

**A HISTORY OF THE NUPE, C.1068 – 1810 A.D.**

**BY**

**SIDI TIWUGI SHESHI  
Ph.D/ARTS/8471/2011/2012**

**Being a Thesis Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies,  
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History.**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis titled, “A History of the Nupe, C. 1068 – 1810 A.D.”, was written by me. It has not been submitted previously for the award of higher degree anywhere. All sources cited in the work have been acknowledged.

---

**Sidi Tiwugi Sheshi**  
Ph.D/Arts/8471/2011/2012

---

**Date**

## CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled, “A History of the Nupe, C. 1068 – 1810 AD”, has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History.

---

Prof. Sule Mohammed  
Chairman, supervisory committee

---

Date

---

Prof. Idris Shaaba Jimada  
Member, supervisory committee

---

Date

---

Prof. Muhammed Mustapha Gwadabe  
Member, supervisory committee

---

Date

---

Prof. Sule Mohammed  
Head of Department

---

Date

---

Prof. Sadiq Zubairu Abubakar  
Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies

---

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of undertaking this study, a number of people-too numerous to mention individually, had assisted me in one way or the other. Before acknowledging the roles played by a few of them, I must first and foremost show unquantifiable gratitude to God, the Almighty, for sparing my life and for giving me the knowledge, wisdom and guidance to undertake this study. With God, everything is possible; a truism of this can never be more apt in my own case.

An unforgettable motivation, encouragement and push-factor came from my friend, Alhaji Saidu Muhammed Doko, a Chief Accountant in the Bursary Department of Federal College of Education, Kontagora. He unrelentingly and untiringly kept advising me to undertake this research work, despite my advanced age. To him, I am most grateful.

The immeasurable and commendable roles played individually and collectively by my amiable supervisors, Professors Sule Mohammed, Idris Sha'aba Jimada and Muhammadu Mustapha Gwadabe are appreciated. They have painstakingly and thoroughly gone through every aspect of the work, guided me and offered invaluable professional advice, which made it possible for the successful completion of this study. Their tolerance, understanding, appreciation of my inadequacies and incisive comments have given the work its final shape.

To the general academic staff of History Department, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, the researcher is appreciative and indebted to Professors Abdulkadir Adamu, Sule Bello, Enoch Oyedele, Musa Adamu Mamman, and Dr. J. O. Agi whose contributions and wise counsel during my seminar paper presentations, are cherished very much. Additionally, the encouragement and inspiration received outside such fora, particularly from Professors Abdulkadir Adamu, M. A. Mamman and Dr. Agi among others, kept me going with hope.

Of no less importance were the contributions of my friend and colleague, Dr. Mohammed Man Shaaba, a Chief Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Federal College of Education (FCE), Kontagora. Apart from being a

resource person to me, he virtually read all the draft chapters of this thesis. His critical and constructive comments added value to the work.

The invaluable assistance and contributions of Dr. Mohammed Salahu of the Department of History Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) University, Lapai, in Niger State, Dr. M. M. Bawa, Department of History, Niger State College of Education, Minna and Mr. Jonah Ndayagi Yisa of the same Department. In addition to giving me some useful source material for this study, they also introduced me to their institutions libraries.

The researcher is equally indebted to the staff of F.C.E. Kontagora, particularly those from the School of Arts and Social Sciences for their encouragement and moral support. They saw my endeavour to undertake this study as a challenge to, especially, those that are younger in age than I am. Among those who kept appreciating my determination are Mr. Sunday Zhiri of Agricultural Education Department; Mr. Joshua Dogo of Social Studies Department; Mallam Musa Shehu; Abdulrahman Oba and Fatai Yusuf of History Department, as well as Dr. Nathaniel Odediran, the Provost of the College and his management team for granting me to go for the programme, but only on full self – sponsorship. To the Head of English Department, F.C.E Kontagora, Alh. Aliyu Umar, I am not less appreciative for his contribution by explaining to me contextual meanings of certain English terms, which assisted in the course of this work..

The tremendous encouragement and moral support from other friends, relations and colleagues are also acknowledged. They include Alh. Abdullahi Ndaliman Kawu, Deputy Registrar, Student Affairs, F.C.E. Kontagora. Hon. Commissioner Salihu Abdullahi, Alh. Kudu Ibrahim of Social Studies Department, F.C.E. Kontagora; Alh. Nma Habeeb, Alh. Aliyu Moh'd of Physical and Health Education (PHE) Department, FCE, Kontagora; Alh. Alhassan M. Wasagi, Mallam Moh'd Bisati Musa, Dr. Usman Nakorji, Late Alh. Nma Kiyakiya, Surveyor Haruna Shehu-cousin brothers, Dr. Sheikh Abdullahi, Alh. Alfa Mohammed, among others. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Ndagi Abdullahi of Government House, Minna, for making some information and source material available to me and for allowing me to have informal chats with him several times.

The staff of History Departmental Library, Northern History Research Scheme (NHRS), ABU, Zaria, National Archives Kaduna, Arewa House, Kaduna, Nupe Cultural and Resource Centre (NCRC), Bida are acknowledged for their assistance.

I owe immeasurable debts to my good friend, former Provost, F.C.E Zaria, Dr. M. I. Macido for his moral and financial support. In addition, he allowed me to stay in the College Guest House any time I was in Zaria for research and consultation with my supervisors throughout the period of this study. I also appreciate the prompt attention usually given to me by Mallam Ibrahim, the Guest House attendant, F.C.E, Zaria, any time I was in town. Worthy of mention here, was the invaluable contribution of my friend, Professor Samuel Tswana Kolo, Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academic, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. He made available to me some materials on Linguistics and Phonology on Nupe.

The wonderful roles played by all my informants, both within and outside the study area can never go unacknowledged. Their cooperation, tolerance and understanding deserve special commendation. I also owe a lot of gratitude to those who took part in the typing of this work, in persons of Mallam Idrisu Ndacheke in the Directorate of University Affiliated Programme (DUAP), F.C.E., Kontagora, and my son – Haruna Sheshi for their wonderful work in typesetting, formatting and corrections.

Finally, but not the least, William Shakespere once said that “what touches us most are said last”, I salute members of my family for their patience, understanding and cooperation during the course of this research work. They may have suffered some denial of love, time and financial attention during the period. So, to my late mother – Amina Abubakar; my wives – Aishatu and Maryam and my children – Aishatu (Senior); Aishatu (Junior); Hadiza, Hauwa; Abubakar; Umaru; Muhammed, Fatima, Amina; Haruna; Aminu, Sadiq; Ahmed and Mustapha. Also, the encouragement, financial and moral assistance received from my cousin brother – Abubakar Mohammed, currently a PhD student at the Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, cannot be ignored. To all of them, I owe immeasurable thanks.

## ABSTRACT

The major objective of this thesis is to examine the history of the Nupe from 1068 – 1810 AD. For a proper conceptualization, the geographical location of the study area in relation to its neighbors is examined. This is to enable us see the socio-cultural affinities, archaeological, linguistic, political and economic relationships among various ethnic groups in the Middle Niger and Benue Confluence areas. The work particularly considers the relationship between Nupe and Igala lands, especially, as it affects the birth and growth of Tsoede, as well as the socio-cultural and political situation regarding his personality. Central to our discussion is the political transformation of Nupeland by Tsoede and his descendants, reflected in the foundation of a central authority – Nupe Kingdom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in place of the hitherto independent principalities in Nupeland. The insatiable desire by Tsoede to rule over a larger political landscape may have informed the idea of the central authority and its extension beyond core Nupeland. Central to the actualization of his dream is the strategic location of Nupeland which favored all sorts of vocation – agriculture, trade and commerce, transport and communication, industrial economy, unlimited access to and out of Nupeland, availability of raw materials for thriving arts and crafts. All these and other factors provided catalyst for state formation processes in Nupeland as was the case in Hausaland. Another central theme the thesis discusses is the penetration of Islam through a number of sources into Nupeland prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad, as well as the economic activities and opportunities which made the land great. It served as an entrepot and a strategic gateway between the north and the southern parts of the Nigerian area. Both the internal and external trade and commerce between the two zones and Nupe passed through the latter. The work also examines the genesis for the eclipse of the Kingdom. The internal dynastic succession disputes, as well as the political and socio-economic happenings in the neighboring states and Hausaland and most importantly, the intervention of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Jihadists under the leadership of Mallam Dendo and other Fulbe, accounted for the demise of the indigenous Nupe Kingdom under Tsoede dynasty and its replacement by a foreign one under Dendo in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
Title page	i
Declaration	ii
Certification	iii
Acknowledgements	iv – vi
Abstract	vii
Table of contents	viii –xi
Preface	xii – xiv
Dedication	xv
Appendixes	330 – 354
<b>CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</b>	<b>1</b>
(i) Introduction	1 – 4
(ii) Statement of the Research Problem	4 – 5
(iii) Review of Literature	6 – 38
(iv) Justification of the Research	38 – 40
(v) Scope of the Study	40 – 43
(vi) Theoretical Framework	43 – 48
(vii) Methodology	48 – 50
(viii) Conclusion	50
<b>CHAPTER TWO: ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE OF NUPELAND</b>	<b>51</b>
(i) Introduction	51 – 52
(ii) Geography	52 – 62
(iii) The Origin of the Nupe	62 – 85
(iv) Nupe Sub-groups	85 – 97
(v) Linguistic Classification	97 – 102
(vi) Conclusion	102 – 103
<b>CHAPTER THREE: ECONOMY OF NUPELAND TO 1800 A.D</b>	<b>104</b>
(i) Introduction	104



(ii)	Agriculture	105 – 114
(iii)	Pastoralization and Livestock keeping	114 – 120
(iv)	Industrial Economy	120
	a. Iron Works	121 – 122
	b. Weaving	123 – 127
	c. Pottery	127 – 130
	d. Woodwork	130 – 132
	e. Mat and Hat Weaving	133
	f. Other Works of Arts	133 – 134
(v)	Transportation and Communication	134 – 137
(vi)	Trade and Commerce	137 – 150
(vii)	Labour	150 – 154
(viii)	Conclusion	155 – 158

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIO – CULTURAL PRACTICES**

##### **AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN**

##### **NUPELAND 1068 – 1463 A.D**

**159**

(i)	Introduction	159
(ii)	Socio-cultural Practices	159 – 177
(iii)	Political Organization	177
	a. The Pre- <i>Bini</i> Confederacy	177 – 188
	b. The <i>Bini</i> Confederacy	188 – 202
(iv)	Conclusion	202 – 203

#### **CHAPTER FIVE: THE TSOEDE FACTOR IN THE**

##### **EMERGENCE OF CENTRAL POLITICAL**

##### **ORGANIZATION IN NUPELAND, 1463 – 1591 A.D**

**204**

(i)	Introduction	204
(ii)	Tsoede's Birth and the Surrounding Myth	203 – 212
(iii)	Foundation of a Central Nupe Kingdom	212 – 216
(iv)	The Tsoede Phenomenon and its Legacy	216 – 222
(v)	Administration of the Conquered Areas	222 – 224
(vi)	Effects of Tsoede's Creation of Central Nupe Kingdom	224

(vii)	Interpretation and Historicity of the Tsoede Story	225 – 232
(viii)	Logical Explanation	232 - 234
(ix)	Conclusion	234 – 237

## **CHAPTER SIX: ISLAM IN NUPELAND,**

	<b>15<sup>TH</sup> – 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES AD</b>	<b>238</b>
(i)	Introduction	238 – 239
(ii)	Sources of Early Islamic Influence	239
	(a) Arab Travellers, Migrants, Muslim Scholars	239 – 240
	(b) Trade and Commerce	240 – 241
	(c) Songhai	241 – 242
	(d) Hausa and Borno Axis	242 – 245
	(e) Formal Islamization Process	245 – 246
(iii)	Indigenous Islamic Reformers in Nupeland	247
	a. <i>Etsu</i> Jibrilu, 1746 – 1759	247 – 250
	b. Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Muhammad Sharif	250– 254
	c. Mallam Musa	254 – 255
(iv)	Conclusion	256 – 258

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: NUPELAND FROM**

	<b>17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO 1810 AD</b>	<b>259</b>
(i)	Introduction	259 – 261
(ii)	Tsoede's Successors	261 – 265
(iii)	Dynastic Succession Disputes	265 – 278
(iv)	The Jihadists' Campaigns/Intervention in Nupeland	278 – 286
(v)	The Fall of Nupe Kingdom	286 – 295
(vi)	Conclusion	295 – 297

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION 298 – 302**

### **NOTES ON SOURCES 303 – 307**

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY 308**

i	Primary sources	308 – 312
---	-----------------	-----------

ii	Archival sources	313
iii	Nigeria Magazines	314
iv	Newspapers	314
v	Gazetteers and Colonial Reports	314 – 315
vi	Conference Papers	316
vii	Dissertations and Theses	317 – 318
viii	Articles	318 – 325
ix	Books	326 – 328
x	Online Publications	329
	APPENDIXES	330 – 354

## PREFACE

The main thrust of this thesis is a study of the history of the Nupe, up to C.1810, when Jihad activities started in Nupeland. The work has examined the pre-Tsoede, Tsoede and post Tsoede periods up to the time of the intervention of the Fulbe under Mallam Muhammadu b Fate Bangana – alias Mallam Dendo or Manko and other Fulbe in Nupeland. It has attempted to examine or re-examine certain assumptions which appear to claim the non-existence of polities and even, human habitation in Nupe prior to the emergence of Tsoede between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the same vein, the study examines the hamitic hypothesis claimed by European and to some extent, Islamic historiography on the origin of Nupe. The study has found both claims historically untrue, but rather supports the anti-diffusionist theory on the tradition of origin of the Nupe. This is based on available archaeological and linguistic evidence, which suggest Nupe's origin within the Middle Niger Basin and Niger-Benue Confluence area.

The socio-cultural, economic and political activities in early Nupeland through Tsoede and post – Tsoede eras engage the attention of this work. This is to give us a conceptual understanding of the continuous human habitation in our area of study, which impacted on the other periods of Nupe history. Other themes which are no less important discussed in the work are the rise and growth of Tsoede and the foundation of an unprecedented Kingdom in Nupeland. Factors that assisted him to achieve such a feat have been examined. These include, lack of centralized authority and lack of a standing army prior to his emergence, strategic location of Nupeland and the attendant economic advantages, topography and non-barriers that would impede accessibility both on land water, among other state-formation factors. Thus, the Kingdom founded by Tsoede and the administrative structure adopted by him and his descendents endured for several centuries, incorporating non-Nupe areas into the kingdom.

However, by the last part of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the once popular, expansive and famous Nupe Kingdom, had been engulfed in series of crisis creating political instability in the area. The internal dynastic succession disputes, leading to the

factionalization of the Kingdom, essentially accounted for the instability. The situation created an opportunity for the Jihadists to exploit to the detriment and advantage of the former and latter respectively. This thesis has been divided into seven chapters. A brief on each chapter is as follows:

Chapter one is a background to the study. It highlights statement of the research problem, gives an extensive review of related literature, provides justification for and scope of the study, methodology and theoretical framework. The framework adopted is political economy and functionalist approach.

Chapter two discusses the geographical location of Nupeland and the importance of such a location to the evolution of polities and state formation in the area. The location is central to the economic prosperity of not only the Nupe, but also their neighbours. The position makes it easy for movement into and out of the land, providing conducive trade, commercial, agricultural and transportation activities, among others.

Chapter three focuses on the economy of Nupeland. It discusses the importance of virile and viable economy as catalyst for evolution and sustenance of states, whether ancient or modern. This is premised on the fact that the political super structure of a society, to a very large extent, is dependent on the character and development of that society's economic base. Against this background, the chapter examines the diverse economic potentials in relation to the foundation of Nupe kingdom. They included agricultural, industrial, commercial, as well as geographical location, topography of Nupe kingdom, among others.

Chapter four examines the pre – Tsoede Socio – cultural and political organisations. It focuses on the pre – Islamic religious practices and activities in Nupeland as well as the organization of political structures some of which survived up to Tsoede period and beyond.

Chapter five focuses on the Tsoede factor in the political organization in Nupeland. After the emergence of Tsoede, as an empire builder, the hitherto independent or semi – independent polities and principalities were united to form a centralized authority known as Nupe Kingdom. The kingdom which survived for several centuries

became one of the most popular polities in ancient Nigeria. The chapter discusses facilitating factors for the foundation of such a kingdom which went beyond the confines of Nupeland.

Chapter six examines the penetration and practice of Islam in Nupeland prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad across Northern Nigeria. Sources for the introduction of Islam in the early times, its propagation, emergence of indigenous Islamic reformers and the problems they encountered have been discussed in the chapter.

Chapter seven examines the state of Nupe Kingdom after the demise of Tsoede – the founder of the Kingdom. We have noted how the kingdom expanded far and wide to incorporate even non-Nupe areas. We have also observed how in the long run, the Kingdom became engulfed in internal dynastic succession disputes. The chapter traces the remote and immediate causes and attendant crises and political instability that followed the succession disputes, as well as examines the consequences on the Nupe and Fulbe groups. The situation paved the way for the latter's intervention in the politics of Nupe, which subsequently led to the eclipse of Nupe Kingdom and its replacement with emirate system introduced by the Jihadists.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to God-the Almighty, who has given me the strength and wisdom to embark on and successfully complete the work and the entire members of my family who have encouraged and supported me in all ways possible from the beginning to the end of the study.

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### (I) INTRODUCTION

Nupe as a language is one of the most major languages spoken in Nigeria. The people speaking the Nupe language occupy the Central Western part of Nigeria and they are found in Bida, Agaie, Lapai and Kontagora Emirates in present-day Niger State; and Patigi, Lafiagi, Tsonga and Tsaragi Emirates in present-day Kwara State. A good number of Nupe speaking people are also found in Lokoja, Ajaokuta, Shintaku, Kotonkarfe, Abaji, Eggan and Budan, among others, in present day Kogi State; in Umaisha, Toto, Shamenge, Kanyehu, Gadabuke in present day Nasarawa State, as well as in Gwagwalada and Zuba in the Federal Capital Authority, Abuja.<sup>1</sup>

The land occupied by the Nupe speaking people is called “*Kin-Nupe*” (Nupeland). It is a geographical expression referring to the land predominantly inhabited by the Nupe.<sup>2</sup> As can be seen later, Nupe identity goes further than its definition as a language alone. Consequently Nupe had evolved far beyond being a language-“*Ezhimi-Nupe*” to being a Nation-“*Kin-Nupe*”. Nupe of old was noted for its ability to exert tremendous influence on the political, socio-cultural, religious, linguistic and artistic transformation of not only its immediate neighbours, but far away non-neighbours alike.<sup>3</sup> Obayemi<sup>4</sup> further shows how ancient or pre-1800 Nupe, both as language and ‘nation’ extended its influence to far away communities which, presumably might have affected the political

---

<sup>1</sup>Oral evidence-AmeerAbubakar, aged 55years, from FCT, Abuja, Interviewed on 23/01/13

<sup>2</sup> Sule Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D.* Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Press Limited, 2011, p.2

<sup>3</sup>I. Saidu, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ibadann: Heinemann Books (Nig) Ltd. 1992. Foreword p. xi; A. Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede, *Estuzhi* and Nupe History Before 1800” History Departmental Seminar Paper, ABU Zaria: 1987, P.1; I. S. Jimada, *The Nupe and Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba C 1275-1897*. Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2005, p.7,among their Authorities.

<sup>4</sup> A. Obayemi, *op.cit.*,p.1.



and socio-economic activities of those areas. Among such communities were Hausa of Kano, Zazzau, Katsina, Kebbi, Yauri, Gobir, as well as the Yoruba-speaking Oyo, Ilesa, Igbomina, Ife and Owo.<sup>5</sup>

In his foreword to Nadel's *Black 'Byzantium'* Lord Lugard,<sup>6</sup> describes Nupe as one of the most important communities in Nigeria, while Nadel himself, gives his high impression on the Nupe political, social and economic formations, which he regards comparable to those of the ancient centres of civilization.<sup>7</sup> This impression might have informed him to title his famous and popular book on Nupe: *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*.

Talking about Nupe as language and its classification, language experts are almost in agreement that Nupe language, together with other languages, such as Yoruba, Igbo, Gbagyi, Igala, Idoma and Edo, among others belong to the Kwa sub-group of the broad Niger-Congo Language family out of the four language families in Africa.<sup>8</sup> The other three being Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan or "Click" languages. Studies have shown that in addition to Nupe, other languages that belong to the Kwa sub-group also of the Niger Congo family, include Yoruba, Igbo, Itsekiri, Gbagyi, Igala, Ibibio-Efic, Edo and Idoma, making this sub-group the largest in the Niger-Congo family<sup>9</sup>.

Linguistic research findings have also shown the wide spread nature of 'Nupoid' group of languages which is believed to have comprised overwhelming majority of the

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, P.1

<sup>6</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: the Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*. Oxford: University Press, 1942, Foreword, P.iii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, Introduction, P.vii.

<sup>8</sup> H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963, p.8 and M. Blench, "Nupoid", in, John Benor-Samuel, *The Niger-Congo Languages: A Classification and Description of Africa's Largest Language Family*, Lanham: America University Press, 1989, pp. 305-319

<sup>9</sup> H. Greenberg *ibid*.

languages spoken by many of the ethnic groups in the Nigerian Middle Belt and even beyond, as shown by J. H. Greenberg<sup>10</sup> and Kay Williamson.<sup>11</sup> In what seems to support the above claim, Jimada<sup>12</sup> shows the linguistic relationship between Nupe and Yoruba languages. He further demonstrates how recent studies have attempted to identify a common area of origin of the several dialects now commonly called the Nupe and Yoruba languages.<sup>13</sup> According to him, some of the speakers of these two languages have lived in the same settlements such as Jebba, Babaloma, Tsaragi/Share, Leaba, Muwo and Ogudu or Gudu, Oworo, Owo, Igbomina, among others for a very long time. In the same vein, Sule shows a linguistic “closeness” between Nupe and Gbagyi languages.<sup>14</sup> Such a linguistic relationship does suggest a common origin or proto – language from which several related languages developed. Furthermore, the linguistic relationship could and, indeed, did promote socio – cultural affinity, economic, political and inter-group relations as was the case between Nupe and old Oyo and Igala communities.

Nupe's history can be divided into periods thus,

- (i) Pre-Tsoede era to C1500
- (ii) The Tsoede period and his descendents 1531-1810
- (iii) The Emirate period C1832-1899
- (iv) The Colonial period C1900-1960
- (v) Post-Colonial period C1960-date

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>K. Williamson, “Indigenous Languages of the Benue Congo Region”: Their Classification and its Implication for Prehistory”. Paper presented to the Conference on Confluence Nigerians at Lokoja Sept. 27, 1987, P.5

<sup>12</sup>I. S. Jimada, *op.cit.*, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6 and 7.

<sup>14</sup>S. Mohammed, “Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbors to 1898,” in A. A. Idrees and Y.A. Ochefu (eds.) *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, vol.1*, Lagos: CSS press Ltd., 2002, pp.513-532.

Of all the suggested periods above, the pre-Tsoede period is the one that relatively suffered neglect in terms of documentation. Others have attracted attention of some writers; European missionaries, travelers, anthropologists, administrators and some indigenous historians.

The above periods suggest the need for more thorough study of the pre and post Tsoede period. For a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of Nupe history, the need to document the early history of the Nupe people therefore becomes imperative. This research intends to undertake this task, relying on the use of oral and other primary sources on the history of Nupe people. Others include, Arabic, archival, archaeological and anthropological evidence as much as possible.

## **(II) STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Generally speaking, the early history of Africa is barely studied or undertaken even by Europeans. This is because in the first place, some European writings about Africa are racist and Eurocentric. Some even claimed that Africa had no history. As part of Africa, Nupeland has had its own share of neglect in this regard. The problem here is that vital information of that epoch of history may seem to have been lost, which of course gives us incomplete, or no knowledge of the early period of the Nupe.

It used to be, and to a large extent, is still being claimed, that the history of Nupe politics does not go beyond the emergence of Tsoede in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. At least, so it was told to the earliest European travellers, traders and missionaries when they

arrived Nupeland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The implication of such information or misinformation would seem to suggest that the Nupe had no history and had hardly existed as a people and nation prior to the emergence of Tsoede. This is a serious historical fallacy, which needs to be studied and documented with a view to reconstructing the early history of the Nupe.

This attempt is premised on the fact that the history of a people and their polity can never be complete without tracing and linking the early past with its subsequent and contemporary periods. The Nupe, being one of the major ethnics groups in Nigeria, which had evolved formidable polities in the past, requires the attention of researchers and scholars to create a historic link between its earlier past (pre-Tsoede period) on the one hand, and post-Tsoede and contemporary periods on the other.

The major task of this study is focus on the pre-Tsoede and Tsoede eras of Nupe history with a view to unearthing what life was then and how such facilitated subsequent developments. In this respect, we have examined or re-examined the political, socio-economic and cultural processes and practices in Nupeland prior to the emergence of Tsoede who was said to have established a Supra Nupe Kingdom around the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Our examination will focused on the inter-group relations between Nupe of old and its neighbours and non-neighbours alike, as well as migration, expansion and consolidation, which became a building block between its past and contemporary period.

---

<sup>15</sup>A. Ndagi, *Who are the Nupes?: The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identity*. Elempke Publishers; Minna, Abuja and Bida, 2012, p.13, Oral evidence-Alh. Mohammed Mustapha-Tswaidan Nupe-says that he does not know Nupe history beyond Tsoede period; on 15/12/12 at Bida.

### (III) LITERATURE REVIEW

Today many people perceive that the term ‘Nupe’ applies only to a clearly defined linguistic group speaking Nupe as their first or mother tongue found mainly in present-day Niger, Kwara, Kogi, Nassarawa States and part of Federal Capital Territory- Abuja. As stated earlier, of all these areas, the present Emirates of Bida, Agaie and Lapai collectively form what used to be referred to as the central Nupeland, or the heart of Nupeland, which has the largest concentration of the Nupe.

Despite the common language, the Nupe were divided into subgroups, which include the *Bini*, *Kusopa*, *Kyadya*, *Batachi*, *Cepkan*, the *Ebangi*, *Gbedegi*, and *Ebe*, among others. Nadel<sup>16</sup> believes that the Nupe language is further divided into several dialects. He identifies five of such dialects as Dibo, Ebe, Bassange and Kupa. However, the political and socio-cultural prominence of Nupe, became more noticed and attractive to especially foreign writers, with the emergence of a ‘mythical’ charter<sup>17</sup> called Tsoede or ‘Edegi’ generally regarded as the “founder” of Nupe kingdom between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

---

<sup>16</sup>Nadel, *Black Byzantium*, *op.cit.*, p.19

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*,P.19.

It is against this background that this study attempts to go into the “almost forgotten or neglected” but seemingly formed an important historic epoch of the Nupe. While abundant and apparently comprehensive literature on Tsoede and post-Tsoede periods of Nupe history can be said to have existed, relatively little, if any at all, does exist on pre-Tsoede era of Nupe history. Most works from the earliest European explorers, writers and missionaries on Nupe land centered on the personality of Tsoede, the so-called founder of Nupe kingdom. This idea might not have been unconnected with the mentality of some European scholars, travelers and missionaries, who did not only describe Africa as a ‘dark’ continent, but that which lacked history beyond contact with Europeans. Among the Europeans holding this view on Africa, (Nupeland inclusive), was Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, a renowned historian from Oxford University, England. In responding to students’ demand for some courses in African history in 1963, he was reported to have replied:

Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at the present there is none; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness and darkness is not a subject of history.<sup>18</sup>

Among the early European works most essentially centered on Tsoede and post-Tsoede periods, but with little or no attention to preceding periods are those of Clapperton, Lander Brothers and Rev. Samuel Crowther.<sup>19</sup> Other later European writers

---

<sup>18</sup> O. E., Uya, “Trends and Perspectives in African history”. In, O.E. Uya, and E.O. Erim, (eds), *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, pp 1-9.

<sup>19</sup>See Jimada, *op.cit* pp. 152-154.

on Nupe were Leo Frobenius, (1913), S.F Nadel (1942 and M. Mason 1970, 1975, 1981, etc).<sup>20</sup> There are also a number of modern indigenous writers on Nupe as will be reviewed shortly.

### **S. F Nadel**

(i) Nadel, S.F. “Nupe State and Community”<sup>21</sup>, makes an attempt to distinguish between the two terms-“State” and “Community” in Nupeland. The Summary of this distinction between the terms is that, while a state in connotes a ‘Nation’, “Kingdom” or “Empire” as that said to have been “founded” by Tsoede, a community gives a picture of a village smaller in both size and population. He gives an average population of a village as 1,000 people.

