



INFORMAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES ALONG THE BORDER REGIONS OF MAI'ADUA AND MAI'MUJIA BORDERLANDS IN NIGERIA AND NIGER REPUBLICS

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relevance of informal socio-economic activities, such as inter-marriage and trade linkages, taking place between Nigeria and Niger border towns of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in explaining key aspects socio-economic well-being and peaceful co-existence of the people in the area. Specifically, attention is on the nature and dynamics of these relationship and the way they, either both or independently promote our understanding of the complexity attached to the politics of boundary relationships and to some extend national border security challenges. Moreover, the two border communities were once under a single entity except before boundaries were erected by colonial invasion. The study employs qualitative method using both primary and secondary data. In-depth interviews were conducted and information used to corroborate data collected from other sources such as documentary source in form of official documents, newspaper, government reports. Integration theory was adopted as the major framework of analysis. The empirical data examined indicated that inter-marriages and trade between the people of the two border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia are encouraging the unity of the two nation-states of Nigeria and Niger Republics. This finding has some key implications on the extant literature. In particular, it has supported the long established tradition that poster cordial relationship between the two communities and their states. Based on this, the study, therefore, recommends for the improvement of these informal socio-economic activities as each or combination could enhance West African Regional Integration efforts already in place under the ECOWAS agenda. Equally, if properly harnessed, these factors would go a long way in enhancing Nigeria and Niger Republic relations especially in the establishment and maintenance of dry sea port.

Keywords: *Borderlands, Cross-border activities, Cultural exchange, informal economy, Socio-economic interactions,*

Introduction

Issues relating to border and border relationships occupy a center stage in the study of International Politics. Societies in border communities do engage in a number of relations, moreover, no country could exist in isolation; thus, forcing many nation states to engage in various beneficial forms of relationship. It is in this regard that bilateral and multilateral relations are initiated and executed among nations. Economic interdependence equally makes trade and other forms of relations among nations of the world a necessity and perhaps mutually beneficial. Historically, people in the northern part of Nigeria and southern part

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of Niger Republic were once living as a single community until they were separated by their erstwhile colonial masters. Consequently, the colonial design creates an imaginary barrier among the people with distinct government of the two countries (Miles, 2014). However, despite this demarcation, people maintained different forms of relationship including marital and trade relations.

History revealed that, Nigeria-Niger relations had its genesis in the trans-Sahara trade that led to the formation of important markets such as Mai'adua international market, Illela market, Dankama market in Nigeria and Mai'amujia market, Gazoua market, Konni market in Niger Republic. This suggests the existence of a cordial relationship between the two countries long before colonial era. For example; Iron ore, Potash, salt and livestock were imported to Nigeria from Niger Republic, while, Cotton, textiles and dyestuff as well as grains are exported to Niger Republic from Nigeria through the border markets (Arzika, 2017).

Similarly, the relationship between Nigeria and Niger Republics is much more within the framework of the desire of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to promote the economic and social development of the region. The purpose seems to be that of integrating of the economies of these nations with a view to achieving an increased measure of self-sufficiency and sustenance. ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and persons further strengthened the interactions by allowing people and goods to cross the boundaries of ECOWAS states. This has contributed towards greater socio-economic linkage, mutual interdependence, understanding, and cooperation between and among border communities and their states at large (Onwuka, 2021).

This study focuses on the relevance of those informal socio-economic activities in particular, inter-marriage and trade linkages taking place between Nigeria and Niger border towns of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in explaining key aspects of security challenges along the two countries.

Statement of the Problem

The relation between Nigeria and Niger Republic is increasingly becoming important and interesting to scholars of international relations. Since independence, the two countries interact with one another. The border between the two countries provided the basis for social, economic, cultural, political and geographical proximity and coexistence. Apart from the increasing number of daily movement of people and goods across the border, illegal activities such as smuggling of goods and weapons, human trafficking, mass migration of people, and other forms of criminal activities across the border have been a source of major concern to both countries which could have serious effect on national and border security issues.

Research studies have been carried out with respect to Nigeria - Niger relations covering different aspects. While the contribution of these studies remain relevant, though none of them attempted to examine the importance of informal socio-economic and cultural activities taking place around border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in understanding of informal activities between the two countries of Nigeria and Niger Republic.

This study, therefore, bridges this gap by concentrating on the relevance of inter-marriages and trade activities taking place along the border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in Nigeria and Niger Republic on national security challenges.

Objectives of the research

- i. To find out the relevance of inter-marriage between the border communities of Mai'adua and Mia'mujia in Nigeria and Niger Republic in understanding of National border security challenges.

- ii. To examine the role of informal trade in enhancing peaceful coexistence along Mai'adua and Mai'mujia communities in Nigeria and Niger Republic.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

(a) Scope

The issue of informal socio-economic activities is too broad and cannot be fully covered by a study of this nature. It is against this background that, Mai'adua and Mai'mujia border communities in Nigeria and Niger Republics were selected. The scope of the study covers a period of five (5) years, that is, 2018–2022. This is because the period reflects session when socio-economic activities of both countries suffered a setback due to the prevalence of the activities of Boko Haram Sect. This incident causes a serious security challenge and has the quality to strain relationship between the two nations.

(b) Limitations

However, there is no study that does not suffer from one constraint or the other. This study is also not an exception, some of which include: access to official documents, (for security reasons) access to, and granting of interviews.

Finally, all efforts were made by the researcher to over-come these limitations in order to meet up with the demands of the study.

Research Procedure

The study is basically a qualitative one. This method involves capturing people's (responses) opinions, feelings and experiences as well as the context and environment in which they respond. The study uses both primary and secondary sources. The universe from which the sample was drawn is defined as all those who engage in regular informal economic activities between Mai'adua and Mai'mujia. In this respect, two from each five (5) categories of respondents were selected because they seem to be most represented in cross-border activities in the area. They are: traditional rulers, traders, farmers, civil servants, and married women.

