

Neither Citizens nor Settlers: Contested Identity of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria

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Abstract

Citizenship is decisive in determining people's belonging and claim of rights to tangible and intangible resources. Citizenship links the people to the agency of the state; it is not an end in itself. It provides the political, social, economic and environmental spaces for competition among different people in any political community. In Nigeria, these competitive spaces have rendered citizenship increasingly contested in contemporary times, defining some people as citizens and some others as settlers. The contested nature of citizenship in Nigeria is informed by indigeneity as occupying the centre stage of making claims to citizenship of Nigeria. The case of the Northern Cameroons people in Nigeria is undetermined, given the historical and political trajectories that led to their incorporation after the 1961 plebiscite. This fundamentally raises pertinent questions, whether they are citizens or settlers, which require understanding the dynamics surrounding the contest.

Keywords: Citizenship, contested identity, indigeneity, Northern Cameroons, Nigeria.

Introduction

A remarkable feature of the collapse of the British Empire is that the British departed from almost every single one of their colonial territories invariably leaving behind a messy situation and an agenda of serious problems that in most cases still haunt those territories to this day (Carlson Anyangwe, 2010).

The assertion by Carlson Anyangwe leave so much to be desired about British colonisation globally and specifically in Africa. One of the major issues that have continued to have a far-reaching effect on the hitherto colonised territories as a consequence of a remarkable feature of British colonization is the citizens-settlers question. Citizenship and settler question are some of the major contested phenomena globally. Where this situation is evident and indeed prevalent, the contested nature of these identity questions suggests that the people are in a state of confused identity since claimant of belonging to a state is indecisive or at best is nominal. The Northern Cameroons are a group that hitherto faced challenge of colonialism in successive order, from Germany (administered as part of the Kamerun) prior to the First World War to Britain at the end of the world war (as Mandate and then later, as Trust territory), a providence necessitated by the League of Nations (1919-1945) and later the United Nations (1945 to present) after the defeat of Germany.

Several years after independence, the question that reverberated in the former trust territory that later became part of Nigeria is whether they are citizens or settlers. This question is informed by the contested identity associated with their indigeneity in Nigeria. It is worthy to note that the condition of becoming a citizen either by means of *jus soli* or *jus sanguinis* in Nigeria is rooted in locating one's belonging to an indigenous community in Nigeria. The other alternatives are by registration or naturalisation, which requires application by the person seeking to acquire such status and must be accepted by the president before it can be granted. As a matter of fact, the Northern Cameroons cannot be situated within these categories of the claimant of citizenship, because it was until 11th February 1961 that by means of a plebiscite they voted to join Nigeria.

It is explicit that the citizenship provisions in the constitution of Nigeria does a cover or recognised the Condition and the procedure which the Northern Cameroons became Nigerians. The people of the Northern Cameroons now occupy a territorial spread across over 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno, Adamawa and Taraba State. They share the same trajectories of incorporation into Nigeria, which was through the plebiscite of 1961. It is also adequate to state that by virtue of this circumstance, though within the boundaries of the social, economic and political rights and privileges the people enjoy, they are emotionally and psychologically outside the boundaries due to the contest associated with their identity in Nigeria. The encounter motivates the need to interrogate the contested identity associated citizenship of the people of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria.

Citizen and Settler Identity

Citizen and settler identity finds expression only in the context of citizenship and the claim to associated rights and privileges accorded to a citizen and denied to a settler. The problems of citizenship in many African countries are associated with the notion of autochthonous as the basis for accessing state-based resources (Bayart

et al, 2001). Citizenship is the status conferred by the state on individuals and groups on the basis of belonging as a criterion for inclusion and exclusion. In modern states, citizenship is a major source for individual and group claims for belonging to a political community. Citizenship determines the parameters of exercising individual and group rights and privileges, which must be pursued legitimately (Ejembi, 2008). Therefore, citizenship is a political artefact reduced to a social organisation that translates to a practice which bound citizens and the state within the context of bundles of rights and obligations (Adejumobi, 2001). Among citizens, citizenship is not an end in itself, but a starting point for individual and group struggle, defined by the rule of law. This is considered to be inimical to the corporate existence of the political community (Dunmoye, 2008; Horowitz, 1985). Not all individuals and groups are entitled to rights and privileges, on the level of equality or proportionally, because citizenship segregates – some people are accorded the status of citizenship and other people are considered as settlers, or at best, foreigners. This apparently indicates that citizenship, create territorial closure and national closure (Geschier & Nyamnjoh, 2000; Bach, 1997).