Nadel’s discussion on the extent to which the Nupe state expanded and incorporated other peoples into Nupe language is relevant to this study. Also his description of the political structure and organization in both Tsoede and Jihad periods are useful. It is doubtful, however, whether such description can be taken as a valid representation of the entire Nupeland. Other sources are, therefore, required to corroborate or otherwise to enable us reconstruct Nupe history in terms of political structure and organization. For instance, Nadel’s estimation of 1,000 people as on average population of Nupe community may be an under-estimation. There were communities especially, commercial and

Political centers, such as Raba, Gbara, Mokwa, Jima, Nupeko, among others, which could boast of far larger population in the early past.

---

<sup>20</sup> L., Frobenium *The Voice of Africa*, New York & London: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1913; S.F., Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, M. Mason, “Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History”, Ph.D Thesis, University of Birmingham 1970; M. Mason, “The Tsoede Myth and the Nupe Kinglists. More Political Propaganda?” *History in Africa*, Vol. 2, 1975 Pp.101-112; M. Mason, *The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press., 1981.

<sup>21</sup>S.F. Nadel, “ Nupe State and Community”, *Africa*, VIII (3), (1935), pp.257-303.

(ii) S.F Nadel, “The Kede: A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria.”<sup>22</sup> focuses on the political organization of a section or sub-group of Nupe called *Kyadya*. These were the people that lived along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna. Their major occupation was fishing and canoe ferrying. Nadel discusses the formation of a political structure under the control and headship of ‘*Kuta*’ with headquarters at Muregi. He gives an insight into the powers of the *Kuta* over the Niger river from the confluence upstream above Jebba before the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ‘*Kuta*’ was assisted by his titled councilors and emissaries for effective management of his state or state-like structure. They include *Egba, Tswaida, Kofen, Lifiti and Egban*. The *Kuta* is said to have exercised an almost absolute power in his area up to the emirate period. He was both the political and spiritual head of his domain. The Jihadists after establishing their supremacy in Bida would not reckon with the growing power of the *Kuta* and did everything possible to curtail such a power, as was reflected in the Ganigan war of 1881- 1882 between Bida authorities and the *Kyadya*.

This work is informative. It gives us an insight into the pre-emirate political organization of the *Kyadya* and *Batachi* peoples in central Nupeland which might have preceded the emergence of Tsoede.

---

<sup>22</sup> S.F., Nadel, “The Kede: A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria, In, M. Fortes and Evans, E.E. Pritchard (eds), *African Political Systems*, International African Institute, (1940) Pp.165-195.



(iii) S.F Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*.<sup>23</sup> appears to be the most popular work on the culture history of Nupe. It essentially discusses the environmental, anthropological, sociological and historical aspects of Nupe society. These include, the geographical location of Nupeland; its political evolution, especially under Tsoede and his descendants; social and religious aspects; economic and commercial activities. It also discusses the emergence of a ‘mythical’ charter-Tsoede or *Edegi* as the “founder” of Nupe kingdom between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. He went on to assert that the history of Nupeland started essentially with the emergence of Tsoede. This may imply that we should look to Tsoede for the earliest history of Nupe. The establishment and consolidation of Tsoede Dynasty as well as the Jihadists and consequently, the European conquest and subjugation of Nupeland also engages the attention of this book.

Analyzing the work under review, one begins to observe some historical distortions in the earlier works on Nupe by European travelers, explorers and missionaries in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>24</sup>Essentially the works by such Europeans on Nupe seem to support the traditionally held view centering on Tsoede personality as the “founder of Nupe kingdom.” Nadel may have been the first, or perhaps, among the first to draw attention, (though without detailed discussion) on the existence of pre-Tsoede “nation” or polity. This implies extending the Nupe ‘nation’, its peoples and civilization, to period beyond the birth and emergence of Tsoede as the empire ‘founder’ and ‘builder’. He mentions the existence of ‘*Bini confederacy*’ or a mighty federation of Nupe

---

<sup>23</sup> S.F., Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, London: Oxford Up., (1942).

<sup>24</sup> Among such early writers on Nupe are: H. Clapperton; *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccato*, London, 1829; R., Lander, and J. Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, 3 vols, London 1970; M. Liard, and Old R. A; Field, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the Niger in 1832, 1833 and 1834*,

city-states. He identifies twelve ‘towns’ forming the confederacy as: Bida, Tafien (Tafyan) Esa, Doko, Towagi (Tuwagi), Egbe, Gaba, Nupeko, Eda, Panjuru (Pandzuru), Ewu and Yesa.<sup>25</sup> However, our findings have shown that the *Bini* settlements were far more than the twelve listed by Nadel and other writers.

All these have significant bearing on this study. They contain important information regarding the understanding of Tsoede and post-Tsoede Nupe history. However, Nadel’s work under reference does not provide adequate information on the political, cultural, religious, as well as economic condition of the Pre-Tsoede era of Nupe history. After drawing our attention to the existence of ‘*Bini* Confederacy’ prior to Tsoede’s emergence, Nadel still urges us to look to Tsoede for the earliest history of the Nupe. This opinion would seem to suggest that the history of the Nupe can be traced only to the middle of the fifteen century when Tsoede is said to have been born. This is questionable because the history of Nupe goes far beyond the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There is evidence to show human activities associated with the Nupe as far back as 1068 A.D or even earlier. This study takes note of these with a view to filling the apparent gap to enable us understand the history of Nupe in a more comprehensive perspective.

---

<sup>25</sup>Nadel *op.cit*, p.25

(iv) S.F Nadel, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam on a West African Chiefdom*,<sup>26</sup> looks at the pre-Islamic religious practices in Nupeland and how such practices provided bond of unity among various Nupe groups. The traditional religious cults were relied upon to checkmate witchcraft and evil doings in the society. A number of religious cults were identified. They included: *Egungu or Gugu, Gunu, Ndakobgoya, Ketsa and Sogba*, each of which were headed by priests.

The influence of Islam on the traditional religious institution is discussed. Even though such influence did not succeed in wiping away completely the practice of traditional religion in Nupeland, some of which still continue up till date, the role played by Islam cannot be underrated. The series of Jihad movements before and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century found justification for their attacks on Nupeland to wipe out paganism and other non-Islamic practices.

Though extensive Nadel's research on this subject appears to be, he does not adequately discuss the role played by some of the Nupe rulers under Tsoede dynasty. An example of this was *Etsu* Jibril (1746 – 1759) who was believed to have attempted making Islam a state religion-an attempt which Sultan Mohammed Bello of Sokoto recognized and commented on thus:

There was a certain just Sarki (king) Jibrilu who ruled over them (the Nupe) in former times. Islam spread because of him. And they hated him because of his firmness and strict observance of the religion. They disposed him and installed one who agreed with them in their folly and shamelessness.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> S. F., Nadel, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam on a West African Chiefdom*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., (1954).

<sup>27</sup> I. I., Ndatsu, "The Spread of Islam in Nupe 1400-1790". History Departmental Seminar Paper, Bayero University, Kano, April 6, 1976, p.9.

In the same vein, the work under review does not mention the activities of an important and renowned indigenous Islamic Scholar and reformer in Nupeland, Sheikh Abdulrahman Mohammed Sherif (*Tsatsa*), who by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had begun his jihadist activities in Nupeland. The present research work will attempt to address these shortcomings.

(v) S.F. Nadel, “Gunu: A fertility Cult of the Nupe in Northern Nigeria”,<sup>28</sup> discusses the importance of traditional religious systems, with particular reference to *Gunu* Cult, believed to be a “fertility” cult among the pre – Islamic Nupe people. The *Gunu* cult was one of the few cults nationally worshiped throughout Nupeland, particularly among the *Bini* sub-group. It was commonly known by every section of the land – hence becoming a universal characteristic of Nupe culture.

---

<sup>28</sup>S.F., Nadel, “Gunu: A Fertility Cult of the Northern Nigeria”, *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (JRAI)*, 47, 1937, pp. 91-130.

The importance of this cult in the socio – cultural and economic lives of the Nupe of old has been emphasized in this work. These include keeping people in check, instilling the spirit of awe, reverence and obedience to constituted authorities – political and religious. The work also discusses the genesis or the origin of the *Gunu* cult, surrounding on a mysterious stranger “who came to Nupeland and settled in Ebwagi (or to use the Hausa name Lemu), a village on the border of Beni (Bini) and Gbari (Gbagyi)”. Having lived in Nupeland for a long time and having been treated very well by the people, the man became leprous and died later. In line with the custom of the Nupe then, the dead leper was not buried in the village, but was dragged by a rope tied around his feet, to a nearby hill in the bush where he was abandoned. A few days later, the body was discovered to the surprise of the villagers, suspecting that God – *Soko*, himself, must have buried the corpse. The supposed burial site was later realized to have been covered with a patch of “pure white sand”, suggesting that the dead leper must have been a pure or holy man, (*Walii*), who must have been a powerful magician, who could “conquer diseases...” and create human and land fertility.

This work is very useful for this research, especially with regards to our discussion on the socio – cultural aspects of the pre – Jihad period of the Nupe. Certain areas of the work under review however, may require clarifications, especially with regard to the “patch of white sand” symbolizing – holiness, as well as what Nadel calls *Gunu* “hill” – “*Pati Gunu*”, in or near Ebwagi (Lemu).

(vi) S.F Nadel, “The Gani Ritual in Nupe: A Study in Social Symbiosis”<sup>29</sup>, discusses *Gani* ceremony as an important socio-cultural annual event in Kutigi town and its environs. The genesis of the ceremony has been traced to Borno area whose immigrants came to settle in Kutigi town in central Nupeland towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is traditionally believed that the practice of *Gani* had been going on in Borno area. It is stated in the work under review that, the *Gani* ritual belongs essentially to the class of ceremonials anthropologist have come to know as *rites de passage*. Nadel claims that the ritual is circular rather than religious in its emphasis, its main theme, being the periodical reconstitution of the male age – grades.

Generally speaking, there existed in Nupe of old three major age-group system. They were the,

Children age-group – *Ena-dzakangizhi* (10-15 years)

Young men-group – *Ena-gbarufuzhi* (15-20 years) and

Old men-group – *Ena-nusazhi* (20 years and above, including married men).

Each of these age-groups had group head – *Etsu* or King and patron or ‘grandfather’ of the *Etsu – Ndakotsu* looking after the activities of the various groups. The importance of the various groups in the arrangements and organization of the three – day *Gani* ritual ceremony has been emphasized. So also was the symbiotic social relationship that existed between the *Benu* – Borno immigrants who introduced the *Gani* festival and those other Nupe groups found in Kutigi and its environs – aboriginals – *Kintsozhi*, the hunters – *Ndachezhi* and the freed slaves of Yoruba origin – the *Konu*.

---

<sup>29</sup> S.F., Nadel “The Gani Ritual in Nupe: A Study in Social Symbiosis”, *Africa*, Vol. 19(3), 1949, pp. 77-186?

This work is relevant to this research work, especially as it relates to the socio-cultural practices of the Nupe which, to some extent have continued to hold sway in Kutigi and its environs. However, Nadel may not be correct to view the *Gani* ritual as being secular rather than religious. The ritual combines both, as some aspects of the festival depict some elements of Islamic practices. After all, those said to have been the origins of the *Gani* ceremony are believed to have been Muslim clerics and traders from the Borno area who came to settle in some parts of Nupeland before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad.

(vii) S. F. Nadel, “Social Symbiosis and Tribal Organization”,<sup>30</sup> discusses the type of symbiotic relationship that existed among various originally distinct and separate ethnic or cultural groups that formed the population of Kutigi town in central Nupeland in the past. The work identifies four different groups as

1. The Kintsozhi (the original owners of the land), who were of the pure Nupe group.
2. The Ndachezhi (hunters), who were also considered pure aboriginal Nupe, but who came from another village across the hills to meet the first group already settled in Kutigi.
3. The Benu, who migrated from Borno area to settle and found a ruling dynasty in Kutigi around the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A good numbers of such migrants were Muslim scholars, clerics and traders. They later gained political and economic supremacy over the other sections in Kutigi and its neighbours.

---

<sup>30</sup>S. F. Nadel, “Social Symbiosis and Tribal Organization”, *MAN*, Vol. 38, No. 85, 1938, pp. 85 – 90.

4. The fourth group was the *Konu* (prisoners of wars and freed slaves of Yoruba origin). This group eventually became completely Nupe – ized like the *Benu*, enjoying the same social, economic and cultural rights. They are said to have introduced into Nupeland the Yoruba art of weaving and indigo dyeing.

This work is useful to this research, especially when considered against the role each confederating unit in the population of Kutigi had played in the emergence of the town. It is also important to us when discussing the economy of Nupeland, as well as the sources of early Islamic influence on the Nupe before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in Northern Nigeria. The activities of the migrants opened a gate – way of trade and commerce between Nupe and Borno lands using the Trans – Saharan trade routes.

#### **Michael Mason’s Works**

Like Nadel, Mason has also done an in-depth study of Nupe society and aspects of political developments. Among such works are:

- (i) M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History”<sup>31</sup>, discusses political history of Nupeland with emphasis on the Kingdom’s 19<sup>th</sup> century political transformation. He discusses how the Nupe Kingdom under Tsoede’s descendants became factionalized following succession disputes between the factions towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

---

<sup>31</sup>M., Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History”, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1970.



This situation created opportunity for the emigrant Fulbe Clerics/Jihadists to establish emirates in Nupeland in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which have since continued to hold sway. Mason discusses the means by which the rule of the emirates was extended and consolidated and the emergence of the emirate of Bida as one of the richest and most powerful in the Sokoto caliphate. Mason also discusses the relationship between Nupeland and the Royal Niger Company under Sir George Goldie and the eventual fall of the area to the European imperialists. The information provided in this work is useful, especially the circumstances that led to the movement away from Raba, which the Jihadists made as their administrative capital, to Bida in 1857 A.D, for the current study.

(ii) M. Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom*,<sup>32</sup> is a revised and published version of his PhD thesis reviewed above. Admitting some of his shortcomings in his doctoral thesis, Mason decides to revise his earlier work to take care of the inadequacies, especially as they relate to the less focus he has given to the economic aspects of Nupeland. He also admits his over-reliance on European sources and reports at the expense of other sources. As researcher and observer, he should have been more close and familiar with the area than the European visitors to the area, even though the latter might have had longer period of stay than he had.<sup>33</sup> The additional information provided by Mason in this work can be said to be more comprehensive on the study of Nupe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century than his PhD thesis. However, there is still a gap to be filled-a study of pre-Tsoede period of Nupe.

---

<sup>32</sup>Mason, *The Foundation of Bida kingdom*, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1981.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid*, p.2.

(iii) M. Mason, “The Tsoede Myth and Nupe Kinglists: More Political Propaganda”<sup>34</sup> attempts to analyze the Tsoede tradition as generally held among the Nupe. The work questions the authenticity of the tradition and its kinglists in Nupe history.

Mason urges that the Tsoede tradition should be rejected since, in his opinion, it was a fabrication of the members of the Bida ruling elite in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He further asserts that neither Tsoede nor his successors before the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century are demonstrably historical figures and that Nupe history can be fruitfully discussed without mentioning Tsoede and his successors. The real basis for a reconstruction of the Nupe past, he opines, comes from sources independent of those created by the colonial officials and anthropologists.<sup>35</sup> However, due to reactions of other scholars on Mason’s “extreme” views against the historicity of Tsoede, he later modified his views on early Nupe history. Despite the initial extreme views which we consider too harsh, the work is useful to our study.

Not surprisingly, Mason’s view point on Tsoede and his kinglists in this work under review has begun to attract attention from other scholars. Obayemi,<sup>36</sup> for instance, regards Mason’s argument as a reckless disregard for historical information. He considers Mason’s arguments and conclusion as unconvincing and, therefore, untenable. He says “I suspect his (Mason’s) conclusions were formulated before the arguments”.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> M., Manson, “The Tsoede Myth and Nupe Kinglists...”

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 109

<sup>36</sup> A. Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede Etsuzhi and Nupe History Before 1800A.D. Postgraduate Seminar Paper, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1978.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

Unlike Mason, Abdullahi Smith, advises that instead of outright rejection of historical issues professional historians should “not close an argument” or their minds to “new historical discoveries, interpretations and perspectives”.<sup>38</sup>

(vi) M. Mason, “Population Density and Slave Raiding”. The Case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria...<sup>39</sup>, discusses the conceptual meaning of the term ‘slave raiding’ against the general view that it was this practice that was responsible for low population density in the Middle Belt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mason argues that the British colonialists blew the issue of slave raiding as it affects population density in Middle Belt out of proportion to enable them conceal their own imperial ambitions.

According to him, the fact that there were raids in certain parts of the zone under reference, did not suggest that all the raids were meant for slave taking. There were others that were meant for ensuring payment of taxes and other dues. Even though some villages might have experienced population reduction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such should not have been exclusively hinged on ‘slave raiding’. Other factors might have been accountable for such, giving an example of a possibility of certain villages abandoning their areas to join others to form a more formidable defense against possible attacks from outside.

The importance of this work to this research lies in the fact that Nupeland, forming an essential part of the Middle Belt, did experience slavery and slave trade as part of the economic activities in the past.

---

<sup>38</sup>A. Smith, *A little New Light, Selected Historical Writings* Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 1987, P.VIII (Editorial Comments).

<sup>39</sup>M. Mason, “Population Density and Slave Raiding: The Case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria”, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 10(4) 1969 Pp. 551-564

(v) M. Mason, “The Antecedents of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic Government in Nupe...”<sup>40</sup> discusses efforts made by indigenous Islamic reformers in Nupeland before the emirate system of government was introduced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadists in the area. In this regard, Mason focuses on reformist activities of *Etsu* Jibrilu (1746-1759), one of the first indigenous Muslim rulers under Tsoede Dynasty to attempt popularizing Islam in Nupe kingdom. This ambition was to some extent, with resistance both from the ruling elite and the subjects, which eventually led to his deposition and exile to Kutigi where he died. The immediate successors to Jibrilu did not pursue the Islamic course like done by *Etsu* Jibrilu.

Another indigenous Islamic reformer, but not from Tsoede ruling family, which Mason mentions in this work is Sheikh Abdulrahman bn Muhammad Sharif. He describes him as a preacher and Islamic teacher. Like *Etsu* Jibrilu, Abdulrahman embarked on the purification of Islam in Nupeland. Towards this end, he travelled and settled in many places in Nupeland such as Mokwa, Akere, Agaie, Bida, among others.

The work is an important contribution to our understanding of the presence of Islam in Nupeland prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in the area. This is useful to this work, especially on the aspect of the penetration of Islam to Nupeland in the early time.

(vi) M. Mason, “Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate:1857-1901...”<sup>41</sup>, examines the importance of captive and client labour in the production process in Bida Emirate. He traces the existence of captive labour in the

---

<sup>40</sup>M. Mason, “The Antecedent of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic Government in Nupe”, *The International Journal of Africa Historical Studies*, Vol. 10(1) 1977 pp.63-76.

<sup>41</sup>M., Mason, “Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate”, *Journal of African History*, Vol. XIV (3) 1973 pp. 453-471.

economy of Nupeland to several centuries before the creation of emirate system at Bida in 1857. The practice however became intensified after 1857 by the Jihadists – following series of exploits especially to the north – eastern Yorubaland and Afenmai. Tributes collected from the conquered areas did not only strengthen the military, but also economic position of the Bida emirate.

Even though the work is essentially outside the scope of this research, it nevertheless provides information on the existence of slave labour in Nupe kingdom before the emergence of emirate system at Bida, which is within the scope of our work.

### **Ade Obayemi's Works**

Professor Obayemi has carried out some researches either exclusively or in collaboration with others on Nupe, or on the area in conjunction with other areas. They include:

- (i) Obayemi, A “Concerning Tsoede, *Etsuzhi* and Nupe History before 1800 A.D.<sup>42</sup>. In this work, Obayemi challenges Mason, on his (Mason’s) view on the importance and historicity of Tsoede and Nupe kinglists. As pointed out earlier,<sup>43</sup> Mason’s opinion on the status of Tsoede in Nupe history was criticized as not tenable. Obayemi’s criticism has thrown more light on the Tsoede figure. He argues that Tsoede provided an important figure in the political history of Nupe, without which the history of Pre-Fulani Nupe would not have been complete. He says that...”so important is the Tsoede tradition and the history of Nupe that we cannot leave it at that.”<sup>44</sup> Mason’s extensive works on Nupe relatively give less attention to the pre-1800 events than he has given to the 19<sup>th</sup> century

---

<sup>42</sup> A. Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede *Etsuzhi*”

<sup>43</sup> See Footnotes 35 & 36.

<sup>44</sup> Obayemi, Concerning Tsoede...” p.9

events. Apart from providing an important critique on Mason's works, Obayemi in this work attempts to discuss the early history of Nupe. We are for instance, referred to traditions which suggest the existence of pre-Tsoedian Kingdom and the aboriginals called "*Epazhi*" who were described as huge elements (beyond human stature) whose 'ears' were as large as 'elephants'. Such elements are said to have gone into extinction, leaving remains of their town near a place called 'Wunangi'<sup>45</sup> which according to one tradition, lies between the present-day Katcha and Eggan towns of the present-day Niger and Kogi States respectively.<sup>46</sup>The Wunangi settlement has gone into extinction, leaving relics of early human habitation – broken pots, signs of fortification walls, among others. To prove this would require the services of oral historians, archaeologists and linguists.

Obayemi's attempt in the work under review to go into the early history of Nupe is highly commendable. His response to attempt(s) by some writers on Nupe to ignore some fundamental historical facts should be an eye opener and a challenge for further field investigation into the area. This is more so when he (Obayemi) himself admits that more needs to be done to be able to have a more comprehensive study of the culture history of early Nupeland. This essentially forms a motivating factor for this study, especially when one considers Obayemi's conclusion thus:

We await, with keen interest the comprehensive study of the culture history of the old Nupe polity, but even if that is yet to be effected, we cannot acquiesce to an attitude that things are "unknowable" especially when the real issues have not been examined. One hopes the challenge is accepted fairly soon.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup>Obayemi, *op.cit* p.9

<sup>46</sup> Oral Evidence-Musa Agaie, 48 years, Interviewed on 3/4/13 at Suleja

<sup>47</sup>Obayemi., *op.cit* p.18

(ii) A. Obayemi, “The Yoruba and the Edo-Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600”,<sup>48</sup> discusses the nature of relations that existed between the Edo and the Yoruba peoples, as well as between the Nupe and Oyo in the olden days. It examines the extent to which Nupe of old related politically, economically and socio-culturally with its neighbours, especially with old Oyo Empire. This gives us an understanding of the early history of the areas, such that it might be possible to propose a “common ancestry”.

This is informative to our work. The political dimensions of the work are fundamental, especially as it relates to the origin of the Alafinate.

(iii) A. Obayemi, “Kakanda: A People, A History and An Identity”<sup>49</sup>, discusses the origin and location of the people called Kakanda. Also discussed was the relationship of the group with the Nupe and Igala. Of particular importance to us in this study was the relationship between the Nupe and Kakanda. It is argued that the Kakanda had been part of Nupe from their early history, the only difference, probably being dialect. This is important to our study of Nupe beyond the emergence of Tsoede in Nupeland.

---

<sup>48</sup> A. Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600” in. J.F.A Ajayi, and M. Crowther, (eds) *History of West Africa*, Vol.2 London: Longman, 1981, Pp.190-197.

<sup>49</sup> A. Obayemi, “Kakanda: A People, A History, An Identity”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.IX (3), 1978, pp. 1-21

(iv) A. Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area”<sup>50</sup>, discusses pre-1800 Nupe along with other peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence area. These include the Igala, Bassa, Komo, Idoma, Koro, Igede and Agatu...<sup>51</sup>. He discusses Nupe in this work in the wider linguistics sense including the Ebe, Kyede, Bassa-Nge, Gbedegi, Dibo and Kakanda under the Nupe heading. Both the historic antecedents of the Nupe and other groups in the confluence area have been discussed. A very important information which is useful for the current study rests on the fact that there evolved a polity with leaders and their staff of office in Nupeland long before the emergence of Tsoede or Edegi<sup>52</sup>. He argues that what Tsoede did was to bring about a revolution reflected in the unification of the hitherto ‘independent’ or semi-independent twelve *Bini* towns or city-states of the Nupe speaking peoples to establish a powerful independent Nupe kingdom which became the core of one of the most powerful autochthonous states of the Nigerian area<sup>53</sup>.

#### **A. A. Idrees’s Works**

Late Idrees, can be said to be one of the major indigenous writers on Nupe history, especially on its political aspects. Among his works are:

(i) A.A. Idrees, *Political Change and continuity in Nupeland: Decline and Regeneration of Edegi Ruling Dynasty...*<sup>54</sup>, which examines the political developments in the Nupe-speaking areas in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The work gives particular emphasis on the fall and regeneration of the indigenous ruling dynasty established by

---

<sup>50</sup> A. Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area” in Obaro, I (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd. 1980

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, P.144

<sup>52</sup> Obayemi “Kakanda: A People Pp 154-155

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, P.155

<sup>54</sup> A. A. Idrees, *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland: Decline and Regeneration of Edegi Ruling Dynasty*, Ibadan: Caltop Publications, (Nig.) Ltd., 1998.



Tsoede. The scope of this work covers both pre and colonial periods. It examines the political instability arising from succession disputes among members of the Nupe ruling class which led to factionalization of the kingdom into “*Gwagbazhi*” and *Yissazhi*”. As would be expected, this division weakened the strength and unity of the kingdom a situation which the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadists very well exploited to establish their supremacy and dynasty-replacing the oldindigenous Nupe dynasty established by Tsoede. This work is an important contribution to our understanding of the political developments in Nupeland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is useful to this writer. However, the work does not discuss in detail the pre-Tsoede period of Nupe history since his emphasis was on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>centuries political developments. We intend to take care of this gap.

(ii) A. A. Idrees, “The Aganchu of Kakanda: A Preliminary Survey of the Origin and Development” ...,<sup>55</sup> describes the Kakanda as riverine dwellers engaged mainly in fishing and canoe ferrying, whose founders are said to be migrants. Initially Idrees tells us that the Kakanda were under the control of Igala kingdom before they subsequently came under the emirate of Bida. This work is informative and useful to our research. It provides us with information on the Kakanda-Nupe relations on one hand and Kakanda-Igala on the other in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, such relationships must have been established long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, contrary to what Idrees has made us to understand. There is archaeological and sociological evidence suggesting earlier trade and commercial relations between the groups which far pre-dated the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kay

---

<sup>55</sup> A. A. Idrees, “The Aganchu of Kakanda: The Origin and Development of a Riverine Ruling Dynasty”, in, Z.O. Apata and Y. Akinwumi (eds.), *The Groundwork of Niger – Benue Confluence History*, Ibadan: Cresthill Publishers Ltd., 2011, pp. 104-114.

Williamson's studies<sup>56</sup> for instance, show that there had been linguistic relationship between the Kakanda and the Nupe from their early history.

(iii) A.A Idrees, "Fishing and Canoe Ferrying Among the Nupe in Central Nigeria..."<sup>57</sup>, discusses the major occupations of the riverine dwellers-the *Kyadya*. Idrees informs us about the evolution of a political system for effective control of their area. *Kuta* the head of the river was both the political and spiritual leader. He was assisted by appointed councilors.

The work is useful to this study in the sense that it gives us an insight into the economic, political and socio-cultural activities of the *Kyadya* in the early past. It also shows the evolution of an independent polity by this Nupe sub-group in the early period of Nupe history which proves our claim of the existence of independent polities in Nupeland prior the emergence of Tsoede.

**Saidu Ibrahim's** *The Nupe and their Neighbours from 14th century...*<sup>58</sup>, gives us information on the Nupe and their relationship with their neighbours. These include the Gbagyi, Kamuku, Ebira, Kontagora, Kambari and Dakarkari areas. The work also contains information on the coming of Mallam Dendo (Manko) and the establishment of Fulbe ruling dynasty in Nupeland which replaced the once famous indigenous Nupe Kingdom founded by Tsoede. The reasons leading to the fall of this dynasty are discussed. Establishment of other Emirates, Lafiagi, Agaie, Lapai, and Tsonga in Nupeland also engages the attention of this book, as well as the fall of Bida to the British

---

<sup>56</sup> K. Williamson, "Indigeneous Languages of the Benue-Congo Region: Their Classification and its Implication for Prehistory" Paper Presented to the Conference on Confluence Nigerians at Lokoja, Sept. 27, 1987 pp. 2-3.

<sup>57</sup> A. A. Idrees, "Fishing and Canoe-Ferrying among the Nupe in Central Nigeria: A Cultural Historical Perspective". Ife Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies, No.4, 1993 pp. 72-82.