Research Methodology

There are two sampling techniques adopted in this study. They include snowball and opportunistic sampling. The two sampling procedures were adopted in order to complement the possible deficiency that may arise from a single procedure. To ensure the successful execution of the research, in-depth interview was used. In this study, the choice of the in-depth interview technique for data gathering is influenced by the fact that in-depth interview provides much more detailed information than other data collection methods. An open-ended questions and face-to-face format was used in order to give maximum latitude for expression to respondents. All respondents granted permission for me to record their responses (interviews). Each interviewee was examined in accordance with his/her own specialization and experience of the study area. It can therefore, be admitted that, different set of questions were asked to different sets of respondents The interviews was, moreover, complemented by personal observation of the study area in order to reduce ambiguities that may arise during the process of the investigation. A total number of 23 people were interviewed in both Mai'adua and Mai'mujia communities.

Documentary (Secondary Sources)

The documentary materials constituted the secondary sources of information for this study. The data in this category include: government records, print and electronic materials such as books, journal articles, the mass media, research centers, historical records, diaries and letters etc. Such data were collected from Mai'adua

Local Government Secretariat, Katsina State History and Culture Bureau, Matamaye de-lait office Matamaye province.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts integration theory as its theoretical framework. Development of integration theory has been heralded as one of the most significant advances in contemporary political science. However, the concept of integration has been defined in many ways. According to Dougherty and Pfalzgraff integration is defined as the process whereby two or more actors form a new actor, when the process is completed, the actors are said to be integrated. Integration theory is said to provide great insight in understanding relations among nation - states or communities. It basically denotes a relationship of community or strong cohesiveness among people; it involves mutual ties and sense of group identity and self-awareness (Sanusi, 2013).

This theory is relevant in providing a framework through which states, communities, organizations and institutions can mutually relate and develop through peaceful inter-dependence. To this regard, this study employed integration theory to describe how shared interests and functions brought about informal socio-economic inter-dependence and development between the two border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in Nigeria and Niger Republic. The theory further explains how such interaction normally affects the relations between the two actors either positively or negatively.

Conceptual Issues

Border

The concept of border has been defined in various ways, for example; border is defined as a geographic boundary of a political entity or legal jurisdiction, such as government or sub-national administrative division. Border may, however be set up as buffer zones and can be fully or partially control, and may be crossed legally or at designated border checkpoints (Wikipedia Encyclopedia (nd.).

Borders are geographical boundaries of political entities or legal jurisdictions, such as governments' sovereign states, federated states and other sub national entities. Borders are established through agreements between political and social entities that control those areas; the creation of these agreements is called boundary delimitation (Pavanello, 2020).

Borderland and Borderland Community

Microsoft Word Encarta (2009) defines borderland as any area of land at territory's edge, meaning the area near the edge of the country or region, especially a remote area. While a borderland community is referred to as any local community located at the border area of a state or regions' territory (Liman, 2021).

Border Relations

Border relations activity is defined as the movement of people across the border of two or more states with a view to enhancing their socio-economic activities. Border relations activity may be formal or informal. It is formal when all legal processes of crossing a nation's border are met. They include among other things, the use of passport, pass, visa and other protocols agreed to by both states, etc. It is informal when due legal processes established by states are not followed.

Background of the study Area

Mai'adua is one of the 34 local government areas in Katsina State sharing border with Daura in the south, Zangon Daura in the east, Sandamu to the west and Republic of Niger in the north. Its headquarters is the town of Mai'adua on the A2 highway. It has an area of 528 km² and a total population of two hundred and one

thousand, one hundred and seventy eight (201,178) people based on the 2006 Population census with 3digit postal code prefix 824 ISO 3166 code NG.KT.MD (www.nationalpopulationcommission.org/ng accessed on 30/12/2024). While, Mai'mujia is located in the region of Zinder. Zinder is approximately 128km/79mi away from Mai'mujia. The distance from Mai'mujia to Niger's capital city Niamey is approximately 828km/514mi. Mai'mujia has a total population of one hundred and two thousand, three hundred and fifty six (102,356) people ([Http://www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), accessed on 30/12/2024).

The two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia as well as Katsina, Maradi, Tsibiri and Tessoua were all in the British territory as a result of the Berlin conference of 1888. Even after intense negotiations between boundary commissioners of France and Britain in 1892-1898, the two communities remained under the British area of influence. Not only that, the boundary negotiations agreement was signed on 14th June 1898 in Paris which gave Britain an arc, a radius of 100 miles from Sokoto which the French accepted. The treaty put Maradi and Tsibiri under British sphere of influences and Mai'mujia which was then under Zinder remained citizens of British Northern Protectorate together with Maradi. It was the agreement of 1904 which led to the separation of the two communities putting Mai'mujia under the French and Mai'adua remained under the British area of influence. What happened was that, during the Anglo-French agreement on the limitation of Nigeria – Niger borders in 1904, the French claimed that Babura and Daura were under tributaries of Sultanate of Damagaram (Zinder) and should be handed over to France. Lugard was only opposed to this claim on economic reason and military strategy. The economic reason was that large number of Kano cloth and leather makers and dealers would migrate to French territory and that a rival trading center would spring within three days in Kano and militarily Babura was within striking distance of that great center of transport and food (Kano) which in case of war would be desirable to defend (Phillips, 2013).

Historically, the two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia were under Daura Emirate. They were all subject to Sarkin Daura and paid tax to him. On this note, the Sarkin Daki (representative of District Head of Mai'adua) has this to say:

The traditional ruler of Mai'mujia known as Hakimi of Mai'mujia (District Head) was a representative of the Emir of Daura to serve in Mai'mujia community, and appointed from amongst the Royal family house of Gado da masun Daura. Similarly, the town of Mai'adua is under the traditional title of Galadiman Daura (District Head of Mai'adua) and they all paid tribute to the Daura emirate that was before jihad (Interview: Jafaru, 2024).