These closures at the level of territorial and nationality considerations create a settler identity by means of in-group/out-group differences. A settler is perceived as an individual or a group of individuals whose origin is not located within the boundaries of a political community. In other words, they cannot claim autochthony based on indigeneity of any community, and as such cannot be granted citizenship. Geschier and Nyamnjoh (2000) revealed that most of the problems associated with citizenship continentally relate to the character of migration during the precolonial era, but post-colonial governments have come to endorse the conception of citizenship based on belongings in terms of ‘roots’ and ‘origins’ with political priority given to ethnic groups considered to be ‘autochthons’.

The practice reduced other people to the rank of settlers, strangers or allogeneic, who are treated as a ‘second class’ people and worse still, as foreigners despite the clear historical conditions that brought them into permanent political intercourse into the territory they occupy (Jibo, 2003; Alubo, 2006). Though the segregation along the citizen and settler identity is popularized by the government, it is a manifest consequence of social relations of production in most communities. It is framed around socialisation and the mobilisation of people of like cultures and political movements determined by the history of common existence or imagination of a common past, the creation of common sense, of belonging to a group defined in opposition to others in a political community (Nnoli, 1978).

In this context, ethnic or group consciousness is transformed to meet narrowed interests, employing the strength of ethnic spread, structural differentiation and competitive efficiency, when there is a failure on the part of the state to respond adequately to the aspirations of the people. Although this is a reflection within the territorial closure of states, at the level of national closure, two social forces play out vehemently. The first is the segregation or exclusion by the agencies of the state, and lastly by groups foreignizing other ethnic groups to expand competitive efficiency to guarantee resources, recognition and participation in both territorial community and national community (Isin & Wood, 1999; Isin, 2002).

Toward a Theoretical Framework: Complex Identity Theory

The complex identity is a theoretical construct with roots from a number of Psychology scholars, whose works have made inroads in explaining personal or group identities and behaviour in a societal setting, whether ethnic, religious, political, economic and social relations. Some of the works worthwhile in explaining human dynamics associated with identity are those by Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986); Roccas and Brewer (2002); Tatum (2000); Brewer and Pierce (2010); and Kolina (2009) among others. Within the theoretical construct, there are varied discourses about individual and group identities, but central to all is the effort to describe and explain behavioural dynamics or pattern that informs and defines oneself identity at a particular time, place and space.

Defining identity is complex because there is no consensus about what it is all about. However, the effort has been made to situate the definition of the concept even though elusive. Identity relates to how one defines the self (Kolina, 2009; Horowitz, 2012). From a theoretical stand, identity, according to Roccas and Brewer (2002), is “an individual’s subjective representation of the interrelationships among his or her multiple group identities”. The complex nature of identity depends on the degree of overlapping relations between or among groups, in this context, in-group membership versus out-group membership (Roccas and Brewer, 2002; Brewer and Pierce, 2010). The complex nature of identity, according to Tatum (2010) is “shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts”, which also depends on the level of awareness of the presence of more than one in-group categorization, and the level of recognition that the multiple in-group categories do not converge (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; 1986).

The complex identity theory in the context of the above relational assertions as it affects the citizen-settler context of the people of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria is implicated by the fact that at the individual level as well as at the group level their identity is contested. First, within the in-group, that is, the people of the territory of the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria, the dynamics of social, economic and political relations, negotiate the behavioural pattern toward one another, people of whom they share common cultural and colonial

history. The differential identity structure within the in-group is informed of the countervailing competition for relatively available, but scarce resources, which are both tangible and intangible in nature. The complexity of intergroup identity in the Northern Cameroons stems from cultural and linguistic differences, family and clannish orientations and political, geographical and social categorizations of groups on the continuum of indigenous or not indigenous to the territorial enclaves within the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria. Those people claiming indigenosity do discriminate against those people they perceived not to be indigenous because individual and group consciousness have been developed to see them as “settlers” or “foreigners”. This is also done without taking into consideration their overlapping group identity across the Cameroun based on their historical trajectories.

