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Origin and Meaning of Maiduguri

Introduction:

Geographically Maiduguri is location @ Coordinates: 11°50'N 13°09'E. It occupies an area of 50,778 square kilometers. It remains center of trade, learning, culture, Durbar and home of tourism and history.

Fig.1: A map of Africa & Nigeria indicating the location of Maiduguri:



The name Maiduguri is from the name Maiduwuri, the name Maiduwuri is referring to the present day Old Maiduguri in Jere local government Area of Borno state. The name Maiduguri is a combination of two Kanuri language words namely “Mai” and “Duwuri”. Mai is a word in Kanuri referring to a King or a leader and Duwuri is from the word Duwu which means a thousand; hence Duwuri is referring to the plural of a thousand which is thousands, ordinarily it’s like saying something is in the category of thousands (a thousand in ancient time is the peak of counting because counting in millions was not known then). So literally Maiduguri (Mai+Duwuri) means “Thousand Kings” thus Maiduguri is a land of a “Thousand-Kings”.

Why Maiduguri is called the Land of the Thousand Kings; During the colonial and pre-colonial eras the African societies and even the global community is not as rich as it is today due to the effects of industrial revolution, development in transportation, agriculture, improvement in food preservation as well as accelerated level in development of science and technology and stability in global governance/politics. In those days ordinary citizens apart from the King /ruler and his children or siblings all other people in a kingdom hardly owns more than One Gown cloth (a set of complete ceremonial clothing) in the sub-Saharan African region including the Hausa lands/Danfodio caliphate and the great Songhai empires . This Gown is known locally as Babban riga/Kuluwu or Malum-Malum in the Hausa language and “Kuluwu” in the Kanuri Language because they are expensive; thus they are not used as regular wears but rather ceremonial one by the members of the public outside the royal families who were then the richest families in almost all the kingdoms in the ancient precolonial African Kingdoms.

Fig.2: A photo of a typical Kanuri Kuluwu/Babban Riga (Gown) and the president of the federal republic of Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari wearing the Gown made in Maiduguri (right) during his swearing in ceremony in 2015



However contrary to this practices in the neighboring kingdoms to Kanem-Borno of wearing Gowns only on special occasions here in Borno (Old Maiduguri) which was a town with booming economy and having Islamic scholars as its leaders (the Shehu's/Sheikh) who pays less attentions on their subjects on issues of who wears what made almost all the indigenes of Maiduguri then to be wearing the traditional Gowns for their daily activities.

Fig.3: A photo of Kanuri cultural Dancers & Horse riders in Maiduguri during a Festival:



So for visitors visiting Maiduguri for the first time as at that time normally gets surprise seeing everybody in the city dressed like a King. Therefore they feel that they are in a Land of a thousand Kings, simply because there are thousands of people with everybody looking like a King. So this is the reason why old Maiduguri is called Maiduguri. To prove this claim just have a look at the Maiduguri society and city of today where people are still wearing one of the most expensive traditional clothing /dressings in the country when compared to their neighboring counterparts or states. Just imagine how an ordinary man who is not a big time business man, a governor, a minister, an ambassador or even known to the society next to him wearing a Zanna cap along costing N 50,000 (fifty thousand naira) equivalent to \$ 350 Dollars USD or even above plus expensive Swiss Filtext materials.

Fig.4: A photo of a Zanna Cap (left) and two Nigerian popular leaders (Muhammadu Buhari & Ibrahim Babangida both wearing the Zanna caps:



It is also important to note that the present day Maiduguri is also called Yerwa because that was its original name before the name Maiduguri.

Why Maiduguri is called Yerwa? That was because Yerwa is a name derived from the Kanuri word "HERWA" or "Herrah" which means a promising or a blessed Land. Experts said it is called Herwa in the first place because of its close proximity to the seasonal Ngadda River that still passes through it while considering the blessings coming with a river flowing through a

desert or semi-desert environment where water is considered to be a highly prestige resource. Remember most of the Kanem Borno capitals like the cities of Ngazargamu, Kukawa, Monguno and others were either desert or semi desert cities , so water has a prestige in the kingdom in fact it is even a determining factor in creating new settlements (towns & villages).

