The Journal of Zaria Historical Research (ZAHIR) 2008 Edition, Published by the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria - Nigeria.

VOL. 3 No.1 JUNE 2008
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THE EMERGENCE OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE SHIKA AREA OF THE ZARIA PLAINS C.1800-1920

Abubakar Zaria Ibrahim

Introduction

Describing the area which this paper intends to discuss as Shika area between 1800 and 1920 may be historically erroneous because during that period there was no area then known or called Shika area. Shika, as a settlement itself, was established as recently as 1928 in the history of the Zaria plains. It was established as a labourers' camp of the Government Stock Farm by the British colonial regime. However, the term Shika area is simply used here because even history recognizes current political and social entities, and Shika is presently the largest settlement and a District Headquarter surrounded by other towns and villages that evolved much earlier in the area. Thus Shika area here is referring to the present day Shika District.

The Shika area lies directly north-west of the Zaria urban complex which is the capital of Zazzau Emirate to date. It is situated in the area that occupies latitude $11^\circ 35'\ N$ and $08^\circ 25'\ E$. It is bordered in the north by the Danja area, (now Danja Local Government Area of the present day Katsina state) and in the south Shika area extends as far as Kufena. To the east it is bordered by Samaru area, one of the units that made up the Zaria urban complex today, while to the west Giwa area, (the headquarters of the present day Giwa Local Government Area) serves as its limit.

Like many other areas in the Zaria plains, emergence of human settlements in the Shika area was significantly influenced by social, economic and environmental factors. This fact has been adequately dealt with by other researchers and scholars alike. The area is geographically located in the northernmost part of the guinea savannah belt of the Nigerian area, which has a lot of advantages in the establishment of human settlements (Mabogunje 1981:1-10). There is no doubt that geography plays a very significant role in the emergence of villages and towns. Especially when we consider the climate, soil and vegetation that allow for the practice of food production (Diamond 2005: 93-103). However, unlike suggested by Buchanan and Pugh (1960: 16-20) the environment is not always completely conducive for evolution of settlements in the savannah. It is convincingly argued by Y.B. Usman (1981: 3-4) that skills
are the outcome of relations between man and his environment and that the
availability of water and the distribution of economic resources are the principal
factors that influenced the evolution of settlements even in the savannah belt of
the Nigerian area. Thus, the environment is aided by the farming and trading
skills of its inhabitants for a settlement to emerge. In his study on the Soba plains of Zazzau, Abdulkadir Adamu (2004: 66-67) established that climate and soil of the area were the major environmental advantages that made it healthy for human habitation and favourable for the cultivation of numerous food and industrial crops. The availability of underground water very close to the earth surface, especially in areas adjacent to the streams also aided the emergence of human settlement in the area. My investigation on the Shika area also shows the same environmental condition in addition to the fact that both areas are within the same larger Zazzau plains. The *fadama* soil found all over the Shika area was an important economic resource due to its support of all season cultivation. Major crops produced in the area included maize, guinea corn, millet, sugar cane, indigo and vegetables.

The area was predominantly inhabited by the Hausa and the Fulani and their major occupations were farming, cattle rearing and handcrafts. Although the Fulani were generally engaged in cattle rearing, the majority of the people, including the Fulani, as we shall see later in this paper, were engaged in farming and in some cases other handcrafts. The pattern of settlement that evolved in Shika area throughout the period of study, c.1800-1920, was in the form of *kauyuka* (villages) surrounded by *unguwanni* (hamlets) located in areas of permanent cultivation. The major villages included Makoye, Mahuta, Gungurfafa, Biye and Tsibiri. Except for Gungurfafa, all the others were walled to serve as fortification and security in times of war or siege. In such situations the population from all nearby hamlets flocked into the walled settlements for safety as explained by M.F. Smith. (1954: 1-43). These *kauyuka* also served as the major centers of political and economic activities on which the surrounding hamlets depended. During the period of study there was a continuous threat to the area by slave raiders (Alhaji Biso, 85yrs. Interview, 15th September, 2002). It is our suggestion, therefore, that the threats must have influenced the walling system of the *kauyuka*. Moreover, it is interesting to note that evidence available to us have shown that most of the *kauyuka* around the area were either established or revived during the period of Shehu Usman Dan Fodiyo’s Jihad that established the Sokoto Caliphate.
The first settlers of this town were, in essence, not known. However, the person who is said to have revived the settlement, a Fulani Scholar named Modibbo Jibir, met the walled village deserted. This was suggested to be after 1808. Thus, he named it *Makoye*, a Fulfulde word meaning “we replaced them” (Maiwada: Undated manuscript). The desertion might have been caused by the frequent slave raids that were common characteristics of the period. Modibbo Jibir was suggested to have come from either Bazanga or Kokami in *kasar* Katsina (Group Interview: August, 2002). Makoye is surrounded by two streams, Shika and Bankama, which do not carry water throughout the year. It was for this reason that Modibbo Jibir constructed a reservoir which was later turned into a well called Tarino. The town has both laterite and *fadama* soils and this allowed for the cultivation of crops like guinea corn, cotton, sugar cane, indigo, etc.