The other complexity is associated with the relationship of the in-group with the out-group, in this context, between the people of the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria and the rest of the people who claim indigenosity of identity within the Nigerian geographical space based on the constitutive provisions of the constitution. Although the contradictions from in-group and out-group relations with regards to the Northern Cameroons citizenship status in Nigeria, stems from the fact that the people of the territory were later entrants into the Nigerian federation based on the plebiscite on February 1961. More so, the constitution lacunae created with regard to their citizenship which should be the basis for situating properly their rights, privileges and obligations have also added to the complex identity nature of the people of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria. These facts have given rise to the out-group contesting identity by often labelling them as foreigners in Nigeria. The challenges associated with this concern are created by an in-group and out-group relations and in-group/out-group relations, culminating into the lack of a proper conception of self-identification. Although it is a condition they did not envisage coming, but colonialism brought it to bear in the individual’s subjective representation of the intergroup relations among the people in the territory and with groups within Nigeria. This situation is a serious problem that still haunts the people to this day.

Some Reflections on the Incorporation of the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria

The Northern Cameroons were formally the colony of Germany, shortly before its annexation by the United Kingdom as a result of the World War I (1914-1919). Fonso (1999) stated that the Germans negotiated and established the boundaries of the country. They also set up the required institutions necessary for effective administration, which gave rise to the idea of belonging together among the various ethnic groups and traditional societies of the territory. The territory spanned from Borno, Adamawa and Taraba States, partitioned without regards to the historical and geopolitical homogeneity to the people. Social complexities of the various ethnicities cut across spatial boundaries that were constantly shifting depending on the conditions motivating these changes (Lenshie and Yenda, 2014).

The Northern Cameroons was an integral part of the Southern, as well as the French Cameroun. The Northern Cameroons became a mandated territory of the League of Nations placed under the United Kingdom administration and later as a Trusteeship territory of the United Nations. By 1914 the Northern Cameroons had been already on the world map, signifying a graduation to becoming an independent federation (Asemanya, 2006; Lenshie, 2014). The fall of Banyo of 1815 and the Mora falls on the 10 February 1916 to the allied forces of Britain and France. Germany was forced into signing a peace treaty at Versailles in 1919, after which in 1920 the territory was divided between France and Britain with boundaries established finally in 1922 under the Leagues of Nations (Cooper, 2010; Asemanya, 2006).

The establishment of the boundaries to demarcate between the areas of control by the French and British colonial power over the Kamerun colony of Germany after the World War I, took the form of the claimant of some sort of annexation of the territory. The French annexed 80 percent, while British annexed 20 percent of the territory for the purpose of administration, which was deemed as mandated territories. Toward the end of colonization, both French and Britain had already started making claims over the Southern and Northern Cameroons respectively, and this was witnessed in the nature of the systems of administration and the laws within the territories as a reflect of the same tradition of “an annexation law, exactly in the same way Adolf Hitler annexed Austria to Germany”. The brief rule of This situation undermined the political and social basis of the mandate and trusteeship as provided in the General Assembly Resolution 224 (III) of November 1948 on administrative unions, the Trusteeship Agreement, and Articles 76 b of the United Nations Charter (Anyangwe, 2010).

It is must be stated that how United Kingdom and the allied forces overran the territory gave an impression that the people therein were captured and rendered booty of war, because they were subjects of Germany under colonial rule. This was not so, because colonialism was a forceful imposition on a population of people occupying a pre-historic territory, whose were neither created nor invented by the colonial powers. The origin of the people is not definable by the colonial myth about the roots of the people as claim by colonial anthropologists and historians, except on the assumption conception of history about the people they know little or nothing about. The territory which the United Kingdom brought under colonial administration from the Lake

Chad Basin to the Baft of Biafra Lake Victoria

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria and Cameroun showing the Northern and Southern Cameroons



Nigeria circa 1955

The Northern Cameroons as presented on the map consisted of the two upper segments on the territory between Nigeria and Cameroun. The territory, even though by virtue of colonialism, was not a part of the Northern protectorate or colony, the people believed that in terms of history, geography and religious beliefs constituted part of the Adamawa emirate. Notwithstanding, they were careful not to allow the Adamawa emirate to dominate their own affairs, to the extent that they should lose their identities and peculiarities in the social relations. As this fear expressed by the people intensified, the plebiscite politics brought a new dynamic of identity politics in the Northern Cameroons.

