	2554	29672
Madagali/Chubanawa	16904	13299	30203
Mubi	23798	11132	34930
Chamba	9704	23177	34881
Tongo/Gashaka	4999	3108	8107
Mambilla	13523	7467	20,990
United Hills	7791	157	7948
Total	146,296	47,659	243,958

Source: Plebiscite of 1959/1961 United Nations Doc. T/1491

The commissioner for the plebiscite report to the trusteeship council acknowledged and accepted 1961 in respect of both Southern and Northern Cameroons as follows:

*I am satisfied that the people of southern Cameroun had the opportunity to express their wishes freely and secretly at the polls concerning the alternative offered in the plebiscite*⁵⁷

The report starts again:

*While the majority of the people may not have grasped the detailed implication of the alternatives at the plebiscite, it can confidently be said that they were aware that the decision they were called upon to make meant joining one or the other of the two neighbouring counties*⁵⁸

With regards to Northern Cameroon, the commissioner says:

*Although the majority of the people of Northern Cameroon may not have grasped the intricate and complex constitutional implications of the two alternatives, they were aware, nevertheless, that the decision they were called upon to make at the plebiscite meant joining one or two neighbouring countries...*⁵⁹

The plebiscite was efficiently organised and conducted by the administering authority following the legislation promulgated for the purpose. Despite the defects and weaknesses inherent in the situation prevailing in Northern Cameroon, I am satisfied that the people had the opportunity to express their wishes freely and secretly at the polls concerning the alternatives offered in the plebiscite.

However, careful observation of the plebiscite indicates the pagans, who were again tipped the voting balance, but this time in favour of joining Nigeria, the results show that only one constituency was a majority in favour of Cameroon. During the political party's campaign, especially the NPC, the use of threats on the pagans is rather difficult, given the peculiarity of the territory to assess victory in terms of campaigns of a political party. But certainly, the

⁵⁷ The Administration of the Trust Territory under Mandate and the Report of the Permanent Mandate Commission as approved by the General Assembly

⁵⁸ General Assembly Resolution 224 concerning Administrative Union of the Trust Territory.

⁵⁹ Summary Record of the General Assembly First Session, Fourth Committee Part 2 pp. 118-119.

achievement could no doubt be attributed to the various reforms undertaken after 1959, the lost plebiscite. Conversely may have been attributed to the commitment of the Northern Government to maintain the territory as an independent province might have contributed to the winning of the votes.⁶⁰

The reaction of the government of Cameroon to the outcome of the plebiscite was that foul play was committed, thereby falsifying the results.⁵⁵ The Cameroon Government immediately complained to the United Nations Organisation to that effect that the plebiscite did not represent the wishes of the people of the territory⁶¹

In a letter of the petition to the United Nations, the southern Cameroun Government accused both the administering organ, Greece, Britain, and the United Nations itself, including the supervisory term, had permitting irregularities both during the registration of voters and the conduct of the plebiscite up to the counting of the ballots. For Nigeria, it was accused of sending a quite number of policemen before the plebiscite. Ostensibly to intimidate the voters or, as it were, “to vote at the pointed bayonet”.⁶² Now the complaint was sent to New York. The British Government, after carefully studying the petition,

denied the allegation. Dr. Abdou, who was the commissioner, reports that:

*The registration itself was well conducted over the whole period. With the vigilance of registration officers and the United Nations observers, who were normally assigned to oversee the personnel in three to five registration areas, most of such minor errors, such as the omission of names and faulty serialisation of registration numbers, were corrected.*⁶³

The British, on their part, further denied that “electors likely to vote for reunification with Cameroun were systematically left off the registers” and the Innuendo in the statements that this was done by the chiefs’ faithful to Nigeria. Further, Dr. Abdou points out that the registration of voters was carried out by an assistant registration officer who was recruited for that assignment. He again reports:

To carry out the registration of voters in the 346 registration areas of the Northern Cameroons, the administration required a total of 430 Assistant Registration Officers. These officials were recruited from within the Trust Territory except for twenty-five students of the teacher Training College Numan, which is situated in Adamawa province in the Northern Region, but it

⁶⁰ Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁶¹ Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁶² Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁶³ Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