Though there is the claim that there had been Fulani herdsmen around Zaria right from the time of the Hausa kings; certainly the Fulani chiefs of Fatika were recognized vassals of Zazzau, and one of them was rewarded by the grant of fief within Zaria city (Unguwar Fatika) (Hogben and Kirk-Green 1966: 219-220), but Modibbo Jibir left *kasar* Katsina after learning that Zaria had been taken by the army of Malam Musa, the first Fulani Emir of Zazzau. Our sources did not disclose whether Jibir arrived the area with his family, but it says that he married a Gwari woman from a neighbouring village, the old Salanke, immediately he settled at Makoye. Apart from being a scholar, the main occupation of Jibir was pastoralism. But he also engaged in farming. Some pastoral Fulani came to join him and that was when he carved a large portion of the village for himself and asked them to settle on the other side. By the time the Hausa people around the area observed that the Fulani had peacefully resided in the village they started moving in to live with them. It was at this time that the wards of Shambuwa and Hayin Malam Barde emerged (Hamza Mil-Goma, 85yrs. Interview, 11th August, 2002). The first Hausa settlers that joined the Fulani were farmers who took advantage of the rich and fertile land to engage in farming activities. Hausa farmers from as far as Rimin Gado in *kasar* Kano arrived the village around 1850 (Buhari, 70yrs. Interview, 21st August, 2002). The production of cotton attracted Hausa weavers, both men and women, to the village and they settled to practice their occupation. This also led to the emergence of *karofi* or *marina* (dyeing centre) in Makoye town. The *karofi* was located very close to the Tarino well, probably for easy access to water needed for the dyeing activities (Abdu Biye, 75yrs. Interview, 17th September, 2002). The dyeing profession became very popular in Makoye that all the other villages
patronized them. The popularity and economic advantage of the profession made even the Fulani, who were basically known to be pastoralists, to join in the trade. The children of Modibbo Jibril himself, Abdulkarim and Malam Idi, also became dyers (Ibrahim Maitisibiri, 85yrs. Interview, 15th September, 2002).

For a very long time there had been no Sarki in Makoye. It was the Imams that led both the religious and the political affairs of the town (Jumare, 91yrs. Interview, 11th August, 2002). Modibbo Jibir was a learned person so just as the first to open the village he was also the first Imam. His Islamic knowledge attracted the people of Gidan Zamfarawa, led by Malam Maigari, to the village (Makoye Buwayi, 90yrs. Interview, 16th September, 2002). This house later took the Imamship of the village up to the present day Shika. The Sarauta system was only introduced with the advent of British colonialism which reorganized the structure and function of the Native Authority System. That was when in 1905, for the first time in the history of Zazzau fief holders were moved out of Zaria city to live in their fiefs as District Heads. Makoye, then, fell under Giwa District headed by Madaki Yero. At this point, Malam Dikko, another Fulani from Tofa in kasar Kano was made the Sarki, with the title ‘Makoye’. Since then every other appointed Sarki was called Makoye. By the early 20th century the village had a population of about 800 people that were mostly Fulani and Hausas (NAK/ZARPROF. 384/ Giwa District Report 1905, p.96). The entire village was relocated by the colonial government within ten years (1928 to 1938) when the whole land and some neighbouring hamlets were appropriated to establish a Government Stock Farm which expanded to become the present National Animal Production and Research Institute (NAPRI), the Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U.) Research Farm and the A.B.U. Teaching Hospital, Shika.