Jafaru further explained that after the jihad, the two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia were under the area controlled by Galadima Umaru one of the leading jihadists in Daura Emirate. As the two communities are predominantly Hausas by tribe under the Daura Emirate, the political authority centered on 'Masu gari' and 'Iyayen kasa' supported by 'Sarakunan sana'a' such as 'Sarkin makera', 'Sarkin aska'. 'Sarkin noma', 'Sarkin zango' etc. It was after the revolt of Zinder that Mai'mujia loyalty was shifted to the Sultanate of Damagaram and the political authority was centered on Dan ila who is a representative of Sultan to whom he is loyal and paid tribute. Meanwhile, Mai'adua remained under Daura Emirate throughout the period of the revolt.

The people of the two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia being of the same tribe (Hausa, Fulani and Tuarez) have been sharing similar cultural traits long time before the jihad and the coming of Europeans. Alh Kamilu Jafaru (Sarkin daki) representative of district head of Mai'adua (Galadima) noted that:

Earlier, their religious and cultural affinities were centered on 'Bori' and 'Matsafa', the prominent of 'Yan bori' and the 'Iskoki' was the vogue before the jihad in both Mai'adua and Mai'mujia communities. The 'Sarakunan bori' in the area managed to continue with their activities long after the jihad (Interview: Jafaru, 2024).

He further stated that; the cultural activities of the two communities were basically explained in their traditional 'Noman kasuwa' which is an annual event to reflect a festival of art and culture of the area. (Interview: Jafaru, 2017). It is usually held after harvest when people finish their farms activities and are less busy i.e. dry season (kaka). It draws renown artists in the region such as Nomau jikan Roro, Buzun kura, Buzu kanin Lawali, Kaura na ila, Bala mai shayi, Shagon harbi and lots of others.

Mai'adua and Mai'mujia communities were both located on the trans-Sahara trade route from Asbin to Kano. It was because of this connection that the business men of the two communities in the past relate to each other. Today the pivot of economic activities and relations between the two communities are the weekly markets. The Mai'adua market has Sundays while Mai'mujia is every Wednesdays as their market days. The continuous movement of people, goods and services across the boundary of the two communities on weekly basis spelt out the economic ties that relate them (Interview: Abbah, 2024).

Making of the Boundary

The Anglo-French treaties of 1890, 1898, 1904 and 1906 were all reached for the benefit of either France or Britain. During the end of the 19th century, both powers have cast their eyes over Hausaland. To protect French intrusion, Britain became pre-occupied with expanding its influence Northward from the coast while France was desperately in search of water route to connect both its eastern and western Africa holdings and a corridor to link Niamey to Zinder. To avoid conflict, both agreed that the division should be carried out based on historical and cultural conditions that divided the two traditional states of Sokoto Caliphate and the Sultanate of Damagaram. This led to three separate treaties over a period of fourteen years that eventually led to the creation of Nigeria-Niger boundary (Mai'adua - Mai'mujia included). The treaties were, however, based on historical and geographical exaggerations that were unfounded and are not known even to Hausa states (Miles, 2014).

The creation of Nigeria-Niger common boundary (Mai'adua - Mai'mujia borderland inclusive) cannot be treated outside the larger history of colonialism. The intrusion of the colonial powers into Africa and their desire to achieve the greatest possible benefits of the land, labour, and capital of foreign land has indeed affected Africa negatively. The resultant effect of this is the division and disruption of lands and tribes of Africa into different socio-economic and political formations, living side by side. It also destroyed the continuity nature of several natural regions of Africa (Inuwa, 2013).

It could be argued that, colonialism has a history of divide and rule. History revealed that colonialism succeeded in dividing single socio-cultural and historical formations into separate independent entities living side by side. This is in order to stop or at maximum reduce the possibility of ethnic re-grouping and the power to resist their rule. Related to this, Inuwa (2013) pointed out that, it was for this reason that the French colonial authority moved its capital of administration from Zinder to Niamey. The reason is that they fear the possibility of re-grouping and attack from the Hausa people who still maintain close affinities with the people of Nigeria.

Implication of Border Demarcation on the two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia

History reveals that, the two communities of Mai'adua in Nigeria and Mai'mujia in the present Republic of Niger were one community before the coming of the colonial rulers. It was the colonial administrations of British and French that partitioned and divided the common people into two separate entities (Interview: Sani,

2024). Therefore, the division of the community into two different political states cannot be without consequences. Despite, the fact that the people of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia communities continue to relate peacefully, the border has, notwithstanding, created abnormalities. First, the fact that Hausa people dominate the two communities, the mode of language expression is seems to be different. This is because the two, were influenced by their colonies. For instance, those in Mai'mujia community like the rest of the people in Niger are influenced by the French mode of expressions and writing. Such differences have become instrument to the Nigerian and their Nigerien immigration officials in differentiating the citizens of the two nation-states (Fieldnote, 2024).

Nature and Dynamics of Informal Socio-Economic Activities along Mai'adua and Mai'mujia Border Communities

(1) Trade Activities

Trade is the most obvious economic activity between Mai'adua and Mai'mujia borderlands. Both communities host weekly market days, which attract people from different parts of West Africa (Fieldnotes, 2024). The Mai'adua market functions every Sundays while that of Mai'mujia is every Wednesdays. This does not mean that both markets function only on these stipulated days, rather it explains the highest level of commercial activities on both sides. As for Mai'adua market the Ag. Chairman of Mai'adua Local Government Council explained the importance of the markets to the people of the area and the nation-states at large. Thus:

The Mai'adua market was established about three centuries ago and attracts traders from all over Nigeria and even from outside... market activities starts, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, then on Sunday we have major weekly business, traders come from Ghana, Niger, Chad, and Burkina Faso (Interview: Abbah, 2024).