Toward independence in 1960, the United Nations General Assembly on 13 March 1959 adopted a resolution to ensure the conduct of plebiscite for the Northern Cameroons. Thus, the UN in consultation with the Plebiscite Commissioner, Djalal Abdoh of Iran, requested the United Kingdom to find out the desire of the people with regard to their future (The Nation Online, 2016). The preparation was made and a plebiscite was conducted. By November 1959, the first plebiscite which provided the opportunity for the people of Northern Cameroons to determine the belonging to the people, either to be a part of the Northern Nigeria when the country becomes independent on 1 October 1960 or decides to determine their political status at a later date. The people decided in favour of the later date. It is noteworthy to state that the number of people registered was 129,549. The total votes, voter turnout was 113,859 (87.9%), the invalid and blank votes 525 and the valid votes were 113,334. Those who voted for the union with Nigeria were 42,788 (27.75%) and those who voted for postponing the decision to a later date was 70,546 (62.25%). This result was a disappointment for the Northern political class, particularly the Northern People's Congress (NPC) (Houser, 1959; Africa-U. N. Bulletin, No. 17, November 1959).

The disheartening situation presented with the result of the November 1959 plebiscite led to the incarceration of some traditional rulers in the territories where the result did not favour the Northern Nigeria. The reason was that these rulers could not mobilise their people into voting in favour of Nigeria, or otherwise, could not have worked hard to subvert the voting in favour of Nigeria, and rather assist the pattern which their people voted. Above all, the political elites attributed that the British officers who organised the plebiscite also contributed in subverting the voting process and pattern to ensure they did not vote in favour of joining the Northern Nigeria when Nigeria achieve independence on 1 October 1960 (Nfor, 1980). See table 1 for the November 1959 British Cameroons plebiscite result.

Table 1: November 1959 British Northern Cameroons Plebiscite

Results	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes
Union with Nigeria	42,788	27.75%
Postpone Decision	70,546	62.25%

Source: http://africanelections.tripod.com/referenda.html#1961_British_Cameroons_Plebiscite

The shocking challenge associated with the result of the plebiscite made the political elites of Northern Nigeria intensify campaign and mobilisation across the Northern Cameroons territories. This process was not without political intrigues and manipulations. One major concern associated with the process was the astronomical increase in the population of registered voters in the February 1961 plebiscite. On 11 and 12 February 1961, the Northern Cameroons became a ‘do or die’ affair among contending forces. Sir Ahmadu Bello and President Ahmadu Ahidjo and their respective political parties fiercely involved in the campaign to secure the votes of the people of the Northern Cameroons. The election went in favour of Nigeria. It was believed that the Northern Nigeria elites were accused of using the police and other security agencies to intimidate voters and that this process aided electoral malpractices during the plebiscite of 1960 (Asemanya, 2006; Nfi, 2012).

During the period, it must be brought to bear that the number of registered voters almost doubled within the period of less than one year. In 1959 the population of registered voters was 129,549 and in 1961, the population has risen to 292,985. The question presented to the people had two options, which was whether voters wanted to unite with Nigeria or Cameroun when independence was granted to the two regions. The valid votes were 243, 955 in which the votes in favour of union with Nigeria was 146,296 (59.97%) and for the union with Cameroun was 97,659 (40.03%). The reflection from the result of the plebiscite was clear that the people have decided to join Nigeria. See table 2 for the detail of the 11-12 February 1961 plebiscite result.

Table 2: 11-12 February 1961 British Cameroons Plebiscite

Results	Northern Cameroons	
	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes
Union with the Federation of Nigeria	146,296	59.97%
Union with the Republic of Cameroun	97,659	40.03%

Source: http://africanelections.tripod.com/referenda.html#1961_British_Cameroons_Plebiscite

It is important to state that the Northern Cameroons would have achieved independence with the Southern Cameroons were it not for Sir Andrew Cohen, the United Kingdom representative to the UN Trusteeship Council, who opposed to the option of the two Cameroons uniting to independence. The action of the Cohen and other representatives in the UN Trusteeship Council over the future of these people was a betrayal of the purpose of the trusteeship principles and indeed, the principles of self-determination of the colonised people.