*is worth noting that half their number were indigenous to the Northern Cameroons. The assistant registration officers were recruited from the various education establishments inside the Territory, including the Staff and pupils of the Teacher Training College Baisa and Mubi of the senior primary schools, and teachers from the various Native Authority and voluntary agencies.*⁶⁴

He also adds that:

*Since it was the first time that women had been given the right to vote in the Northern Cameroons, the administration made every effort to recruit suitably qualified women to serve as assistant registration officers and thus to lend encouragement to potential women voters to come forward to register. A total of twenty-five women served as registration officials in the various districts in the Northern Cameroons, and the United Nations observers and Administrative Officials alike attested to their efficiency and effectiveness.*⁶⁵

However, apart from the allegation brought by the Government of Cameroon, other political parties in favour of unification with Cameroon also complained. Their complaints included among other things, discrimination and

imprisonment of the supporters of NKDP/KEP, especially KEP, whose president was Mallam Umaru Michika, (a party favouring union with the Cameroun Republic) alleged that prison had been filled with people because of their political associations, on this, he was asked to visit the prison and mentioned those that he thought had been jailed, when he visited the jail in Mubi, he brought about seven names, and other names were added, by another unmentioned person. This brought the number to 12 twelve names. Uniformity, only seven persons were listed in Dr. Abdou's report, which had arisen from offences.⁶⁶ Dr. Abdou points out that though the person charged with one offence or another had the right to be represented by a counsel of his choice, this was ruled out because there was no provision existed for the appearance of defence lawyers in Native Court procedure. In yet another development, a thorough investigation was carried out by the United Nations Liaison officer at Mubi, together with Mallam Yaro, the Representative of the Government of Cameroon, who visited the jail in Mubi. Only fifteen cases were recorded concerning offences related to political meetings based on the interviews of the prisoners. Regarding this case, Abdou again reports:

⁶⁴ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁶⁵ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁶⁶ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

*According to the report of the senior District officers upon conclusion of questioning, Mallam Yaro expressed himself as being satisfied that the persons concerned had been imprisoned on reasonable and legitimate grounds and only requested that the four prisoners awaiting trial be brought before the courts as soon as possible. This, the senior District officers assured him, would be done. Mallam Yaro also warned three of the prisoners he had seen that since the permit was required to hold political meetings, they should have observed the law. He told them that similar laws in respect of meetings existed in the Republic of Cameroon and asked the three prisoners concerned to convey what he had said to the other prisoners.*⁶⁷

However, all the allegations by the Cameroon Government and the people referred to in the report had been investigated by the plebiscite commissioners. Similar reports were submitted to the United Nations observer at Mubi. In the report, a total of 58 fifty-eight people were recorded in various ways, eleven names were duplicated, eight were nowhere to be traced, ten were released on bail before the plebiscite, seven had no political significance, one appeal was dismissed, one was allowed, four were awaiting appeals, and fifteen did not appeal.⁶⁸ During the period of the plebiscite, it was discovered that

about twenty people were in the prison in Mubi, out of this number, seven were on conviction with no political significance. The complaint of the arrest came almost entirely from the Madagali, Michika, and Mubi districts of the Mubi Native Authority, where the parties seem favourable to unification with the Cameroon Republic. In yet another arrest, on 29 January 1961, thirty-five people were arrested, out of the total, four were imprisoned, and the rest were fined by the law.⁶⁹

However, with regards to the allegation on the freedom of speech, Dr. Abdoh, commissioner for the plebiscite, stipulated in his report that such permission was usually used by the Native Authority on Public assembly unless otherwise, there was a likelihood of a breach of peace, then it was denied. Abdoh reports:

There continued to be a few instances in which permits were refused some sometimes for valid reasons, e.g., to hold meetings on market days in or near the marketplaces. Besides, a few permits were refused because the applications were either Vague or contained requests for meetings to be held on more than one day. In those cases, where the reasons for the refusal were different from those set out in the proclamation, representatives were made, and usually,

⁶⁷Article 10 of the Mandate Commission Report.

⁶⁸The Trusteeship agreement for the Cameroons under the United Kingdom Administration (December, 13th 1946).