Alh Abbah maintained that both Mai'adua and Mai'mujia provide goods and services that are important to the survival and development of their communities and their states at large. For instance, Mai'adua exports agricultural produce such as yam, maize, sorghum, sweet potato, cassava, Garri, wheat, millet, fruits (mango, banana, Guava, pine apple, kola nuts, vegetables (tomato, okra, palm oil, etc, to Mai'mujia. Some of these goods are consumed while others are re-exported to other parts of Niger Republic and beyond. This equally applied to manufactured goods (and their spare parts) like, automobiles, mattresses; electronics such as radio, television, mobile phones, and machines such as motorcycles, water pumps, grinding machines, etc. Others include soft drinks, insecticides, plastic wares, building materials, roofing sheets, plywood, cement, sweets, biscuit, soap, perfumes, agro chemicals, cosmetics and textile materials among others (fieldnotes, 2024). Many of the food items and manufactured goods come into Mai'adua market from many parts of Nigeria. They include among other goods from, Katsina, Kano, Sokoto, Onitsha, Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, etc.

There are also goods imported from other parts of West African states (like Benin, Mali, etc) for re-export to other states beyond Nigeria. These goods include: live animals (like goats, cows, camels, horses, birds), manufactured goods (like galila shadda, foreign rice, and foreign evaporated milk), food items (dates, milk, chilled milk, beans, cowpeas, and tiger nuts. (Interview: Sani, 2024). It is also observed, that a significant number of private and commercial motorcyclists from Mai'mujia fuel their tanks in Mai'adua filling stations (Shiraj, NNPC Mega, Con-Oil filling stations among others) and black market sub-stations. This is because the price of fuel is cheaper in Mai'adua than in Mai'mujia, despite the fact that Niger Republic is an oil producing state. It is however, noted that, goods are allowed by the Nigerian customs officials if they are not in commercial quantity (fieldnotes, 2024). Mai'mujia also provides for Mai'adua services that may demand

expertise, such services include; repairs of cars, motorcycles, electronics, etc. Proximity, therefore, contributes in no small measure towards binding the two communities together. (Interview: Sani, 2024).

Despite Niger's position as a beans producer in the region, a large chunk of beans sold in Mai'mujia market comes from Mai'adua. Mai'mujia also provides for Mai'adua and beyond with meat. Much of the sheep, goats, camels, and cows that come to Mai'adua market are imported from Mai'mujia and beyond (Interview: Buba, 2024).

Standing by the border post, one can easily observe the movement of herds through the custom border post. These are in exclusion to those who use illegal tracks that are directly linked into Mai'adua. Other goods provided by Mai'mujia include foreign used clothes, which come through Cotonou in Benin Republic, foreign textile materials, etc. (field notes, 2024).

Apart from the agricultural and manufactured goods, which Mai'adua provides for Mai'mujia and other parts of Niger, Mai'adua also provides Mai'mujia with portable drinking water. This is due to the fact that underground water in Mai'mujia which most of the community members depend on, is potash and thereby unhealthy for human consumption. The people of Mai'mujia town, therefore, resort to importing drinking water from Mai'adua. The water is mostly transported in cars, trucks and tanks (as in the case of package and non-package water (Interview: Abubakar, 2024).

The shortage of electric power supply in Mai'adua like in many other parts of Nigeria makes it dependent on Mai'mujia for iced or block water. Today, there are people in Mai'mujia whose livelihood depends on ice water production for Mai'adua. Most of those who produce the "ice" comes from Mai'adua while their major traders come from Mai'mujia. It is, however, ironical to hear that sometimes retailers of this good in Mai'mujia find it more accessible in Mai'adua than in Mai'mujia itself. This is because most of the ice block marketers produce largely for Mai'adua than for Mai'mujia. This is because Mai'adua is a bigger market for iced water than Mai'mujia. The major transporters of this good are commercial motorists and motorcyclists who convey it from their places of production to their dealers. Ice block market is more attractive on Mai'mujia market days (Interview: Abubakar, 2024)

(2) Agricultural Activities

Although trade seems to be the most obvious activity between the two border communities, it employ the greater number of people in the area thereby serving as a medium for social relations between the two communities and employment opportunities to the members of both communities (field note, 2024) but also, agricultural activities played a significant role in sharpen the social relationship between the people of these communities. Apart from the agricultural produce (like beans, millet, foreign rice, etc.), that have been a source of trade for the people, agriculture provides for cross-border labour and animal rearing. Gayya (group) farming is a prominent means of economic relations in these areas. During rainy season, friends or relatives (especially youths) from both side of the border seek the assistance of one another to cultivate their farmlands or those belonging to their parents. Such lands are relatively vast and difficult to be cultivated by few individuals over a short period. Therefore, Gayya (group) farming is carried out to reduce the cost of labour and increase the level of productivity (Interview: Jibbou, 2024).

Interesting to note in the study area is the existence of what can be regarded as "cross-border farms". In the border area, one can easily observe the existence of farms starting from one side of the border area and ending on another side (field note, 2024). The farmers are quite aware of the fact that they are tilling beyond the

borders of their territories; they however, do not attach much importance to its implications since authorities of both sides do not question their action. The traditional rulers and border security officials of the area are also aware of such practice (Interview: Jibbou, 2024).

(3) Informal Currency Exchange and Cross-Border Activities

The participation of different set of people from different parts of West Africa in Mai'adua market, inevitably gave rise to the activities of informal currency exchange. Such exchange business contributes in creating a more efficient framework for regional trade (Meagher, 2018). The activities of yan canji (those who engage in informal currency change) have contributed in no small measure towards harnessing economic activities in the area.

Informal currency exchange provides services which cannot easily be carried out by banks since they do not engage in currency exchange with individual persons but rather with corporate bodies.

Koko (2013) points out that, through informal cross-border currency exchange, traders from Nigeria, Niger and beyond have learnt to travel from or to Cotonou, Mali, Togo, etc., and even down to Sokoto without the risk of holding huge amount of money. This is successful due to the broad network of yan canji in West Africa. Yan canji, as they are usually referred to in Hausa language, are categorized into two: the first category are those who provide instant services to traders who perhaps demand travelling with their money or those whose interest is to use them for immediate transaction, especially in the border area. This category operates at small scale level and hence referred to as Kanan yan chanji (small scale currency exchangers who largely engage in direct and immediate currency exchange).