Maiduguri, is still called Yerwa by its locals. It is the present day capital and the largest city of Borno State in the north-eastern Nigeria and the Fourth largest city in Nigeria. The city as stated above seats along the seasonal Ngadda River which annually disappears into the Firki swamps in the areas around Lake Chad. Maiduguri was founded in 1907 as a military outpost by the British and has since grown rapidly in to millions in terms of its population.

A brief history:

The city was actually home to the Kanem-Borno Empire for centuries. Maiduguri consists of two cities: Yerwa to the West and Old Maiduwuri to the east. Old Maiduguri was selected by the British as their military headquarters while Yerwa was selected at approximately the same time by Shehu Abubakar Garbai of Borno to replace Kukawa as the new traditional capital of the Kanuri people.

Maiduguri is estimated to have a population of 2,607,497 as at 2014 and presently 3.7 Million due to the recent past unrest that pushed the rural population to Maiduguri. Its residents are mostly Muslims and the main tribes in Maiaduguri includes the Kanuri, Shuwa Arabs, Hausa Bura, Marghi, and Fulani ethnic groups.

It serves as the capital of Borno states and it once served as the capital of the entire Northeastern Nigeria region including the present day states like Bauchi, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba and Gombe states.

Climate:

The average temperature in Maiduguri is 25.8 °C. The highest record temperature was 47 °C (117 °F) on 28 May 1983, while the lowest record temperature was 5 °C (41 °F) on 26 December 1979.

The average annual rainfall is **613 mm**.

The Shehu palace:

The Shehu Palace was built in 1907 by the British. The original settlers who were relocated to build the Shehu's Palace were the descendants of the former Mais (Kings) of the Borno Empire before the coming of the Elkanemi dynasty in the year 1809 including the great -great grandchildren of Mai Idris Alauma (1580–1617) (Internationally the most historic and most popular Kanuri Empire King), some of them were initially moved to the Shehuri North (Located at the Northern part of the present day Shehu palace) to enable the British create space to build the Shehu Palace which still stands at the place today. Construction work of the Palace began in

the early 1900's immediately after the defeat of Rabih az-Zubayr in the year 1900 and completed in 1907.

Though the palace was built by the British and has resemblance to a British super house with its Chimneys, but yet it also has more Kanuri style elements in it in terms of its central location and neighborhood arrangement patterns around it; with traditionally bounded by the courtier's residences including the; Waziriri, Shettimari, Abbari, Limanti, Kalari, Talbari, Yerimari, Kaigamari Moramti and Galtimari among others with Shehuri (the Shehu Palace) standing at the center .

Fig.5: A picture of the Shehu's Palace in Maiduguri:



Economy:

Maiduguri has an ultra-modern market known as the "Monday market" that has a spectacular satellite or Umbrella like image view 4from the above. It has an ancient museum and is served by the Maiduguri International Airport. The city has one of the best layouts in Nigeria. It is connected by road to the republics of Cameroon🇳🇮, Chad🇳🇪 and Niger🇳🇪 and from Maiduguri goods and services are transported to as far as Sudan🇸🇩 , Bangui in the Central African Republic and Gabon🇬🇧. There were existing historical records of trade with the North African nations of Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Lebanon. A survey of property markets in Nigeria (2009) positioned Maiduguri as the third most expensive for buying and renting in the country next to Abuja and Lagos. Maiduguri is the principal trading hub for the northeastern Nigeria. Its economy is largely based on services and trade with a small share of manufacturing.

Maiduguri manufactures locally and traditionally the best Horse Saddles known as "S3RD3" or "SIRTTI" to that end there is a street in Maiduguri named after the making of the Horses Saddles referred to as S3RD3MARI or SIRTIMARI (within Fezzan ward of Maiduguri) meaning where the local Horse Saddles are made. Horse Saddles and horse dresses /decoration from Maiduguri are considered to be one of the best in the in the World.