Mahuta
This village derived its name from the Hausa word huta, meaning ‘to rest’. Mahuta, therefore, means ‘a resting place’. Like Makoye, the actual people who walled the village are not known. But it was two Hausa hunters named Ibrahim and Barde, who met it deserted that revived the village about two hundred years ago (Hasan, 65yrs. Interview, 16th March, 2008). The two, who were brothers, used to hunt around the area, so made the abandoned village a camp in which they rested. They gathered the meat of their hunted games in the huts, rested for some days and continued hunting. Ibrahim and Barde soon made their resting place, (Mahuta) a home. Barde is said to have gone back to kasar Katsina, where they came from, brought their families and invited some friends to join them at Mahuta. The most remembered among those he invited
was a man called Abarshi. He established the *Gidan Bambaxawa* which is presently over two hundred years old (Haladu, 61yrs. Interview, 16th March, 2008). They also invited other people from elsewhere to the town and agriculture took the leading role among other occupations.

The village is located on a hilly area above a valley of marshy soil (*fadama*) that almost surrounded it. This *fadama* allowed for the dry season cultivation of sugar cane and vegetables that Mahuta is still identified with. The village is also rich in *azara* (timber derived from palm tree) and the *kuka* tree (baobab). *Azara* is generally used for roofing and fencing of compounds and gardens. The leaves of the *kuka* are dried and used for soup making (*miyar kuka*) and at times the fresh leaves are also used for preparing a type of soup called *miyar gatsika*. Neighbouring settlements depended on Mahuta for those two economic trees. *Azara* makers, therefore, added to the economic activities of the town. Historians have indeed used the concentration of the kuka tree in an area as indication of the antiquity of the settlement (Usman, 1981:9).

The *Sarauta* in Mahuta started immediately the population expanded when other people came to join Ibrahim and Barde. Ibrahim, the senior among the two brothers, became the first *Sarki* and he reigned for a very long time before he was succeeded by Labaran. With the advent of colonialism the role of the *Sarki* was increased to include collection of taxes and remitting them to the District Head in Giwa. The people of Mahuta contributed to both the forced and employed labour that the colonial regime used to establish Shika (Inuwa, 60yrs. Interview, 16th March, 2008).

**Gungurfa**

This village was established by a Fulani scholar called Muhammadu Lawal. He was the son of Muhammadu Mustafa who is also the son of Malam Abubakar Dankwaire. The village derived its name from a stream called Gungurfa due to its deep banks that one has to crawl in to fetch water (Ahmadu, 95yrs. Interview, 16th September, 2002). This stream is a diversion of the Kubanni river which passes through Biye, runs behind the present A.B.U. Teaching Hospital, a place where the Magarabi ward of Gungurfa was once located, and joins the Shika river in the north-west. What led to the establishment of this settlement was relocation from the first place settled by Malam Abubakar Dankwaire which was Kware itself. Dankwaire came from Katsina. He was a friend of the third Emir of Zazzau, Abdulkarim, who established the Katsinawa dynasty of Zazzau ruling houses. We are told of the *impass* on who was to become the first Emir of Katsina when each of Umaru Dallaje, Umaru Dumyawa and Na Alhaji were awarded minor flags by Usman.
Dan Fodiyo (Hogben and Kirk-Green 1966: 168-170). Despite the fact that Umaru Dallaje was the one given the true jihad flag for Katsina, his role as the Emir was, in the words of Hogben and Kirk-Green, no more than that of first among equals. According to our sources, Abdulkarim participated in the jihad that ousted the Hausa rulers of Katsina in 1806 but antagonism set in between him and Umaru Dallaje due to his popularity within the learned Fulani and his cordial relationship with Na Alhaji who occupied the house of "Yandaka and camped at Dutsinma. Umaru Dallaje therefore reported to Sokoto that Abdulkarim had no allegiance for him. Shehu sent that Abdulkarim should report to Sokoto. When he reported the Amirul Mu'miniyns told him that he was aware of the situation in Katsina and understood that antagonism had set in between the ulema, so he should remain in Sokoto. Thus, when the expedition for Zaria came late in 1808 Abdulkarim was among the army of Musa and Yamusa. When Zaria was taken he was given the title of Sa'i (a little holder in charge of tithes) (Ahmadu, ibid). When he consolidated his stay in Zaria many of his Fulani admirers and friends from Katsina migrated to join him. Some he invited and others came on their own. Among those he invited was Malam Abubakar Dankwaire, though he did not come until when Yamusa became the Emir. That must have been after 1821. When Malam Abubakar arrived he first settled near a stream called Kware, very close to Gungurfa, and that was how he got the nickname Dankwaire. But he was asked by Abdulkarim to move into Zaria city to assist him in his official duty of the Sa'i. Malam Abubakar accepted the invitation but left in Kware all his cattle and some slaves. He had only one son, Malam Mustafa; who on the other hand had two sons and five daughters. The eldest son, Malam Lawal; engaged in seeking for knowledge of the Qur'an, Islamic law and jurisprudence. After completing his education he sought for his father's consent to return to the rugga (the Fulani type of settlement) at Kware to be with his flocks and slaves. When he returned he observed that the rugga was closing up towards the stream due to increase in population of the people and the flocks. He decided, therefore, to move the settlement to Gungurfa where there was a larger grazing area and also availability of water.

