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## Migrant Factor in the Historical Development of Minna Town in Nigeria, 1999-2015

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### **Abstract:**

*The factor of migration in no small measure play significant role in the historical development of human settlements. Movement and consequent settlement of people in new places cut across human history. The population of Minna Town witnessed tremendous increase especially during the period of our study due to the influx of migrants. The paper aims at discussing the waves of migration into Minna Town and how it has influenced its transformation as an urban centre. Ithave been noticed that works on migration and its consequences on the urbanization of Towns in Nigeria since the inception of democratic rule in 1999 has been left fallow most especially Minna Town. This study in particular considers specifically the historical development of the Minna town 1999-2015 which is a watershed in its history. Using qualitative method the research employed the utilization of semi structured interview approach with twenty five people across board to obtain historical information on the development of Minna Town. The information was corroborated with other secondary source materials to analyse and interpret the study. Minna is located at the central part of Nigeria thus it is a corridor of movements that attract population. The research finds out that various reasons are responsible for the regular and unprecedented influx of people to Minna Town. The study will assist in our understanding of the magnanimous contributions made by the migrants towards its urban growth. It will assist government and policy makers shed more light on the socio-economic and political of migrants on settlements.*

**Keywords:** Migrant factor, historical development, Nigeria, Minna town

### **1. Introduction**

Migrants have constituted a sizeable population proportion of urban settlements in world cities. The phenomenon has become more rampant in recent years as reasons of different nature displace people from their homes to settle elsewhere as migrants (UN ECA, 2017; Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005; Bakewell and Haas, 2007). Migration is considered as the movement of people from one geographical region to another, which may be on temporary or permanent basis (Adewale G.J, 2005). Such movement can be from rural to urban, rural to rural, urban to rural, urban to urban and across international boundaries. Thus it is an accepted fact that natural increase through birth and reduction in death rate are not enough to swell population that may cause urban expansion rather, considerably the factor of migration play strong role in urbanization (Smith, 1987; Fox, 2012; Awumbila, 2017). Demographers and economic historians have submitted that both push and pull factors are responsible for the movement of people from their places of abode to newer location.

Available statistics shows that more than half of the world's 6.6 billion people live in urban areas, jam-packed into 3 percent of the earth's land area (U N, 2010; Sassen, 2012). The population of the world living in urban areas was estimated at blow 5 percent in 1800 but rose to 47 percent in the year 2000 and is expected to attain 65 percent in 2030 (United Nations, 1990). It is also projected that by 2020 Nigerian urban population will reach 100. Although the urban population growth rate declined from 5.7% in 1985 to the rate of 4.0% in 1994, (Afolayan, Ikwuyantum and Abijide, 2008), howeverit increased to 5.8% in 2004 (Fox, 2012).

Since the return to civilian administration in 1999 in Nigeria, internal and external migration has been on the increase. The prevailing migration pattern in Nigeria is rural to urban, which makes population growth in major Nigerian cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, Minna and Port Harcourt among others to be very alarming on annual basis. Adepoju (1976) observed that net migration in Nigeria (both internal and external) is more significant than natural increase in the growth of cities. Afolayan, Ikwuyantum and Abijide, (2008) also indicate that nearly half of the growth rate of urban areas was due to migrants. Previously migration within Nigerian settlements was spurred by the efforts to seek safety of life, arable land for farming, education prospects and to access health facilities. The population of settlements like Minna town began to assume an astronomical dimension as a result of several factors which rest on both push and pull forces (Salihu, 2018). The major reason for migration in Nigeria nowadays is chiefly for economic purpose. Existing scholarly works have pointed out the economic effects of rural-urban drift on the migrants, the places of the origins and the purposes (Todaro, 1969; Aworemi Joshua *et al.*, 2011; Braunvan, 2004; Celia V. Sanidad-Leones, 2006; and Joseph Yaro, 2007) yet none have considered the development of settlements like Minna town from the perspectives of migration studies.

The challenge for this paper is to discuss how migrations into Minna town aid its historical development specifically its expansion since 1999. It is also to explain the complexity of the society and the impacts of migrant population on its urban growth. The paper utilizes oral interview as method of collecting primary data and also benefitted from desk review of literature. The study is significant as it will provide policy makers an insight into the causes of some of urban problems associated with migrants. It will also illuminate on how migrants have taken over the generation of economic activities in the city and their consequent domination of socioeconomic and to some extent political affair of Minna town in particular and Nigerian cities in general, finally it will add to the existing literature on Minna and urban growth in Nigeria.