<sup>58</sup> I. Saidu, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from 14<sup>th</sup> Century*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, (Nig.) Ltd., 1992

in 1897. These and other information provided in the work are useful for this study. However, considering the periodization of Saidu's work, one would have expected a more detailed discussion on pre-Tsoede and Tsoede periods of Nupe History. The emphasis in the work appears to be on the happenings and developments in Nupeland between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The work does not contain references or footnotes, even though the author mentions some of his sources in his preface. The work is a conflation of written and oral sources which the author compiled. It needs to be used with other sources.

**I. S. Jimada's Works** on Nupe exclusively, or in conjunction with other areas include,

(i) I.S Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background 1810-1898..."<sup>59</sup>. This work is an M.A Thesis submitted to the Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. It discusses the genesis and historical antecedents of the establishment of Patigi emirate and the present ruling dynasty out of the old Nupe kingdom. This creation can be said to be circumstantial. It was done by the British to compensate the *Yissazhi* faction of the eclipsed Nupe dynasty for their support to the Royal Niger Company against Bida which led to its (Bida's) defeat in 1897.

This work is important contribution to the study of Nupe history generally. The author's discussion on many aspects is not limited to Patigi alone, but applicable to other parts of Nupeland. Of particular importance to this study is the information provided on the political, economic, socio-religious activities in pre-Jihad Nupeland.

---

<sup>59</sup> I.S. Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background 1810-1898", M.A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, 1991.

(ii) I.S Jimada, “The External Relations of the Nupe Kingdom and Emirate C.1650-1850 with Special Reference to the Alafinate of Oyo and its Successor States...”<sup>60</sup>, discusses to some extent, the early history of Nupeland and its relationships with the old Oyo Empire and the north western part of Yorubaland. The common environmental and geographical factors which facilitated relations between the two areas are discussed. The work is important to this study especially considering the period of the study. In addition to the scope of Jimada’s work, this work examines Nupe’s external relations with other neighbours not extensively discussed by Jimada. Such neighbors include, Igala and Kambari ethnic groups.

(iii) I.S Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba C.1275-1897...*<sup>61</sup> is a published work which contains most of the author’s Master’s and Doctoral thesis, the little difference being the scope. While the previous works just reviewed cover 1810-1898 and 1650-1850, respectively, this one attempts to discuss the earlier part of Nupe history which our study finds very useful even though ours will cover a wider scope not limited to one particular Nupe neighbor.

Other works by Jimada, though not exclusively on Nupe, but contain in one way or the other useful information for this study includes:

(iv) I.S Jimada, “The Environment and the Early Peopling of the Middle Niger Basin Area”<sup>62</sup>. Of particular importance in this work to us is the information on the role of environment on human history in terms of formation of human culture, settlement

---

<sup>60</sup> I.S.Jimada, “The External Relations of the Nupe Kingdom and Emirate C1650-1850 with Special Reference to the Alafinate of Oyo and its Successor States”. Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, 2001.

<sup>61</sup> I. S. Jimada, *Nupe and the Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba C.1275-1897*, Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical research, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), 2005.

<sup>62</sup>I. S. Jimada, “The Environment, and the Early Peopling of the Middle Niger Basin Area” *Lapai Journal of Central Nigerian History*, Vol. 1 2007, pp.15-21.

patterns, economic activities and state formation. Jimada's discussion on the economic and agricultural value of the Niger River and its tributaries is also important to our study.

Nupeland forms a greater part of the area under discussion.

(v) I.S Jimada., "Some Reflections on the Early History of the Peoples of the Middle Niger and Upper Ogun River areas before 1500",<sup>63</sup> emphasizes the importance of oral, archaeological, linguistics, ecological and ethnological evidence in determining and understanding the origin and early history of the peoples of the Middle Niger and Upper Ogun Areas. These, according to him, contradict the established traditions which emphasize Hamitic hypothesis of origin from outside their original homelands, the Far East and from a single ancestor. Nupeland which is our area of study forms an essential part of the middle Niger area. The traditionally held and accepted opinion on the origins of early peoples in the areas claiming their origin from the Far East now stands challenged. Archaeological findings demonstrate that the peoples of these areas, both the indigeneous and migrant groups, have inhabited their homeland for several millennia. This information is useful to our study, especially when discussing the theories of traditions of origin of the Nupe. However, from the title of this work under review, Jimada's discussion is centered essentially on the Nupe who share borders with the North-western Yoruba. Discussion on the central Nupeland appears minimal. Our study takes this into account.

---

<sup>63</sup>I. S. Jimada, "Some Reflections on the Early History of the Peoples of the Middle Niger and the Upper Ogun River Areas before 1500. *ZAHIR: Zaria Historical Research Journal* of the Department of History. Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), vol. 1 2001, pp. 1-8.

**Ismaila Danjuma's**, *Nupe in History 1300-date...*,<sup>64</sup> would appear to be a comprehensive study on Nupe undertaken by an insider. Like some of the other works reviewed previously, it discusses various aspects of Nupe history, ranging from socio-cultural, religious economic and political organizations, as well as the judicial system and educational development.

The information provided in this work, especially on the political, economic and religious activities before and after the emergence of Tsoede in Nupe has, to a certain extent, some bearing and therefore useful to our study. One observes however, that the work lacks in-depth discussion on the pre-and Tsoede periods considering the periodization of the work. More emphasis seems to be on the Jihad and post-Jihad periods which relatively enjoy more literature than the preceding eras. The author does seem to share the opinion that there hardly was a kingdom in Nupe before the 15<sup>th</sup> century when he says: "Right from 15<sup>th</sup> century when Nupe kingdom came into existence up till the colonial conquest...<sup>65</sup>. The scope of Ismaila's book in the view of this writer, appears too wide to allow for more detailed discussion on issues raised.

**Sule Mohammed's**, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 AD...*<sup>66</sup>, is a revised and published work of the author's doctoral thesis of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, titled "Historical Development of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D". The work discusses in detail the genesis and processes that led to the emergence of emirate system of government under the Jihadists in Nupe in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also examines the Islamic reformist activities led by Shehu Abdulrahman Muhammad Sheriff

---

<sup>64</sup> D., Ismaila, *Nupe in History 1300-date*, Jos: Olawale Publishing Co. (Nig.) Ltd., 2002.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, P. 16

<sup>66</sup> S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D* Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2011.

which preceded the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad in Nupeland. The Fulbe, led by Mallam Dendo established its administrative capital at Raba after overthrowing the Nupe ruling dynasty established by Tsoede-taking advantage of the succession disputes and eventual factionalization of the kingdom into opposing camps.

This work has provided useful information for our study, especially its examination of the circumstances that led to the establishment of Bida as capital in 1857. Also relevant to our study is the author's discussion on the political, economic and socio-religious systems and activities in Nupeland prior to and during the early kingdom periods.

(ii) Sule M., "Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbours to 1898..."<sup>67</sup> among other things, essentially discusses the extent of language closeness as well as the relations between the Nupe and Gbagyi groups. The work identifies linguistic affinities and trade as major area of closeness between them. The two groups share common boundaries – which start from the Niger – Benue confluence area, extending northwards to Zungeru area. However, while the Nupe are mainly found in the Middle Niger region on both sides of River Niger from the confluence area to the frontiers Borgu, the Gbagyi on the other hand, are mostly found on a very large expanse of land from the Niger – Benue confluence, extending northwards to Igabi and Giwa areas in Zaria region. The occupations of the two groups appear to have influenced their settlement patterns. For instance, the major occupations of the Nupe include, farming, fishing, trade and canoe –

---

<sup>67</sup>Sule M., "Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbours to 1898", in, Idrees, A. A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, Vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Ltd, 2002, pp. 513 – 532.

ferrying, while those of the Gbagyi, who settled in the hilly areas include, hunting, cattle rearing and farming.

Linguistically, Sule shows how Nupe and Gbagyi languages are genetically related. Both languages together with Epira and Gade have been classified in the same unit in the Kwa sub – family of the Niger – Congo group of languages. This classification showing close relations suggests a possible ancestral origin in the Niger – Benue confluence area from where the languages might have dispersed several thousand years ago. To demonstrate the linguistic genetic affinity between Gbagyi and Nupe groups, Sule provides in this work, many examples of the language sounds and meanings found between the two groups, as shown in pages 516 and 517. Other areas of relationships between the groups include, trade, slave raiding and territorial expansion.

The work is informative and to some extent, relevant to the present research work. Of particular relevance in this regard is the discussion on language classification and inter – group relations between Nupe and Gbagyi groups in the early past.

(iii) Sule M., “The Significance of the Emirate of Bida in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1833 – 1897...”<sup>68</sup> discusses essentially the economic importance of Bida emirate in the sustenance of Sokoto Caliphate. According to him, the emirate of Bida rose to become one of the most prominent of the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. The importance of Bida’s location, especially as it affects trade and commerce, has been emphasized in the work – being a gateway between the Savannah North and the Yoruba forest zone in the

---

<sup>68</sup>Sule M., “The Significance of the Emirate of Bida in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1833 – 1897”, in Wuam, T., and Salahu, M. ,L. (eds.) *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB)University Press, 2014, pp. 50 – 70.



South. This led to the rise of important commercial towns, as Raba, Mokwa and Kulfo, among others.

The work stresses the circumstances which influenced the transfer of the emirate capital from Raba to Bida in 1857 after the eclipse of the Nupe ruling dynasty and the official appointment of the first Pullo emir – Usman Zaki in 1833. Series of efforts made by Gwandu, to which part of the Caliphate Bida belonged, to resolve intra – leadership crises among the descendants of Dendo before the movement of the capital to Bida, was discussed in the work. The population of Bida as the new capital began to swell following, among others, movement of various artisans and craftsmen – blacksmiths, brass-smithers and glass workers, settled at different quarters of the town, producing different products for both domestic and outside consumption.

The Jihadists at the new emirate capital, are said to have tapped other resources within and outside the emirate to strengthen the economic, political and military position of the emirate, which, in turn, contributed to the economic, military and religious greatness of the Sokoto Caliphate.

This work is useful to this research, especially, as it concerns the economic potentials in Nupeland before the establishment of the emirate system in the area.

(iv) Sule, M., “Some Notes on Pre-colonial Gbagyi Environment and Economic Activities...<sup>69</sup>” examines the pre – colonial Gbagyi environment and economic activities, which, according to him, has received very little attention from earlier writers. The work

---

<sup>69</sup>Sule M., “Some Notes on Pre-Colonial Gbagyi Environment and Economic Activities”, in, Wuam, T. and Salah, M. L. (eds.), *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) University Press, 2014, pp. 201 – 213.

discusses the Gbagyi environment in terms of land, mineral resources, rivers, rainfall, climate, flora and fauna. Sule assesses Gbagyi environment being attractive to human settlements. The land is rich in game, fertile and blessed with water and mineral resources, which provide for a number of economic activities. These include farming, hunting, fishing and crafts, among other economic activities.

The work concludes that to a large extent, the Gbagyi made good use of the opportunities provided by their environment in their attempt at sustaining themselves prior to the advent of colonial period.

The work, to some extent, useful to this study. Both Gbagyi and Nupe ethnic groups share boundaries, economic transactions in the past, cultural and linguistic affiliations which promoted and have continued to promote inter – group relations.

**S.T Sidi's**, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland: The Emirate of Bida as a Case Study-1832-1857...*,<sup>70</sup>, discusses the political, socio-economic institutions and religious belief systems in Nupe prior to the introduction of Islam into Nupeland. The penetration of Islam and indigeneous reformist activities of *Etsu* Jibrilu and Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Muhammad Sherif, as well as the Jihadists onslaughts on Nupeland are examined. The factors responsible for the political instability in Nupeland prior to Mallam Dendo's arrival in the area and the consequences of such instability are discussed. Sidi also informs us in this work of the genesis of the movement of the capital of the Fulbe aristocracy from Raba to Bida in 1857 and the establishment of Emirate

---

<sup>70</sup>S.T.Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland: The Emirate of Bida as a Case Study, 1832-1857*. Kaduna: Fembo Books and Graphics, 2000.

system of government as well as the institutionalization of the three Fulbe ruling houses in Bida as Usman Zaki, Muhammad Masaba and Umaru Majigi.

The work is useful for our research. It gives an insight into the factors leading to the eclipse of Tsoede dynasty and the emergence of a successor dynasty-the Fulbe in Nupe. However, based on periodization, the work does not provide detailed discussion on both pre-and Tsoede periods. This study will take this into account and fill the gap.

**Ndagi Abdullahi's**, *Nupe the Origin: How the Tribes in Nigeria Originated...*<sup>71</sup> and *Who are the Nupes?: The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identity*<sup>72</sup>. In these and other works by Ndagi, he tries to show how Nupe, in his own claims would seem to be the Origin of many groups and ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The author tries to refer us to authorities to support his claims, but fails to give detailed information on such authorities by way of foot or endnotes or detailed references. One would not also know whether or not the sources referred to have been quoted within or out of context. For, instance, such renowned authorities like Professor Ade Ajayi, F. Showande, I. A. Akinjogbin, S.O. Biobaku, A.E Afigbo, Gloria; H.R Palmer, Abdullahi Smith, and L. Frobenius, among many others, have been mentioned as having written in their scholarly works referring to Nupe as the 'origin' of Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Edo Benin, Jukun and Igala<sup>73</sup> among others. The pieces of evidence provided for Ndagi's claims are not convincing beyond reasonable doubts, and therefore should be taken with utmost caution.

---

<sup>71</sup>A. Ndagi, *Nupe the Origin: How the Tribes in Nigeria Originated from Nupe, and Who are the Nupes?": The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identity*, respectively. Abuja and Washington D.C: Elemkpe Publishers.

<sup>72</sup> A. Ndagi, *Who are the Nupes?: The Evolving Definition of Nupe Identity*. Abuja and Washington D.C: Elemkpe Publishers.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid*, (2008) Back Page

Other interesting postulations are made by Ndagi on pre-Tsoede Nupe history. That prior to *Bini* Confederacy which preceded Tsoede era, there existed several kingdoms and civilizations in Nupeland. These include the “*Akanda*” ‘*Atagra*’ and ‘*Kisra*’ dynasties<sup>74</sup> which are said to have flourished in the area many centuries or even a millennium before the emergence of Tsoede<sup>75</sup>.

While one does not dismiss Ndagi’s claims outright as Abdullahi Smith referred to earlier<sup>76</sup> advises us against, such claims must be treated with caution. If anything at all, Ndagi, in our opinion, should have limited his arguments to the Middle Niger and Confluence areas. But for him to claim that “all the tribes in Nigeria originated from Nupe” without any impeccable, concrete and detailed historical, archaeological, linguistic and anthropological evidence appears improbable. For them to attract a more historical and scholarly status and credibility, they need to be subjected to further research and scientific proof. This is what this study intends to do in response to Ndagi’s challenge to modern scholars on Nupe history. He believes that little, if anything at all seems to be known on Nupe’s glorious past, and urges scholars to:

Concentrate and focus on these pre-Tsoede eras of Nupe in order to unearth the incredibly rich historical legacy of the Nupe Nation that is virtually unknown to the generality of humanity today.<sup>77</sup>

**Leo Frobenius’s**, *The Voice of Africa* Vol. 11...,<sup>78</sup> reports on various aspects of Nupe history, especially its socio-cultural, political systems and inter-group relations. He attempts to contribute to the discussion on Pre-Tsoede phase of Nupe history. He dates

---

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid* (2012), pp.40 &45.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>76</sup> See footnote 37

<sup>77</sup>Ndagi (2012) *op.cit*, P.50

<sup>78</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa, Vol. II, Being an Account of the Travels of the German Explorer into Inner Africa-1910-1912* (Trans) Rudolf Blind, London, 1913.

Tsoede's emergence to the year 1435 with no evidence to prove that. He seems to support the hamatic hypothesis which claims that the Nupe originated from the Far East. He tries to link the Pre-Tsoede dynasty with the Kingdom of 'Napata' in the Nubian part of the Nile River, claiming that USSU? *Etsu* 'Napata' the first king of Nupe came from the east<sup>79</sup>. He describes the external and diplomatic relations established between the Nupe kings of the earlier period with the Christian Emperor of Byzantium in faraway Constantinople (Istanbul).

The information in this traveler's report on early history of Nupe inspires this study to investigate particularly his claim of a mighty kingdom (prior to the emergence of Tsoede) called '*El-Derado*' on the lower Niger<sup>80</sup>, cutting across Nupeland, by a very powerful ruler or emperor whom Ndagi calls Isah or Yisah. Frobenius is said to have obtained this information from the writings of an 11<sup>th</sup> century Arab traveller and historian, Seno EL-Bakri to the effect that such a magnificent Nupe kingdom was already flourishing as early as 1068 A.D<sup>81</sup> hence the starting point of this study. As will be seen later, El-Bakri's information to Frobenius seems to have been supported by other Arab Scholars, such as Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn Battuta.

#### **(IV) JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH**

There is no doubt that abundant literature exists on Nupeland from the time of Tsoede through the intervention of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadists to the European conquest and their eventual colonization of the area. Most of the documented works, especially those from the earliest Europeans to visit Nupeland, such as Hornemann and Clapperton,

---

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid*, PP.364-365

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid*

portrayed it as if it had no history before the era of Tsoede. This is not surprising, considering the European thinking that Africa did not have history to write on before the coming of Europeans. Like Professor Hugh Trover-Roper referred to previously<sup>82</sup>, a renowned Scottish philosopher-David Hume, writing in 1768, is quoted to have commented on Africa-which by extension includes Nupeland thus:

I am apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than the white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No indigenous manufacture among them, no arts, no science<sup>83</sup>.

Comparatively, the pre-Tsoede era and its civilization seem grossly under studied in almost all ramifications. This, however, does not mean, in sharp contrast to Trover-Roper and other Europeans who belong to the same school of thought, that Africa generally and Nupe in particular, do not have ancient historic past and civilization. It is against the background of such erroneous assertions, that one feels challenged to undertake this research to, among other things, prove wrong such assertions and to put things in their proper historical perspectives. This would be the basis or justification for our examination or re-examination of our ancient past with a view to reconstructing it to enable us fill the gap between the two epochs. The assumption that the Tsoedian and colonial periods marked a watershed in Nupe history has been examined against the earlier period.

From our review of literature earlier on, one observes a missing link between the early and contemporary history of Nupe. Both Obayemi and Ndagi referred to

---

<sup>82</sup> See footnote 18.

<sup>83</sup>O.E Uya, "Trends and Perspectives in African History"... PP. 1-3

previously<sup>84</sup> have challenged researchers and scholars on Nupe history to fill the apparent gap, hence this study. It is the contention of this work that pre-Tsoede Nupeland extended far and wide beyond the confines of not only its immediate neighbors, but to other places within, and most likely beyond, Nigerian area. Emerging new theories from recent studies by Obayemi, Ismaila, Jimada, Ndagi,<sup>85</sup> among others, seem to suggest that Nupeland, long before the emergence of Tsoede, might have evolved important civilizations and polities which had significantly impacted on other parts of Nigeria as well as central Sudanese empires of old.

## **(V) SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The motivating factors for determining the commencement date for this work comes from series of information provided by a number of sources, pointing to the fact that by 1068 AD<sup>86</sup>, the Nupe as a people and community had evolved a formidable and enviable polity and socio – economic systems. Another one is to prove or otherwise the claims from certain quarters that Tsoede who emerged in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries as an important phenomenon in Nupe history, was the “progenitor and beginning” of Nupe history. It is true that the history of the Nupe like any other Nigerian group can be divided into two distinct periods, namely; “pre – history” and “history”<sup>87</sup>. According to this source, the former period dates from the earliest times to 14<sup>th</sup> century while the latter

---

<sup>84</sup> See footnotes 49 and 81 respectively.

<sup>85</sup> A. Obayemi, “ Concerning Tsoede, *Etsuzhi...*”; D. Ismaila, *Nupe in History...*; I.S Jimada, “Some Reflections on the Early...”; I.S Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution...* and A. Ndagi, *Who are the Nupes?*, respectively.

<sup>86</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, p. 365. Frobenius sources of information include some Arab geographers, travellers and historians, like Ibn Mas’ud, Ibn Khaldum, among others; Obayemi in his “The Yoruba and Edo – speaking peoples and their Neighbours before 1600”, J.F.A Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History in Africa*, London: Longman, 1976, pp. 235-236, suggest existence of pre – Tsoede dynasty in Nupeland.

<sup>87</sup> Carolyn N. E, “Gender and Nupe Economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, in, Wuam, T. and Salahu, M. L., (eds.), *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Press, 2014, pp. 147-148.

periods date from 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present. It is however very paramount to have systematic knowledge of the earliest past for the clarification of fundamental issues in the social, political, technological and economic activities of that period. The problem with the earliest period of the Nupe history is the paucity or dearth of documented or even oral source material at our disposal to enable us make a reasonable historical reconstruction of that period.

However, inference about Nupe in the remote past can only be deduced from archaeological and linguistic evidence. Though details of the political and socio – cultural organizations and practices of that period respectively maybe unknown to us, evidence obtained from such studies has proved the existence of human habitation in Nupeland far predating the emergence of Tsoede in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. It should be noted however, that little or no archaeological and linguistic research works have been carried out in the core Nupeland, references and deductions were made based on the results of such works carried out in the neighbourhood of Nupeland as has been shown later in this work<sup>88</sup>.

The termination date of this work – 1810 AD, marks a turning point in the history of the Nupe as people and their polity. It marked the beginning of what appears to be the Islamic reformist movements/campaigns in Nupeland. Secondly, the first Sokoto Jihadist expedition to Nupe to support an indigenous Nupe Islamic reformer – Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Sharif, against the Nupe army took place at that date. Thirdly it was in 1810 AD that the self – acclaimed *Etsu* Yikanko, regarded as a usurper by the descendants of Tsoede and a non – Muslim by the Jihadists, was killed at Mokwa town

---

<sup>88</sup> See pp. 60-61



by a combined force of the Nupe and the Jihadists. Fourthly, the popular ‘Ragada massacre’, in which *Etsu* Jimada, the arch – rival of *Etsu* Majiya at Raba, was killed together with most of his supporters by the allied forces of the latter and Dendo, took place in 1810 AD.

The above events were historically important not only because of the disintegration in the Nupe ruling dynasty, but also marked the “formal” intervention of the Jihadist under Mallam Dendo into the politics of Nupe kingdom; the resultant effect being the final eclipse of the indigenous Nupe dynasty established by Tsoede in the early part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the enthronement of a foreign one by the Jihadists in 1833. This made Nupeland to be part of a larger Sokoto Caliphate established over Northern Nigeria, as a result of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad.

This work considers the period of C. 1068-1810 AD crucial, considering the significant historical landmarks of the period. Between them can be noted major historical events. These ranges from political, socio – cultural and economic dimensions up to 1500 AD, through Tsoede period – 1500-1591, to post – Tsoede epoch – 1591-1810.

For proper understanding and conceptualization of the area of study, a brief knowledge of the geographical location of Nupeland may not be out of place here. A number of sources<sup>89</sup> have already described the location of Nupeland. It lies within the Middle Niger region. The Nupe are mostly found in the heart of Nigeria in the low basin formed by the valley of Rivers Niger and Kaduna. The land lies between 9<sup>0</sup>30 and 8<sup>0</sup>30

---

<sup>89</sup> S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, pp.1-11; M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> C...”; I.S. Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution...*, p.1; A. Obayemi, *The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples...*, pp.190-197; S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida...*, pp.1-2, among others.

N.L.<sup>90</sup> Generally speaking, two aspects of the physical geography of Nupeland seem to have dominated others. These are the size of rivers and the lowness of the land.

Nupeland is bounded in the North by Kambari and Kamuku ethnic groups, in the Northeast by the Gbagyi, in the West and Northwest by the Yoruba, Yawuri and Borgu and in the South by Ebira and Kakanda.<sup>91</sup> Chapter two of this work treats this aspect of geography and other related issues in greater detail.

## **(VI) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

For historical studies to be well conceptualized, the need for an articulated theoretical framework becomes imperative. Such a framework gives us a holistic understanding of a people and society on the social organization, political and economic life against the possible factors shaping their evolution and development. The history of Nupeland and that of its pre-Tsoede period in particular, requires such a theoretical perspective to enable us have a comprehensive knowledge of the area in terms of its evolution, identity and development.

Furthermore, an articulated theoretical framework as adopted for this study has helped to explain the interplay of multi-faceted physical, environmental and economic factors in the study area which can be said to have constituted the building blocks for the formation of subsequent socio-economic and political structures. Karl Marx<sup>92</sup> argues that the political ideological superstructures of a society have its origin in the character and development of that society's economic base. Against this background, this study adopts Political Economy and Functionalist Theories to explain Nupe identity and their

---

<sup>90</sup> S.F. Nadel, *op.cit*, P.1.

<sup>91</sup> S.T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland...*p.1, S. Muhammad *History of the Emirate of Bida...*, P.2.

<sup>92</sup> Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1997, p.1

evolution and development. Possible factors responsible for the evolution-physical, economic, political, among others, have been examined against the adopted theoretical framework.

### **The Political Economy Theory**

The free Encyclopedia<sup>93</sup> refers to political economy as the study of the conditions under which production or consumption within limited parameters was organized in the nation-states. It refers to different but related approaches to studying economic and related behaviours which range from the combination of economics with other fields such as sociology, anthropology, history, ecology, human geography, political science, among others. From this perspective, therefore, political economy can most commonly be referred to as interdisciplinary studies employed to explain how political institutions, the political environment and economic system influence each other. Thus, Charles S. Maier suggests that a political economy approach “interrogates economic doctrines to disclose their sociological and political premises”<sup>94</sup>.

Anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, among others, use political economy in referring not only to reigns of politics or economic values that emerge primarily at the level of states or regional governance, but also within smaller social groups and social networks<sup>95</sup>. The theory under discussion can be employed by historians, as this study does, to explore the ways in the past that persons and groups with common economic interest have used politics to effect changes beneficial to their interests. In summary, political economy theory is such that recognizes and thus works in conjunction with other

---

<sup>93</sup> Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.

<sup>94</sup> S. Mayer, Charles, *In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp.3-6

<sup>95</sup> Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.

fields to achieve desired goals and satisfaction, not primarily in the interest of individuals or group of persons, but that of cooperate body and community at large. For, according to Henry George, political economy is a particular kind of economy, which literally means the “economy which has relation to the community or state, to the social whole rather than to individuals”<sup>96</sup>.

Based on the above discussion, it can be seen that political economy theory takes into account other fields with it which works to achieve desired goals in an attempt to shape society and history. Political economy theory goes beyond economic determinism. Gabriel<sup>97</sup> would not want us to see political economy centering exclusively on the role of capitalism in shaping society and history. Instead, according to him, a more open-minded approach should be adopted to social causality in the creation of history. He argues that economic processes should work in conjunction with environmental, political and cultural processes in order to produce workable and sustainable society.

## **Functionalist Theory**

Ashley Crossman<sup>98</sup> describes functionalist theory or functionalism, as one of the theoretical perspectives in sociology. This, according to him, has its origin in the works of Emile Durkheim who is said to have been interested in how social order is possible or how society remains relatively stable. In the same vein, the Free Encyclopedia<sup>99</sup> defines functionalism as a building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at society through

---

<sup>96</sup> Henry, George, (Google Search) “The Meaning of Political Economy” *In...The Science of Political Economy...*

<sup>97</sup> S. Gabriel, *Introduction to Political Economy*, [https://www.metholyoke.edu/courses/sgraiel/politicalUeconomyUmain.thm\(2002](https://www.metholyoke.edu/courses/sgraiel/politicalUeconomyUmain.thm(2002) Accessed on 23/06/2013.

<sup>98</sup> Ashley, Crossman, former About.com Guide.

<sup>99</sup>Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (<file:///D:/structuralUfunctionalism.htm>).

a “macro-level orientation”,<sup>100</sup> which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, believing that society has evolved like organism that works towards the proper functioning of the body as a whole. Some functionalism theorists try to draw analogy between Biology and functionalist theory to enable us conceptualize the structure and function of social systems for the purpose of analyzing processes of evolution through mechanism of adaptation...<sup>101</sup>.

In functionalist theory therefore, order, stability and cooperation are essential prerequisites for social survival. Functionalism, like political economy theory interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole society. Each constituent part must perform its allocated function, if a society must survive. Ashley, Crossman believes that society is more than the sum of its parts, but rather each part of society must function for the stability of the whole society. He asserts,

The different parts are primarily the institutions of society, each of which is organized to fill different needs, and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. These parts all depend on each other<sup>102</sup>.

The above seems to emphasize the consensus and order that exist in society which focus on social stability and shared public values. This seems to suggest that any disorganization, arising from deviant behavior, disputes and non-cooperation can lead to change in the status-quo. For societies to endure, they at times need stability and internal cohesion to achieve the overall social equilibrium. Whenever one part of the societal components becomes dysfunctional, it has the potential to affect all other parts, hence

---

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>101</sup> Talcott Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory*, New York: The Free Press, 1975. DeRoss Deb, “The Structural Functional Theoretical Approach” (1) (<http://www.wise-online.com/objects/viewobject.aspx>). Id=1253404) Accessed, Feb, 24, 2012.