One of the primary reasons for the development and increase of population in Gungurfa was that Malam Lawal started a school there after settling down. Some of the students he met while studying in Zaria soon heard of his effort, and due to their knowledge of his piety and education they started trooping to take lessons from him. Some of his students included Malam Na Iya and Malam Shuraihu, the father of one time Mutawallen Zazzau Ladan Dan
Shuraihu, all of whom became prominent scholars of Zazzau in the mid 19th century (Ahmadu, ibid.)

There were four wards in Gungurfa, Hayin Malam Lawal, Unguwar Umaru Maisukuni, Unguwar Ango and Sabon Gida established by Malam Amfani. Umaru, Ango and Amfani were Malam Lawal’s senior slaves. Umaru was from one of the tribes of Bauchi, while the last two were of the Gwari tribe. Umaru was in charge of Malam Lawal’s animals, Ango supervised the farms and the slaves and Amfani was in charge of security of the whole village. Students who initially came to study decided to stay and acquired lands for farming. This significantly added to the population of the village. The crops mostly produced in this town were guinea corn, millet and beans. By the end of our period of study the village had a population of over 650 people (NAK/ZARPROF. 384/ Giwa District Report 1905, p.96).

Tsibiri

The village of Tsibiri was among the prominent settlements in Shika area. It is located south-west of the area on a vast and flat land. It was founded by a Hausa slave of the Emir of Zazzau Abdulkarim called Umaru Allahe (Bako, T1yrs. Interview, 9th February, 2008). This slave came from a family of one of the Hafe ruling houses that chose to remain in Zaria after they were removed from power by the jihadists. It is said that Malam Musa, the first Emir, only allowed them to remain within the city after agreeing that each year they will give one of their sons as a slave, instead of the usual jizya (a tax paid by non-Muslim to a Muslim ruler). Umaru Allahe was therefore collected from that family since childhood, so he grew up a Muslim. During the reign of Abdulkarim he observed the bravery and hard work of Umaru so he asked him to pay fansa (redemption fee) and freed himself (ibid).

Umaru Allahe first went to Kufena and started a farm, the product of which he intended to use in paying his fansa. His first yield was however, very poor probably because of the rocky nature of the area. So he decided to move on. It is said that he went to the Emir and informed him of a fertile area he discovered around one tsibiri (sand dune) on the way to Fatika. And he sought for the Emir’s permission to establish a home and a farm there. The Emir, Abdulkarim, did not immediately granted Umaru’s request until after he had sent some people to survey the area. When the Emir’s messengers reported back and confirmed the fertility of the area, Sambo, one of the son’s of the Emir, who also became the tenth Emir of Zazzau in 1879, was attached to Umaru to go and establish a rumada (slave farm) around that sand dune, thus the new settlement
was named ‘Tsibirin Sambo’ (ibid and Ahmad, opcit). Hence, Umaru Allaha
acquired some fortune, paid for his fansa and became free.

The soil fertility of the village area attracted many other people apart
from the over fifty slaves that were first brought by Sambo. With the population
increase the village was walled and divided into two with the Southern part
vested on Umaru’s control and the northern part given to Sambo’s care. The
items mostly produced there were guinea corn, millet and groundnut. There
were economic trees such as dorawa (locust bean or parkia felicicoidea),
tsamiya (tamarind) and gamji (rubber tree).

At a point before Sambo became the Emir of Zazzau, Tsibiri was raided
and some of the people of the village were captured. However, some of them
ran away never to come back, including one of the sons of Umaru Allaha who
was later discovered to be in Zuru of the Kebbi Emirate (Bako, ibid). When
Sambo became the Emir he offered Umaru Allaha the office of Galadima but he
refused to accept it. A year after Sambo appeased him to take the position of
Ma’aji and Umaru again rejected. He was said to have declared that his father
warned him not to serve the Fulani as a palace official.