Fig.6: Horses and horsemen decorated with a made in Maiduguri Silver wears, clothing and Saddles during durbar:



The city lies at the end of a railway line in Nigeria connecting the cities of Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kafanchan, Kuru, Bauchi, and finally Maiduguri. This rail lines were originally intended by the British to convey Groundnuts (Peanuts) as well as Hides and skin to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in Southern Nigeria for upward transportation to Europe. Even though the Borno state town of Nguru in the present day Yobe state had its rail system functioning as far back as in the 1930s, but Maiduguri got its own rail lines or railway system in the 1960s due to the fact that the elders of ancient Maiduguri prevented the rail lines from reaching Maiduguri deliberately through prayers . Because people here are good in determining the faith of future events through the Islamic religious practices known as the “ISTIHARA” (prayers). This is a type of prayer usually prayed in the middle of the night or before going to sleep purified, it helps to give inside or serve as a guide regarding blessings or evils associated with future events. After this ISTIHARA on the coming of the rail lines (which is something never known here before) to Maiduguri it was said that the elders of Maiduguri then saw associated problems /troubles coming with this intended rail lines coming to the city ;meaning that it might bring with it associated troubles/problems/evils to the City . So their efforts in praying against the coming of this rail line to the city actually prevented the rail lines from reaching the city of Maiduguri in the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s until the 1960s when the original elders where mostly no more or stopped this prayer. So in this modern era of today we can now say with confidence that their guess is true or is now proved to be true, because on 14th July 2009 the “Boko Haram” unrest that seriously affected the city actually started from the “Railway compound” in a place called “MARKAS” behind the State-Low-cost Housing-Estate of Maiduguri “. At this point I would like to point out that I am not an anti-rail line person, but I was amazed with the level of this Sophisticated forecast in to the future without using science and or technology by our Grandfathers as far back as some 70 years ago; that manifested now and directly correlating to their guess. Even with our present day sophisticated modern science gadgets/equipment which has the ability to forecast future weather patterns ahead of times, days or even weeks using sophisticated gadgets like the satellite systems , but yet we can see an determine event that is about to happen decades away. So actually it’s so amazing.

Fig.7: The Railway Terminus of Maiduguri:



Maiduguri is blessed with various communities which offers differing expertise and professions helping in economically, educationally and socially building in developing the city since inception ; that's why some places (wards, streets or boulevards) are still named and called after the original profession that exist or the most popular profession still existing within them for example Arinmari – dyers , Mundulmarai (Hyde and Skin business), Mundulmari – tanners, Kaalmari – blacksmiths, S3rtemari (Sirttimari)-Horse saddle makers , Kumozomari -calabash decorators and Aritamari-Trumpeters .

Education:

Maiduguri is known to be a center of Islamic and Quran studies for the past 100 years since its founding. In fact it is very impossible for great Islamic scholars that remain popular in the Islamic history of Sub-Saharan African region or even in the modern days to find an Islamic scholar from the Sokoto Caliphate including Sokoto, Gwandu, Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Hadejia and many others that have never come and acquire Islamic knowledge and the Quran in Maiduguri . Some neighboring students and Scholars from other part of Africa still feels that their studies is somehow incomplete without coming to study in Maiduguri during the course of their studies. So it is not a surprise that Maiduguri based Scholars like late Sheikh El-Miskin, Sheikh AbulFathi, Sheikh Abba Aji, Sayinna Alhaji Bashir, Imam Upchama (Ba Liman), Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh, Sheikh Sherriff Tijjani and Mallam Usman Bida still remained popular across Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and within Africa and parts of the Middle East and “Magerib” (Morocco/Algeria) as a whole . In fact this is one of the reasons that made one late Sheikh Mahmud Ja'afar from the city of Kano in Nigeria and a graduate of the University of Madina Saudi Arabia , keep acknowledging that during his life time he was greatly inspired by the teachings of Sheikh Abba Aji which was one of the reasons he read to become an Islamic scholar and at the same time saying that after visiting Sheikh El-Miskin's library in El-Miskin house Maiduguri he acknowledged that he has never seen a library that has so much unique collections

of books with some of its books not even available in the market or in the other libraries that he has known ; in fact he concluded by saying that some of the books looks new to him.