The government of the Republic of Cameroun contested the result of the plebiscite in the international court, but could not succeed (Daily Trust, 8 July 1961; Goodridge, 2013). Specifically, the effort by Foncha to discredit the plebiscite result of the Northern Cameroons that was opposed to the one obtained in Southern Cameroons was futile. Endeley considered that the plebiscite result was not a litmus test of the true wishes of the people. The inability to secure majority votes from the Northern Cameroons was due to the politics of primordial identity – a situation which he described as “an issue between those tribes controlling the government and those tribes whose leaders are in the opposition and who therefore wish to unseat the government” (Johnson, 1970). This showed that the political process that presented itself among the political elites in the two Cameroons was marred by opposing social and political forces. The lack of internal harmony in the face of a fierce Northern Nigeria political mobilisation accounted for the failure to secure maximum votes in the plebiscite of 1961 conducted in the Northern Cameroons.

From the plebiscite results, Dikwa Central and Cubunawa-Madagali plebiscite districts voted in the majority in favour of the Republic of Cameroun. Many people envisaged that the pattern of their votes was construed by the fear of Fulani domination. The fear expressed by the people was seemingly an age-long experience they have had with the Fulani people in their respective localities. Since the votes of the people from these areas were insignificant, their choice could not amount to anything reasonable to change the outcome of the result to favour Cameroun. The contemporary dynamics of the people of the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria today is a one of contested identity along indigeneity and citizenship.

Socio-political Context of Citizens-Settlers Question of Northern Cameroons

The citizenship-settler question in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon. It dates to the era of the conjugation of the federation of Nigeria through the British colonial instrumentality. This situation has produced ethnic convolutions that have become difficult to mitigate after several decades of independence. As the indigeneity question, the consequence of the question of settler identity, manifest at the national and sub-national levels, the citizenship question manifest at the international level. Abah and Okwori (2002) stressed that the indigeneity

and citizenship questions posed the greatest threat to nationality claims in Nigeria. This is so because the conception of citizenship excludes other people as foreigners or settlers on the basis that no matter the number of years one has been resident in a particular locality in a state in Nigeria provided that ancestry cannot be located there, the individual is a settler or a stranger. This exclusionary dynamic also applies to a group of people, for example, the people from the Northern Cameroons, who historically cannot locate their roots within the Nigerian territory.

The nature and dynamics of citizen-settler questions as it affects the people of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria takes a socio-political pattern that is historically driven. The people of the Northern Cameroons are faced with a sort of threat to their identity of whom they are and where they belong. Are they citizens or settlers? This relates to the social and political struggles for recognition and redistribution as instances of claim-making based on identity and difference among ethnic groups for tangible and intangible resources (Isin, 2002; Alubo, 2006). The social and political struggles for recognition and distribution of resources at the instance of claim-making is driven by the quest for political power among ethnic political class both within and outside the region. Above all, it is construed by constitutional making and the content of the constitution, which defines the political and social relations in the state (Lenshie, 2014).

It is important to state that the people of the Northern Cameroons were neither part of the French Cameroun nor the British Nigeria colonies. Even though it appears that they were part of Nigeria, they were people under the mandate and subsequently, trusteeship to determine their belonging through self-determination. This informed the reason for their separation from the British colony of Nigeria before the plebiscite in 1959 and 1961 respectively. This also points to the fact that the people of Northern Cameroons were a late entrant into Nigeria, that is, they became Nigerians after independence. The people of the Northern Cameroons afterwards became confused even though they have celebrated their incorporation with Nigeria, the reason being that they started witnessing segregation in the spheres of public life (Lenshie and Yenda, 2014).

In contemporary times, this is evident by the nature of the political and social relations among the people of Northern Cameroons, who are the later entrant and the people who were from the onset part of the traditional Nigeria during the colonial era. The relationship has been in a manner that those ethnic groups within the traditional boundaries of Nigeria label the later entrants as settlers, and worse still, as foreigners. And, within the territorial boundaries of the people that became incorporated into Nigeria, also foreignize another based on the consideration of the fact that their ethnic identity traverses the boundaries of Nigeria and Cameroun.