Tsibiri became one of the two major marketing centers in the whole of
Shika area, next only to Biye, and its market used to hold every Monday of the
week. Its population also continued to increase that by the end of our period of
study there were about 800 people ((NAK/ZARPROF. 384/ Giwa District

Biye

The establishment of Biye followed that of Tsibiri. And that was how
the village derived its name. Biye is a Hausa word meaning ‘to follow’. Few
years after the establishment of Tsibiri Emir Abdulkarim’s courtiers were said to
be impressed with its agricultural production, and when they mentioned that to
the Emir he was said to have replied that “Wani garin ma na biye”. Meaning,
“Another town will be following”. And he opened the Biye area as another
rumada which eventually turn into a village bigger than all the other
neighbouring ones around it (Goma, 75yrs. Interview, 17th August, 2008).

The quick growth in population made Emir Abdulkarim to build a
mosque in Biye within a very short time. He was said to have supervised the
construction of the mosque from foundation to completion. In the process a
disagreement ensued between him and the architect on the qibla (the direction
of the Ka’aba mosque in Makka Saudi Arabia which the Muslim face when
performing prayers) and Abdulkarim reportedly displayed his spiritual powers
convincing all those present on the direction of the qibla (ibid). That was one of
the things that made people to believe that Abdulkarim was a waliyyi (Saint). The mosque in Biye is still standing and it is the oldest mosque in the village. (Dan-Muhammadu, 80yrs. Interview, 17th August, 2008)

It was also the population of Biye that made the Emir to appoint Dabo as the first Dagacci around the year 1837. Dabo was the Sarki that reigned for the longest period of about fifty years. He was succeeded by Salihu. Interestingly, the elders in Biye have a near accurate chronology of the reign of their sarakuwa from about 1837 to date. The main occupation in the village was farming, which was what initiated its establishment. Hausa seasonal farmers ("yan ci rani) used to come, from as far as Kasar Kano, to Biye. Some of them eventually settled in the village, acquired and own farmlands (Nuhu, 80yrs. Interview, 15th September, 2002). But with population increase other occupations such as weaving, dyeing, goats rearing, blacksmithing and butchering also became popular. Among the prominent dyers remembered was Tankare who had retired from the job over sixty years ago. People like Alu, Malam Ladan Macicfo and Mazada were among the weavers that excelled between the last fifty and one hundred years (Dan Muhammadu, opcit).

Biye became the largest market in the whole of the Shika area. This was probably because, apart from its agricultural products, the only major road that goes to Sokoto from Zaria passed through the village. Thus, it became a zango (stop over) for travelers. Items of trade included guinea corn, millet, beans and groundnuts which came from both the village and its neighbouring villages and were transported on donkeys. The availability of food and economic trees such as dorawa, kadanya (Shea nuts) and tsamiya also enriched the Biye market. Mankade (Shea nuts butter), used for medicinal, cooking and lighting purposes was one of the most important items of trade. It was solely manufactured by women in large quantity, which indicates that they also significantly contributed to the economy of the area. Merchants from as far as Maska, Maigana and Zangon Aya used to come and purchase it (Sule, 65yrs and Aliyu, 65yrs. Interview, 17th August, 2008).

 Though the village’s market day was weekly, held on Wednesdays, the market place started to fill up with traders as early as Tuesday evening. By the end of our period of study, with a population of over 1000 people, there was no larger village like Biye anywhere north-west of Zaria (NAK/ZARPROF. 384/ Giwa District Report 1905). The village only started diminishing with the coming of colonialism when in the first instance a new road from Zaria to Sokoto, diverting Biye from the east, was constructed. The establishment of Shika and its location on the new Sokoto road dealt the second and final blow to Biye relegating it to the background.
Conclusion

The paper started with the historiographical problem of naming the area of study. However, agree that though Shika, as a settlement, did not exist during the period of study, its present position as the District Headquarters of the area permits our choice of the name. There was also the argument that the environment, though playing a significant role in the evolution of human settlement in the area, was not the only determinant of their emergence. The paper demonstrated that other factors such as religion, social relations, transportation and trade which demonstrated the distribution of economic resources played far more crucial role in the emergence of settlements in Shika area between 1800 and 1920. Lastly, we observed that the coming of colonialism disrupted the development of some of the settlements, i.e. Tsibiri and Biye, while Makoye was totally wiped out of the map to be replaced by Shika.

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