The second category of yan canji is usually referred to as manyan yan canji (big time currency exchangers). This category of yan canji deals with the exchange of huge amount of money and also provides financial security for travelers going to or coming from Cotonou, Togo, Mali, Nigeria, etc. In this respect, instead of exchanging currency for currency, they receive cash from traders travelling far away to other West Africa countries (like Mali, Togo Benin, Nigeria, etc.) and then provide them with a receipt or document indicating the amount received and the equivalent to be paid. Such amount collected is then paid by their branches or associates in other countries where the business is intended to take place. In this case, they charge the traders for the transaction. The advent of mobile phones has improved the nature of this transaction. Now, apart from the document tendered, the agent who collected the money communicates with his/her branch or counterpart in the country of collection in order to ascertain the identity of the receiver and the information concerning the transaction. Many traders in West Africa depend on this method for their financial safety and security (Interview: Abu Dan-chanji, 2024).

(4) Smuggling Activities

Smuggling is another activity that is pronounced in the border area. Smuggling is regarded as an illegal activity all over the world. It destroys locally produced goods and encourages dependence of a state on foreign goods. It also promotes criminal activities across the borders of nation-states. While the activity is viewed as destructive, it however, enriches those people involved in the business (Shea, 2019). On getting to Mai'adua town, it is easy to see smugglers' cars packed by the side of the road filled with petrol jerry cans (Field notes, 2024). Due to the vast, porous and motorable nature of the border, smugglers take advantage of the bus routes to transport petroleum products, grains, yam, cassava, flower, sugar, biscuits, Nigerian textiles, timber, spare parts, etc., into Mai'mujia and other parts of Niger. The smugglers also use bush routes from Mai'adua to smuggle foreign rice,

beans, cigarettes, mosquito coils, foreign textiles materials, dates (*dabino*), etc. Others include used cars popularly referred to as ‘tourist’ (Field notes, 2024). One of the smugglers in the area (Aliyou Mai Mota) admits that there are over thirty (30) illegal bush routes (motorable and unmotorable) used in smuggling in the area.

The smuggling activities in the area are complex and that it is difficult for ordinary individual to know who is responsible for the smuggling or where the goods are heading to. This is because the chain of connection between those in charge and their agents is complex (Interview: Kabiru Uziri, 2024). In addition, those involved have close connection with the political leaders and traditional rulers of the areas. There are different bush routes linking Mai’adua and Mai,mujia. These are in exclusion to other major and minor motorable and unmotorable routes used daily for conveying goods. Camels, donkeys and motorcycles are used in unmotorable areas. This makes detecting every smuggling activity difficult (field note, 2024).

In relation to the above, Abdul Dan-mallam reveals how he was intercepted in smuggler’s truck on his way from Mai’mujia to Mai’adua. He explained that, having joined a truck carrying vegetable oil to drop him at Mai’adua, on his arrival at customs post, the driver stopped and paid the duty for his goods. Surprisingly, before the customs officials, the driver took an illegal bush path. This he did without any resistance from the security officials. As they head towards the Mai’mujia security post, the smugglers’ agent escorting the goods informed them that the road was “cleared”. But they got closer, a security official (who cannot be identified) tried to stop them but he was told that his boss was “settled”. The truck arrived at Mai’mujia successfully (Interview: Abdul Dan-Malam, 2024). This suggests that the security operatives of both sides contribute and connive with smugglers for the success of smuggling in the area.

Moreover, smugglers on the Nigerian part took a bold step not to pay duties or connive with security agents in order to smuggle goods into the country. The smugglers are not ignorant of the terrain; they, therefore, take such advantage using available information from their agents, to clandestinely cross the border (Interview: Abdul Dan-mallam, 2024). In Mai’mujia borderland, he added that, the smugglers, whatever route they take, in or out of the borderland, legal or illegal, they turn back to the Niger customs officials to pay their duties. This is due to the fear of harsh penalty associated with the Niger border security officials. The Nigerian security personnel are regarded as far more lenient and open than their counterparts in Niger Republic (Interview: Uziri, 2024, Field notes, 2024).

Apart from corruption on the part of the Nigerian border securities as stated above, blame can also be directed to the Nigerian government. As at October 29, 2024, there were only 8 custom officers for the whole border area, of which two are women. There was also one patrol vehicle for the whole border with virtually no communication equipment. It can, therefore, be deduced that, the shortage of work force and equipment has limited the activities of customs officials and increased the illegal activities across the border area. It also affects negatively the amount of revenue generated by the Nigerian state. (Interview: Uziri, 2024, Field note, 2024).

(5) Inter-marriage

Another aspect of informal socio-economic activities in this area which is very common is inter-marriages activities among the people of the two border communities of Mai’adua and Mai’mujia. People from both communities often marry from across the communities. People from Mai’adua marry from Mai’mujia so also those in Mai’mujia marry from Mai’adua. It is, indeed, difficult for one to count the number of women married

in Mai'adua from Mai'mujia vis-a-vis number of women of Mai'mujia married in Mai'adua. Hardly, month could pass without people crossing either of the borderlands to attend and witness wedding ceremony. As an eye witness, we attended a wedding *fatiha* on Friday 28th November, 2024 in the house of Malam Maigatari Ahmadou one of the respondents' in Mai'mujia town and the bridegroom (Aishetou) is married to a Malam Yusuf Popular from Mai'adua (Field note, 2024). The process of marriage ceremonies in the two communities is basically the same. The process of '*Kamun amarya*', '*Turgeza*' as well as '*Sa lalle*' is the same in both communities (Interview: Sani, 2024). Therefore, the boundary which separated the two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia becomes less complex as similarities in culture have no boundary.

The Implications of Informal Socio-Economic Activities between Mai'adua and mai'mujia Borderlands in Nigeria and Niger Republics

Positive Implications

Informal socio-economic activities between Mai'adua and Mai'mujia borderlands have both positive and negative implications on their mother states. To begin with the positive, it allows for social and economic development of the borderland areas. Inuwa (2013) Informal socio-economic activities do not only improve the social interaction between the borderland communities, it supports the border economy of both nation-states (Idris, 2018).