<sup>102</sup> Ashley, Grossman, *op.cit.*

creating social problems capable of bringing about socio-political change. Functionalist theory can therefore be seen as the network of statuses connected by associated roles. In this regard, the individual is significant not in and of himself, but rather in terms of his status, his positions in patterns of social relations, and the behaviours associated with his status<sup>103</sup>.

In summary, functionalist theory is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which sets out to interpret society as a structure with interrelated parts,<sup>104</sup> each of which is expected to carry out its assigned function towards the development and survival of the society as a whole.

The two theories-Political Economy and Functionalist examined above, have been adopted as our theoretical framework for this study. The study has adopted a holistic approach propounded by both theories to enable us look at the totality of social organizations, political and economic life with a view to explaining the interplay of factors towards the evolution of Nupe polity, their identity and possible contributions to their neighbours and other ethnic nationalities in the Nigerian area.

The application of the adopted framework is relevant, considering a number of interrelated factors which had and indeed, have continued to facilitate the development of Nupeland. Among such factors are the location and physical environment of Nupeland. Others are presence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna and their tributaries, abundant fertile land for the growth of variety of crops and other agricultural practices. There were hardly barriers to prevent accessibility to Nupeland from all corners due to the absence of major physical barriers. This aspect encouraged easy movement into or out of the land.

---

<sup>103</sup> Wikipedia, the Encyclopedia, *op. cit.*

<sup>104</sup> J.E. Goldthorpe, *An Introduction to Sociology*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Cambridge: University Press, Cambridge, 1974, P.142.

Nupeland also occupied a central position which provided conducive terrain for trading and commercial activities, as well as for large human settlement, which in turn, promoted political or state formations. Details of these are discussed in chapter two of this study.

## **(VII) METHODOLOGY**

As stated earlier, there may be inadequate documented resource material, especially on the pre-Tsoede era of Nupe history. This is common in most pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa. While this research depended on available documented source material, it has, to a very large extent, also relied on a wide range of primary, secondary and other sources in form of oral interviews, collection of oral traditions, archival sources, among others. The researcher embarked on visits to important historical centres, towns, villages- including some of those that have gone into extinction both within and outside Nupeland. The former, as expected required extensive library research, visits to Historical Documentation Centres, relevant Research Institutes, and Internet websites, among others. For the latter, let it be noted here that the importance of oral traditions, in the reconstruction of human society cannot be over emphasized. However, methods and techniques of collecting and handling of oral traditions as historical source material must be adhered to. Martine Jane<sup>105</sup> aptly captures this when he asserts that,

Oral traditions transmitted from past generations and recounted by African traditional historians were valid and important sources for historical reconstruction. Today, all historians of Africa profess to recognize the value of oral traditions, for their work and the necessity for careful collection of such traditions during present changing times.

---

<sup>105</sup> J. Martine, "Oral Traditions And African Historical Reconstruction", in, O.E. Uya, and E.O .Erim, (eds), *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, Ltd, 1984, pp 69-76.

In the same vein, D.P. Henige comes to a conclusion that, Oral traditions, archaeology and linguistics are nearly all that the historians of sub-Saharan Africa have to reconstruct history.<sup>106</sup>

The above assertions are no doubt correct, particularly when one is undertaking a study of predominantly non literate societies such as ours in Nigeria. However, as pointed out earlier, a lot of caution and care must be exercised in the use of this important source of historical reconstruction. This now brings us to the method and techniques of collection and utilization of this source material to ensure reliability, authenticity and dependability.

Among the requirements for workers going into the field of oral traditions include, the need to learn the language of the people (if possible) establishment of familiarity of the researcher with the community, and knowledge of the existing or some of the existing sources on the area of study<sup>107</sup>. Emphasizing the importance of this requirement, Professor Abdullahi Smith points out that a researcher working on oral traditions does not (only) engage himself in recording, but also in analysis and interpretation of the available information at his disposal<sup>108</sup>. In addition, the researcher on oral traditions must possess in Smith's view, "Special skills in historical research; interviewing, equipment operation, alertness...and empathy on the part of the interviewers"<sup>109</sup>.

---

<sup>106</sup> D.P. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Traditions*, London: Oxford University Press, London, 1984, pp.2-3

<sup>107</sup> H. Musa, "Methods and Techniques of Collecting Oral Traditions as Historical Source Material", Postgraduate Seminar Paper, History Dept. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, April, 1983, P.2

<sup>108</sup> A. Smith. "Considerations Relating to the Large Scale Recording of Oral Traditions", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN)*, Lagos, 1969, P.2

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.2.



From our examination, collection and handling of oral traditions are not easy task to accomplish. The task requires professional skill and patience. Both written sources and oral traditions are used in this study to complement each other. Much as the written sources might be dependable, care must be taken on solely relying on them especially, as Alagoa cautions, “those that are external in origin and external in their orientation”<sup>110</sup> and that’s why there may be need in some cases to use internal sources in the form of oral tradition in conjunction with written sources to reconstruct the history of early peoples and kingdoms in Africa.

In what appears to be in agreement with this, Professor Ayandele quoted in Martin Jane throws challenge to African scholars thus,

... in historical appreciation and use of oral traditions, oracles, myths, legends and work of arts... African scholars have an advantage over others and are more likely to get at the truth than non-Africans.<sup>111</sup>

## **(VIII) CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduces to us the general background to the study. This is aimed at providing a conceptual understanding of what the work is all about. Our discussion beginning from the statement of the research problem, through literature review, justification of the study, scope, theoretical framework and methodology have hopefully given us that conceptual understanding.

---

<sup>110</sup> E.J. Alagoa, “The Present State of Oral Traditional Studies, In ,O.E Uya, & E.O. Erim, (eds) *op.cit*, pp.33-37.

<sup>111</sup> Martine, Jane, *op.cit*, PP. 69-70

## CHAPTER TWO: ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE OF NUPELAND

### (I) INTRODUCTION

The importance of geography and environmental factors to the determination of a people's polity, economy, social and inter-group relations cannot be over emphasized. For, it is argued that "The geographical location of each group has been a major factor in the type and source of dominant influence that is experienced."<sup>112</sup> The land, climate, rivers, vegetation, fauna, among other environmental features, are critical determinants not only for the study of state formation, demographic and occupational profile, but also vital to human culture, settlement patterns and economic activity.<sup>113</sup>

The type of political systems – whether mini or mega – state structures adopted, or/and adapted, was to a large extent, dependent upon the environment of the people. It should however be noted that much as the environment plays crucial role in human and historical geography of all societies, man's ability to influence the natural setting of his environment to his advantage or otherwise, cannot be underrated. This demonstrates the dialectical relationship between man and his environment. For, "while environment plays a major role in human history, man also utilizes the environment for his benefits"<sup>114</sup>, because of his unique membership of the animal kingdom. Our attempt to study the early history of Nupeland which had, and still occupies a prominent political, social, economic and cultural position in Nigeria, cannot, therefore afford to ignore the

---

<sup>112</sup>R. K. Udo, "Environments and peoples of Nigeria; A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria", in, O. Ikime, (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educ. Books, 1980, pp.7 – 24.

<sup>113</sup>S. I. Jimada, "The Environment, and the Early Peopling of the Middle Niger Basin Area", *Lapai Journal of Central Nigerian History*, Vol.I (I) December, 2007, pp.13 – 21.

<sup>114</sup>S. I. Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background C1810-1898", M. A. Thesis, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991, pp.1 – 2.

significance of geography and environment in its evolution and transformation as we attempt to reconstruct its history in the early period.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on the geographical location of what used to be Nupe kingdom vis-à-vis the importance of geography in human activities in the area. Also discussed in the chapter are the Nupe sub-groups such as *Bini*, *Kyadya*, *Batachi*, *Kusopa*, *Gbedegi*, *Chekpan*, among others. Discussion of the language group of Nupe, together with some others, such as Gbagyi, Yoruba, Igala, Edo, and so on, as well as the traditions of origin of the Nupe, bordering on both diffusionist and anti-diffusionist hypothesis, engages the attention of this chapter, with the conclusion that the anti-diffusionist appears more historically plausible than the diffusionist. As discussed later in the chapter, such a conclusion was drawn on the basis of archaeological, linguistic, ethnographic and anthropological research findings. Our knowledge of the various subsections in this chapter gives us a conceptual understanding of the subsequent events and developments in our area of study.

## **(II) GEOGRAPHY**

A number of sources have already described the geographical location of Nupeland.<sup>115</sup> The people who are known today as Nupe occupy the geographical area lying in the North Central part of Nigeria. The area falls within the lower basins of Rivers Niger and Kaduna in the Middle Niger region. Udo describes the Niger region as extending from the Niger-Benue confluence at Lokoja in the south to Timbuktu in the

---

<sup>115</sup>S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, Oxford University Press, 1942, ppI-II; M. Mason “The Nupe of Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> C: A Political History”, Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham University, 1970; S. I. Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba-C.1275-1897*, Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2005; “Environment and the Peopling of the Middle Niger Basin Area”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigerian History*, Vol.I(I), Dec.2007, pp.13-21; S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Up, 2011, Pp.1-2, among others.

north, covering large tracts of land on both sides of the Niger River.<sup>116</sup> In the same vein, the area is described as being generally in the area of “low relief and abundant drainage, formed by the influence of the Niger River and its tributaries and distributaries...”<sup>117</sup> (measuring) not more than 140<sup>m</sup> in the low lying areas and not more than 600<sup>m</sup> in the highest points of the broken rocky hilly areas found here and there above the surrounding plains. Having a transitional climate, the region stands between the north and south as a zone of mixed culture, in which the food crops of the south are cultivated side-by-side with those of the north.

Nupeland (‘*Kin Nupe*’ as the Nupe call the land they occupy) is bounded in the North by the Kambari and Kamuku ethnic groups; in the North-East by the Gbagyi; the Kupa and Kakanda in the South-East; while in the South-West are Yagba, Yoruba, Igbomina, Owo and Oworo, as well as Borgu and Yauri in the North-West.<sup>118</sup>

In the midst of several geographical features, two aspects of the physical geography of Nupeland are said to have dominated all others. These are lowness of the land and size of its rivers<sup>119</sup>. Nupeland is of almost consistently low relief, as observed earlier, most of it being not more than 200 feet above sea level. Much part of Nupeland lies within what Buchanan and Pugh<sup>120</sup> describe as ‘the Niger trough-the broad river valley of the River Niger, which together with the trough of the Benue to the east forms a depression running between the northern and southern halves of Nigeria’.

The Niger River (called *Ndaduma*-father of rivers by the Nupe,) together with the axis of the trough forms the most notable feature of Nupeland. The two big Rivers –

---

<sup>116</sup>R. K. Udo, *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*, London: Heinemann, 1970, pp.116 – 117.

<sup>117</sup> Jimada, “Environment the Peopling...” p.16.

<sup>118</sup> Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and ...p1*.

<sup>119</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byz...pp.1*.

<sup>120</sup> K. M. Buchaman and Pugh, J. C. *Land and People in Nigeria*, London; 1962, p.77.

Niger and Kaduna form an efficient natural system of transportation and communication. It is no accident, therefore, that the early Nupe Kingdom grew in the area near the confluence of the two rivers which were its first highways as well as its natural boundaries.<sup>121</sup> The presence of these rivers together with a net of other smaller ones and creeks, rich in fish, as well as land fertility which cover Nupeland places it on an economic advantage. With low banks, the rivers were important for hunting, fishing, canoe-ferrying and farming. The geographical location permits the growth of a variety of crops. These include millet, guinea corn, cotton, cassava and groundnut, all typical of the agriculture of the savanna to the north, as well as banana, rice, kolanut and palm trees – characteristic of the rain forest.<sup>122</sup> The texture of the soils in Nupeland enhances high crop yield which, Sule suggests, seems to be a pointer to the survival of human habitation in the earliest time.<sup>123</sup>

Worthy of mention here is the production of rice. As stated earlier, Niger and Kaduna Rivers which passed through Nupeland covering almost its full length are said to be carriers of alluvium<sup>124</sup> from their upper courses to Nupe land and beyond. In addition to these two major rivers, the whole of Nupeland is traversed by other rivers and streams. These include Gbako, Yemi, Eku, Awun, Gazum, Duku, Kampe and Egwa,<sup>125</sup> which made large areas of the land marshy throughout the year. The deposition of alluvium and other manure-rich contents on the flood plains further increased the fertility of the plains, hence making it possible to grow rice and other cereals in large quantity beyond the subsistence level of the locality, hence attracting customers, both within and outside the

---

<sup>121</sup>Nadel, *opcit*, p1.

<sup>122</sup>M. Mason, *The Nupe Kingdom...* " *op.cit*, p.3, also see p. 46 of this chapter

<sup>123</sup> S. Mohammed, *opcit*, p.6..

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid*, p.4

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid*.

producing localities.<sup>126</sup> From all indications, this would seem to have been maintained up to date. Nupe, in particular and Niger State in general, is said to be the largest producer of rice in Nigeria,<sup>127</sup> although this position is now being contested by Kebbi and other states in present day Nigeria.

It is argued that the Middle Niger basin formed the earliest homeland of the Nupe as well as the Yoruba and other neighbouring peoples of the area.<sup>128</sup> This may have been made possible by the tributaries and distributaries as noted earlier, as well as other favourable environmental features, which, as observed previously,<sup>129</sup> are said to have been major factors for continuous human habitation and growth of civilization along the banks and confluence of the rivers long before the emergence of Tsoede in Nupe. Frobenius accounts based on his ethnographic studies, and early Arab travellers' reports such as those of Al-Bakr and Ibn Batutta alluded to the existence of strong polities of antiquity in pre-Tsoede Nupeland.<sup>130</sup> Archaeological and linguistic evidence seem to support this. For instance, excavations carried out in a number of sites in and around Nupeland including those at Jebba, Giragi, Tada, Oyo-Ile, Esie-Oba, among others, are supportive of the above claim. Such studies have shown evidence of early human settlements in the areas for several millennia dating back to between 10,000B.C.<sup>131</sup> and

---

<sup>126</sup>Oral evidence – Mallam Salihu Abdullahi, 63 years, public servant – FCE Kontagora, on May 20, 2014, and Mallam Ladan Moh'd Dokomba, rice farmer – 65 years, on Feb. 15, 2014.

<sup>127</sup>I. M. Jidda, "Agriculture in Nupeland: Rice Production and Others", in, A. A. Idrees, and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds) *The History of Central Nigerian Area, Vol.I*, Lagos: CSS. The next chapter discusses the economy of Nupeland in greater detail.

<sup>128</sup>I. S. Jimada, "Some Reflections on the History of the Peoples of the Middle Niger and Upper Ogun River Areas before 1500", *Zaria Historical Research (ZAHIR)*, Vol.I (I) 2001, p.2.

<sup>129</sup>See footnote 10 above.

<sup>130</sup>This is treated in chapter II.

<sup>131</sup>A. Obayemi, "Conceptual and Methodological consideration of the Early History of Nigerian Peoples", in, *History Research at Ahmadu Bello University, Vol. 2, the Postgraduate History Seminar Papers, 1977/78 section*, p.9.

3,000B.C.<sup>132</sup> From the broad outlines of archaeological findings in what is now the Southern half of Nigeria, Thurstan gives two important implications thus, that there had been considerable populations in this area for several thousand years and that such populations seem to have been physically and culturally continuous with the present – day inhabitants.<sup>133</sup> Also, modern linguistic research appears supportive of and supplementary to those of archaeology. According to Obayemi, “they suggest that Yoruba, Edo, Igala, Nupe, Idoma, Igbo, Ebira and Gbagyi form a cluster of languages within the larger Kwa group, centred roughly on the area of the Niger – Benue confluence”.<sup>134</sup>

Flourishing markets and commercial centres are said to have been established at certain strategic settlements along the Niger and most likely Kaduna Rivers. Oral evidence collected recently mentions some of such centres as Jebba, Gbere, Raba, Muregi, Nupeko, Eggan, Baro (Gidi), among others.<sup>135</sup> At most of the centres, as this source further claims, tribute or taxes were charged and collected from foreign traders along the Niger within the vicinity of Nupeland. The methods of assessment of the charge, in Nupe antiquity, whether on individual commodities and traders or collectively, may not be easy for us to determine given our present state of knowledge. However, the tribute would seem to have been paid either in cash or kind by traders travelling up and down stream of the river. The appointed emissaries in such centres collected tribute on behalf of *Kuta*, the head of the riverine area, stationed at Muregi, the headquarters of the

---

<sup>132</sup> I. S. Jimada, *op.cit*, p.2. and the History of the Peoples of the Middle Niger and Upper Ogun River Areas before 1500” in, *ZAHIR* vol.I(I), 2001, P.2.

<sup>133</sup> S. Thurstan, “Prehistory of West Africa”, in, J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowther (eds.), *History of West Africa*, London: Longman, 1976, Pp. 33-71.

<sup>134</sup> A. Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600”, in J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowther (eds.), *History of West Africa*, London: Longman, 1976, Pp. 196-263.

<sup>135</sup> Mallam Salihu Abdullahi, *op. cit*. Also see chapter II for more discussion on the economic activities in Nupeland in early times.

Kede at the confluence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna. Payment of tribute ensured protection for the traders and their goods on the waterways and land as well as enhancing the economic position of the rulers as well as revenue for the state.

This, in turn, invariably, facilitated strong military built – up for expansionist campaigns. The above does seem to suggest a polity and economic organization among the riverine people prior to the emergence of Tsoede and his dynasty. The importance of Rivers Niger and Benue in the early history of Nigeria, Ajayi and Alagoa<sup>136</sup> suggest, is further reinforced by the fact that three major Kingdoms flourished on their banks. These were the Jukun Empire, Igala and Nupe Kingdoms. The unity of these rivers, they further assert, encouraged a network of relationships within the basin which provided routes of contacts between peoples cutting across the north and south axis. The general low nature of the relief of Nupeland and the navigability of the principal rivers by canoe allowed for the movement of peoples, favouring greater economic, cultural and political interaction.<sup>137</sup> In the same vein, Obayemi notes that the mobility of men, ideas, culture, goods and services was highly enhanced by the openness of the environment.<sup>138</sup> Another account suggests that the absence of major physical barriers made territorial boundaries of the various polities around Nupe often fluid.<sup>139</sup> This situation could and indeed, did promote cultural, social and to some extent, political uniformity as was the case with

---

<sup>136</sup> J. F. A. Ajayi, and E. J. Alagoa, “Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of Economic Development and Inter-group Relations”, in, I. Obaro, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History* Ibadan: Heinemann Education Books, 1980, P.229.

<sup>137</sup> Jimada, *op. cit*, p.3.

<sup>138</sup> A. Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo – Speaking People, P. 231.

<sup>139</sup> Jimada, *opcit*, p.3.



Nupeland and the North-West Yoruba<sup>140</sup> on one hand and Nupe with the North-East Gbagyi<sup>141</sup> on the other.

Generally speaking, Nupeland can be said to have been fertile in most parts. However, Nadel<sup>142</sup> observes that east of Kaduna River – around Bida, dense population and intensive cultivation have reduced the fertility of the land as against the thinly inhabited areas West of River Kaduna. As for flora and fauna, Mason and Sule<sup>143</sup> note that the nature of the soils in Nupeland is reflected on the vegetation and animals found in the area. The availability of clayey soil in some parts of the land was favourable for heavier trees against the sandy soil which was suitable for lighter trees. The tropical, low-laying and well-watered nature of Nupeland provides the land with a rather hot and humid climate. No wonder then, Nadel describes the area as one of the hottest and most humid districts of Nigeria.<sup>144</sup>

The rainfall, which varies from the South to the North between 2.50mm to 1.120mm,<sup>145</sup> respectively affects the character and nature of the vegetation in Nupeland. Open savannah woodland predominates, alternated with patches of thick rain forest, shrubs and orchard bush, characteristic of the Nigeria's Northern and Southern vegetational zones converging in the Guinea Savannah.

---

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> S. Mohammed, "Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbours to 1898", in, A. A. Idrees, and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds), *History of Central Nigerian Area Vol.I*, Lagos: CSS. Bookshops Ltd., 2002, p.515.

<sup>142</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*, p.I.

<sup>143</sup> Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom...", P.3, and Sule, *The History of the ...*,p.6.

<sup>144</sup> Nadel, *opcit*, p.2.

<sup>145</sup> R. K. Udo, "Environment and Peoples of Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria", in, I. Obaro, (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educ. Books Nigerian Ltd., 1980, p.16.

Among the crops grown and economic trees and plants were:

i. Food Crops

S/N	ENGLISH NAME	LOCAL (NUPE NAME)	BOTANICAL NAME
1.	Millet	<i>Mayi/Kpayi</i>	<i>Pennisetum typhoideum</i>
2.	Maize	<i>Kaba</i>	<i>Zeemays</i>
3.	Sorghum	<i>Eyikpan</i>	<i>Sorghum balgare</i>
4.	Rice	<i>Jekafa</i>	<i>Oryza glaberrima</i>
5.	Yam	<i>Echi</i>	<i>Discorea cotundata</i>
6.	Beans	<i>Ezo</i>	<i>Vigna unguicalate</i>
7.	Cassava	<i>Rogo</i>	<i>Manihot esculanta</i>
8.	Pawpaw	<i>Konkeni</i>	<i>Carica – papaya</i>
9.	Melon	<i>Epingi/paragi</i>	<i>Clocryriths spp</i>
10.	Potato	<i>Duku</i>	<i>Ipomoea batata</i>
11.	Bambara nut	<i>Edzu</i>	<i>Voandzeia subterranean</i>

ii. Economic Trees and Plants

S/N	ENGLISH NAME	LOCAL (NUPE NAME)	BOTANICAL NAME
1.	Kolanut	<i>Ebi-chigban</i>	<i>Sterculia acuminata</i>
2.	Banana	<i>Yaba</i>	<i>Musa spp</i>
3.	Mango tree	<i>Mungoro</i>	<i>Mangifera indica</i>
4.	Groundnut	<i>Guzya</i>	<i>Arachishypogea</i>
5.	Baobab tree	<i>Kuka</i>	<i>Andosonia digitata</i>
6.	Locust-bean tree	<i>Lonchi</i>	<i>Parkia filikoidea</i>
7.	Shea butter tree	<i>Kochi</i>	<i>Butyrospermum Paradoxum</i>
8.	Sugar cane	<i>Kpansanako</i>	<i>Sauharum officiarum</i>
9.	Onions	<i>Lubassa</i>	<i>Allium cepa</i>
10.	Indigo tree	<i>Echin</i>	<i>Lonchocarpus cyanescus</i>

The existence of fauna in Nupeland followed the same climatic conditions as the flora. This can be categorized into domestic animals – *enanya-emizhi* and wild animals *enagontazhi*. Among the domestic animals were cattle *nankozhi* (plu); horses *dokozhi*; goats – *nangi-wuryazhi*; sheep – *nangi-kingbagbazhi*. The wild animals and reptiles included, lion – *gaba*; buffalo – *eya*; elephant – *dagba*; gorilla-*gbogi*; leopard – *nampa*; hyena-*makundunu* and various kinds of snakes –*ewazhi*.<sup>147</sup>

The importance of flora and fauna to human settlement in Nupeland of old cannot be overemphasized. Apart from providing food, vegetables and oil, flora also served as medicine as well as raw materials for crafts.<sup>148</sup> As stated above,<sup>149</sup> apart from food crops, there were other wild plants and trees grown and treasured in Nupeland which had added value to the economic development of the area – hence providing catalyst for human settlements and survival. In the same vein, fauna provided source for survival-in terms of feeding, shelter, clothing, transportation, among others, notwithstanding the fact that some of the fauna, especially the wild ones had constituted danger to human existence. Lives and farm products could be destroyed. For instance, people have been reported to have been killed by wild animals and snakes and farm crops destroyed, especially by monkeys and birds.<sup>150</sup> Subsequent developments-clearing of thick bushes and forests for agriculture, however, had led to the reduction or disappearance altogether of such

---

<sup>146</sup> Source for Botanical names: A.Y. Solomon, *Nupe Heritage Dictionary*, Minna: Kochita Resources Ltd., 2013 and to some extent, Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi...”, p.9

<sup>147</sup> Sule, *History of the ...*, p.7 and oral evidence Alh. Zakariyawu rom Wunagi village, 72 years on 14/8/13.

<sup>148</sup> Buchamn and Pugh, *Land and People ...*, pp.17 & 174

<sup>149</sup> See footnote 33

<sup>150</sup> See Sule, *opcit p.7 for this information*

destructive fauna and their habitat in Nupeland. These include elephants, lions, leopards, buffalos, among other wild animals. Large scale hunting and ever increasing acquisition of farm land in the hitherto forest and bush areas may have accounted for this phenomenon.

Besides the wealth of fields, forests, rivers, flora and fauna, Nupeland had additional resources, such as iron and silicates.<sup>151</sup> Iron working and blacksmithing had been practiced in the land since early period. Nadel,<sup>152</sup> notes the presence of red earth mixed with laterite and rich in silicates which he considers important raw materials for the native glass industry in Bida. On his visit to Nupe, Clapperton is reported to have observed the presence of four large blacksmith shops, each, with five forges in a small village in the westernmost part of Nupe<sup>153</sup> most probably Kulfo village in the present – day Mashegu Local Government Area Council of Kontagora Emirate. As for the source of the smith’s supply, Clapperton saw in another village, not far from the one described above, hills on which abundant ore was available for smiting. According to him, the people “get their ore from the hills, which they smelt where they dig it and which is done without mining”<sup>154</sup>

It is important to note here that the geographical area predominantly inhabited by the Nupe could hardly be regarded as static,<sup>155</sup> and definitive in terms of its territorial boundaries. There had been expansion to different directions at different times in its

---

<sup>151</sup> Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom...”, p.5

<sup>152</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*, p.1.

<sup>153</sup> Mason, *opcit*, pp.6-7.

<sup>154</sup> H. Clapperton, *Journey of the Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo*, London 1929, p.116. For the location and direction of the village and hills see Mason *op. cit* pp.6-7 and his footnote 2 on p.6.

<sup>155</sup> Sule, *op. cit*, p.2.

history. Sule,<sup>156</sup> for instance, shows Nupe's subjugation of the Kamuku and Kambari following its expansion to the North as well as Gbagyi in the North-east and East. The South-West constituting different groups of Yoruba, as well as the Ebira and Kakanda in the South were not spared by the expansionist policy of the Nupe, particularly during the emirate period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It would seem to be the policy then, that once a neighbouring area had been conquered and the people assimilated into the Nupe language, the area so conquered would become part of Nupeland. Details of these are discussed in chapter five. Thus, Nupe either by assimilation or by force of arms was able to acquire large territories which greatly increased its size, making it appear to be one of the largest kingdoms in pre-colonial Nigeria. Perhaps, this apparent domineering nature of the Nupe of old may have informed Obayemi's assertion that:

“The Nupe Kingdom had served as a core area for a process of acculturation and political domination of various sub-sections of Nupe and of initial outsiders like the Kupa, Ihabe or Kakanda and some Yoruba-speaking peoples.”<sup>157</sup>

### **(III) THE ORIGIN OF THE NUPE**

The precise origin of peoples and societies in the Nigerian area is a complex or problematic question. According to Atanda “the origin of people in any society is a problem which inevitably confronts the historian in or of that society”.<sup>158</sup> Hence, (as we have observed briefly earlier), the issue concerning the origin of Nupe as a group has

---

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> <sup>46</sup>A. Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue Confluence Area”, in, I. Obaro, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educ. Books (Nig.) Ltd, 1980, p.149.

<sup>158</sup> J. A., Atanda, “The Historian and Problem of Origins of Peoples in Nigerian Society”, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 10 (3), 1980, pp. 63-77.

continued to be shrouded in controversy and mystery.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, one of the most difficult and inconclusive aspects of Nupe history is yet the inability of historians and researchers alike, to determine a universally acceptable and incontrovertible theory of the origin of the Nupe. Even some of the renowned authorities and scholars on Nupe history, are yet to reach consensus on this aspect thus far. They include Idrees, Jimada, Sule and Saidu, among others. Idrees, for instance, admits the near impossibility to so far determine the origin of the Nupe. According to him,

It seems impossible to know the origin of the term “Nupe”. What we do know is that the term Nupe refers to distinct group of people who dwell within Nupeland in the trans-Niger areas.<sup>160</sup>

In the same vein, Sule admits that none of his sources (most probably oral traditions) could explain in a convincing manner how the term ‘Nupe’ as a people was derived.<sup>161</sup> Mason may also have been aware of this difficulty to determine the origin of Nupe, when he says that “the origin of the Nupe itself appears lost, so it is not possible to know whether it is local or foreign”.<sup>162</sup> Jimada<sup>163</sup> states the controversies and contradictions coming from both written and oral sources surrounding the origin of the Nupe. Both Saidu<sup>164</sup> and Ismaila<sup>165</sup> seem agreeable on the lack of consensus so far to arrive at an incontrovertible theory on the origin of the Nupe. The former, regarding the traditions on Nupe origin thus far as an hypothesis into which he urges scholars to

---

<sup>159</sup> I. S., Jimada, “Preliminary Historical Inferences about the Origins and Antecedents of the Nupe” in, A. A., Idrees, and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds), *The History of Central Nigerian Area, Vol. 1* Lagos: C.S.S Bookshops Ltd, 2002, pp. 93-105.