## 2. Literature Review

The history of peoples and settlements contain stories of how groups have moved from one place to another due to either economic or other factors. Abundant literature on migration and urbanization has raised arguments on why people migrate. Since the 1950s traditional economic theory of urbanization has dominated both academic and policy spheres that revolves around the connection between structural economic transformation and the spatial dynamics of the labour market (Fox, 2012). The idea is clear: as the modern urban sector develops, surplus labour from the “retrograde” rural economy is brought to towns and cities, attracted by higher wages (Lewis 1954; Fei and Ranis 1964). By implication, the view is that urbanization is fundamentally driven by rural-to-urban migration stimulated by a wage gap between rural and urban areas that arises in the initial periods of industrialization.

Earlier researches have presented different arguments on the relationship between migration and urban expansion and wage/income differentials (Todaro 1969; Mazumdar 1987; Weeks 1995; Becker and Morrison 1995; Fay and Opal 2000; Lall, Selod, and Shalizi 2006). Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s acknowledged many noneconomic motives for migration, such as the desire of young persons to seepage the control of parents; of women to escape femininity differences, join lovers in town, or exploit advantage of the “thick” market for spouses in urban areas; and to enjoy the social prestige attached with urban life or to pursue their aspirations in the abundant employment opportunities in the city (Byerlee 1974; Mazumdar 1987; Becker and Morrison 1995). More recent works have explored the impacts of ethnic conflict, war, and climatic changes in stimulating migration to urban areas (Fay and Opal 2000; Barrios, Bertinelli, and Strobl 2006). With regard to rural-to-urban migration the immediate cause of urbanization it has long been argued among demographers with Malthusian background that rapid population growth in rural areas places strains on natural resources (e.g., land and water) resulting in declining living standards, thereby contributing to the “push” factors that drive people into cities (Preston 1979; Kelley and Williamson 1984; Fox 2012).

In developing countries, cities rural-to-urban migration accounts for roughly 40 per cent of urban population growth (Annez and Buckley 2009). For Africa, these percentages have actually been declining, from 41.2 per cent in the 1960s, 40.6 per cent in the 1970s to 24.9 per cent in the 1980s. However, there are good reasons to assume that rural-to-urban migration is the main source of migration on the African continent. Based on the estimate that in developing countries rural-to-urban migration accounts for approximately 20 to 40 per cent of urban population growth (Annez and Buckley 2009), and based on 2005 and 2010 data on urban populations it estimates yearly net rural-to-urban migration across Africa at an approximate level of between 2.7 and 5.3 million, which is 4 to 8 times higher than the total annual emigration to Europe and North America which is estimated at 704,000 in the same period (UN ECA 2017).

Migration constitutes a major factor in the historical development of towns and cities across the world hence economic historians use it to provide complementary explanation for urbanization prior to the nineteenth century based on a compelling logical premise: cities can only exist where a surplus of energy (food and fuel) is available to support a large non-agricultural population (Lowry 1990; Janet 1991). It follows that the size of the urban population in any given region is a function of the quantity of surplus liveliness available, which in turn is jointly determined by agricultural productivity and transportation costs (Bairoch 1988). The location of early cities mostly on areas that are naturally conducive for surplus food production is an added advantage that attracts population in short; agricultural productivity and transport facility fundamentally explain the geography of early cities, which developed almost exclusively in fertile river valleys or locations on coasts and along rivers (Childe 1950; Davis 1955; Bairoch 1988).

Between 1800 and 1900, following the results of industrial revolution intensified regional trade and falling mortality rate set the stage for European urbanization hence, the proportion of Europe’s population living in cities nearly tripled running between 10 percent to 30 percent, and by the beginning of the millennium almost 70 percent of Europe’s population lived in urban areas (Bairoch and Goertz 1986; United Nations 2010). Through trade, colonialism, and international development in the latter half of the twentieth century, technological and institutional developments that propelled Europe’s urban transition were diffused to other regions, stimulating urbanization there as well. The onset of the urban transition in any given country or region should therefore be understood as part of a global historical process linked to technological and institutional change and diffusion, not simply as a product of internal economic and demographic forces.