Abubakar (staff of Mai'adua Local Government Area in Nigeria) explained that, Mai'adua as of 2018 generate about eight hundred thousand naira (800,000) every week from weekly market activities. Nigerian government, in an attempt to improve the economy of the area, is set to establish a well-structured market in Mai'adua that will facilitate further economic activities on the Nigerian part (Interview: Abubakar, 2024). In addition to this, border informal socio-economic activities in the area have also contributed to cultural exchange and interactions. On Mai'mujia market day, peoples from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Mali, and Burkina Faso among others, attend to conduct their business activities (Field note, 2024). Richard cited in Mekuriyam, 2016:141 stated that informal socio-economic activities create an avenue for improving the existing relationship between nation states. It also provides for a smooth path towards peaceful regional integration of West African states in the context of ECOWAS.

Informal socio-economic activities in the area also help in alleviating poverty between members of the two communities due to the increasing level of economic activities in the area that provides employment opportunities through buying, selling of goods and provision of services. For instance, the increasing level of commercial activities in the area has attracted many commercial institutions like banks and other form of informal currency exchange network across West Africa, which not only provides security to the traders of the area but also ensure the smooth convertibility of other foreign currencies which are not easily obtained in commercial banks (Interview: Abdu Mai-dala, 2024). The members of both communities are also increasingly becoming engaged in distance trading to Cotonou, Mali, Togo and other West African countries to purchase goods (such as kolanut, foreign rice, manufactured goods, etc.) which fetch them profit (Interview: Tanko, 2024). The consequence of these on both states is that, they reduce the burden of their governments in creating jobs. It also increases the revenue capacity of both governments.

It could also be argued that, informal socio-economic activities between the two borderlands have, in no small measure, reduced rural-urban migration. Mai'adua displays a typical example. The settlement of many Nigerians from northern and southern part and from other countries, to conduct their activities, is a typical

example that border informal socio-economic activities have the capacity to reduce urban congestion and improve rural living.

Negative Implications

Apart from the positive implications mentioned above, border informal socio-economic activities between Mai'adua and Mai'mujia also have their negative implications on both countries. First, informal socio-economic activities between the two areas have contributed, in no small measure, in undermining Nigerian productive sectors, especially agriculture and industry. The inflows of subsidized foreign agricultural and industrial commodities (like foreign rice, evaporated milk, clothes, etc.) through clandestine activities have contributed towards the underdevelopment of Nigerian agricultural and industrial sector. Nigeria also lose so much of its revenue to such informal activities since import tax is usually evaded (Meagher, 2018). It, therefore, contributes towards the growth of dependency and underdevelopment of the Nigerian state.

Usman (2014) adds that, it is countries like Niger and Benin Republics that benefit most from such activities. This is because their economies are largely dependent on the import tax received from goods crossing their borders. The Nigerien authority, for instance, does not recognize anything called smuggling in so far as duty is paid for goods and such goods do not affect its own security (Meagher, 2018). In fact, goods in commercial quantity from other parts of West Africa (such as foreign rice, vegetable oil, milk, etc), passing through Niger Republic to Nigeria are usually escorted and ensured they cross the Nigerian border before the Nigerien security officials turned back. This affirms the stance of Meagher (2018) that border informal socio-economic activities in the borderland areas have failed to create efficient framework for regional trade which would have given the two states the ability to enjoy trade in their agricultural and industrial produce.

Meagher (2018) further posits that Nigeria has the largest economy, population and cross-border network in West Africa. He further argued that despite processing the largest economy, instead of the country to be a key beneficiary of informal socio-economic activities, such activities have rather contributed towards the devaluation of Nigerian currency and the rising cost of imported goods. Unlike other currencies like dollars, Euro, the British or Canadian pounds, Yen, etc, that are easily convertible in the international market, and the Nigerian naira depends largely on the US dollars and CFA Francs for its cross-border trade. The high demand of these currencies to buy foreign goods has led to the drastic fall of Nigerian currency and the rise in US dollars.

Implications for National Security

Informal socio-economic activities has some implications for national security, for instance, evil minded people use informal socio-economic activities like smuggling as an avenue of infiltrating the security of nation states for arms trade. For instance, many people are of the view that it was through these smuggling activities (i.e. arms deal) that the activities of Boko-Harram spread across the border of these two nation states Nigeria and Niger. Smuggling also undermines national economy, because planning is endangered and the national economy is contracted because of dumping which leads to low demand for internally produced goods and can caused closure of factories and retrenchment of workers. Many factories at Katsina and Kano were shut down (Field note, 2024).

There are several ways through which informal socio-economic activities could be seen to influence national border security challenges. Table below presents a summary of these ways. It indicates that informal socio-

economic activities along Mai'adua and Mai'mujia communities could be said to have both positive and negative implications.

Table – Influence of Informal Activities on National Security

INFORMAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES	POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS	NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS	IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITYS
INFORMAL TRADES	(i) Provides job opportunities (ii) Provides goods and services (iii)Exports/imports of goods across West African states. (v) Increasing poverty alleviation.	(i) Unstructured market which brought unwanted goods and commodities. (ii) Rising of imported goods which contributed towards the growth of dependency and underdevelopment. (iii) Import taxes usually evaded.	Economically, there are risks to the economy, because planning is endangered and the national economy is contracted because of dumping which leads to low demand for internally produced goods and retrenchment of workers.
INTERMARRIAGE	(i)Serving as a medium for social relations. (ii) Enhances peaceful coexistence (iii) Prevent communal clashes. (iv) Contributes towards binding the communities.	(i) Pave way for dual citizenship while some countries do not allow for dual citizenship. (ii) Disregarding the demarcation lanes of the two nation-states.	Intermarriage enhances national security between Nigeria and Niger Republics. When there is a cross-border marriage, it reduces the chances of skirmishes, because they are one people.
SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES	(i) Provides job opportunities. (ii) Enriches people involves in the business. (iii) Avenue for import and export of goods and commodities for human consumption.	(i) Destroys locally produce goods/commodities. (ii) Encourages dependence of a state on foreign goods. (iii) Promotes criminal acts such as smuggling of weapons, human trafficking etc. (iv) Promotes consumption of expired products. (v) Undermining the local products.	Evil minded people can use smuggling as a way of infiltrating the security of both countries through arms trade. Smuggling also undermines national economy.
INFORMAL	(i) Provides job opportunity (ii) Create efficient framework for regional trade. (iii) Harnessing economies of the region.	(i) Governments lose revenue. (ii) No financial security in it.	Fake currencies could be brought into the national economy through the informal