<sup>160</sup> A. A. Idrees, *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland*, Ibadan: Caltop Publications Nigerian Ltd, 1998, p.1.

<sup>161</sup> S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate...*, P.10.

<sup>162</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida Kingdom*, Zaria: ABU Press, 1951, p.9.

<sup>163</sup> I. S. Jimada “Traditional History and the Genesis of the Nupe-speaking People”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History, Vol.2 (1)* March, 2008, pp.9 – 15.

<sup>164</sup> I. Saidu, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from the 14<sup>th</sup> century*, Ibadan: Heinemann Books, (Nig) Ltd., 1992, p.2.

<sup>165</sup> D. Ismaila, *Nupe in History 1300-Date*. Jos: Olawale Publishing Company. (Nig), 2002, p.1.

research. The latter, though accepting that the term Nupe was derived from Nupeland, notes the difficulty that is there to actually establish its origin. Our recent field work in some Nupe settlements seem to support the above submissions on the origin of Nupe group. This was reflected in contradictions found in the oral evidences collected, especially from the *Bini* sub-group of the Nupe. This is not unexpected as according to Boston, “divergence is an essential feature of legends of origin”.<sup>166</sup>

Despite the apparent lack of consensus on the origin of the term Nupe, as noted above, attempts have been made by both written and oral sources<sup>167</sup> to link the origin externally and internally. While the former emphasizes hamitic or diffusionist theory, the latter places premium on the anti-diffusionist hypothesis on the origin of the Nupe. We shall first look at the diffusionist theory and then the anti-diffusionist position.

## **DIFFUSIONIST THEORY**

Most foreign writers – travellers' accounts, missionaries, administrators and so on-trace the origin of the Nupe to either outside Nigeria completely, or other places within the Nigerian area. Both Dupigny and Temple, who probably might have used the same source, have claimed that the term Nupe might have been corrupted from Nefiu, probably referring to Ugba bn Nafiu, who is said to have come from Arabia to settle among the people in early times<sup>168</sup>. The Arabic meaning of Nuffe (Nefiu) according to

---

<sup>166</sup> J. Boston, “Notes on the Origin of the Igala”, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. ii, no. 3, December 1962, pp. 373-383.

<sup>167</sup> H. Clapperton, *Journey of a Second Expedition...*, pp. 339-340; E.G.M., Dupigny, “The Gazetteers of Nupe Province”, in, C.L., Temple, (ed.), *The Gazetteer of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, 1965, 328, Frobenius, *The voice of...*, pp. 574-575 and oral interview with Muhammad Ibn Abubakar 85 years from Nku village on September 6, 2013.

<sup>168</sup> E. G. M., Dupigny “The Gazetteer of Nupe Province” in C. L. Temple (ed), *The Gazetteer of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, 1965, p.328

Abdullahi, an Arabic scholar, is “those who were exiled” whom Dupigny calls the “fugitives”, respectively.<sup>169</sup>

According to Dupigny, the Nupe claimed to be indigenous but some authorities traced an external connection between them and the Gabi- erstwhile inhabitants of Egypt. He (Dupigny) refers to a legend to the effect that a certain stranger, a hunter called Abdulazizi, travelling from the East, arrived with his family at the town of *Doko Dazi* where he was reported to have settled amongst the Nupe *Bini* sub-group. The settler-hunter was referred to as ‘*Nefiu*’- the Arabic word for ‘fugitive,’<sup>170</sup> corrupted as Nufe or Nupe.

From the above, two inferences may be made. First, the legendary hunter-Abdulazizi came to meet the *Bini* – a subgroup of Nupe already settled on their land for long. The fact that many parts of the ancient Nupeland were covered with forests (*Kusozhi*) and thick bush (*cikan*) attracting hunters and wanderers both within and outside the area was attested to by a number of traditions.<sup>171</sup> Second, he is said to have been called *Nefiu* (fugitive in Arabic). The question here is who gave him that name? If it was the *Bini* that did so, what inference can we make from this? Wouldn't this be suggestive of the existence and possible practice of Islam among the indigenous people in the area before the so-called arrival of Abdulazizi to Nupeland? For, if not, how did the people (the *Bini*) get to know the meaning of the term *Nefiu*? Even though the date of the so – called migration of Abdulazizi from Egypt to Nupe remains unknown to us, if the story is anything to go by, the migration would seem to have been after the early introduction of

---

<sup>169</sup> S.A. Abdullahi.*op. cit*, p.7 and Dupigny, *op. cit* p.319.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* S. A. Abdullahi.

<sup>171</sup> Alh. Mohammed Gana Doko – Mayakin Doko at Doko on 12/08/13. 80years, a Rtd Civil servant; Alh. Zakariyau Usman Wunangi at Bida on 14/8/13Rtd. civil servant, 69 years; Mohammed Bin. Abubakar Nku, at Nku on 09/06/13, 85 years, among others.



Islam into Nupe by the Arab traders, travelers, clerics and North Africa Berbers through Borno and Hausaland between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The sources under reference informed us that in the remote past, greater part of Nupeland was covered with forests. According to them, the forests attracted hunters and animal gatherers from within and outside Nupeland. An informant from Nku village, for instance, told us that the forests around Nku, Bida-Bani, Doko, Labozhi, among other places, had big trees and thick vegetation, giant animals, mammals, reptiles and other species in the animal kingdom. So also were ‘huge, unimaginable’ human beings. Perhaps, this is what Obayemi refers to as *Epazhi* being the aboriginals who he describes as “huge elements beyond human stature whose ‘ears’ were as large as elephants...”<sup>172</sup>

Traditions under reference further state that such ‘super’ human beings (strong and tall) in the remote past in Nupeland “needed no axe or cutlass but their hands to pull down any tree, no matter the size”. They used their hand and stone as weapons to hunt and kill animals. It was in the process of throwing stones at animals that they incidentally discovered fire. Two stones aimed at an animal by two hunters hit themselves (the stones) instead of the targeted game, which produced “a spark of fire”. It then became a practice to strike two stones together, using cotton – like substance or dried soft grass put in – between the stones. The fire produced by this method is called *Ena – ta’amu* in Nupe language. This pre – dated the introduction of matches and lighters as modern means of producing fire.

Perhaps the presence of such forests and animals of game in Nupeland, attracting hunters and animal gatherers from far and near, might have been responsible for linking

---

<sup>172</sup> A. Obayemi, “Tsoede, Etsuzhi and Nupe History before 1800”, in, A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds.), *The History of Central Nigeria Area* Vol. 1, Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd, 2002, p.176.

Nupe's origin to Kastina, Kano and other places within Nigeria. According to Clapperton, "They (the Nupe) came originally from Kashna (Kastina) and their prince, Thoodyar (Tsoede) from Attagher (Attah Gara)".<sup>173</sup> However, a number of sources have questioned this claim. Mason, for instance, argues that it cannot be literally true that the Nupes came from Kastina, "their culture is inextricably plaited with that of the peoples of the Niger Benue valley and not the plains of Hausaland"<sup>174</sup>. In the same vein, Suleiman and Adamu question the tenacity of the Kastina connection with Nupe origin. Such reasoning, in their opinion can hardly stand critical appraisal by the science of anthropology.<sup>175</sup> They could not identify any cultural, linguistic or genetic relationship between Nupe and Hausa that could suggest the former having originated from the latter. However, the fact that the two areas had much to do with each other in their early history, especially based on trade, commercial and inter – group relations, can hardly be dismissed.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, according to Usman,<sup>176</sup> a complex network of trading roads had sprung into existence linking the Central Sudan from the Black Volta to Lake Chad and beyond. It is most probable that along these roads moved the peoples who made migrations one of the most dynamic themes in pre-colonial African history. In this regard, blacksmiths from Katsina and other parts of Hausaland seeking for new sources of iron ore; merchants from the northern entrepots leading caravans southward in search of buyers for their goods - salts and luxury foods; Fulani

---

<sup>173</sup> H. Clapperton, *Journey of a Second...* pp.339 – 340.

<sup>174</sup> M. Mason. *The Foundation of Bida Kingdom*, ABU Press, 1981, p.9.

<sup>175</sup> M.A.T.Suleiman, & Adamu I.N., "Nupe: The Past, The Present and The Future".  
<http://newsdiaryonline.com/nupethe-pastthe-present-thefuture-by-prof-m-a-t-suleiman-dr-l-ndayi-adam/^athash.wkmat4.dpuf>

<sup>176</sup> Y.B. Usman, *The Transformation of Kastina C.1796-1903...* p.48.

herdsmen with their cattle and sheep, were all included. Nupeland as stated earlier, is situated in the area where human culture is known to have existed for several millennia. It has been suggested that people were already living along the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue as early as 9000BC,<sup>177</sup> or about 40,000 years ago.<sup>178</sup> Field works and archaeological research in some neighbouring areas with Nupeland suggest that the Middle Niger and the Niger-Benue Confluence, in which Nupeland is situated, has been one of continuous human habitation.<sup>179</sup>

Another hamitic hypothesis concerning the tradition of Nupe origin which seems similar with the first one mentioned earlier on, is the one linking it with Misra – Egypt. The Nupe are said to have migrated from the lower Nile River in Egypt. They had belonged to the Nubian tribe, some of whom are said to have migrated southwards following the Arab mass migrations the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>180</sup> They came through Sudan and Jukun land in Northern part of Nigeria until they finally settled in what was then known as Nupeland. The name Nupe, might have been corrupted from the word ‘Nuba’, a name of a valley situated between Aswan and Sudan whose inhabitants are said to be black<sup>181</sup>.

In the same vein, H.R. Palmer, one of the Eurocentric writers cited in Abdullahi,<sup>182</sup> emphasized the hamitic hypothesis for origins of peoples. This view might have influenced Haruna in his work titled, *A Concise History of Bassa – Nge Nupe*,<sup>183</sup> in

---

<sup>177</sup> Mason, *op.cit.*, p.8

<sup>178</sup> Suleiman & Adamu, *op.cit.*

<sup>179</sup> S.G.H.Daniels " The Early Stone Age", in T.Shaw, (ed) *Lectures on Nigerian Pre-History and Archaeology*, Ibadan: University Press 1969, p.21. For details of such works of archaeological studies, see Jimada, Preliminary Historical .... pp.95-96, Obayemi Concerning Tsoede... pp.7-8.

<sup>180</sup> S.A. Abdullahi; “Nupe Kingdom before and after the Jihad of Uthman Ibn. Fodio: A Survey of its Political and Administrative Set – Up”. M.A. Thesis Bayero University Kano, 1983, p.7.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> F.N. Fayam, “The Traditions of Origin of the Bassa-Nge Ethnic Group of Niger – Benue Confluence of Nigeria”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History vol.1(1)* Dec. 2007, pp. 31 – 40

which he traces the origin of Bassa-Nge and Nupe to the Middle East or Egypt. He claims that the Bassa-Nge and the Nupe people originated from the same stock. According to him:

While the Nupe are said to be merchants, warriors and artists, the Bassa-Nge belonged to the sedentary group engaged in occupations such as farming, hunting and other related human endeavours.<sup>184</sup>

While it is true that the two groups originated from the same stock, that stock does not have Middle East, Egypt or any other outside connection, as claimed by Haruna. The Bassa – Nge group left Nupeland – their original home in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the political crises and intervention of the jihadists.<sup>185</sup>

Emphasizing diffusionist theory, Frobenius claims that the first *USSU (Etsu)*-King of Nupe Napata, migrated from the east with King *Kisra*<sup>186</sup> to found a ruling dynasty in Nupe. In the same vein, another source asserts that by 600A.D; there was “a great migration from East to West across the Sudan called *Kistra* migration”.<sup>187</sup> This, according to the source, followed the disagreement between the Prophet of Islam- Muhammad and the *Kisra* people from Syria on the latter’s refusal to accept Islam as a religion, hence, their southwards movement across the Sahara, entering Nigeria through Lake Chad until they reached Nupeland and Borgu, where they are reported to have found ruling dynasties.<sup>188</sup>

However, there seems to be a general consensus from oral evidence collected from Nupe informants on their origin from outside-either from Egypt and or the Middle East, hence supporting the hamitic hypothesis. This might have been based on the type of

---

<sup>184</sup> A.A. Haruna, *A Concise History of Bassan – Nge Nupe*, Pankshin, 1975, pp 16 – 18

<sup>185</sup> Fayam, *op. cit* p.33

<sup>186</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, pp.574 – 575.

<sup>187</sup> Borgu History, “The Kisra Legend”, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/kisra-legend.p.4

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

fixed traditions handed from generation to generation which have been uncritically accepted as ‘facts’ rather than myth. The Eurocentric writers, travelers, missionaries and administrators’ accounts on the origins of peoples might have probably been based on the already accepted diffusionist theory on their traditions of origin. However, studies from modern scholars and researchers have questioned this theory of origin and supported the anti-diffusionist theory,<sup>189</sup> which suggests non-origin of the Nupe from outside.

For a better conceptualization or appreciation, it may be relevant to mention, even in passing, traditions of origins surrounding some other groups within or outside the Niger – Benue confluence zone. This would enable us appreciate some common characteristic features inherent in the origins of peoples in the zone in particular and the Nigerian society in general. Okita describes the Niger – Benue confluence as a “focal area of migrations, commerce and conquests which set-up cultural cross currents of many kinds”.<sup>190</sup> As was the case with Nupe, series of legends concerning the origins of other ethnic groups in the Niger-Benue confluence area have been given. For instance, the origin of Igala is linked with Jukun, Benin and Yoruba.<sup>191</sup> That of Gbagyi is linked with Hausaland – Zazzau and Borno.<sup>192</sup> The Kakanda tradition traces its origin to Jukun<sup>193</sup> together with Igala ethnic groups with which they shared relationship. The group forms

---

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, p.33

<sup>190</sup> S. I. O., Okita, “Cultural Affinity in Niger – Benue Confluence Region: A Theoretic – Methodological Consideration”, in, P.C. Dike, (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger – Benue Confluence Region*, National Gallery of Art, Nigeria, 2005, pp. 127-133.

<sup>191</sup> A.Obayemi States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence Area”, in, O. Ikime (ed),*Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann (Nig.) Ltd. 1980, pp.144 – 164.and “The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples and Their Neighbours before 1600”, in, J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.),*History of West Africa* London: Longman, 1976, pp. 196 – 263. Also see R. G. Armstrong, “The Igala”, in, D. Forde (ed), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*. London: *International African Institute*, 1955, pp.77 – 90. J. Boston, “Notes on the Origin of Igala Kingship”, *Journal of Historical Society on Nigeria*.

<sup>192</sup> S. Mohammed, “Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbours to 1889”, in, A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area Vol.I* Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 2002, pp.513 – 532.

<sup>193</sup> A. Obayemi, “Kakanda: A People, A History, An Identity”, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.9 (3), December 1978, pp 1-21.

an identity, the language of which belongs to the Nupe group, although by no means directly intelligible to speakers of Nupe.<sup>194</sup> This linguistic relationship between Nupe and its dialects and Kakanda suggests a more probable break-away of the latter from the former than Jukun being the source of its origin. The linguistic connections between the two groups as well as the traditions of aborigines within the land of the Kakanda which borders on the land of Nupe-speaking peoples, is suggested to have strengthened our “argument against origins in the Middle- Benue valley-just as we may not accept a Katsina origin of the neighbouring Kupa” as claimed by Temple.<sup>195</sup>

The Ebira groups also claim their ultimate ancestry from Wukari-the capital of Jukun State. Both Ebira Panda and Igu according to legend, also accept being subjects to the Attah Igala, justifying the Igala claim that the areas were their external fiefs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>196</sup> However, recent studies tend to question most of the traditions of origins of the peoples and their dynasties in the Niger confluence region.

It is interesting to note that recent field work, archaeological and linguistic research findings in some neighboring areas with Nupe seem to suggest human habitation in the Middle-Niger and the Niger-Benue region (in which Nupe is situated) from ancient time. It has been argued as pointed out earlier, that as far back as 40,000 years ago, or 9,000 B.C,<sup>197</sup> human habitation has been known to have existed along the confluence of Rivers Niger, Benue and Kaduna. This far pre-dated the arrival of those who have claimed to be the source of origin of the peoples in the Niger-Benue confluence area.

---

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9 – 10, citing O. Temple and C. L. Temple, *op.cit.*

<sup>196</sup> P. Brown, “The Igbara”, in, D. Forde (ed.), *Peoples of the Niger Benue Confluence* London: International African Institute, 1955, (Reprinted 1970) pp. 55-73.

<sup>197</sup> M. Mason *The Foundation of...*, p.8.

There had been both intra and inter personal and group relations both among the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence region, as well as with their neighbours. In one of his studies,<sup>198</sup> Obayemi draws our attention to the material culture and institutions of the Nupe, Igala, Edo, Igbo and Yoruba on the one hand and of the Jukun, Idoma Igala, Epira and the north-east Yoruba on the other hand. This according to him was an indication of complex patterns of pre-Jihad interactions. He remarks that,

Looking at the various groups... it is impressive to see how much took place and how much the groups had in common in spite of differences in languages and political organization.<sup>199</sup>

The above situation would appear to counter the external connection regarding the traditional origins of the Nupe and other ethnic groups in the Niger-Benue confluence area. Contrary to the hamitic theory of origin, a number of accounts,<sup>200</sup> based on archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic research findings, have argued for the anti-diffusionist hypothesis of origins of Nigerian peoples. Studies have shown that linguistic and to some extent, cultural affinities<sup>201</sup> exist among several ethnic groups in our area under discussion, which suggest a possible common source of origin. This is due to the

---

<sup>198</sup> A. Obayemi, "States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue..." p.162.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Among such accounts are\; A.Obayemi "States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area," in, O. Ikime, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History...*, pp.144-164; The Yoruba and Edo-speaking... pp.196 – 263; "Conceptual and Methodological Considerations of the Early History of Nigerian Peoples", Postgraduate Seminar paper, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1977, pp. 1-10; J. A. Atanda, "The Historian and..." pp.63 – 77; I. S. Jimada, "Preliminary Historical...", pp. 93 – 105; T. Shaw, "The Prehistory of West Africa", in, J. F.A. Ajayi and M; Crowder, (eds.), *History of West Africa Vol.1, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*, Longman, 1985, pp.48 – 86; K. Williamson, "Indigenous Languages of the Niger-Benue Confluence Region: Their Classification and its Implications for Pre-History", in P. C. Dike (ed), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger-Benue Confluence Region*, National Gallery of Art, Nigeria, 2005, pp.148 – 154; J. A. Ballard, "Historical Inferences from the Linguistic Geography of the Nigerian Middle Belt", *Africa Vol.XLI, No.4*, 1971, pp.294 – 305.

<sup>201</sup> R. M. Blench, "Nupoid", in, J. Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *The Niger-Congo Languages: A Classification and Description of Africa's Largest Language Family* Lanham: University Press of America, 1989, pp.305 – 322.

“closeness” of the languages spoken there.<sup>202</sup> Sule,<sup>203</sup> for instance, has shown such linguistic ‘closeness’ between Nupe and Gbagyi. Also, as we have noted earlier, linguistic studies have generally suggested that Yoruba, Edo, Igala, Idoma, Nupe, Epira, Gbagyi and Igbo, among others, form a cluster of languages within the larger Kwa group of the Niger-Congo family in the Niger-Benue confluence zone.<sup>204</sup> This does suggest a possible common ancestor for these languages writing on the interconnections of these languages, Williamson suggests a continuous intermingling of the peoples in the Middle Niger and confluence areas over several millennia<sup>205</sup>. No wonder, Williamson describes the confluence of the two rivers as “a complex linguistic area”.<sup>206</sup> While, Ballard sees the area within which the ‘Nupoid’ languages<sup>207</sup> are geographically located as “an area of linguistic complexity”,<sup>208</sup> Greenberg regards the zone as the meeting ground of three of his four major classifications of language families – the Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Sahara.<sup>209</sup>

Accepting the Niger-Benue confluence area as being a possible source or origin of languages spoken within the zone or its immediate neighbours, we are faced with the problem of conceptualization and methodological considerations. The question begging for an answer might be the ‘proto-language’ of our area of discussion from which ‘daughter’ or ‘grand-daughter’ languages emerged later in history. We may be rescued

---

<sup>202</sup> A., Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the...”, p.144 - 147.

<sup>203</sup> S. Muhammad, “Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbours to 1898”, in, A. A. Idree and Y. A. Ochefu (eds), *Studies in the History of Century Nigeria Area*, vol.I, Lagos: CSS Ltd 2002, pp.516 and 517.

<sup>204</sup> K. Williamson, *op.cit*, p. 151.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> R. M. Blench, “Nupoid”, *op.cit*pp. 309-312 describes ‘Nupoid’ as the Nupe language cluster which includes Nupe, itself, Dibo, Kakanda, Kupa, Agbi, Asu/Abewa, Ebe) Epira, Epira Koto, Epira Okene Gbari, Gupa, Kede, Gbedegi, Kami, among others.

<sup>208</sup> A. J. Ballard, *op.cit*, p.194.

<sup>209</sup> J. H. Greenberg, *Languages of Africa*, Bloomington, 1966, p. 162.



by Williamson's suggestion that "the area in which there is the greatest diversity of different language groups is likely to be the original homeland of the speakers"<sup>210</sup>.

According to him, the degree of diversity in terms of the size and population of speakers of the language is not 'important', but those languages (no matter how small) that have survived (not absorbed or swallowed by bigger languages) 'are extremely historical in the past'.<sup>211</sup>

Archaeologically, the area of the Niger – Benue confluence is the core of central Nigeria from where archaeologists are said to have recovered some fragments of civilization complex described as 'Nok civilization'.<sup>212</sup> As noted earlier, this suggests evidence of human habitation in the area from the ancient time of not less than 40,000 years ago.<sup>213</sup> Relatively speaking, it can be noted that no larger scale archaeological work has been carried out on the core Nupe area, as well as in the Igala, Idoma, Ebira, among other areas, which form the bulk of the population in the Niger – Benue confluence region. Obayemi's attempt at following reports of archaeological findings and locating possible sites for excavation in Nupeland were unsuccessful, probably due to lack of political – will and support from Government and Non – Governmental Organizations (NGO's). According to him,

My own attempt in 1971-72 to follow up archaeological finds near Kpaki village at the prompting of M. Idris Alhassan (Former Deputy Governor of Niger State – now late) had a negative result. I recorded oral tradition at Patigi in November 1974 and recent plans to conduct archaeological

---

<sup>210</sup> K. Williamson, *op.cit*, p.151.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid* pp.151 – 152 for greater details which may not be of our immediate focus here.

<sup>212</sup> J. A. Ohiare, "Nupe Relations with her Southern Neighbours in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: The Case of Ebira", in, A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area* Vol.I Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp.533 – 561.

<sup>213</sup> T. Shaw, "The Pre-History of West Africa..." pp.48 – 86.

reconnaissance have been made impossible by lack of suitable transport.<sup>214</sup>

Notwithstanding the above shortcoming however, results of archaeological findings from neighbouring area with Nupe can be applied to suggest ancient human existence and civilization in Nupeland. The Nok culture in central Nigerian area, which shares border with Nupe, for instance, has been shown to cover the period ranging from 500 – 200 B.C.<sup>215</sup>

It is important to note that the seemingly few or even lack of trained or interested archaeologists and linguists in the core Nupeland in particular and the Middle Niger area in general, may have made researchers including this one, to depend or accept cautiously results of archaeological and linguistic studies outside our area of study. According to Obayemi, there is “no directly comparable archaeological data... from within Nupeland. But these facts enhanced the level of probability with which we can discuss the evolution of Iron Age society of Nupeland within the general framework of the region (Niger – Benue confluence)...<sup>216</sup>

The above situation makes it possible for us to make inference and or deduction from neighbouring areas, where such researches have been undertaken. Limitations that may be suffered in an attempt to reconstruct the early history of the Nupe have been noted.<sup>217</sup> This is premised on the fact that Nupe and other areas in the Middle Niger zone, “remain largely outside the sphere of archaeologists and linguists”.<sup>218</sup> If however,

---

<sup>214</sup> A. Obayemi, “Tsoede, Etsuzhi and...”, footnote 3, p. 188.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> I. S. Jimada, “Establishment of Patigi...”, p.48.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

inferences can be made in historical discourse, we may accept as suggested by this source,

that the evolution and expansion of Nupe land could have been possible mainly due to the incorporation of various groups into Nupe political entity. A fact that could have led to some modification of the original linguistic configuration, giving rise to the present form of language.<sup>219</sup>

In apparent agreement with this observation, Obayemi submits:

Taking a cue from studies of the languages of the regions, we can only conclude that Nupe-speaking folk have occupied most of the territory that they are now identified with since pre-historic times.<sup>220</sup>

Works from other immediate neighbours both in the south-east and north-west of Nupeland show evidence of very early human settlements. Shaw<sup>221</sup> refers us to such works in the area of Keffi-Nasarawa-Izom-south-east of Nupe (and directly north of the Niger-Benue confluence) as having shown Sangoan assemblage, indicating very early human habitation and activities. Such activities, according to him included evidence of iron working in form of smelting furnaces, iron slags, manufactures in iron and tin, particularly found at Taruga near Bwari town in the present-day Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.<sup>222</sup> Among other places where Sangoan culture sites were found included Jebba in Nupeland, Jos Plateau, along Sokoto River and along Ibadan-Abeokuta road<sup>223</sup> and also in Wara, Yelwa, Kainji and Bussa sites about 200 miles north-west of Nupe, as

---

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> A. Obayemi "Tsoede, *Etsuzhi* and Nupe History before 1800...", pp.167 – 196.

<sup>221</sup> T. Shaw, "An Introduction to Archaeological Methods", in, T. Shaw, (ed), *Lectures on Nigerian Pre-History and Archaeology*. Ibadan: university Press, 1969, pp.1 – 59.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> S. G. H. Daniels, "The Early Stone Age", in, T. Shaw, (ed), *Lectures on Nigerian Pre-History and Archaeology*, Ibadan: University Press, 1969, pp.14 – 22.

well as Kongo Makeri in Wushishi area about 60miles north of Bida.<sup>224</sup> Sangoan culture has been placed between 55,000and 40,000 years ago.<sup>225</sup>

From the above highlights and discussion, it is possible to generally conclude that the origin of Nupe and indeed, that of other groups in Niger-Benue confluence region could hardly have been traced outside the area. The linguistic, archaeological and cultural affinity found to have existed among the peoples of the zone and its immediate neighbours, may have informed Okita to hypothetically ask “Do we have to go outside the region (Niger-Benue Confluence area) to look for the cradle of Negro civilization?”<sup>226</sup> comparing the area with other areas of ancient civilization such as the Nile Valley, the Fertile Crescent watered by Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the Ganges in India, among others, who became seats of ancient civilizations, because of their environment.<sup>227</sup>

There cannot be doubting the fact that both internal and external migration and inter-group relations, which are said to have been “one of the most dynamic themes in pre-colonial history”<sup>228</sup> did take place. Even though such relations may have, to some extent, introduced certain political, economic and socio-cultural changes, this cannot be enough historical ground to assign an external connection to the origin of Nupe and its polity. In the same vein, Atanda argues that the fact that the Arab Muslims’ invasion of North Africa at about the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. led to the movements and displacement of few

---

<sup>224</sup> T. Shaw, “Preliminary Report on Second Session Archaeological Work in the Wushishi Area, *Zaria Archaeological Paper* No.4 1976 – 1977.

<sup>225</sup> S. G. H. Daniels, *op.cit*, p.21.

<sup>226</sup> S. I. O. Okita, “Cultural Affinity in the Niger-Benue Confluence Region...” pp.127 – 133.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid* p.132.