Fig.8: Pictures of some of the most popular religious scholars of Maiduguri including Sheiks Elmiskin, Abba-Aji (center) and Abulfathi:



In terms of modern education Maiduguri has one of the best-equipped university and hospitals in Nigeria. The University of Maiduguri attracts foreign students from neighboring countries especially Cameroun, Chad, Sudan and Niger Republics as well as some commonwealth students from Malaysia, Kenya, Ghana, Belize, Jamaica and Gambia among others. The College of medical sciences is among the top 5 best medical schools in Nigeria. Other higher institutions include Ramat polytechnic, Elkanemi college of Islamic Theology, Muhammad Goni college of Arabic and Islamic studies, the Lake Chad Research Institute, College of agriculture and College of education among others.

Fig.9: A photo of some of the Most Recognized Educational Institutions of Maiduguri:



Attractions of Maiduguri: Kyarimi Park, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri Monday Market, Deribe Mosque, Deribe Palace ,the Maiduguri Museum, Shehu’s Palace, Imam Malik Islamic Center, Indimi Mosque, Maiduguri International Airport, Maiduguri Sports Center,

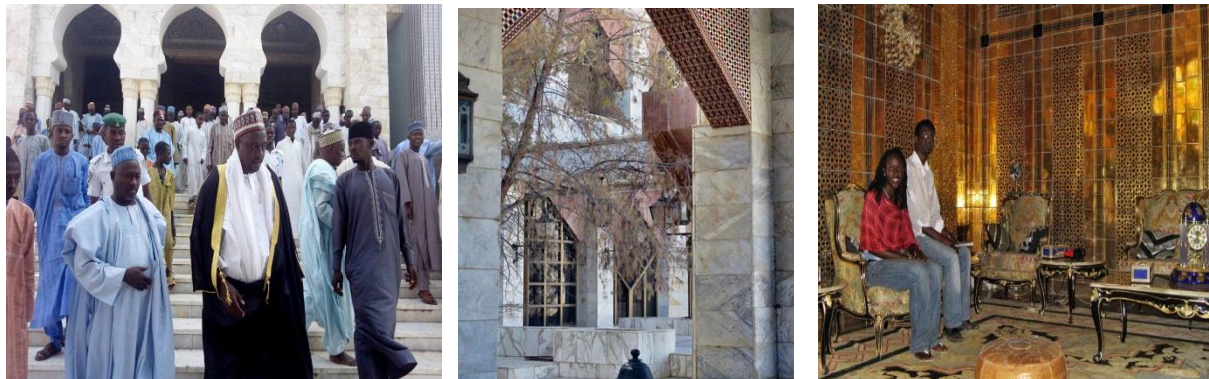
Ramat square, Lake Chad hotel, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital and the Maiduguri International Hotel.

Fig.10: A photo of University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, Indimi Mosque and Maiduguri International Hotel:



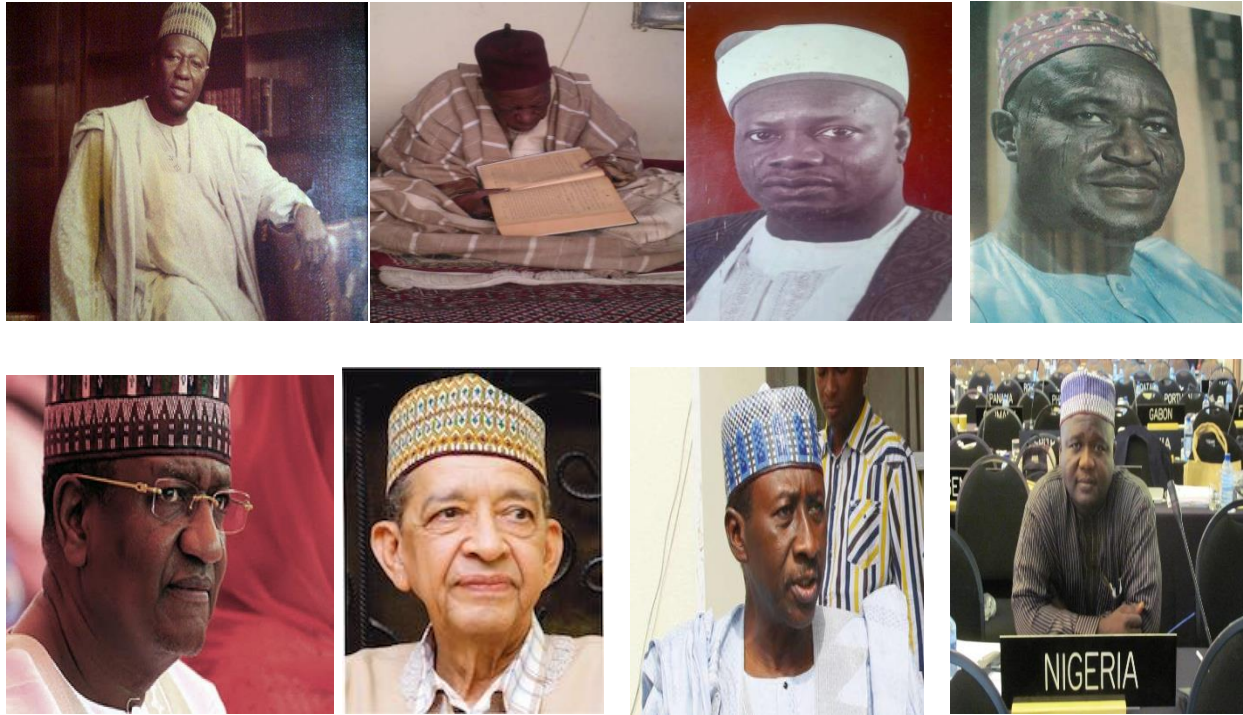
The Deribe Palace which is considered as the most expensive House in Africa and one of the best in the World is in Maiduguri. Remember this house hosted King Carlos of Spain, Prince Charles and Lady Diana of the United Kingdom as well as the American President.

Fig.11: A photo of different parts of the Deribe Palace & Deribe Mosque in Maiduguri:



Maiduguri serves as a home and remains a home to many great business men, scholars, military generals, academicians, technocrats and diplomats; Some of the popular names under this category are Alhaji Mai Deribe ,Sheikh Elmiskin, Babagana Kingibe, Sir Kashim Ibrahim, Waziri Ibrahim, Sheikh Abba Aji, Professor Umaru Shehu, Shehu Mustafa Elkanemi, Alhaji Bukar Mandara, Alhaji Bukar Bolori, General Abba Kyari, General Mamman Shuwa, Major General Yusuf Brutai, Kashim Ibrahim Imam, Mala Kachalah, Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh, Mukaddam Bukhari, Alhaji Zanna Deribe, Muhammad Indimi, Alhaji Zanna Dipcharima, Imam Ibrahim Ahmed (The chief imam of Borno), Dr. Shetima Ali Monguno, and Babagna Monguno among many other great personalities not mentioned here that are either residence or indigenes of the city.

Faces of some Maiduguri people:



MAIDUGURI COLLECRTIONS:

The Maiduguri museum, the Maiduguri main Islamic library, the Maiduguri University libraries, private libraries like that of Sheikh Elmiskin, Chief Imam Ibrahim Ahmed, Sheikh Abulfathi, Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh as well as the Deribe collections in Maiduguri altogether hold a lot of unique historical artifacts, thousand-year-old books, letters as well as customised collections of items and objects that remain rare or in very limited editions that among the few places on Earth to reach such items or objects includes Maiduguri. This makes Maiduguri a unique city and one of the World's capital of artifacts, special customised and unique collections.

Conclusion:

Though Maiduguri is a young city with most part just 100 years old, but its strategic location, climate, history, nature and quality of its inhabitants made it popular to rank with cities of thousand-year history. Its inhabitants are historically mostly experts and established professionals in diversity cutting across craft making, education, international trading and its leaders are wise gentlemen that made all aspects work together in developing the city to an extent that today Maiduguri serves as not only the capital of Borno state in Nigeria, but has the economic and social powers and prestige that made it only major city in the Su-Saharan African region connecting the West, North and the Central African region as such that if social or economic earthquake affect it makes nations like Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Sudan, Central Afrique, Gabon and beyond feel the impacts of its after shock or shockwaves.

Thanks for your time in reading this piece.



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