In precolonial Nigeria the level of the dynamics of migration flow and trends during the era indicates that Sokoto Caliphate was essentially populated by immigrants, of Gobirawa, Nufawa, Bussawa, Tuaregs, Adarawa and the Zabarmawa ethnic groups, while the emigrants were mostly Hausa-Fulani (Kwaire, 2000). In addition, emigration from the northeastern part of Nigeria can be traced to the 19th century, prior to the partitioning of Africa, when most of the ethnic groups found in Nigeria’s neighbouring French speaking territories migrated from and were part of the old Borno Empire (Mahadi, 1989).

The emergence of the northern cities of Kano, Zazzau and Katsina has been explained to be the results of several factors of which migration play very significant role. Smith, 1987 believed it was the religious, geographical, political,

security and economic factors that encouraged migrants into the places. For instance that the 'Kufena and' 'Turunku' hills in Zazzau possess spirits *iskokis* that weld influence on the life of the people similar to the case of Dalla hills in Kano where people came for consultations with the spirits, worship and its consequent emergence as an economic hub.

Migration in the north-central part of Nigeria has been traced back to as early as 500 BC, when territorial struggles were entrenched to secure their own land for identity as shown in the history of Nork and other civilizations in the area (Armstrong, 1955). The history of the Idoma, Nupe Gbagyi and a host of other tribes of the central Nigeria area equally provide adequate prove that the people have migrated into their present homes many centuries ago (Ikemi, 1980; Erim, 1981). To further buttress the point, the Tiv people of the middle belt (in the present day north central Nigeria area), from ethnographic and historical studies were identified to be of Bantu stock (Makar, 1994). They are said to have migrated from the Congo basin and now present in four Nigerian States of Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, and Taraba (Armstrong, 1955). In the south western present-day Nigeria, movement of the powerful Oyo empire builders led to subsequent founding of settlements, and trading activities in the region. The vastness of Oyo Empire that stretched as far west as the Ashanti and Dahomey areas is evident and provides corridor for easier movement of people (Akinjogbin, 1980).

Colonial era had its own share of migration in the history of urban development in Nigeria following the various repressive and repugnant policies of the administration (Rodney 1972; Ake 1980; Falola & Heaton 2010). The introduction of European money economy led to wage labour and the need to pay for the hydra-headed taxes which was responsible for many people to migrate in search for white-collar job so as to pay taxes. Many moved to places like Jos, Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna Zaria, Enugu, Minna and Lagos (Ake 1980).

Post-colonial experience shows that the oil boom era and its effects on the country led to massive movement of the populace from countryside to the cities, and that brought about various problems in the cities like; crimes, unemployment, insecurity, poverty and slums among others. Nigeria has a high rate of rural-urban migration which is due to factors such as; backwardness of rural areas and depressed economy with little or no formal activities, but dominated with low scale agricultural activities. Secondly, high rate of inadequate social amenities like; epileptic power supply, degenerate health services, deplorable road conditions, poor educational facilities and poor housing conditions. Some of the migrants to urban centres find jobs and consequently settle down hence the increase in urban population. This thereby results to the problems of urbanization like; slums development, traffic congestion, pollution (water, air, land and visual), crimes, and insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and health challenges among other problems. Rural-urban migration in Nigeria has been increasing over the past 25 years (Afolayan, Ikwuyantum and Abijide, 2008). Between 1985 and 1990, over 3 million Nigerians migrated from rural areas to urban centres, while over 5 million Nigerians migrated between 2001 and 2005 which is about 75% increase in the rural-urban migration in Nigeria, for every period of 5-year (Afolayan, Ikwuyantum and Abijide, 2008, UN ECA, 2017).

### 3. Research Methodology

Using qualitative method the research employed the utilization of semi structured interview (Mujis, 2010, Gun and Flaire, 2012) approach to discuss with twenty five people across board so as to obtain historical information on the development of Minna Town. The number consists of Ten (10) migrants, Ten (10) community heads and Five (5) indigenes of the town as suggested by Cladinin and Connelly (2000), Pinneger and Daynees (2013), Creswell (2015). The information collected was corroborated with other secondary source materials such as textbooks, journals and other reference materials to analyse and interpret the study.