<sup>228</sup> Y. B. Usman, “The Transformation of Katsina C. 1796 – 1903: The Overthrow of *Sarauta* System and Establishment and Evolution of the Emirate”, Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1974, p.48.

immigrants into Nigeria cannot be doubted. This however “does not and cannot account for the origin of vast populations of peoples in the Nigerian society.”<sup>229</sup>

### **ANTI-DIFFUSIONIST THEORY**

This theory suggests the indigenous origins of peoples in the Nigerian Society. The authorities cited in support of the anti-diffusionist theory have essentially relied on linguistic and archaeological evidence. Even though Nupeland as we have noted previously, has not enjoyed much archaeological studies, studies from some of its neighbours are fairly abundant through which one can make reasonable speculations on the existence of the Nupe in the area they now inhabit since ancient times.<sup>230</sup> Appreciating the dearth of field archaeological works in Nupeland, Obayemi, notes that until such a time when such works can be made available we can,

Only offer some most tentative opinion of the antecedents to the better known cultural history of recent times. Taking our cue from studies of the languages of the region, we can only conclude that Nupe-speaking folk have occupied most of the territory that they are now identified with since pre-historic times.<sup>231</sup>

Available indirect archaeological works tend to puncture the hamitic hypothesis on the origin of Nupe and other Nigerian societies. Archaeological works at Taruga and Bwari which lie not far away in the eastern part of Nupeland reveal cultural material of early Iron Age date.<sup>232</sup> Inferences can also be made from the Bwari figurine which is identified with the Nok assemblage which is said to have depicted a kneeling person with

---

<sup>229</sup> J. A. Atanda, *The Historian and...* p.73.

<sup>230</sup> Among other works that support this are: A.Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo-speaking peoples”; A.Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede, Etsuzhi”; Obayemi, A; “States and Peoples”; Atanda, J.A, “The Historical and...”; I.S. Jimada, “Preliminary Historical Inferences”; F.N.Fayam, “Traditions of Origin of the Bassa – Nge”; and Ndagi, A., *Who are the Nupes? The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identify*, Minna: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.

<sup>231</sup> Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede, *Etsuzhi...*”; P. 7.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

representations of ropes and beads round the neck and right arm raised to the head on which a cap is worn.<sup>233</sup>

In the same vein, excavation works of some settlement mounds at Rafin Ndoko and Kongon Makeri around Wushishi area about 60 kilometers north of Bida revealed dates spanning substantial parts of the first millennium A.D.<sup>234</sup> Also, at Wara sites, around Kainji, within 200 kilometers west of the heartland of Nupe exists reports of a series of excavations which suggest continuous human settlements since first millennium A.D.<sup>235</sup> Another source suggests existence of iron working activities in the same area as far back as the second century. B.C.<sup>236</sup> It has also been shown that from the study of pottery in terms of vessel types, decorations and its large quantities as well as their similarities that Ife, Nupe and Benin might have some ancestral affinity and a high level of technological development upon which the knowledge of the use of iron could easily be based.<sup>237</sup>

From the above, it is clear that origin of the Nupe could hardly have been traced outside the Middle Niger Basin region. While there could be internal and to some extent, external migrations into Nupeland in the past, as have been the general theme with most communities, this cannot be a valid historical ground to assume a diffusionist theory on the origin of the Nupe and indeed of other ethnic groups and dynasties in the area.<sup>238</sup> It

---

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> S. Thustan, Shaw, "Preliminary Report on the Second Session's Archaeological work in the Wushishi Area..."

<sup>235</sup> F. Willets, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, Thames and Hudson Plate, 1967.

<sup>236</sup> See Obayemi, *op.cit* Footnote 20 p.4.

<sup>237</sup> K. D. Aiyedun, "Subsistence and Settlement Patterns in the Wushishi Area of Kaduna Valley, Niger State", Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1989, pp. 30-31.

<sup>238</sup> Thustan & Daniels, (1984) cited in M.A.T.Suleima, and I. A.Ndagi, *op.cit*, P. 1.

has been observed<sup>239</sup> that the bulk of earliest immigrations into Nupe area was internal rather than external. According to this source, there is evidence of immigrations of peoples from Borno, such as *Barebari* traders and the Islamic clerics – founders of Kutigi, Enagi and other settlements as well as the *Katsinawa*, *Kanawa*, the *Gobirawa*, among others.<sup>240</sup>

Most of the traditions of the peoples show that they immigrated into Nupe area generally from other Nigerian areas. We are yet to have any impeccable historical evidence to suggest that the people ‘migrated’ from the far Nile valley or any other place in the Middle East or the Sudan outside the vicinity of the Nigerian area

The environment around Niger River has been seen as a crucial factor for early human habitation<sup>241</sup> in the area and possibly for migrant settlements. The source refers to the Sangoan assemblage as an indication that man might have lived by the banks of the Niger River from the earliest times. Obayemi cites some places located along the banks of River Niger, such as Jebba, Tada and Giragi as significant archaeological sites where traces of brass and bronze figures of great antiquity associated with traditions of Ile – Ife, Idah, Benin and Owo, can be found.<sup>242</sup>

From the similarities in the physical features of the present inhabitants and relevant archaeological findings, it is most likely that the Niger-Benue area of which Nupeland forms a greater part, must have been inhabited by the ancestors of the present

---

<sup>239</sup> I.S Jimada, “Preliminary Historical Inferences About the Origin and Antecedents of the Nupe”, in A.A Idrees and Y.A Ochefu (eds), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Press, 2002, p.100.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> I. S.Jimada, “Environment and Peopling of Middle Niger Basin Area”, in, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, Vol. 1(1) December, 2007, Pp. 15 – 21.

<sup>242</sup> Obayemi, Concerning...” pp. 15 – 16 and A. Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue Confluence...” pp. 144 – 146.

settlers prior to 3000BC.<sup>243</sup> This suggests that the Niger area would seem to have been of continuous human existence “for several millennium and it is apparent that the peoples shared close cultural affinities, in a favorable barrierless environmental zone where diverse peoples intermeshed and intermingled”.<sup>244</sup> For instance, the Nupe and Igala groups have, to a very large extent, similar facial and body scarifications. So also do the Gbagyi and Yoruba tribal marks, to a lesser degree resemble those of the Nupe. Even though we are yet to determine with impeccable evidence, which of these scarifications was the proto – cultural marks, we can hardly escape a conclusion of the existence of contacts among various groups in the Middle Niger and confluence areas, as well as North-Western Yorubaland in the early past. However, traditions in Nupeland commonly ascribe the “origin” of scarification to Tsoede myth following facial and body injuries and scars sustained in his attempt to catch a thorny bunch of palm fruit cut from a high oil palm tree. According to a source,<sup>245</sup> however, the source of the Nupe scarification goes beyond Tsoede period. According to it, the practice and popularization of the marks, especially among the ruling elite went as far as “Yisa or *Kisra* Nupe period several centuries before the age of Tsoede”.

Thus, Obayemi’s conclusion in this regard appears plausible and relevant. According to him, the homeland of the various groups in the Central and Southern Nigerian areas of which Nupeland is part, can be “nowhere else than where they share common frontiers”<sup>246</sup>. He also questions ascribing the origin of the Yoruba to the ‘East’.

---

<sup>243</sup> D. Birmingham, “Historians and West Africa”, in, J.D.Fagg, (ed), *Africa Discovers her Past*, ... pp.53-54.

<sup>244</sup> Jimada, *op.cit*, p.20.

<sup>245</sup> N. Abdullahi, “Nupe Tribal Marks and the Winged Solar Disk”, an – eight – page unpublished write – up, dated April 14, 2016, Pp. 2 -5.

<sup>246</sup> Obayemi, *op.cit*, pp 144-145.



According to him, the ‘East’ being referred to by the protagonists of the hamitic hypothesis, may not be the Middle East or any other place outside the Nigerian area, but rather, the North-Eastern part of Yorubaland, bordering the Middle Niger and Confluence areas of the Nigerian area.

Until recently, African historians and researchers as well as traditional communities and institutions used to and to some extent, still fall victims of hamitic hypothesis, deriving origins of most Nigerian societies from Egypt, Sudan and the Middle East.<sup>247</sup> The reason for this “wild romanticism or sterile skepticism”<sup>248</sup> cannot be unconnected with the complete absence of historical records and the difficulties of deciding the origin of most Nigerians. Thus, it may not be out of place to suggest that lack of historical documentation led some authors to select evidence twisted to show hermitic origin of certain Nigerian groups.

The above situation unfortunately was revealed by colonial historiography, which most traditional Nigerian societies, including Nupeland, readily accepted with pride in order to enjoy association with the so-called prestigious and glorious civilizations rather than being content with their indigenous traditions of origins. Nadel sees these as “historical falsifications, racial doctrines, distorted dogmas of social necessities, which have produced weapons no less deadly than those manufactured in factories and laboratories”.<sup>249</sup> Thurstan Shaw observes that a number of writers on West Africa have sought to give dignity and luster to the cultural history of West Africa by trying to show connection with ancient Egypt and other places, thus enabling West Africa to bask in the

---

<sup>247</sup> F.N.Fayam, “The Traditions of the Bassa-Nge Ethnic Group...”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, Vol.1 (1) December, 2007, p.31.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, p.31 and oral evidence from Alh.Hassan Wasagi – 66 years, a retired Public Servant at Minna on 26 – 9 –13.

<sup>249</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*...p.vi.

reflected glory of that civilization.<sup>250</sup> The early contact between the Southern parts of the Sahara and North African Berbers and Islamic clerics may have enhanced the hamitic hypothesis on the origins of ancient West African communities, ethnic groups and dynasties.<sup>251</sup> In this respect, one cannot rule out the influence of Arab or Islamic historiography on West Africa for adopting historical and legendary persons outside the zone as their ancestors. The commonly told stories of Abdulazeez and Kisra; Oduduwa; Bayajida Sayf b. Dhu Yazan; in Nupe, Yoruba, Hausa lands and Kanem-Borno, respectively, are cases in point.

The various migration myths could be seen in the light of the long Islamic influence following trading contacts with the Islamic and other outside world from West Africa's early history. Islamic influences could therefore be traced in the various migration myths. These myths, according to Babayemi, "suited the hamitic theory of the western – oriented writers, missionaries, travelers, anthropologists and colonial administrators".<sup>252</sup>

The Hamitic hypothesis wrongly holds the view that any evidence of development or civilization found among the black race must have been due to the influence or even the leadership of some people from the white or semi-white race. This implies therefore, that centres of civilization noticeable in the Nigerian society, Nupe inclusive, "must have been inhabited by peoples whose rulers, if not the entire people, originated from the white

---

<sup>250</sup> T. Shaw, "Prehistory", in, I.Obaro, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980, pp. 25-53.

<sup>251</sup> Levtzion, Nehemia, "The Early States of the Western Suddan to 1500", in, J.F.A.Ajayi, and M.Crowther, (eds), *History of West Africa, vol.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, London: Longman, 1975, p.126.

<sup>252</sup> S.O. Babayemi, "The Oyo, Ife and Benin Relationship Reconsidered", in, *African Notes*, vol.viii (2), October, 1979, pp.15-26.

or semi-white race termed Hamites”.<sup>253</sup> According to this source, the nearest bases of the white or semi-white population, such as Arabia, Egypt, the Maghrib – the home of Berbers on whose shores the Phoenicians once settled and Nubia – the home of Cushitic Hamites– have become the areas to which they trace the origins of a number of Nigerian peoples, or, at least, their rulers.<sup>254</sup> The proponents of this group of historians of the diffusionist school do not seem to recognize the origins of the autochthonous people who the so-called Hamitic rulers came to meet living in their areas practicing the political and socio – cultural systems suitable, as their environments “dictated” to them in ancient times.

Dismissing the above hypothesis and arguing for the anti-diffusionist theory, Obayemi, among other modern scholars, points out that the traditions of origin based on Yoruba and any other ethnic group cosmogony and the one from the Nile Valley or Middle East lack historical bases and by implication, remains debunked.<sup>255</sup>

According to him, clues to the peopling of the area can be sought from archaeological linguistic and other studies. He, for instance, refers to excavation works by Eyo, Willett, Shaw, among others, at different sites, in the Nigerian society as relevant. Such excavations and the radio-carbon dates suggest human existence in the savanna and forest areas as early as 10,000BC.<sup>256</sup> These are persistent set of documents

---

<sup>253</sup> Atanda, “The Historian and the Problem ...”, p.70

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>255</sup> A.Obayemi, “Conceptual and Methodological Consideration of the Early History of Nigerian Peoples” History Research at Ahmadu Bello University, vol. II.The Post-graduate Seminar Papers, 1977/78 session, p.9.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*.

which remind us of the unity of the early period cultures and technology with its successors of the later period, which are said to have survived to date.<sup>257</sup>

#### (IV) NUPE SUB – GROUPS

Nupe as a group has been classified into sections or what we may call sub-groups. The number of such sections/sub-groups differs depending on individual writers' perspective. The most popular ones include Bini, Kyadya, Kusopa, Gbedegi, Batachi, Ebangi and Chekpan. S.F.Nadel, for instance, identifies twelve sub-groups of Nupe as: Ebe, Gbedegi, Kusopa, Benu, Bini, Dibo, Kyadya, Ebagi (Ebangi), Batachi, Kupa, Cekpa, Gwagba and Nupe.<sup>258</sup> Another source lists seventeen groups which according to him, form *Nupoid* Languages and dialects. These are: Agbi, Asu, Dibo, Ebira – Koto, Ebira-Okene, Edzu, Egba, Etuno, Gade, Gbagyi, Gbari, Gupa, Kakanda, Kani, Kupa, Nupe and Nupe – Tako.<sup>259</sup>

The above classifications need further clarifications. Nadel's inclusion of *Gwagba* as one of the sub – groups is a mistaken identity. *Gwagba* was never a Nupe sub – group, but a faction of the Nupe under *Etsu* Majiya, following succession disputes between his arch rival – Jimada's faction – the *Yisazhi*. In the same vein, Blench's classification has been rightly criticized by a number of sources. Sule, for instance, notes the apparent lack of knowledge or refusal of Blench to take into account Nupe history in making some of his assertions.<sup>260</sup> The major one according to him is his references to Nupe as the language of Bida and a broad area both east and west. This assertion would seem to

---

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byz...* p.19.

<sup>259</sup> R. M. Blench, "Nupoid", in, John, Bender-Samuel (ed). *The Congo Languages: A Classification and Description of Africa's Largest Languages Family*, Lanham, University Press, 1989, pp.305-312.

<sup>260</sup> S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida...* p.13.

suggest that Bida gave the name Nupe to other sections in Nupeland,<sup>261</sup> probably as a result of the emergence of Bida as the capital of the new government instituted by the Jihadists in 1857.

Being one of the many *Bini* settlements that formed a confederacy that had existed from time immemorial, Bida could not have wielded influence beyond being one of the confederating units under the supremacy of Nku and later Tafyan.<sup>262</sup> After all, Bida was never one of the various capitals such as Nupeko, Gbara, Jima, Raba, Tafyan, of the old Nupe Kingdom before its ascendancy as the Emirate capital in 1857.

Sule, therefore, rightly concludes:

If the name Nupe was given by one section to others in *Kin* Nupe as a result of the ascendancy of a ruling class, Bida would have been preceded by the earlier capitals as agents of this development.<sup>263</sup>

Before Tsoede, Bida was one of the *Bini* settlements called Bida – Bani, meaning a walled city – state. It was also a war camp, hence, the need to build a strong wall around it. This was to ensure protection, safety and comfort. A source describes Bida at that time of history as “a secure and well - defended military town and home for hunters”<sup>264</sup> Indeed, the name Bida as a town was derived from an ancient Nupe word – *Be – yi – da*, literally meaning – “Come let us go”. Tradition has it that those who came to Bida for hunting from other places would go back telling people back home of the abundance of games there. Those who had not been there and wished to go, would be told by those already familiar with the place, *Be–yi –da* or *Bi – da*, in a shortened form. In fact, the neighbouring Gbagyi (Gwari) referred to the place as *Bidahin* – meaning “beauty

---

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid p.12*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid, p.12.*

of meat is here”.<sup>265</sup> This reference suggests the abundance of all kinds of meat and meat products in Bida in the ancient times.

Another weakness that can be observed in Blench’s division of Nupe into sections is his inability to distinguish between Nupe sub-groups and Nupe dialects - on one hand and the Nupe and some of their neighbours on the other. For instance, Dibo, Gupa and Kakanda, to some extent, are not sub-groups, but rather Nupe dialects. Also, Ebira – Okene, Ebira – Koto, Etuno, Gbagyi, among others, are neither Nupe sub-groups nor dialects, but Nupe neighbours, notwithstanding the tremendous political, socio- cultural and linguistic influence Nupe might have exerted on them in the early times. Temple’s classification of Nupe sub-groups into nineteen seems to portray his ignorance more than that of Blench, for his list includes some Nupe towns and not sections.<sup>266</sup> Even though the evolution of the term Nupe as a group would seem to appear not too clear, there are generally popular and acceptable sub-groups. Jimada reports a school of thought that suggested that probably the name Nupe had disseminated to cover the whole group on the confluence of the Kaduna and Niger Rivers and the areas north and south of it from the people to the West of the Kaduna River called “*Nupe Zam (Zami)* ‘pure Nupe’ to which no other name other than Nupe had been applied”.<sup>267</sup> This might have been the Nupe which for the first time, according to Mason, appears along with other groups such as Yauri, Borgu, Kebbi and Kwararafa in the Middle Niger and Benue regions on the 1722 map, drawn by a French cartographer, De’L’Isle, as important nations or commercial centres. In fact, the history of the Nupe as a group can be said to have gone beyond the 1722 map. A 14<sup>th</sup> century Arab historian and geographer mentions ‘Yufi’ which could

---

<sup>265</sup> S.A. Yisa, *Nupe Heritage Dictionary*, Minna: Kochita Resources Limited, 2013, pp. 54 – 55.

<sup>266</sup> Oral evidence, Alh. Shehu Alfa, a Qur’anic teacher and present Imam of Bida – Bani Mosque, 52 years.

<sup>267</sup> S.A. Yisa, *op. cit.*, p.55.

have been mistaken for Nupe, as one of the biggest cities of the blacks...’’<sup>268</sup>As noted previously, Nupe had existed in sub-groups, some of which appear more popular and recognized. They included the Bini, the Kyadya, the Ebangi, the Cekpan and the Benu.<sup>269</sup> An interesting observation that can be made from such group identification of the Nupe is the association of some of such groups to their occupations and, or places of habitation. Nadel and Obayemi, for instance, attempt to explain the origins of the names of some of the sub-groups of Nupe language. Nadel asserts that the names of some sections were associated with the places of habitation and occupations.<sup>270</sup> Obayemi suggests that because of the Nupe love for generic and descriptive terms, the people came to be identified according to the land they inhabit, particular skills or occupations with which they are associated.<sup>271</sup>

The *Bini*, whose origin and meaning appears unknown are the most numerous section of the Nupe. However, Baikie and Clapperton<sup>272</sup> attempt to offer explanation on the possible origin of the *Bini*. According to them the *Bini* derives its name from the tradition that its early inhabitants came from ‘*Bini*’ (Benin?). Such a suggestion might have been on the similarity of the terms ‘*Bini*’ and ‘*Benin*’. However, this still remains in the realm of speculation based on hamitic hypothesis yet to be proved with impeccable evidence, even though suggestions and presupposition exist, pointing to a possible ancestral link between the *Bini* Nupe sub – group and the Benin of Edo. <sup>273</sup>

---

<sup>268</sup> M. Mason, “The Kingdom of...”, p 186.

<sup>269</sup> D. Ismaila *Nupe in History...op.cit*, pp4-9.

<sup>270</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byz... op.cit*, p. 22.

<sup>271</sup> Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede ...” p.14.

<sup>272</sup> See F O. 2/31 Baikie to Malmesbury, 4 March, 1859 and H.Clapperton, *Journal of the Second Expedition...*, p.340.

<sup>273</sup> I. S. Jimada “The Foundation of Nupe, Benin and Ife Relations”, in, T. Wuam and M. L. Salahu, (eds.), *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Press, 2013, pp. 37-49.

The *Bini*, the aboriginals of the land (*kintsozhi*) occupied the strip of land between Rivers Kaduna and Gbako, stretching from the northern boundaries to the River Niger. Today the *Bini* are concentrated mainly in and around Bida, Doko, Kutigi, Lemu,<sup>274</sup> among others – the areas that are regarded as the core of Nupeland. The *Bini* were so called because it is said that they were highly skilled in the knowledge of medicine – “*Chigbe*”.<sup>275</sup> Because of this knowledge, the *Bini* were and to some extent, are still being feared within and outside Nupeland.<sup>276</sup> Perhaps, this skill of “*Chigbe*” and fearlessness may have been responsible for what a source describes as “They (the *Bini*) were people who opened their mouths freely to speak the truth”.<sup>277</sup> They were recognized and regarded as “*Kintsozhi*” – owners or aboriginals of the land, over which they used to and still, in some *Bini* villages exercise firm ownership and control.<sup>278</sup> Permission is usually sought from “*Kintsozhi*” directly or indirectly through their appointed or anointed village representatives holding such lands on trust on behalf of the “*Kintsozhi*” for farming, fishing and other activities.

As stated, the *Bini* composed of many towns or what can be called city/mini states referred to earlier.<sup>279</sup> Each of the mini-states would seem to enjoy independence within the confederation. However, they recognized and acknowledged the supremacy of Tafyan

---

<sup>274</sup> A. Hadiza, *The Evolution of Etsu Nupe Dynasty*, Kano: Tofa Commercial Press Ltd, 2008, p.24.

<sup>275</sup> O. Temple, *op.cit*, p.332.

<sup>276</sup> Oral evidence – Alh.Mohammed Gana Doko, 80 years at Doko on 12/08/13.

<sup>277</sup> A.H.M. Green, *Gazeteer of Northern Provinces of Nigeria, vol.III, London: Frank Cass...* p.83.

<sup>278</sup> Some *Bini* Settlements such as Gbadun, Kanba, Pandzuru in North Eastern part of Lemu, still exercise such power.

<sup>279</sup> See notes 156 and 157.



to which tribute is said to have been paid.<sup>280</sup> In war times, however, all the confederating units would co-operate against a non-*Bini* aggressor.

The *Kyadya* is the term used to refer to the canoe and fishermen on the rivers. Because of their association with canoe-ferrying, they are called “*Eyapachizhi*” – those that paddle canoe.

They derived their name – *Kyadya* (aquatic) from their fishing activities and canoe transportation.<sup>281</sup> This section of the Nupe had been living in Nupeland long before the emergence of Tsoede as the Mega-Empire builder in Nupeland. The economic pursuits and general social life of the *Kyadya* centred around Rivers Niger and Kaduna on which they lived and which they derived their livelihood. The *Kyadya* are said to have evolved a political economy along the banks of Niger and Kaduna Rivers from early times – hence becoming a “colonizing” and “domineering” group. As Tamuno puts it,

From Muregi close to the Confluence of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers, the *Kyedye* had established along the river banks trading posts which subsequently became colonies.<sup>282</sup>

The *Kyadya* are said to have lived on the right bank of the River Niger, in places such as Jebba, Tada, Gudu, Kparadogi, among others. Others were located at Muregi, Raba and Dokomba on the Eastern bank of the Niger. Some were also located in Eggan and Kotonkarfi areas now in Kogi State.<sup>283</sup> Nadel describes the political organization of the *Kyadya*<sup>284</sup> being centered around *Kuta*-the Head of the riverine area, with

---

<sup>280</sup> T.N. Tamuno, “Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence”, in, J.F.A. Ajayi and I. Espie, *A Thousand years of West African History*, Ibadan: University Press, 1976, p.213.

<sup>281</sup> Jimada, “Preliminary Hist...”, p.75 and Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, p.14.

<sup>282</sup> Tamuno, *op.cit*, pp.212-213

<sup>283</sup> D. Ismail, *op.cit*, pp 4 – 5.

<sup>284</sup> S.F.Nadel, “The Kede: A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria”, in, M. Fortes and E.E.Evans Pritchard (eds), *African Political System, International African Institutes*, 1940, pp.165 – 195.

headquarters at Muregi at the Confluence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna. Occupying both political judicial and socio-religious leadership, *Kuta* was assisted in the administration and management of his state, or state – like structure by titled councilors and emissaries.<sup>285</sup> The *Kuta* welded strong financial position through taxes, duties and royalties, which assisted him to provide naval and military base for territorial protection and expansion. Among his titled councilors were the *Egba*, *Kofon* and *Lifiti*. They would be assigned specific duties including tax collection, maintenance of law and order as well as serving as *Kuta's* representatives in the ‘districts’. These included “*Egba*”, “*Kofan*” and “*Lifiti*”. The origin and history of the *Kyadya* goes beyond the emergence of Tsoede in contrast to some sources. Nadel, for instance, presumably based on the tradition collected in Nupe, suggests Tsoede being the origin of the *Kyadya*. Trying to link the origin of *Kyadya* and *Gbedegi* to the coming of Tsoede to Nupeland, he asserts,

The riverine Kyedye are supposed to have come with him (Tsoede) to Nupe country and to have been settled by him all along the river Niger and established as the Lords of the water and as local rulers over the aboriginal inhabitants of the area-the mashing- dwelling *Bataci*...<sup>286</sup>

The above assertion cannot be true. Tsoede came and met the *Kyadya* in Nupeland. In fact, it was the *Kyadya*, according to Nupe tradition, that assisted him to escape from his pursuers from Igalaland. The occupations of fishing and canoe – ferrying had existed along the river banks of Niger and Kaduna Rivers between the two groups of the *Kyadya* – the *Chan Kyadya* and *Yan Kyadya* long before Tsoede age. Investigations to determine the origins of the twin groups of

---

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, and oral interview, Mal. SalihuAbdullahi, *op.cit*.

<sup>286</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byz...* pp. 18 -19.

these Kyadya are still on – going. Williamson,<sup>287</sup> however, suggests them being the aboriginals of the Nupe who migrated from the upper Niger River traveling down the Niger on canoe from an earlier home farther upstream on the Niger. Settling in the Northern part – Jebba, they are reported to have dispersed and found settlements along the banks of the Middle Niger River from Jebba down to the Niger – Benue confluence at Lokoja<sup>288</sup>. However, traditions collected from some Kyadya settlements<sup>289</sup>, do not believe in the outside origin of the Kyadya, but within Nupeland. This belief seems to support Obayemi’s suggestion that the origin of the peoples, including the Nupe in the Middle Niger and confluence area, could not have been outside the region, given the archaeological and linguistic research findings. Even if Williamson’s claims were to be taken on the origin of the Kyadya, such migration from the upper Niger to Nupeland must have taken place long before Tsoede era.

The *Kusopa* is a descriptive word referring to those people who inhabit the forest zone – hence are called tenderers of forests<sup>290</sup>-*Kusopachi* (sing) *Kusopachizhi* (plu). The concentration of this Nupe sub-group is around Labozhi, extending to Mokwa. Other areas inhabited by the sub-group are Kudu, Ibba, Chiji, Yeti, Kimbokun, Takuma, Tianbo, among others. Long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad, Labozhi which could be regarded as the headquarters of *Kusopa* had been a great center for both domestic and international commerce, being not only the greatest centre of kolanut and oil palm

---

<sup>287</sup> K. Williamson, “Indigenous Languages of the Niger – Benue Confluence Region: Their Classification and its Implication for Pre-history”, in P.C. Dike (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger – Benue Confluence Region*, National Gallery of Art, 2005, pp. 148-154.

<sup>288</sup> H. Clapperton, *Journal of the Second Expedition...*, p.339.

<sup>289</sup> Interview with AlhassanTswako, 80yrs from Dokomba,

<sup>290</sup> Jimada, *Preliminary Hist...*, pp. 94 – 95.

production, but also, formed an important centre on the former trans – Saharan trade routes, linking the Sahara North with the forest, South of the Nigerian area. The commodities especially the kolanut, being produced in Labozhi area, is said to have been highly prized due to its taste and flavor,<sup>291</sup> attracting high demand by the Hausa and Borno in the North and North-East respectively. So also were the people from Bussa, Yauri and other places in the North-West. To date, the *Kusopa* people are still noted for large kolanut, palm oil and banana plantations, in addition to farm products such as yam, rice, millet and sorghum.

The *Batachi* sub-group can be said to have been related to *Kusopa*, at least in habitation and occupation. They lived at the backwaters of River Niger. They were mainly marshland farmers *Batachi* (sing) *Batachizhi* (plu), famous for large quantity production of rice, potatoes, garden-eggs and to some extent, fishermen. Examples of *Batachi* settlements include Lenfa-Kuso, Nantu, Kuchitagi, Egagi, Nku, Dangi, Cheku, Sunlati in the present day Niger State, while Belle, Gbere, Tada, Ella, Sunkuso, among other areas in Kwara State.<sup>292</sup>

The Gbedegi sub-group is believed to have been of Yoruba origin and had to be Nupe-ised by Tsoede and his men.<sup>293</sup> The Gbedegi are so called because they are said to have been ‘Nupefied’ Yoruba – meaning the people who understood the language little or with two tongues.<sup>294</sup> Whether their origin from the Yoruba is true or not, it would seem that the Gbedegi had their language other than Nupe before their eventual absorption into

---

<sup>291</sup> A Report of the Kola Plantations in Nupe (Division III). M4105= Kolanut Development”, NAK, p.1.