⁶⁹Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

*following an investigation, the permit was granted.*⁷⁰

Furthermore, the complaint about the general question of restriction within and out of the territory, the committee maintains that:

*.....the United Nations Liaison officer, in Mubi for his part reported that he had passed through the frontier between the Territory and the Republic along the road from Mubi to Garua on at least six occasions, and that he had visited the border on at least four other occasions, and that he had not noted any police officers or authorities posted to stop vehicles on the road from Mubi to Garua. Neither I nor United Nations officials who travelled rapidly on the road from Mubi to Garua found a checkpoint on the Northern Cameroons side of the border.*⁷¹

The Republic of Cameroun, in yet another allegation in 1961, Plebiscite, accused the Regional Government of Nigeria and the commissioner of intimidation and employment, particularly, the employment of expatriate staff. This was denied by the commissioner for the Plebiscite as contained in the Plebiscite report. The commissioner, Dr. Abdoh, responded, as regards the ledged employment of the expatriate staff, his report:

*As regards expatriate staff, it would have been in the administrator's view wholly impracticable to bring the territory and to employ in its administration expatriate officials from the United Kingdom or from British territories who were neither acquainted with the problems of the area nor able to communicate with the local people in the local languages. It was for these reasons that the administering authority decided to retain on a secondment basis from the Northern Region Government the services of such numbers of officials (British as well as Nigerians) as were required for the administration of the Northern Cameroons. These numbers, although limited during the period when the Territory Region Government*⁷²

It was inevitable that the links of the above officials with the Northern Region Government, which most of them had served for some years past, as well as their sympathies towards Nigeria, would open the door to suspicion of partiality and become the subject of bitter complaints from the parties which favoured union with the Republic of Cameroon. However, no specific evidence of impropriety was brought to light.

Furthermore, the allegation on the Arabs of Bama was also denied in that all the parties following voting regulations and procedures were applied

⁷⁰ Mahmood D. Abubakar (1980) *the political Economy of Michika District in Gongola State since the United Nations Plebiscite (1959-1983)*.

⁷¹ Ardo U. Northern Cameroun: *The aftermath of incorporation into Nigeria 1960 –1983*

⁷² Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

or adhered to. On the issue of security, the government of the Republic of Cameroon alleged that barely three days before the voting, a total number of seven hundred policemen were brought into the territory for the Plebiscite, also, an unspecified number of “troops” was used, according to the allegation put forward by the Cameroons.⁷³ In response to this allegation, Dr. Abdou mentioned that only fifteen policemen were brought into the territory during the 1961 Plebiscite, which now brought a total number of about 172, one hundred and seventy-two, for the whole of the Northern Cameroons.

For the military, according to him, only those of the detachment 101 signal that was used for voting and counting for both the 1959 and 1961 Plebiscite, and they had not been allowed to carry any arms. They further agreed that the extension was allowed instead of one day. In his response, the commissioner explains that:

To enable the largest possible number of inhabitants, particularly the recently enfranchised women to participate in the Plebiscite and wishing to avoid the introduction of polling staff from outside Trust Territory, I agreed to the extension of the polling period from one to two days, provided that the Plebiscite Administrator could assure me concerning the

safety of the ballot boxes during the night separating the two polling days. The assurance was subsequently given to be entirely satisfactory, and the Plebiscite Administrator designated 12 February 1961 to me be additional polling day.⁷⁴

However, besides, the polling both were constructed to a standard in such a way that no policeman or any other official was inside the polling station. But where it became necessary that a policeman was needed in the station, (Northern Cameroons) police were allowed, as happened in one or two instances, but not the police from the Trust Territory, this is the (police on loan to the Trust Territory Administration and under the Authority of the Administrator). As indicated in the whole of Northern Cameroon, there were about 391 (167 Nigerian police hired for services in the Northern Cameroons, 45 in the Native Authority police training unit, and 179 other authority police; the latter 224 were Northern Cameroons).⁷⁵

The number of policemen indicated covered about 378 polling stations. Based on this, the commissioner and the region, the British completely denied the allegation by the Republic of Cameroon on the excesses of policemen provided for the Plebiscite. This, according to the

⁷³ Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁷⁴ Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