### 4. Discussion

#### 4.1. Minna before 1999

Minna lies at latitude 9.37<sup>0N</sup> and longitude 6.33<sup>0E</sup> in central Nigeria area (NGSG 1978). To the northeast of the town, a more or less continuous steeply outcrop of granite occur limiting any urban development in that direction, while the remaining wings are more of plain land (Salihu, 2018). Its soil which is very fertile, reddish brown coupled with abundant rainfall enables the cultivation of a variety of crops and vegetables as well as grasses for the consumption of reared animals like cattle goats and rams which supports population increase (Salihu, 2016). The town is well watered with streams running across it thus enhancing irrigation. This is very important as a necessary feature for the citing and development of any town (Smith, 1987; Janet 1991). It has been argued that the development of ancient cities of Egypt and Mesopotamia depended on the river Nile and the Euphrates; similarly the ancient Chinese cities depended on the Yellow river (Janet 1991). Thus, the availability of water in Minna enhanced the attraction of population hence a basic need of life has been fulfilled.

At the creation of Niger State in 1976, the town covers an area of 8.74<sub>sq</sub>km, which is 0.1% of the total land area of Niger state. The generally moderate atmospheric condition makes it conducive for people to settle down and engage in economic activities such as farming, handicraft, trade and white collar jobs. Minna is a popular railway town through which the Kano to Lagos line passes. There is also the Baro rail terminus, which extended some 176 kilometres southeast from Minna. (NGSAM, APN328) The town is severally connected to different directions of the state and the country by series of road network hence making it a corridor of movements. The population of Minna in 1910 when it emerged as a modern settlement was only 2000 people with the natives (Gbagyi) constituting only 5%, Nupe 17.7%, Hausa-Fulani 31.1% Yoruba 11.9%, others 24.1%. With these figures it is indicative that the migrant settlers seem to be more populous in the town with Hausa being largest in number. Between 1939 and 1949 the entire population of Minna town stood at

11,778 but the Gbagyi were only 286 (Salihu 2018). By 1979 after it has become the capital city of the State the population stood at 70, 000 with the natives strongly lesser than migrants (Master Plan, 1979). However the astronomic growth in its population at 8% per annum is quite interesting and shows significant impact of migrant factor in the expansion of the town (Master Plan, 1979). Early migrants came for the purpose of railway work, some came for gold mining others for trade while some were public servants in the colonial regime, many also came to enjoy what the urban place have to offer (Liman, 2011; Zakari, 2017).

Nigeria the most populous African nation of about 200 million resumed democratic governance in 1999 after over three decades of political meandering. Modern democracy is closely associated with the exercise of fundamental human rights which include freedom of movement thus since its inception people move more freely across the country and even into it from the neighbourhoods. For obvious reasons people migrate to Minna during the period of our study on the following grounds: proximity to Abuja the federal capital city of Nigeria, proliferation of employment opportunities in Minna, surplus and cheapness of food items, security and the hospitable character of its people (Salihu, 2018).

The introduction of Sharia rule in the state in 2003 solidified the efforts of Islamic sects ('Izala' and 'Tariqa') that hitherto have wanted a situation which will provide for them easy access to the town. Soon was the law was proclaimed, in large numbers migrants mostly Hausa and others from the Northern part of the country and some also from Niger, Chad, Mali and other west African states begin to migrate into Nigerian cities Minna not an exception under the guise of religious preaching.

The administration of Muazu Babangida Aliyu as Governor in both direct and otherwise ways encouraged the exodus of migrants into Minna town. Historically Muazu came from a family that is known to have tremendously contributed to the increased number of Hausa people in Minna-the Sarkin Hausawa house. His policy like that of David Mark held the view that Minna is a municipality and that every resident is an indigene which made the town more disposed to migrants. While in the colonial and immediate post-colonial days large number of southerners (Yoruba and Igbo) trooped in as railway and colonial staff (Zakari, 2017), the current wave of migration in to Minna comprise more people of Northern extraction and their foreign accomplices followed by the Igbo and Yoruba respectively. The table below shows the population of Minna Town between 2006 and 2014 (Revenue office Minna Market, 2018).

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
201,429	208,278	215,359	222,681	230,252	238,081	246,176	255,458	264,169

Table 1

Source, Niger State Bureau of Statistics, 2014

Of the twenty five people interviewed ten agreed that they came to Minna from other places outside the borders of the town. They agreed that principally economic factor and security influenced the decision to settle in Minna town. A respondent to the interview said his grandparents like many in the town came because they were railway workers. Another respondent said it was the bloody insurgency in the northeast region that made for their movement to Minna. A Muslim cleric said his group settled in the town following their evangelical activities in the area as a result of sharia law in 2003.