<sup>292</sup> Group Interview-Mallam Salihu Abdullahi Belle, Mallam Aliyu Sunlati and Ladan Dokomba, 65, 58 and 40 years respectively,...at Kontagora on 21/09/2015.

<sup>293</sup> Nadel, *opcit*, p.19

<sup>294</sup> Jimada, “Preliminary Historical...”, p.95

Nupe language and culture. They inhabited areas around Jebba, Mokwa, Muwo and Zugurma. Among their major occupations were trading and canoe-ferrying. Nadel further asserts that both the *Batachi* and *Gbedegi* were the aboriginals on whom the Kyadya<sup>295</sup> came to superimpose their authority, by building settlements on the former's land and claiming rulership over them.<sup>296</sup>

This development, gave rise to twin villages – half *Kyede* and half *Batachi* or *Gbedegi*, administered by the Kyadya<sup>297</sup>. This erroneous view by Nadel might have been informed by his claim that the *Kyadya* were not the original inhabitants of Nupeland, but were brought along by Tsoede from Idah. This, as we have noted previously, contradicts the claim that the different groups of the Kyadya – *Yankyadya* and *Chankyadya* were migrant settlers, who came from up-stream of River Niger.

The *Ebangi* are called by that name because of their association with land and farming. Ebangi is said to have meant “diggers of the ground”.<sup>298</sup> They inhabited areas around Pategi and Lafiagi, now in Kwara State. Such areas include Matokun, Tamkpafu and Rifun. They are reported to have claimed being the descendants of a dynasty superseded by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihadists.<sup>299</sup>

The *Chekpan* are said to have initially lived in the northern area of River Niger in Nupeland. Due to reasons unknown to us, they decided to cross over to the Southern part of the river, hence the name *Chekpan* which can be translated to mean ‘cross over’. They were mainly upland farmers and craftsmen. Idrees mentions some of the important

---

<sup>295</sup> *Kede* and *Kyadya* terms are pronounced inter-changeably erroneously perceived to mean the same thing. The former connotes territorial expression, while the latter are the original riverine people inhabiting that territory.

<sup>296</sup> Nadel, *op.cit*, p.24

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> Jimada, *op.cit*, p.95.

<sup>299</sup> D.Ismaila, *Nupe in History...*, p.6.

settlements of the Chekpan as Duro, Koro, Echi, Kpada, Rogun, Wako, Mamba, Gakpan and Kajita<sup>300</sup> in Pategi area of the present day Kwara State.

Of the other Nupe sub-groups, such as Ebe, Dibo or Zhitako, Benu and the Bassa – Nge would require special attention. The Bassa-Nge group of the Nupe can now be found essentially in the Southern part of River Niger, especially in present – day Kogi State. They are believed to have migrated from Nupe proper to their present habitats and had the same legendary origin with the Nupe. This fact remained and has continued to remain indisputable by both the Nupe and the Bassa – Nge peoples. Fayam, for instance, asserts that all the Bassa-Nge people agreed that Gbara, one of the ancient towns and for a long time, the famous capital of Nupeland, was their place of origin.<sup>301</sup> According to him, the people called Bassa – Nge, are Nupe who originally inhabited Gbara and later migrated to their present place of abode, following push factors in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This led to wide dispersion of the Bassa – Nge to some areas in Nigeria.<sup>302</sup> The above assertion was corroborated by oral evidence collected recently at Gbara.<sup>303</sup>

The political instability arising from the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century succession disputes in Nupe kingdom, between Jimada and Majiya might have accounted for the group migrations elsewhere and eventual absorption there. Reasons for such dynastic feuds are discussed in greater detail in chapter seven. It is, however, interesting to note here that the Nupe kingdom eventually became factionalized into two factions. The Jimada faction called *Yisazhi* had its headquarters at Gbara, while Majiya's called *Gwagbazhi* had his at Raba and later at Zugurma –on the North – Western side of the

---

<sup>300</sup> A.A.Idrees, *Political Change...*, p.2

<sup>301</sup> F.N.Fayam, "The Traditions of Origin of ..."p.37.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> Oral interview-Mal. Alhassan – Cekpan Gbara, 80 Years at Gbara on 10/05/13.

kingdom. The Jihadists' arrival in Nupeland later in the century took advantage of the chism, to take control of the kingdom by adopting diplomatic and divide – and rule tactics. Following series of wars between the two factions of Nupe kingdom, there was a split off of Jimada's faction from Gbara. Some of these moved southward in family units, reaching Bunuland, where they are said to have settled among the Bunu people. This dispersed group is what became the Bassa –Nge people.<sup>304</sup> They settled among the Bunu and Yagba groups in what later became part of former Kabba Province in the present-day Kogi State.

Contrary to certain assertions,<sup>305</sup> that Bassa – Nge and Bunu people were slaves to the Nupe, Fayam argues that the Bassa – Nge people, unlike the Bunu, had never been slaves to their Nupe brothers,<sup>306</sup> but rather, a splinter – group of Nupe. To accept Nupe – master and Bassa – Nge servant relationship exhibited some lack of knowledge about the origin of the Bassa – Nge. Traditions among both the Nupe and Bassa – Nge groups are in agreement that the original homeland of the latter was Gbara in Nupeland. Hence, the connection of Bassa – Nge's origin to outside Nupeland stands rejected and jettisoned.

The *Benu* are the inhabitants who are said to have been the founders of Kutigi and Enagi settlements around the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Benu were so called because of their link with Borno in the North-eastern part of Nigeria. In fact, 'Benu' is a corrupt Nupe name of 'Borno' the homeland of the 'Benu' from where they migrated to settle in Nupeland. Following the early trade and commercial links between Nupeland and Borno, traders from both areas used to exchange goods and services. Having found Nupeland

---

<sup>304</sup> Fayam, *op.cit*, p.37.

<sup>305</sup> O.Temple, "Notes on...", p.305.

<sup>306</sup> Fayam, *op.cit*, pp.37 – 38.

commercially and geographically viable and adaptable respectively, traders and Islamic clerics from the former eventually, not only settled, but became politically and economically dominant over the locals, hence establishment of their ruling dynasty in Kutigi, Enagi and other places in Nupeland. No wonder, a source describes them as “guests that later Nupeized in Nupeland”.<sup>307</sup> Later, probably for reasons of trade, commerce and religion, the Benu are reported to have spread from Kutigi and Enagi areas to other parts of Nupeland to found only settlements, but not dynasties. Among these were Emiworongi, Akoti and Tsakpati in Lemu area.<sup>308</sup> However, it is most probable that lack of population, and socio – cultural dominance was responsible for the non-establishment of Benu ruling dynasties in the above Nupe settlements contrary to what it was in Kutigi and Enagi. Up to date, traditional rulers, the *Ezonuwazhi* in Kutigi and Enagi have continued to be the descendants of the founders of the dynasty. They have also continued to maintain to some extent, cultural and religious affinities with Borno – their place of origin. An example of this is the famous annual *Gani Cultural Festival* which has continued to take place annually in Kutigi and Enagi towns.

## (V) LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATIONS

Languages are integral parts and vehicles of expression of the cultures of all peoples. From the works of linguists, such as Westerman, Armstrong, Williamson and Greenberg, it has become clear, that except in the North-east between the countries of Niger and Chad, nearly all the languages of West Africa belong to one great group now

---

<sup>307</sup> C.C., Ifemesia “The Peoples of West Africa Around A.D. 1000”, in, J. F. A, Ajayi; and I.Espie, (eds), *A Thousand years of West African History*, Ibadan: University Press, 1965, pp.39-54.

<sup>308</sup> I., Dauda, *Nda: The Only Nupeman in Africa*. Minna: Murak Press, 2010, p.59



broadly referred to as the Niger Congo Family.<sup>309</sup> This, according to the same source, suggests that:

West African languages were in the early periods derived from one ancestral speech; that the forest and Savannah regions formed one large cultural zone, and that the majority of the peoples of this zone perhaps even originated from one common stock.<sup>310</sup>

The difficult question now is who could that common stock be? Nupeland falls within the above linguistic group. Williamson, however, suggests that based on linguistic evidence, a language like Nupe is classified under *Nupoid* of the Benue – Congo group which forms a cluster of languages centered roughly in the area of the Niger - Benue Confluence.<sup>311</sup> Hence, Blench describes ‘*Nupoid*’ as the language cluster which includes Nupe itself, Dibo, Kakanda, Kupa, Agbi, Asu/Abewa, (Ebe), Ebira, Ebira-Koto, Ebira-Okene, Gbari, (Gbagyi) Gupa, Kede, Gbedegi, and Kami, among others.<sup>312</sup> The Nupe language is believed to be the northernmost extension of the Benue Congo group. In the same vein, Nadel, agreeing with Armstrong’s and Greenberg’s classifications, categorically states that Nupe language belongs to the group of Sudanese languages and within this category, forms together with Ibo, Igala, Gbagyi, Edo, Ijo, Andoni, Yoruba, among others, the Kwa group of West African Languages.<sup>313</sup>

It still remains difficult to determine what the common proto-language of the Nupe area was. We may speculate, however, that the possible linguistic relationship among the peoples in the Niger – Benue valley is an indication of the continuous intermingling of the peoples around the Niger – Benue Confluence over several

---

<sup>309</sup> J. H. Greenberg, *Languages of Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966, p. 162

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, p.41

<sup>311</sup> K. Williamson, “ Indigenous Languages of the Niger – Benue, Confluence Region...”, p. 154.

<sup>312</sup> R.M. Blench, “Nupoid...”, pp.309-312...

<sup>313</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byz...* p.77.

millennia.<sup>314</sup> Based on the studies of the languages of the region, we can only conclude that the Nupe-speaking folk have occupied much of the territory they are now identified with since ancient times. As for the time depths, Armstrong estimates between 4000 and 6000 years for the ancestry of some members of the Kwa Branch,<sup>315</sup> to which Nupe, Idoma, Igbo, Yoruba, Gbagyi, Edo, among others belong. His computation of more than 5,000 years for languages of the Gur Branch, Obayemi suggests, may not be irrelevant for Nupe and others.<sup>316</sup> Together with archaeological and to some extent, oral evidence, languages could be used in the determination of the possible beginnings of human activity in the Nupe area.

Against the above background, it is most probable that basic linguistic groups had emerged by 3000B.C. in the area of the Niger – Benue valleys. This, Jimada suggests, may have led to the type of linguistic configuration existing there today.<sup>317</sup> This would seem to imply that probably, before the end of the first century B.C. some basic linguistic groups had assumed some distinctive ethnic group identities.<sup>318</sup> However, as plausible as the evidence may appear, we may still be standing on “a very shaky ground as far as a detailed reconstruction of their history during that remote period is concerned”<sup>319</sup>.

Referring to Nupe as a language group, the origin of which, as pointed out earlier, still remains unclear, Sule believes that the antiquity of the name may provide firm ground for analysis.<sup>320</sup> He further shows that the name had been applied to the people

---

<sup>314</sup> Jimada, “Preliminary Historical...”, p.98.

<sup>315</sup> R.G.Armstrong, “The Use of Linguistic and Ethnographic Data in the Study of Idoma and Yoruba History”, in J.Vansina et al (eds). *The Historian in Tropical Africa*, London: OUP, 1964, pp.127 – 139.

<sup>316</sup> Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede...”, p.7.

<sup>317</sup> Jimada, “Preliminary Historical...” p.38.

<sup>318</sup> J.H.Greenberg, *The languages of Africa*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 1966, p.2

<sup>319</sup> Jimada, *op. cit* p.38.

<sup>320</sup> Sule, *History of the...*, pp.10 – 11

bearing it from early times not only by the people themselves but also by their neighbours.<sup>321</sup> For instance, the Yoruba in the West and South-West of Nupe call them ‘*Tapa*’ – meaning in Yoruba ‘those who fight with legs’. The Gbagyi in the north-east and eastern part of Nupe call them ‘*Anupeyi*’ while the Ebira in the south call them *Anupe*.<sup>322</sup> The Hausa call them ‘*Banufe*’ (sing), *Nufawa*(plu) changing the letter ‘p’ to ‘f’ probably due to the Hausa problem of pronouncing ‘p’.

Asides from their neighbours, other distant peoples had also known the Nupe as a group in their early relations. Sule, for instance, refers us to reports from Hugh Clapperton and Heinrich Bath which show trading and commercial relations between Borno and Nupeland in which horses and natron were brought<sup>323</sup> from the former and sold in the latter. Such relations may have been in practice long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century reports of the explorers. Kano Chronicle<sup>324</sup> also mentions longstanding relations existing between Nupel and Hausa – lands as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. Further away from the Nigerian area, in Brazil, for instance, Nupe under the name ‘Tappa’ is reported to have been spoken as late as the 1880’s.<sup>325</sup>

Attempts have, however, been made recently to classify Nupe language as being mutually closely related to some neighbouring languages. Nupe and Yoruba languages have been, for instance, found to be closely related. Some of the speakers of the numerous dialects of these two languages are said to have lived in some boarder settlements such as Tsaragi/Share, Jebba, Babanloma, Ile-aba or Leaba, Gudu or Ogudu

---

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> Daryll Forde “The Nupe”, in, Daryll Forde (ed) *Peoples of the Niger – Benue Confluence*, International African Institute, London, 1955, p.17.

<sup>323</sup> Sule, *op. cit.*, pp.12 – 13.

<sup>324</sup> H.R.Palmer, “Kano Chronicle” in *Sudanese Memoirs, vol.III*, Lagos, 1928, pp.109 – 111.

<sup>325</sup> N. Rodrigues, *O.S Africa Brazil*, Sao Paulo, 1932, cited in, M. Blench “Nupoid”, in, J.Bendor-Samuel (ed), *The Niger-Congo Languages...* p.311.

and Mokwa for a very long time.<sup>326</sup> Authorities<sup>327</sup> on the Niger – Congo family of languages have suggested that the mother of the languages to which Nupe and Yoruba dialects belong, may have come through migrations from a homeland upstream on the Niger River, most likely by canoe down to the Middle Niger that has now come to be identified as Nupeland.

In the same vein, for a close linguistic relationship between Nupe and Gbagyi such that can reasonably permit suggestion of common origin for the two groups,<sup>328</sup> we are referred to linguistic studies that have shown the genetic relationship between Nupe and Gbagyi.<sup>329</sup> According to the same source, the Nupe, Gbagyi, Epira and Gade all inhabit the Niger – Benue Confluence area. These groups, among others have been classified as the languages spoken in the Niger – Benue confluence area showing a high degree of relationship among them. This may have informed Obayemi’s suggestion to the effect that the Niger – Benue Confluence area may have been the place of origin of the languages that have such closeness.<sup>330</sup>

The above assertion would seem to counter the popularly held view that both Nupe and Gbagyi groups originated from outside their present areas of habitat. Nupe, for instance, was mythically believed to have originated from either Nubia, Egypt, Suddan or Katsina, while Gbagyi originated from Borno and Zaria.<sup>331</sup> Linguistic evidence as noted previously, has however proved such claims untenable. The evidence shows that none of the languages spoken in the areas which Gbagyi traditions claim origin from, is as closely

---

<sup>326</sup> I.S.Jimada, *Nupe and the Origins and Evolution...*, p.6.

<sup>327</sup> J.A.Ballard, “Historical Inferences from the Linguistic Geography of the Nigerian Middle Belt” *Africa*, 41, 1971, p.294 and Williamson, “Indigenous...” p.5.

<sup>328</sup> S. Mohammed, “Gbagyi and their South – West Neighbours to 1898”, in, A.A.Idrees, and Y.A.Ochefu, (eds). *The History of Central Nigerian Area*, Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshops, vol.1, 2002, pp.513 – 532.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid*, p.515.

<sup>330</sup> A.Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger–Benue Confluence Area...” , pp.147 – 148.

<sup>331</sup> Sule, *op.cit*, p.515.

related to the Gbagyi as the Nupe language is. The languages of the areas from where Nupe and Gbagyi claim origin from do not belong to the same language family, not to talk of belonging to the same unit. The close linguistic relationship existing between Gbagyi and Nupe can permit speculation of a common ancestral origin although this has not been proved with impeccable historical evidence.

However, from the linguistic studies carried by K. Williamson,<sup>332</sup> noted earlier, Niger – Benue confluence is said to be the centre of focus of the Benue – Congo languages. This suggests that first settlements of the speakers of these languages was around the confluence from where they gradually spread out over the area in groups, speaking dialects which later became the proto languages of the different groups. This apparent conclusion was based on the assumption that the speakers of proto – Benue – Congo, travelled down the Niger on canoe from an earlier homeland farther upstream on River Niger. The basic principle, according to Williamson’s suggestion is that the area in which there is the greatest diversity of different language groups is likely to be the original homeland of the speakers. “Thus, it appears that the complexity of the linguistic situation around the Niger – Benue confluence today (of which Nupeland forms a major part) is a reflection of complex migrations and processes of absorption and language shifts in the past”.<sup>333</sup>

## **(VI) CONCLUSION**

This chapter examines the position of Nupe in relation to other areas in the Niger–Benue Confluence area in particular and the Nigerian society in general. It observes the strategic geographical location of Nupe on one hand and the attendant advantages

---

<sup>332</sup> K. Williamson, *Indigenous Language of...* pp. 151-152

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

derivable from such a location, which can be said to have placed Nupe between two climatic zones – the Savanna zone in the North and the rain forest in the South. This makes it possible for Nupe to grow crops typical of the two zones. The importance of Rivers Niger and Kaduna which traverse Nupeland has been stressed in the chapter. We have noted that apart from being instrumental to farming, fishing, transportation and hunting, the two rivers were critical to continuous human settlement and evolution of early civilizations on their banks.

Various theories of traditions of origins of the Nupe have been discussed with the general conclusion that the anti-diffusionist theory seems more probable than the hamitic diffusionist hypothesis which links the origin of the Nupe to outside Nigeria or at least outside the Middle Niger area within the Nigerian territory. Other aspects of the Nupe discussed in the chapter include Nupe sub-groups and language classification. Most of the sub-groups were identified with their areas of habitation and occupations. Language experts have classified Nupe language as belonging to the Kwa group of the Niger Benue Language family. Other language groups in the same unit of the family include Edo, Yoruba, Idoma, Ebira, Gbagyi and Jukun. Worthy of note here are studies that have shown genetic language relationships between Nupe and Gbagyi,<sup>334</sup> on the one hand, and Yoruba<sup>335</sup> and Nupe on the other, suggesting a common stock of origin within the Niger-Benue basin area.

---

<sup>334</sup> Sule, *op.cit*, p.515.

<sup>335</sup> Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins...*, pp.7 –9

## CHAPTER THREE: ECONOMY AND SOCIETY OF NUPELAND TO C 1800 AD

### (I) INTRODUCTION

The importance of a virile and viable economic system in the evolution and sustenance of states, whether modern or ancient, cannot be overemphasized. According to Karl Marx, the political ideological superstructure of a society has its origin in the character and development of that society's economic base.<sup>336</sup> It is also argued that economic processes in conjunction with environmental, political and cultural processes work together to make "society and history".<sup>337</sup> The inter-dependendness of these forces in the political economy approach can be seen as a critical push-factor in state formation. This scenario is applicable to Nupeland as we discuss the economy and society of the area, which was based on multi-faceted factors. In a similar manner, it is asserted that the "evolution of human societies is characterized by multi-culturalism which is based on diverse processes..."<sup>338</sup> As stated earlier, the economic system, which facilitated the foundation of Nupe kingdom can be said to have been hinged on an integrated approach.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on a number of economic activities in relation to the foundation of Nupe Kingdom. Among such activities examined are, agriculture, local industrial economy, arts and crafts, and presence large bodies of water weaving, woodwork, transportation, trade and commerce, labour, among others.

---

<sup>336</sup> Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1997, p.1.

<sup>337</sup> S. Gabriel, *Introduction to Political Economy*, <https://www.metholyoke.edu/course/sgabriel/politicalueconomyumain.htm2002> Accessed on 23/6/2013.

<sup>338</sup> S. Bello, "Nation-Building in Africa: The Reality, Challenges and Prospects, A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of Arts Seminar Series, Ahmadu Bello University, Samaru Zaria, at Theatre 1, Faculty of Arts, on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, p.16.

## (II) AGRICULTURE

Agriculture, from time immemorial formed the most dominant economic activity widely practiced in Nupeland. This suggests that the economy of the Nupe people was based and has continued to be based predominantly on agricultural practices. Agriculture, to a very large extent used to be critical in the determination of settlement pattern of the Nupe in the past. According to Thurstan Shaw,<sup>339</sup> well-established agricultural production in the process of state formation cannot be over emphasized. This was facilitated particularly by the presence of important rivers – Niger and Kaduna across Nupeland and other environmental factors. Evidence of the precise period, the history and details of agricultural practice and tools in the remote past in Nupeland may be difficult to ascertain. However, we may generally consider the transition from total dependence on hunting and food gathering to stock raising and agriculture. According to Ajayi and Alagoa, domestication of food crops and animals was the basic activity necessary for control of the settled communities.<sup>340</sup>

A number of modern scholars and writers on Nupe in particular and other places in general, have emphasized the importance of rivers and other environmental factors in relation to agricultural production. Nadel and others rightly observe that the largest population of the Nupe were farmers.<sup>341</sup> River valleys providing better fertility than the

---

<sup>339</sup> T. Shaw, "Prehistory", in, O. Ikime, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Books (Nig.) Ltd, 1980, pp. 25 – 53.

<sup>340</sup> J.F.A., Ajayi, and E.J. Alagoa, "*Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of Economic Developments and Inter-group Relations*", in, O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd, 1980, pp.224 – 235.

<sup>341</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 44-45; M. Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> C: A Political History", Ph.D Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1970, pp. 4 & 5; Ajayi, and Alagoa, op.cit, pp.224 – 225; J.D. Fage, *A History of West Africa*, London: Cambridge Up. P.17; I.S Jimada, "The Environment and the Early Peopling of the Middle Niger Basin Area", in,W. Terhemba, and M. L. Salahu, (eds), *Aspects of Niger*



upland areas attracted the earliest farming communities.<sup>342</sup> Consequently as pressure continued building up on the river valleys, other farming settlements began to spread in the upland and flood plain areas. This was made possible due to the availability of plentiful land for farming and other aspects of agriculture.

The existence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna are said to have pre-dated the later Stone Age as the evidence from archaeological studies in the Middle Niger area shows-dating as far back as 10,000 years ago,<sup>343</sup> or prior to 3000BC.<sup>344</sup> Such evidence shows that the earliest human settlements were located within the vicinity of the Niger trough which cuts across the length and breadth of Nupeland. The flood plains which hardly suffered droughts, favoured the growth of most tropical food crops, such as maize, rice, groundnuts, cotton, sugar cane, sorghum, yam, among others. The early settlers in Nupeland may have produced variety of crops which may have laid the foundations for the change from the gathering and hunting economy to that based on agriculture and animal husbandry. With this, permanent settlement, rather than wandering about, could be ensured. This, in turn, provided catalyst for state formation with attendant advantages. Thurstan believes that “the change from dependence on hunting, fishing and gathering of wild fruits, to crop-raising and stock – keeping, is the most important step which man has taken in the last ten thousand years.”<sup>345</sup>

---

*State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBB) UP, 2014, pp. I-II; M., Sule, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D.* Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Press, 2011, pp. 23-26 and A.A., Idrees, *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland...*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>342</sup> S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, p.23

<sup>343</sup> B.E.B. Fagg, “The Nok Culture in Pre-History”, in B., Davidson, (ed.), *The African Past*, 1969, p.65. Also in *JHSN*, Vol.I (4), 1959, pp. 288-293.

<sup>344</sup> D.Birmingham, “Historians and West Africa” in, J.D. Fage, (ed.), *Africa Discovers Her Past, 1970*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>345</sup> S. Thurstan, “Pre-History”, p.32.

He further states that the change,

did not only radically advance man's capacity for controlling his environment, but it set up the conditions necessary for the emergence of what we call 'civilization'. It made sedentary life possible as never before, the storage of food, the accumulation of wealth and an increase in population. It led to the division of labour, social stratification and new forms of social control.<sup>346</sup>

The establishment of a famous polity-the Nupe Kingdom later in the history of Nupeland might have been facilitated among other factors, by favorable agricultural and environmental conditions conducive for state formation. This then suggests a high correlation between a well – organized agricultural system and state formation process.

It is important to note however that cultivation of crops in Nupeland depended more essentially on the nature of the soil.Sule<sup>347</sup> observes that rice, garden eggs, vegetables, among others were cultivated on marshy land along river valleys and other low sites. Kolanuts, banana, oil palms and others were produced on the forestland along the waterways. Labozhi, Yeti, among other areas of *Kusopa* – forest dwellers, in Nupeland, were particularly noted for the production of kolanuts and oil palms. The former in particular, in time past, became a major export crop in Nupeland. As noted in chapter two, Labozhi town – the headquarters of *Kusopa* became a great centre for both domestic and international commerce- being the greatest centre of Kolanut production in Nupeland of old. The commodity is said to have been highly priced and valued because of its taste and flavour<sup>348</sup> and exchanged for goods such as leather works, sheep, goats, horses, camels from Hausaland and Borno in the north and north-east respectively. In

---

<sup>346</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>347</sup> S. Mohammed,*The History of the...* pp.23-26.

<sup>348</sup> NAK "A Report of the Kola Plantations in Nupe (Division III) M. 4105 – Kola Development" p.I.

addition, Mason reports a tradition suggesting payment of tribute in Kolanut and eunuchs to the legendary Queen Amina of Zaria by the Nupe.<sup>349</sup>

Other crops grown in Nupeland included millet (two varieties – brownish and whitish) – *Mayi* and *Kpayi* respectively, Sorghum, cotton and groundnuts, all typical of the agriculture of the savannah. Yam, cassava, oil palms, among others – which were typical of “neither the open savannah nor the rain forest”<sup>350</sup> were also cultivated in Nupeland. As stated earlier, the geographical position of Nupeland which can be regarded as economically strategic permitted the growth of a greater range of crops and plants than can be grown either in the drier north or the wetter south.<sup>351</sup> This was a rare natural advantage for Nupeland.

Apparently agreeing with the above, Nadel submits,

This manifold agricultural system however, could not have been evolved if the natural conditions of the country (Nupeland) had not been favourable. The meeting of south and north in the vegetation of Nupe, the co-existence of marshy-land and savannah country, the natural irrigation and the strips and patches of thick forest, provided essential ingredients for the development of the productive system, coupled with the inventiveness and stage of civilization of its people.<sup>352</sup>

Apart from domesticated food or cash crops, there were other wild grown plants and trees in Nupeland which had added value to the economic development of the area – hence providing catalyst for human settlements and survival. They also served other purposes including provision of industrial materials, household furniture, medicine, food

---

<sup>349</sup> M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History”, Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham University, 1970, P.36.

<sup>350</sup> S. Thurstan, *Pre-History...*, P.32.

<sup>351</sup> Mason, *op.cit*, p.3.

<sup>352</sup> Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*, p.3.

and its ingredients, energy and objects of worship, among others. Such plants include *Kuka* (baobab tree – *Andosonia digitata*); *Kochi* (shea butter tree – *vitellaria paradox*); *Lonchi* – locust bean tree – *parkia biglobosa*); *Yikunnu* (palm tree – *Elaeis guineensis*); *Wuchi* (mahogany/iroko tree – *Khaya Senegolensis*)<sup>353</sup> among others. Due to the importance of these and other wild plants and trees to human survival, wherever such plants were – whether in the plains or in the forests, they were treasured and protected for their economic, socio – cultural, religious and medicinal values. Baobab, for instance, is named “the small pharmacy or chemist tree”.<sup>354</sup> Its leaves are used as remedy for small pox, measles, amenorrhea, healing of wounds...,<sup>355</sup> among other purposes. The trees were exploited by the various economic groups in Nupeland. They included woodcarvers (*egbazhi*), blacksmiths (*tswachizhi*) and canoe builders (*eyadinchizhi*), among others. The hunters (*Ndachezhi*) and medicine men (*cigbecincizhi*) as well as the spiritualists (*bochizhi*) used them for medicinal and religious purposes respectively.<sup>356</sup>

Apart from being a major determinant for survival and permanent settlement in early Nupeland, agriculture also promoted works of arts and crafts. Production of farm implements such as small hoe-*dugba*; big hoe-*dzukun*; machete – *gada*; sickle – *lenzhe*; knife – *ebi*; axe – *egba*; among others, must have boosted other economic activities in terms of blacksmithing, brass and glass works. In this regard, agriculture on one hand and black and brass smiting on the other can be said to be complimentary to each other. Sule,<sup>357</sup> asserts that most of the agricultural implements produced by blacksmiths in

---

<sup>353</sup> See footnote 35 p.45

<sup>354</sup> Z.S. Ujudud, “The Goodness of the Baobab Tree”, *Daily Trust on Saturday Newspaper*, September 17, 2016, p.46

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>356</sup> I.S. Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi...”, pp.30-31.