⁷⁵ Dr. Abdoh’s Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

commissioner, even if there was such a number as alleged by the Republic of Cameroon, it would have been quite impossible for these to have exercised a significant influence on the 378 polling stations. Dr. Abdou puts:

A total of 760 presiding and polling officers were recruited from within the Northern Cameroons, except for twenty-five students from Numan Teacher Training College, Adamawa province of the Northern region of Nigeria. Some were residents of Northern Cameroon. Although I have requested the administrator in so far as possible to recruit staff from among qualified persons in the Northern Cameroons. I did not object to the employment of these 25 students because these men's previous experience and their knowledge of the difficult Mambilla Plateau could most usefully be employed during the polling period. The presiding and polling officers were recruited from among senior and Junior School Teachers, mission schools' teachers, and pupils who had completed standard IV or above. Training courses were held at each of the returning officers' headquarters, lasting over periods from eight to nine days. These courses were begun on 28 January and lasted until 6 February. During the training courses, these officials were instructed in the instruction of polling stations, the mechanics of polling, and their duties concerning the delivery of ballot boxes to the

*counting centres, and were issued written instructions.*⁷⁶

However, it was pointed out that no press was allowed to speak to anybody or allowed to go into the polling station to confirm whether the boxes were empty before the Plebiscite perhaps, the reason for this could be contributed to the fact the press representative was of the Republic of Cameroon and were active members of the campaign who also favoured union with the republic. For the Plebiscite to be credible, there was a need to keep the secrecy of the poll, because of this, not even the Plebiscite officials and the United Nations observers, and the polling agent who was appointed by the parties were allowed into the booths. The United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner has this to say:

However, I agree with the administrator's suggestion that each of the two governments concerned is invited to designate six press representatives to come to the territory to witness the polling and counting of the ballots. Accordingly, individuals were sent by the administrator to both Governments, and so far, as I am informed, the Republic of Cameroon sent one representative to each of the areas in which a counting centre was located. The Government of the Federation of Nigeria, for its part, limited

⁷⁶ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

*itself by sending a few cine cameramen and photographers to the territory.*⁷⁷

Further, to avoid any kind of accusation, the two ballot boxes were placed in a direction that was to be seen by all voters and in a clear and safe location. The commissioner again describes this in his words:

*During training, polling staff were instructed in the construction of polling stations, and each was provided with a construction plan which required that the stations be built on an axis between the borders of the Republic of Cameroon and the Federation of Nigeria and that the ballot boxes be placed in the respective directions. In this way, a total of 378 polling stations were created in the 246 registration areas of the Northern Cameroons in locations that had previously been cited by the returning officers. The polling staff was also provided with all necessary equipment called for in regulation 7, before being sent to their stations.*⁷⁸

However, in the whole of the Northern Cameroon Plebiscite, only one report of the closure of the polling station was received. The polling station at 2a was closed down as a result of a disturbance that occurred. The reason was that the presiding officer had allowed polling agents into the booth. There was also an alteration regarding some

ballot papers, which were said not to have not placed in their respective boxes. This led to a disturbance and the vandalization of the polling station. Because of this, a fresh election started and was completed on the 13th of February, following the Plebiscite regulation. This was the only incident of such in all the territories, or rather, the polling stations.

However, at the end of the polling, counting of votes began and was completed within three days, in southern Cameroun, where no complaint was made took four days to accomplish counting. Now, regarding the counting of the votes, Dr. Abdou comments:

...only the returning officers and the United Nations observers owned the codes and knew the number belonging to a particular polling station. The counting agents, although able at all times to satisfy themselves of the accuracy of the count, could not identify a particular polling station as such, during this procedure the counting agent was located at a point close enough to them to observe the coding operation by the returning officers and the United Nations observers, ballot close enough to be able to identify the code number with its polling station. Once the foregoing operation was completed, the opening of ballot boxes, the counting, and all other

⁷⁷ The Administration of the Trust Territory under Mandate and the Report of the Permanent Mandate Commission as approved by the General Assembly

⁷⁸ The Trusteeship agreement for the Cameroons under the United Kingdom Administration (December, 13th 1946).