Internal migration constitutes the most common into Minna town and that comprise a population that is indigenous to the area. Democratic dispensation and its attendant opportunities has since 1999 been responsible for many nigerlites to move into Minna town to take up appointment as elected public officers and they carry along their families. Equally other employment opportunities abound that attracts people to the town. However economic reasons remain the major magnet that attracts people to Minna town in addition to security of life and property in the face of terrorism and other security challenges in the country during our period of study.

#### 4.2. Migrant Factor 1999 to 2015

The development of any human settlement into an urban centre is never a monopoly of its indigenes rather a marriage of different peoples of varied ethnic, racial and other backgrounds. It have been observed that over a long time migrants have continuously entered Minna and they come with their cultural practices most importantly language, thus the spread of some dominant cultures over the area such as the Hausa culture.. Discussions with some of the migrants in Minna revealed that many do not understand the native language rather it is the aborigines that assimilate the language and cultural practices of the migrant groups like Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, therefore the preponderance of these cultures over the local.

One major consequence of migrants on the historical development of urban centers is the increased moral decadency and attendant crimes associated with the factor. Migrants are people who have left their homes hence most of their own cultural values (viewed as archaic and uncivilized) have been dropped for so called modernization, civilization, westernization and socialization. Life in urban areas generally lack the standard moral ethics expected of virile society. Cases of rape, stealing, lawlessness and other forms of social vices have become prevalent in the town. These are vices associated with urban centres where home discipline is failing.

A significant aspect of migrants in the development of Minna Town in particular and urban centres in general is their contributions to the economy. Migrants from the neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad, Mali, Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone and other African States are involve in many aspects of the economy of Nigerian cities and these which include construction industry, watchmen, cleaners, okada riders, shoemakers, car washers and even street beggars (James, 1987). Although statistical data on the numeric of the various population groups are for now un the absent, in Minna town

the economy is largely under the control of migrants as they control the major consumption sector. Foreigners from Niger, Chad, Mali and other nearby republics constitute the major forex traders; they are also the leading sellers of food items, precious metals (gold in particular) and luxury goods. They dominate tea shop and bread industry a business through which they increase their number by continuous expansion and monopoly. The revenue officer of Minna central market observed that "there is no single nigerlite that have the wealth of these foreigners except on Alhaji Nda a Nupe and no single Gbagyi have a stall in the ultra-modern market. The market is dominated by foreigners followed by the Igbo and the Yoruba and other Nigerian peoples. Hausa traders from Kano, Zamfara, Sokoto and other northern states of the federation lead in the sale of clothing materials, foot wears and Jewries. The indigenes (Gbagyi and Nupe) preferred the white collar job as such are in the low class when it come to the issue of control of the economy. It is also important to note that livelihoods and or complementarities between peoples are ensured through various forms of migration, for instance Mortimore, 1988 notes that most of Nigeria's livestock industry is essentially dependent on imports from Chad and Niger.

Social discordance and insecurity have been seen as negative repercussion of migrants in Nigeria. These have manifested in recent and frequent disputes and crisis in different parts of the country (Ali, 2006). A consideration of the mass exodus of almajirai into Nigerian settlement from Niger was identified to be critical in their involvement in the Maitasine crisis of 1981, where it was observed that about 85 per cent of the 187 aliens that were arrested during the disturbance came from Niger Republic (Abba, 1993). Perhaps much more reported, but without adequate supporting data, is the perceived impact of the emigration of professionals and skilled workers on relevant sectors of the country's economy (Astor, et al. 2005; Hagopiana, 2005). The population of Minna have swollen in recent years chiefly because of people moving in from the troubled area affected by the Boko Haram insurgency and other ceaseless ethno-religious and political crisis in various parts of the country.

## 5. Conclusion

Migration is a historical and world-wide phenomenon that cut across human history and it is a process in the development of man and society. The development of human civilization owe much to the factor of migration as it is the process through which ideas are cross breed and technology and sciences are exchanged.

The Gbagyi population of Minna is so little that by natural increase alone it cannot urbanize the town neither cause it to civilize but with the influx of migrates new cultural values, building styles and designs and many forms of changes are daily taking place which transforms the place into urbanity. Migrant factor have therefore become responsible for not only scarcity of lands but also of other facilities and security challenges. Increased population have created more slums, dirty environment and increase diseases.

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