As stated, this situation is socially and politically construed among groups whose competitive efficiency is at variance, therefore sentiments are bound to be used to eliminate competition in the social and political marketplaces. This concern manifest most of the times saliently among the people as a competitive consequence of group interrelations. However, the institutional agency saddled with the responsibility of checking illegal crossing of international boundaries of the state of non-citizen takes the cue to ascertain the people's identity. This usually takes the form of fierce interrogation and sometimes, incarceration in pursuit of facts or evidence to determine the veracity of the claims against the people. The manner issues in which related to their nationality are handled does not only complicates their claim of belongings, but also render even more complex their status as citizens of Nigeria or otherwise, Cameroon which forcefully they are associated with. They are more or fewer people in the middle of nowhere or at best stateless people. They can also be seen as a people who are neither citizens nor settlers in Nigeria.

Nigeria Constitution and Dynamics of Citizens-Settlers Question of Northern Cameroons

Reflecting the provision of the constitution, the people have no claim to belonging in Nigeria nor do they have in the Republic of Cameroun. Therefore, as such, to state that the people could be reckoned with as a set of ethnic conglomeration whose identity is uncertain, by the fact of the colonial invention of international boundaries demarcating Nigeria from the Cameroun are into play. Their uncertainty of identity stems from the traversing nature of their ethnic spread between the two countries, which rather complicated their belonging. In any country, group belonging and identity is defined by the state. In this context, the state is the responsibility of conferring the status of citizenship, which the criteria are provided in the constitution.

The trace to the constitutional foundation of the citizenship question of the people of the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria dates to the independence constitution of 1960. The constitution in chapter two provided the grounds on which citizenship of Nigeria can be conferred. The chapter two of the constitution contains citizenship by birth (see Section 7 (1) (2)) and other categories of citizenship – citizenship by registration and naturalisation (see Section 8-13). The requisite conditions for the grant of citizenship are clearly defined by the constitution. The independence constitution of 1960 provided that one can make claims to citizenship by birth when both parents of the claimant or one of the grandparents of the claimant belong or belonged to an indigenous community in Nigeria, otherwise, most have arrived Nigeria on or before 30 September 1960.

The challenge with this provision is, since the Northern Cameroons was a trusteeship territory, it was neither a part of the colony nor protectorate of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the people could not have been

the part of the Northern Nigeria from the onset by virtue of the pre-1960 territorial demarcation. As people of the trusteeship territory under the United Kingdom administration, the people of the Northern Cameroons found recognition and acceptance as citizens under the Nationality Act of 1948. Afterwards, the 1960 constitution considered citizen under the British Nationality Act of 1948 as citizens of Nigeria when they have naturalised or registered before 1 October 1960 (see Chapter II of the 1960 Constitution of Nigeria Federation). Unfortunately, the people of the trusteeship territory did not belong to the category of people who naturalised or registered to become citizens, rather it was through an act of the plebiscite.

The 1963 constitution of Nigeria did not make any different to capture the citizenship of the people. Even the 1979 constitution, which was widely considered as an inclusive constitution that sought to address indigeneity question as the root of the citizens-settlers question in Nigeria (Egwu, 2004; Adesoji and Alao, 2009), could reflect or address the citizenship concerns of the people of the Northern Cameroons (Lenschie and Gambo, 2014). The constitution, with regard to citizenship, had a strong attachment to having “every person... whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to an indigenous community in Nigeria” (see Chapter III of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). The same condition is presented in the 1999 constitution. The bottom line to this contradiction is that the inability of the Nigeria constitution to properly integrate the people of the Northern Cameroons poses serious challenges to them and their children (Lenschie, 2014).

It may be stated that since the incorporation of the Northern Cameroons into Nigeria, albeit not properly carried out, the people have continued to enjoy equal privileges as other people within the territorial boundaries of Nigeria before and after the plebiscite. Also important is to note that, not all of the people share the same rights and privileges; some are more equal than others. Those who do not suffer most of the time ethnic labelling that foreignizes them in Nigeria even though they share the same historical facts and post-colonial fate in Nigeria. The exclusion associated with ethnic labeling is informed by the localisation of citizenship rooted in the making of the 1979 constitution, which it was taken advantaged to create a dichotomy among different ethnic groups.