*procedures were fully witnessed by the counting agents.*⁷⁹

Now, with regards to the actual counting of the ballot papers, some officials were selected for the important assignments. Dr. Abdou points out:

*...those selected for this important function had obvious reasons to be selected from amongst non-Cameroonians. Also excluded by common consent were those officials who were primarily charged with the administration of the territory. In the circumstances, the field of choice was narrowed to technical or contract officers and their wives. At one counting centre, for example, the counting officers included a Priest of the Roman Catholic Church, a Nursing Sister, two professional engineers, and a Doctor of Medicine.*⁸⁰

On the conclusion of the count, the British government re-read Abdou's report, found the Plebiscite to be credible and therefore considered it as contained in the report of Dr. Abdou, which reads:

Although the majority of the people of the North may not have grasped the intricate and complex constitutional implications of the two alternatives, they were aware, nevertheless, that the decision they were called upon to make at the

*Plebiscite meant joining one or other of the two neighbouring countries.... The Plebiscite was efficiently organised and conducted by the administering authority following legislation promulgated for the purpose. Despite the defects and weaknesses inherent in the situation prevailing in the Northern Cameroons, I am satisfied that the people had the opportunity to express their wishes freely and secretly at the polls concerning the alternative offered in the plebiscite.*⁸¹

However, based on Dr. Abdou's report, the British Government submitted the report on April 21, 1961. The United Nations, in its meeting of the General Assembly, rejected the Republic of Cameroon's complaints and ratified the plebiscite results. Cameroon lost the case when it was taken to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Thus, the Trust Territory formally unified with Nigeria, July 1, 1961. The handing and taking over of the Territory were done in Mubi, with a simple and dignified ceremony when the Northern Cameroons were formally handed over to Nigeria, to become the 13th province of the Northern Region.

The representative of the United Kingdom, who was also the administrator of the Trust Territory, Sir Percy Hym-Harris, handed over the territory

⁷⁹ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria

⁸⁰ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria

⁸¹ Dr. Abdoh's Report on the conduct of the Plebiscites as Commissioner for the Plebiscites of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria

to the Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister of Nigeria, before the ground in Mubi. It became the second smallest province of Northern Nigeria, after Kabba province, with about seven thousand inhabitants then. A council of ministers meeting held in Mubi, as suggested by the chief of Mambilla, Alhaji Mohammad Mansur, the province (former Trust Territory) was named Sardauna province. By this, the territory lost its identity as the United Nations Trust Territory for Sardauna province.

Conclusion

This article examines the British occupation of the former United Nations Trust territory in Northern Nigeria, intending to examine the political transformation of the Trust territory from the period of 1945 to 1961. As a precursor to the study, the final unification of the Trust territory with Nigeria in 1961. Similarly, it examines how the minority ethnic stock was exploited by the European powers through the Fulani and the Kanuri rulers, who owed their position to the 19th-century Jihad. The minority groups belong to the various indigenous ethnic groups who were mostly non-Muslims, as we have seen. During the period, the Fulani and the Kanuri Aristocrats ruled over the people. The territory then was the German-Cameroons, which came under the British through their indirect rule system. The adoption and experimentation of the

system in Northern Nigeria brought about any meaningful changes in the territory.

However, the British, as part of the deal, were bent on making sure that the mandated territory was unified with Nigeria. In line with this, the British championed the political ties of the territory with northern Nigeria. It was this and other historical factors within the territory that brought about an easy unification of the territory with Nigeria. The minority ethnic groups who hitherto opposed the Fulani rule and the Native Authority Government, and perhaps, the oppression and injustices as claimed, voted against Nigeria in the first plebiscite of 1959. The Regional Government of Northern Nigeria, knowing fully well what happened in the first plebiscite of 1959, took steps and made some changes in the administrative settings. Consequently, in the February 1961 plebiscite, mass votes for the unification with Northern Nigeria were accepted. More especially, the influence of 19th-century jihad before the unification process, which would have been rather difficult in a region where most of the people were non-Muslims. Undoubtedly, before the plebiscite, almost all the rulers of the territory accepted Islam, with the minority ethnic groups escaping for fear of being involved in the jihad, thereby restricting themselves to the mountain-top.