CURRENCY EXCHANGE	(iv) Provides instant services to its customer (v) Operates at small scale level. vi. Provides financial security for travellers.	(iii) Devaluation of local currency.	medium without the knowledge of the government which is dangerous.
AGRICULTURE	(i) Provides job opportunities (ii) Exportation/Importation of farm produce. (iii) Cross-border labour. (iv) Improve social interactions i.e. Gayya farming (Group farming). (v) Enriches peoples involve.	(i) Herdsmen and Farmers clashes. (ii) Underdevelopment of local Agricultural industrial sector.	Within the context of comparative advantage, agricultural produce of the two countries could go a long way in enhancing the food security and the well-being of the citizens of both countries.

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Research Findings

This study focused on Nigeria-Niger border relations. It is a study on the relevance of informal socio-economic activities in enhancing peaceful co-existence among the border communities of Nigeria and Niger Republics and particularly Mai'adua and Mai'mujia border communities. The study raised several questions and discussed them in details. Based on the research, the followings findings are arrived at:

- i. The empirical data examined indicated that intermarriage between the people of the two communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in Nigeria and Niger Republics are encouraging the unity of the two countries.
- ii. The study also reveals that, there exist problems emanating from such relationship which include: smuggling of goods and weapons, human trafficking, etc along the border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia that brings about threat to national security of both nations.
- iii. The ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods and persons further strengthened these interactions towards socio-economic linkages, mutual interdependence, understanding, and cooperation between and among these border communities.
- iv. The prevalence of socio-cultural ties between the communities under study had rendered and increased the proven of the boundaries put in place by erstwhile colonialist as informal. Social and economic activities are carried out without regard for the demarcation. The boundaries appear fragile fence and failed to check the continuous interaction of the two communities.

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

Summary

Informal socio-economic activities between the people of Nigeria and Niger Republics dated back to pre-colonial era of the two nation-states. Shared history, socio-cultural, and economic relations between the two communities of Mai'adua in Nigeria and Mai'mujia of the present Niger Republic are the binding forces that keep such relationship. These communities lived under different kingdoms which include: Gobir, Borno, Katsina, Daura Emirate and Sultanate of Damagaram which were divided into Kingdoms and distinct political entities of the French that occupy Mai'mujia in Niger Republic while Britain occupied Mai'adua in Nigeria.

Despite their division, these communities exhibit some sign of integration. These are in the aspects of culture that promote togetherness with little or no confrontations. In particular, the role of informal socio-economic activities could be seen between these communities for example, there is still shared culture by the members of the two communities, even though they are in different political entities. There is also a form of internal movement of people, and goods among them. This is an indication of peaceful unification which has helped in furthering the popular regional integration through ECOWAS. Most importantly, the two communities speak Hausa language and follow the same religion of Islam. In fact, they have many things in common as people who lived together for several centuries. Though with the creation of artificial border which divided the people of these communities as neighbours they remained one and continue to attend to each other's needs and protecting their economic and political interest.

The relation between the two nation-states does not stop at formal governmental interaction alone. It promotes cross-border activities between the borderlands and their communities. Today, the two border communities interact daily without much restriction from the border securities of either side. No doubt, what promotes this linkage is buried deep in the nature and character of the economic relationship that characterized these communities. Traditional wrestling (*Kokuwa*) and boxing (*Dambe*) are two sporting activities that bring the people of these two communities together and strengthen their relationships. The activities of traditional rulers, members of the communities, border securities, and other relevant stakeholders could be seen on equal slate with the role of informal socio-economic activities in promoting the socio-economic growth and development and wellbeing of the people among these communities.

The cordial relationship does not entail the absence of problems between the two nation-states; rather, it explains the absence of open confrontation and conflict and the dominance of cooperation between the two nation-states. Nigeria shares with Niger Republic: rivers, underground water, Lake Chad, etc. So also, the two nation-states signed several agreements both at bi-lateral and multilateral levels. Apart from their embassies in Abuja and Niamey, the Nigeria – Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation was also set-up to facilitate development and improvement in the area of socio-economic cooperation between the two nation-states. Mindoudou (2001 in Dankama, 2004:88) states that the peaceful atmosphere between them have contributed to trans-border cooperation in the reciprocal interest of the people linked together by history, geography and culture and who have been maintaining dynamic relations from time immemorial.

The study reveals that, the border security officials provide an avenue for the blossoming of informal cross-border activities in these areas. Such activities are not without negative effects. Such effects include migration, human trafficking, and smuggling of goods and arms among others which is becoming a source of concern especially to the Nigerian state. Such activities are, however, carried out with the assistance of corrupt border security officials; the communities itself as well as their leaders support such acts. So also, inadequate funding of border security officials to effectively carry out their duties efficiently is also identified as factor militating against the curbing of informal cross-border activities in the area. Meanwhile, the consequences of these menaces are enormous, which include the following: Loss of government revenue, political corruption, undermining the growth of indigenous companies, Nigeria and Niger of recent are witnessing *Boko-Haram* insurgency.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for the promotion and improvement of socio-economic activities on regional integration in the border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia in particular and the two nation-states of Nigeria and Niger Republics and West African states in general:

1. Governments of the two countries should be more lenient in their regulations concerning import and export so as to reduce the business of smuggling along the borderland areas. The two countries should collaborate in curtailing the illegal activities of smugglers.
2. Governments of Niger and Nigeria should also consider putting in place more border police patrol teams to guide against influx of terrorists into both countries. On the part of the indigenes of both communities, they should as a matter of national importance co-operate in providing security forces with information of all illegal movements among insurgents in order to curb the menace of terrorism along the borderland areas.
3. To improve the socio-economic activities in this area, the governments of Nigeria and Niger Republics should collaborate to establish a dry sea port as well as encourage the establishment of companies in the area. This action will curtail smuggling in the borderlands and harness the socio-economic development that can enhance political integration and development along the border communities in particular and the nation-states at large.
4. The Governments of Nigeria and Niger Republics should facilitate ECOWAS integration process by improving social and economic conditions of the communities under study. Boarding schools (both Primary and Secondary) should be established in each side of the borderland and employ the services of teachers in the area of English, French, Hausa, Fulfulde languages respectively. This will create unity and understanding among the future leaders of the communities and the nations in general.
5. The Governments Nigeria and Niger should consider setting up a joint commission/board for socio-cultural activities. This board will assist in providing modalities through which socio-cultural and sporting activities like traditional wrestling (*Kokuwa*), traditional boxing (*Dambe*) etc can be internationalized. This can enhance the living conditions of the people as well as a means of revenue generation to the governments of both countries.
6. The Governments of the two nation-states should improve the working condition of the security operatives working in the borderland areas. So also, their entitlements should promptly be paid. Seminars and workshops with regards to patriotisms should be organized from time to time. Modern security facilities like surveillance cameras that can detect criminals should be provided to the borderland areas.
7. The Governments of the two nations should also encourage the activities of clubs and associations in the border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia. This can be done through inter-states competitions, seminars, workshops as this will further strengthen as well as cement the longstanding relationship between the two border communities and their states in general.

Conclusion

From the information gathered in this research there is no doubt that border relations cannot be swept under the carpet when it concerns nation-states that share geographical boundaries. With government or without

government presence, the inhabitants of border communities will naturally interact. The involvement of governments is simply to regulate, secure and ensure that legitimate businesses are carried out around these boundaries. This study has proven the importance of border relations, using Nigeria-Niger border, case study that socio-economic activities are for the benefit of nations involved.

The study also reveals that, there exist problems emanating from such relationship which include: smuggling of goods and weapons, human trafficking, mass migrations etc along the border communities of Mai'adua and Mai'mujia. On the whole, it can be stated that despite the problems, border relationship is very relevant and plays important role in keeping countries diplomatic ties. Suffice to say that border relations can only be improved upon as it has come to stay.

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Appendix

List of Interviewees

1. **Alh Kamilu Jafaru**, Representative of the District Head (Galadima) of Mai’adua. Interviewed on 20th December, 2024 at the District Head Place Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
2. **Alh Abbah Yusuf Malumfashi**, (Director of Admin and Finance) Ag. Chairman Mai’adua Local Government Council. Interviewed on 24th December, 2024 at his office in the Local Government Secretariat Mai’adua LGA, Nigeria.
3. **Mal. Mu’azu Abubakar**, Unit Head - Education and Social Services Department, Mai’adua Local Government Area. Interviewed on 24th December, 2024 at his office in the Local Government Secretariat, Mai’adua LGA, Nigeria.
4. **Alh Abdullahi Mai Dala**, Secretary Yan-chanji Association Mai’adua. Interviewed on 25th December, 2024 at his shop in Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
5. **Mallam Buba Kari**, a well-known farmer in Mai’adua Town. Interviewed on 26th December, 2024 at his residence in Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
6. **Majesty Monsieur Adamu Bisallah** (Dan’ilan Damagaram), *Chef de district de la ville de Mai’mujia en Republique du Niger* (District Head of Mai’mujia). Interviewed on 30th December, 2024 at his place.
7. **Gatari Ahmadou Harouna** (Gatarin Mai’mujia), *Le Representant du Chef de district de Mai’mujia* (representative of the district Head of Mai’mujia). Interviewed on 30th December, 2024 at the place of District Head in Mai’mujia, Niger Republic.
8. **Monsieur Hassan Adamu Maitre d’ecoles** (Primary School Teacher), Interviewed on 2nd December, 2024 at the *Modele Ecole Primaire de Mai’mujia ville, Republique du Niger*.
9. **Alh Abu Dan Chanji**, Chairman Integrated Exchange Marketers Association (Yan Chanji). Interviewed on 14th December, 2024 at his office in Kara Market Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
10. **Alh Kabiru Mohammed Uziri**, Car Dealer/Smuggler. Interviewed on 6th May 2017 at Dantakari Motors Company Mai’adua in Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
11. **Mallam Aliyu Dogon Hauwa**, a farmer in Mai’adua town. Interviewed on the 16th December, 2024 at his residence Kofar Kade, Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
12. **Monsieur Hammane Buba, Directeur** (Director) *Amfani Cars SALR (Societe a Responsabilite Limitee), Mai’mujia*. Interviewed on 18th December, 2024 at his office La ville de Mai’muji Republique du Niger.
13. **Monsieur Alleyou Concessionnaire automobile** (Car Dealer/Smuggler) Mai’mujia, Niger Republic. Interviewed on 18th December, 2024 at Rinji area, Mai’mujia town.
14. **Haj Aisha Muazu Abubakar**, House Wife. Interviewed on 24th December, 2024 at her residence, Unguwar Yar Laraba, Mai’adua town, Nigeria.
15. **Monsieur Lawalli Jibbou, Fermier** (Farmer) *Le village de Danbarto* (Danbarto Village) Mai’mujia town, Nigeria. Interviewed on 27th December, 2024.

16. **Madame Youdou Kare** (House wife) Interviewed on 27th December, 2024 at her residence, Koza area Mai'mujia town Niger Republic.
17. **Alh Abdoul Dan Malame , un Commercant** (Businesss Man) living in Mai'mujia town at his shop around Rinji area. Interviewed on 18th December, 2024, Mai'mujia, Niger Republic.