The implication of such dichotomy cut-across access to land, offices, jobs, scholarships and political offices among others rendered available only to indigenous people. Because in most communities see themselves, within the Northern Cameroons territories incorporated into Nigeria by virtue of plebiscite, as bona fide they segregate against other people using constructed history of ‘first in time is first in rights’ to reduce the “others” to the rank of settlers. Therefore, access to political and economic resources is frequently challenged or is denied. Outside the boundaries of the Northern Cameroons in Nigeria, a dynamics of exclusion also manifest widely against the people, because of the internal creation of differential identities of citizens-settler dichotomy. In most circumstances, they are not only stereotyped as foreigners but are also challenged, harassed and denied rights and privileges to access tangible and intangible resources owing to the government decisions and actions (Nnoli, 1995).

To the people of Northern Cameroons in Nigeria, the manifestations of exclusion toward them, which are political, social and economic and indeed, psychological takes different forms and characters in the various schools where their children attain, their respective workplaces, and other agencies and LGA Councils where they must obtain documents of authentication to conduct specific transactions or receive scholarship and bursaries, or to travel within or outside the country. This crisis associated with their citizenship is complicated by the nature of their settlements, located along the borders of Nigeria with Cameroun and the traverse nature ethnic affiliations into the Cameroun territories, which predates the creation of Nigeria and Cameroun. The questionability of their identity has in many instances led to contestations among them as a people and the agencies of the state. The reason for this is informed by the fact that the activities of the state and its agencies have been dominant and predatory, particularly in advancing ethnic group interests over other ethnic groups who they label as foreigners, rooted around myth-making and the dredging up of past events (Carment, 1993).

The nature of the relationship happens as a result of the internal disconnections to factual realities of the conditions which necessitated their entrance into Nigeria after the country’s independence in 1960. The situation surrounding the complexities of colonial interchange and intergroup relations with those within the indigenous circle of Nigeria renders even more difficult the pursuit of a common goal to assert their identity within the Nigeria federation. The difficult challenges posed by the contradictions make the conception of a common Nigeria citizenship difficult to be attained, especially for the people of Northern Cameroons (Nigeria Research Network, 2014).

The social, economic and political circumstances that necessitated the incorporation of the people of Northern Cameroons into Nigeria can be factored out from two perspectives are that the population of the educated elites who should have protested against the provisions in the plebiscite were a handful. Their population could not have accounted for any meaningful changes, after all, they colonialists preferred to relate with the traditional rulers as opposed to relating to the educated class from the Northern Cameroons. The other factor was the master-subject relationship between the colonialists and the few educated people from the Northern Cameroons, who were out to implement the dictates and interests of the colonialists in the plebiscite.

As subjects, the people have not choices of their own other than to choose from the options provided to them during the plebiscites. This accounted for the reason why the exclusion of the third alternative as manoeuvred by Sir Andrew Cohen, the British representative to the United Nations Plebiscite Council went through during the 1961 plebiscite.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Citizenship question is a contested identity among ethnic groups across the world. The complex nature of the citizenship question varies accordingly in many countries. With regards to the people of the Northern Cameroons, the situation that presents itself point to the dilemma of situating properly their citizenship status in Nigeria. The difficulty pointing to the provision of their citizenship claims in the constitution of Nigeria, starting from the 1960 constitution to date complicates their claims to rights and privileges in Nigeria. More so, the state and its agencies through several policies that localized citizenship created inclusion and exclusion dynamics among ethnic groups in the Northern Cameroons, and on the other hand, created prejudices between the people from the areas with the people in the ethnic circle of Nigeria territories as provided in the Nigeria constitution. The consequences of this challenge have placed the people in the middle of nowhere – neither citizens nor settlers – that always give rise to the foreignization of identity either as individuals or groups. In this context, the people of the Northern Cameroons require proper incorporation into Nigeria through the constitutional means, otherwise, require a referendum to determine their belonging appropriate to the provisions the United Nations with regard to self-determination to end the contested identity question that have placed the people of the Northern Cameroons to be neither citizens nor settlers in Nigeria.

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