



The Story of the Origins of the Bura/Pabir People of Northeast Nigeria: Language, Migrations, the Myth of Yamta-ra-wala, Social Organization and Culture

By Ayuba Y. Mshelia

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"A Synopsis of the Bura Project The three major rationale for writing this book are primarily to: through the study of African language family groups trace the origin of the tribe to a more specific location rather than the diffused response of "from the East"; secondly to investigate why and how the word "Pabir/Babur" came on the scene referring to a separate ethnic group different or the same as the Bura and thirdly to document some of the vanishing Bura cultural practices and deeds. For example what their beliefs are, their marriage practices, local industries and what they do to pass time. It is my strong belief that the first objective is accomplished through our analysis and presentation of the Proto-Afro-asiatic linguistic family classification group and its subgroup the Proto-Chadic of which the Biu-Mandara forms a sub-branch. Through a systemic and vigorous study of the classification of the different languages comprising this Proto Family of languages and its sub-branches we are able to assert that the Bura people were among many other ethnic groups part of a group whose origin can be traced to the Levant region of south west Asia and the Middle-East. They belong to the group that forms "back to Africa migration". This is because modern genetic studies of languages indicate that they're the only group that have traces of Y chromosome belonging to haplogroup R1b R-V88 in Africa but found mainly in Asia and Europe. After tracing the influences of the powerful Kanem (ca. 700-1376) and later Bornu-Kanem (1380-1893) empires around the Lake Chad region as well as the kingdom of Mandara (founded in about 1459, i.e. end of the 15th century), in what is today modern Cameroon on the inhabitants of the region, we conclude a chaotic period of migrations and wars, including trade in slaves. It is through this prism that we notice the emergence of the founder of the Woviri dynasty of Biu. Through his failure to win the Maiship of Bornu, he moved to Mandara and then the Plateau of Biu with some of his followers or relatives. Being a student of History Abdulahi or who later became Yamta-ra-wala attempted to replicate what the Kanembu were able to do among the local people they conquered some centuries earlier; they created an ethnicity

and language called Kanuri. Yamta-ra-wala succeeded somewhat, but wasn't able to completely conquer the Bura people and turn them in his new ethnic vision. Instead the Buras went to the hills to fight him the next day. The new breed he created he called "Pabir" or Babur as the Hausa would call them. The myth of who Yamta-ra-wala is has for the present eclipsed historians and would probably continue for some time to come. As for the Bura (Most have down the hill-tops and mountains!) and the Pabir they have never been closer than today. Today for all practical purposes they are one and the same ethnic group, they've intermingled more than any two previously separated groups. Their vocabulary, phonology and cultural practices have fused into one in most instances."

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Editorial Review

About the Author

"I was born in Garkida, a town in Adamawa State in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. I attended a missionary school from Elementary to High School. After High School, I was admitted to ATC/ABU Kano from 1967-1970. In 1971 after the completion of my course of studies, I was admitted to Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria; and graduated three years later with an honors degree in 1974. I served one year of National Youth Service before joining Ahmadu Bello University Zaria faculty, in the Department of Education. In 1977/1978, I attended the University of Chicago where I earned an MA degree. I went back to Ahmadu Bello University teaching, until 1980 when I was admitted to a Ph.D. program at Columbia University in New York City. I completed my degree in 1985. From 1987 to the present I have been a Professor at BMCC/City University of New York in New York City. Besides my teaching responsibilities, I am the author of several books which include the following titles: *Araba Let's Separate- The story of the Nigerian Civil War*, 2012; *Suksuku, 2010- Stories and Folktales of the Burrah People of North-Eastern Nigeria*. *The Village Boy*, 2009; and *Cognition, Culture and Field Dependence-Independence*, 2008. All the books are published by AuthorHouse Publishing Company in Bloomington, Indiana."

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