<sup>357</sup> Sule, *History of...*, p.26.

Nupeland were initially exchanged for agricultural products. As the blacksmiths devoted much time to their craft, they had little or no time for farming. Therefore, they needed food crops from farmers, who, in turn, needed agricultural implements from the blacksmiths to sustain their farming activities.<sup>358</sup>

Other aspects of agriculture practiced in Nupeland included animal husbandry, local poultry keeping and fishing activity. These activities are almost interrelated with agricultural production. Lovejoy,<sup>359</sup> for instance, believes that the growth of the livestock industry was closely related to agricultural expansion. This, to a large extent, was also determined by environmental factors. The riverine people particularly and those on the flood plains depended more on fishing and canoe ferrying as a means of livelihood. While local poultry farming could take place in almost all parts of Nupeland, animal husbandry took place more in the open grassland. Among animals reared were and are still goats, sheep, horses, cattle, donkeys and dogs, most of which were imported either by way of direct purchase or through exchange with available goods produced in Nupeland<sup>360</sup>.

As to the source or origin of the crops cultivated in Nupeland in the early period, we may lack detailed knowledge of this. There are, however suggestions that, while some of the crops were indigenous, some others had their sources from outside Nupeland. Among the indigenous ones were the varieties of rice (paddy) red in colour botanically

---

<sup>358</sup>*Ibid*, p.33

<sup>359</sup> P.E., Lovejoy, "The Role of Wangarawa in the Economic Transformation of the Central Sudan in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *Journal of African History*, vol.xix (2), Cambridge University Press, 1978, 173 – 193.

<sup>360</sup>M. Mason, "Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate: 1857 – 1901", in, J.D. Fage, A.G. Hopkins, S. Marks and R.A. Oliver, (eds), *The Journal of African History*, vol. xiv, 1973, P.457.

called *oryza glaberrima*.<sup>361</sup> It was grown and is still being cultivated in other parts of West Africa including Mali, Senegal and Cote de Voire.<sup>362</sup>

The Nupe people are said to have exported their rice to other parts of Nigeria. These included Onitsha, Benin, Yagba and Ebiraland. The cultivation of this commodity would seem to have dated back to the earliest ages of man, long before the era of which we have historical evidence on the margins of the Neolithic Sahara.<sup>363</sup> Other varieties of rice produced in Nupeland called *Oryza Fatua* and *Oryza Sativa*, are said to have originated from Asia<sup>364</sup> the growth of which was adapted to the naturally flooded or marshy places, such as river banks, valleys and fresh water mangrove swamps. Apart from swamp rice (*shankafa bata*), there is another variety recently introduced called upland rice (*shankafa kinti*). While cultivation of the former requires both shallow and deep flooding areas, the latter is grown without irrigation or flooding.

In the past, it would seem that the number of local rice varieties in Nupeland were minimal contrary to what we have presently. Nupe rice growers in both Niger and Kwara States now have local names for various varieties. They include, *Majelisa*, *Gya'ana*, *Mambechi*, *Washagi*, and *Zhikogi*.<sup>365</sup> Others, according to another source from Kwara are, *Kpuruka*, *Angara*, *Bokungi*, *Emigi*, *Dogo*, *Bokun*, *Gondagi* and *Dzwanawa*<sup>366</sup> majorly

---

<sup>361</sup> M. I., Jiddah, "Agriculture Production in Nupeland: Rice Production and Others", in, A. A., Idrees and Y.A. Ochefu, (eds), *The History of Central Nigeria Area*, Vol.I, Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd. 2002, pp.333 to 366.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid* p.337.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*, p.334.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>365</sup> Oral Interview, Mallam Salihu Abdullahi, 64years and Danjuma Moh'd Nagenu, 45years, on 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2016 at Kontagora respectively. They are from predominant rice growing areas of Kwara and Niger States respectively.

<sup>366</sup> Mohammed Nakodi Latayi from Patigi area in Kwara, 88years, On 6/8/16

produced in Chekpan, Ebangi in Patigi and other areas in Lafiagi and Tsonga Emirates. The Portuguese are said to have introduced their own variety of rice in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>367</sup>

Sorghum would seem to be indigenous, at least to the Nigerian area. It is reported to have been domesticated by the middle of the second millennium in the Sahara and savannah.<sup>368</sup> Yam grown in the moister zones of West Africa probably as far back as five thousand years ago<sup>369</sup> might have been introduced to Nupe from south eastern Nigeria and from Nupe's immediate neighbors Gbagyi. The local names of certain varieties of yams suggest that. For instance, there is *echi-egbogi* translated as 'Igbo Yam' and *achibiri doyan Gbari* translated as 'eat small Gwari yam'. Varieties of yam grown in Nupeland include *Giwa*, *Suba'a* and *Kwasi*. While the first one is said to have grown in early Nupe, the last two would relatively appear to be a recent introduction. The *giwa* variety, meaning elephant in Hausa language, *dagba* in Nupe, is one of the most valued and highly priced varieties in almost all parts of both Nupe and Gbagyi communities as is the case with other varieties. Among the important areas of yam production in Nupeland were and still, are, Mokwa, Kutigi, Lapai and Agaie areas in central Nupeland. Other areas include Makera, Tsadogonna, Ganabigi, Sodi and Edotsu in Lemu, Kataeregi in the North-Eastern part of Nupeland of the present-day Niger State. Of no less important yam production centres were/are Lafiagi, Patigi, Tsonga, Lade, Tamkpfafu, among others in the present-day Kwara State.<sup>370</sup>

---

<sup>367</sup>M.I. Jidda, "Agriculture in Nupeland...", p.334.

<sup>368</sup> S. Thurstan, "Pre-History...", p.32. Also see Ajayi & Alagoa, *Nigeria Before 1800: Aspects of...*, p.226. They suggest that the cultivation of Sorghum in the middle Niger area and Lake Chad might have been in practice before the first archaeological evidence at Diama dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

<sup>369</sup>S.Thurstan, *op.cit*, p.32.

<sup>370</sup>Oral testimonies from Danjuma Mohammed, Ndako Shaba from Niger State and Idrisu Ndacheke from Kwara State on 5/9/16 and 15/8/16 respectively.

The habitat of yam and oil palms is neither the open savannah nor the rainforest.<sup>371</sup> As was the case with other West African areas, Nupeland had witnessed introduction of new food crops from the ‘New World’. These included cotton, cassava, citrus fruits, maize, sugar-cane, groundnuts, sheanuts, among others. While some of these crops are said to have been introduced as a by-product of the slave trade, others came through foreign growing associations and trading companies. For instance, new varieties of cotton and sheanuts were introduced to Nigeria by the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) and the Royal Niger Company (RNC) respectively.<sup>372</sup>

As for the source of Kolanut product in Nupeland, there are varying claims. Most of the *Kusopa* people-forest dwellers-would claim the indigenality of the crops. However, there are suggestions that the crop might have been introduced to the *Kusopa* with headquarters at Labozhi town since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the *Wangara* traders coming from Gonja in the former Songhai Empire (Mali). Mason, for instance, reports oral tradition suggesting that the first trees in Labozhi were grown from seeds and seedlings imported from Gonja.<sup>373</sup> This tradition, if actually reported well, appears misleading. The cultivation and marketing of Kolanuts in the area far predated the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kano Chronicle, for instance, reports exchange of trade goods, including Kolanuts between Nupeland and Hausaland – Kano, Zazzau, Katsina and Borno as far back as 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>374</sup> or probably earlier. The source under reference reports Nupe at one time in the past paying forty eunuchs and ten thousand kolas as tribute to the legendary Queen Amina Zazzau, who ruled in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>371</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>372</sup> M. Jiddah, Idris, “Agriculture in Nupeland: Rice Production...”p.334.

<sup>373</sup> M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: A Political History”. Ph.D Thesis, Bermingham University, 1970, pp 3-4 and 36.

<sup>374</sup> H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Kano Chronicle 3 Vols., Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1967, p.102.



century.<sup>375</sup> Accepting this as a historical fact, then, the issue of the beginning of Kolanut production in Nupeland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century remains logically and chronologically countered. While we cannot dismiss the inter-group relations between the centre of kolanut production in Nupeland and that of Gonja, marketed by the Wangara traders in the early period, it still remains to be well established which of the two areas was the origin of Kolanut cultivation.<sup>376</sup>

Some sources, however, talk of the importation of cheap southern Kolanuts, the shiny type with many sections, into Nupeland, eaten by pregnant women to settle their stomachs.<sup>377</sup> These, together with the one produced in Nupeland called *Ebi Labozhi*, much bigger, in several colours, were re-exported and exported respectively to the North and North-east. The Nupe-*Labozhi* Kolanuts were preferred due to their taste and flavour.<sup>378</sup> With the establishment of emirate system in Bida in 1857, the *Kusopa* kolanut producers began to lose control as the land became under the control of the emirates system and later, under the Native Authority at Bida under the Fulbe and British administrations, respectively.

### **(III) PASTORALIZATION AND LIVESTOCK KEEPING.**

Related to Agricultural practices, pastoralism and livestock keeping formed an aspect of the economy of the Nupe in time past. However, the elaboration and tensivity of the practice might be lower than those of agriculture and other aspects of the economy. This is because nomad pastoralism in Nupeland in the past would appear not to have been

---

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid* p.109.

<sup>376</sup> This can be uncovered by further research..

<sup>377</sup> NAK "A Report of Kola Plantations in Nupe (Division III), M 4105 – Kola Development", p.1 and Mason, the Foundation of Bida Kingdom. Zaria: ABU Press, 1981, pp.47-48.

<sup>378</sup> See note 13 above and, M. Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom*. Zaria: ABU Press, 1981, pp.47-48.

an original occupation of the Nupe. The Fulbe who formed the bulk of the nomad pastoralists had their original home outside the Nigerian area. They are said to have migrated somewhere from Futa Toro between Senegambia and Western Sudan in the present day Republic of Guinea.<sup>379</sup> The Fulbe – both settled and nomadic began to expand westwards from the Gambia River over the last thousand years, probably due to the pressing limits of the available pasture.

However, the exact era when the Fulbe pastoralists first began to expand to Nigeria is obscure. Traditions collected from them by Blenchi suggest either 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>380</sup> If this information is anything to be relied upon, it is possible Nupeland witnessed some influx of the pastoralists from the remote past, even though the density of the population might be low compared with that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The confinement of the Fulbe nomads to the edge of the desert for a very long time, before their mass movements Southwards, might have been due to the fear of disease and losses from the trypanosomosis.<sup>381</sup>

However, the mass movement of the pastoralists Southwards – Nupeland, inclusive, might have been in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This might have followed the town Fulbe, especially the religious scholars, who by this time had developed, or started developing an urban sedentary structures in Nupeland. For instance, it is reported that,

After the ‘pacification’ of the Nupe hinterland and the establishment of Raba as the capital of the town Fulbe in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pastoralists began movement down to the low – lying pastures

---

<sup>379</sup> R. Blench, “Conflicts Between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria”, Review Paper Prepared for DFID, Nigeria, Cambridge, August 9, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid*.

along the River Niger. They may even have passed further into the Northern part of (old) Oyo.<sup>382</sup>

Prior to the arrival of nomad pastoralists in Nupeland with their relatively larger stock, the practice of keeping and domestication of animals such as goats, sheep, dogs and chicken, among others, had been in practice in antiquity Nupe, even though with minimal economic value to the entire society. Livestock keeping then was mainly done by the ruling class and the wealthy, while cattle herding was not common<sup>383</sup> in Nupeland compared with other economic activities. The livestock so kept then was more for nutrition, entertainment and sacrificial purposes than for trade and commercial gains. It was after the mass influx of the nomads before or during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that pastoralism and livestock keeping can be said to have become a commercial activity, adding value to the economy of the land.

Details on pastoralism in the remote past in Nupeland would prove difficult because of the paucity of available evidence. However, the climatic and topographical conditions in the area could and indeed, did permit the influx of emigrant groups from the Savannah North and Borno: Nupeland, as noted in chapters two and six did not constitute serious barriers to movement on both land and water. As for the availability of conducive grazing area and water, at least, seasonally, Nupeland became almost a second home for the nomad pastoralists, who, though, still isolated in terms of co – existence with the local communities, established what can be called reciprocal relationship with the Arab farmers. This relationship was based on the exchange of dairy products for grains and a market for the animals that must be sold periodically to provide cash for maintenance and

---

<sup>382</sup>*Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>383</sup> I.S. Jimada, *Historical Background to the Establishment of Patigi Emirate: C 1810 – 1898*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2016, p. 62.

domestic purposes – food, cloth and marriages. The community farmers permitted settlements of the nomads on their land in exchange for the manure produced by the livestock reared by the latter. This type of reciprocal or exchange relations would seem to have been maintained in many parts of Nupeland, hence strengthening the harmony, cordiality and cooperation between the farming communities and the herdsmen.

This is in sharp contrast with the current unfriendly relationship between the two groups in many parts of Nigeria, where violent clashes, killings, kidnapping, destruction of lives and properties and cattle rustling, among others, have become almost a daily occurrence in the country. It has to be noted that the success of livestock enterprise is not only “tied to the availability of moisture and vegetation in the right time, place, quantity and quality”<sup>384</sup> but also to the harmonious relationship between the herders and the farming communities.

A discussion on nomadic pastoralism anywhere requires focus on ‘mobility’, which was and still is a major feature of nomadism. It is argued that mobility of livestock from one place to another by the pastoralists is to ensure better production.<sup>385</sup> For instance, in the rainy season, it aims at accessing the richest pastures, when they are most nourishing. This however depends on the quantity of rainfall, stage in the plant growth cycle and soil, among other variables. Sufficient rainfall and right type of vegetation, undoubtedly increase the nutritional value, as well as increased weight of animals during

---

<sup>384</sup> I. Ismaila, “From Nomadism to Sedentarism: An Analysis of Development Constraints and Public Policy Issues in the Socio – economic Transformation of the Pastoral Fulani of Nigeria”, Washington: African Development Foundation, 2013,

<sup>385</sup> Fanny Granval, “Pastoralism in Sub – Saharan Africa: Know its Advantages, Understand its Challenges, Act for its Sustainability”, Inter – Reseaux Development Rural, May, 2012, p. 3, (Translated by Lara Andohazy – Colo).

the rainy season<sup>386</sup> – a catalyst for optimal dairy production and increased wealth for pastoral communities

In the same vein, mobility in the dry season through transhumance is said to have made it possible to move herds over variable distances, often across borders, searching for pastures and water.<sup>387</sup> In each case therefore, mobility is essential for production, sustenance, marketability, revenue generation and avoidance of risks, such as disease, drought and conflicts. By implication therefore, weather, to a large extent, determines the mobility of the Fulbe and stock keepers, as well as the patterns of migration. Hence, “the rhythm of mobility and the latitudinal oscillation of pastoral Fulani correspond to the vacillations in moisture and forage conditions”<sup>388</sup>. Nupeland was typical of this scenario. During the rainy season, the nomads are found in any part of Nupeland following the availability of pasture and food. However, during the dry season, they are concentrated in the semi – forest and riverine areas where pasture can be found in both seasons.

A relatively new concept of pastoralism can be said to have emerged to promote and to ensure diversification of pastoralism in the modern sense. This is **agropastoralism**, which is described as the “practice of combining farming by sedentarizing the household with pastoral stock farming by maintaining herd mobility”.<sup>389</sup> This, according to the same source, “is currently the most frequent security strategy in Sahelian and Sudanian Zones because of the complementarity between the two activities”<sup>390</sup> (pastoralism and agriculture). In addition to being a security strategy, other attendant advantages derivable

---

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>388</sup> R. Blench, *op.cit*, p. 2.

<sup>389</sup> I., Iro, *op.cit*, p. 3.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*.

from this practice, in the modern sense of it include access to medical cares, school, supplies and possible participation in the political life of the country. This system, the agropastoralism, might not have been a popular practice in pre – 19<sup>th</sup> century Nupe. If, however it did take place at all, for which we lack evidence, then, it might have been on a lower scale.

In the final remarks, the importance of pastoralism and livestock keeping in any society – whether ancient or modern, towards the economic development, cannot be over – emphasized. It is estimated that more than eighty percentage of Nigerians depend on the pastoral Fulbe – the custodians of the nation’s herds, for meat, milk, glee, cheese, animal blood, hides and skins, poultry products, butter and manure.<sup>391</sup> Other economic values – either directly or indirectly, include, provision of industrial raw materials, such as leather industry and animal tracking. Others were/are provision of bulls, used in carting, ploughing and hauling. Thousands of Nigerians wholly or partly, are said to have made a living from selling, milking, butchering or transporting herds.<sup>392</sup> The roads or tracks created by the cattle, called *Ekpa – nanko* in those days were very important linkages between one community and another.

For instance, during the reign of *Etsu* Muhammad Kolo of Nupe (1795 – 1796) a diplomatic and commercial relationship is said to have been established between Nupe and Gobir, under King Bawa Jan Gwarzo.<sup>393</sup> There was exchange of gifts in form of slaves, palm oil, Shea butter, kolanuts with thousands of cattles and horses between the two areas respectively. The movement of cattles, horses and other animals from Gobir to

---

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>392</sup> Fanny Granval, *op.cit*, p.3.

<sup>393</sup> NAK SNP 17/253555, “Notes on Nupe”, p. 10 and A. A. Idrees, *Political Changes and continuity...*, p.14.

Nupeland is suggested to have been accountable for the creation of an international highway called *Ekpa – nanko*,<sup>394</sup> cattle road, path or track. Such roads were characterized by narrowness, cutting corners and winding passages. Perhaps, the first motorable roads constructed by the colonial administrators followed almost the same pattern in Northern Nigeria.

Finally, it has to be noted that pastoralism and livestock keeping among the pastoralist generally, and others such as the royal and economic elite, did not only serve as social investment and economic security, they were and still are also prestige – making in pastoral society. According to Western and Finch, 1987, cited in I. Iro, the tendency to keep large number of animals,

comes from the high premium pastoralists attached to their herds. The respect and influence a Fulani man commands in his community increases with the increase in his livestock wealth. With enough herds, a person can participate in a wide range of social and economic activities.<sup>395</sup>

#### **(IV) INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY**

Another aspect of the economy of Nupeland in its early history, which made it famous, was the industrial economy which existed in various forms and in various localities. The industrial base of the Nupe can be said to have been broad and diversified, reflected in the abundance of local industries across Nupeland. According to Mason<sup>396</sup>, the skill and diversity of the extensive trade in manufactured goods in Nupeland gave the

---

<sup>394</sup> Idrees, *ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> I. Iro, *op.cit*, pp. 11 – 12.

<sup>396</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of...* p.48.

early European visitors to Nupeland pleasant surprises. It was this which nourished and sustained markets and merchants over many centuries.

#### **a. Iron Works**

Initially, production of manufactured goods would seem to have satisfied the domestic needs of the people. But with the increase in skill, quality and quantity of production, the need for outside patronage and export arose. Nupe, for instance, was noted for the production of iron which had a multiplying effect on the output of other areas. According to E. Pritchards, quoted in Ogunremi and Faluyi,<sup>397</sup> iron metallurgy did not only “bring economic revolution; it also put political power into the hands of those who knew and used it over those who did not”. Iron war weapons, such as poisonous pointed spears, local guns and arrows, among others helped existing or emergent ancient kingdoms, empires and chiefdoms to subjugate their peoples and even their neighbours. As warfare could, in those days, directly or even destroy economic activities, it could also help create trade and other economic pursuits as a result of creating a larger political unit under strong leadership.<sup>398</sup> Nupeland in the pre- and post Tsoede periods fitted in this scenario. The production of iron was enhanced by the availability of raw materials for which Nupeland of old was noted.

Thus, Schon and Crowther describe Nupe “as a country of iron”,<sup>399</sup> while Clapperton identifies the source of it to be the hills, with steep slopes and flat tops punctuating the country side, associated with several of the capitals of Nupe – Gbara,

---

<sup>397</sup> G.O. Ogunremi, and E.K. Faluyi, (eds), *An Economic History of West Africa Since 1750*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication, 1966, p.21.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> J. Schon, and S. Crowther. *Journals of Rev. T. F. Schon and S. Crowther, 1842, p.175.*



Jima<sup>400</sup> and other areas at the southern bank of River Niger. Supporting the procurement of raw materials locally, Jimada and Sule aver that all the raw materials used in the production of glass and beads at *Masaga* in Bida were derived from the hills in the area.<sup>401</sup> This debunks the Hamitic hypothesis of the origin of the glass workers in Bida which points to Egypt. In contrast to this traditional claim, the availability of the raw materials locally suggests glass working in Nupeland from early time. The precise period for this may be unknown to us. However, it must have been several centuries before the 19<sup>th</sup> century taking into account the glass workers' tradition of migration from Egypt in the remote past.

The quality of iron works in Nupe of old attracted patronage from far and rear. A number of sources<sup>402</sup> report people flocking Nupeland in search of cherished iron works produced by artisans. For instance, trade in such works existed between Nupe and Yawuri<sup>403</sup> as well as Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Yorubaland.<sup>404</sup>

The production of a variety of farm and war implements no doubt would have supported and sustained agricultural production as well as expansionist policies characteristic of the early period of Nupe history and probably, of other neighbouring communities. State formation came to strengthen the craft and artisan guilds as they played more prominent roles in the state, which became the major patron of the products

---

<sup>400</sup> H. Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bright of Benin to Soccatto*, London: Frank Cass, 1966, p.137.

<sup>401</sup> I.S. Jimada, "Preliminary Historical Inferences...", p.101 and M. Sule, *History of the Emirate of...*, pp.27-28.

<sup>402</sup> Among such sources are Mahdi Adamu, "A Hausa Government in Decline: Yauri in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", M.A Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria 1968, p.29. M., Mason, *The Foundations of the...*, p.49 and Clapperton, *Journey of Second Expedition...* p.118.

<sup>403</sup> A. Mahdi, *op.cit*, p.29.

<sup>404</sup> H. Clapperton, *op.cit*, p.118.

of some guilds.<sup>405</sup> This phenomenon might have survived up to the Tsoede period between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Jihadist period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Nupeland.

### **b. Weaving**

Another important economic activity for which Nupe was noted in the early times was weaving. Clapperton and Denham report that most of the textile industrial activities in Nupeland were carried out by males and females.<sup>406</sup> While spinning was exclusively reserved for women, men essentially did the weaving. The Nupe are reported to have excelled in weaving from very remote times and rivaled the inhabitants of Kano in the arts of weaving and dyeing.<sup>407</sup> Clapperton notes that the Nupe men-slaves were renowned throughout the Sudan “as being the best weavers and Nupe women the best dyers”<sup>408</sup> No wonder, the high quality and value of Nupe cloth, *ede* attracted merchants from almost every part of the Nigerian area. These included Hausa, Yoruba, Yawuri, Koton-Karfi, among others, who came to purchase, the cloth from the famous Nupe market at Kulfo.<sup>409</sup> Later travelers to Nupeland had the same positive impression on the quality of Nupe woven cloth. Barth, for instance, observes, “The Nufe (Nupe) have excelled in industry from very remote times and rival the inhabitants of Kano in the arts of weaving and dyeing”<sup>410</sup>.

---

<sup>405</sup> Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, pp.26 – 27.

<sup>406</sup> H. Clapperton and D. Denham, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa*, London, 1926, p.113.

<sup>407</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...* p.49.

<sup>408</sup> H. Clapperton & D. Denham, *op.cit.*, p.113.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> H. Barth, “Routes from Kano to Nuffe and from Mozambique to Lake Nyassi...Extracted from Letters from Dr. Barth to Dr. Baikie” *JRGS*, 24, 1854, pp.283 – 288.

In the same vein, Leo Frobenius' collection of traditions and the ones collected by this researcher in Nupeland suggest export of Nupe textiles to other parts of the world. According to the former, Nupe textile products were sold in places as far as Ougadougou (now Burkina Faso), as they were also traded across the Atlantic to the Americas.<sup>411</sup> Among the important weaving and dyeing centres included, Kulfo, Eggan, Raba, Gudu, Gbara and Bida, most of which attracted local, national and international patronage.

As was the case with the smiths, the weavers would seem to congregate into towns/centres where there were thriving markets for their products. Consequently, designated textile industrial centres emerged in Nupeland, among which were Kulfo, Gudu or Ogudu, Eggan and Bida.<sup>412</sup> Such centres that had existed from the early period in Nupeland, attracting high demand, are reported to have survived up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Crowther, for instance, is reported to have seen at Eggan, which had been the dominant port and effective head of commercial navigation in the Middle Belt, in 1841, as many as 200 looms,<sup>413</sup> used for weaving different types and sizes of cloth. These ranged from white cloth – *edekun* and or *edekoshi*, to strip white, blue and red cloth – *edetakpola* and *edekpasa*. The former was more valued, costly and used at special ceremonial occasions such as weddings, when grooms might be expected to use it as cover-cloth. The former was less costly and commonly used ordinarily by everybody. They were produced in different colours and designs for both domestic use and for export. At Kulfo town, Clapperton saw Yoruba artisans producing various wares as well as Yoruba woman

---

<sup>411</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa* vol.2, 1913, p.407?

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid* pp.40 & 50 and Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins...*, pp.36 – 37.

<sup>413</sup> M. Mason, *Foundations of the Bida...*, p.49.

cotton spinners.<sup>414</sup> It is suggested that the Yoruba must have learnt the skill of silk and cloth weaving from Nupe, especially from the immediate Nupe neighbours. Jimada reports the Lander brothers to have specifically noted that the Nupe town of Zagozhi produced high quality textile imitated by its Yoruba neighbours.<sup>415</sup>

Another important cloth weaving centre bordering Yorubaland in the remote past is ‘Gudu’, or ‘Ogudu’ according to the Yoruba. It was located on the southern bank of River Niger, not far away from Tsonga town in present day Kwara State. Noted to be one of the greatest textile, slaves and fish market centres,<sup>416</sup> among other goods, Gudu must have attracted merchants and probably skilled personnel from far and wide at both national and international levels, using both water and land trade routes.<sup>417</sup> No wonder, Clapperton, Mahdi Adamu, Abdullahi Mahdi, Jimada, among other sources, observe the widespread of Nupe skilled weavers and blacksmiths together with their products in Yoruba, Yawuri and Hausalands<sup>418</sup> and most probably other parts of Nigeria and beyond. Jimada, for instance, notes that several towns in Kano area, such as Kura, Rano, Bebeji, Gumel, among others, are identified with Nupe merchant and immigrant cloth weavers, dyers, spinners, tailoring, as well as involvement in wholesaling and retailing of textile products.<sup>419</sup> The Yoruba chiefs at Oyo-Ile are said to have been very fond of wearing Nupe quality cloth,<sup>420</sup> as was the case with the Kano nobility class<sup>421</sup> of old. The Lander

---

<sup>414</sup> H. Clapperton and D. Denham, *Narrative of Travels and...*, p.31.

<sup>415</sup> I. S. Jimada, *op.cit*, p.36-37.

<sup>416</sup> Oral evidence – group interview – M. M. Shaaba and S. Abdullahi – 58 and 63 years respectively, on 25/5/15 at Kontagora.

<sup>417</sup> J. F. A. Ajayi and, E. J. Alagoa, “Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of...”, p.231.

<sup>418</sup> Clapperton *op.cit*

<sup>419</sup> I.S Jimada, “Nupe – Kano Economic Relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, in, I.M Wuan and M.L. Salahu (eds.), *Aspects of the Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: IBB, 2014, pp.186-200.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> A. Mahdi, *op.cit*, p.119.

brothers who passed through Nupeland in 1830 noted the cloth which the Nupe of Zagozhi manufactured in common with their countrymen and the robes and trousers which they worked were most excellent and would not disgrace a European manufacturer. They were worn and valued by kings, chiefs and great men and were the admiration of the neighboring areas.<sup>422</sup>

Of all the weaving and dyeing centers, Kulfo, as noted earlier, was one of the most important. It served as a market between the south Atlantic and the Mediterranean to the north. This strategic position attracted different kinds of merchants and European goods from the savannah and the sea coast, respectively. According to Clapperton, Kulfo all the times was a central point for this part of the interior which saw the importation and re-export of foods from the north...<sup>423</sup> This analysis is an indication of the position of Nupeland in terms of trade with the neighboring areas.

Being a purely commercial centre, the citizens of Kulfo must have been well connected in one form or another with attendant financial benefits. For instance, hostel accommodation of various categories are said to have been provided both within and outside the town, for merchants and travelers.<sup>424</sup> While merchants with lifeless goods, such as salt, potash, cloth, beads, among others, could easily have been accommodated within the four walls of the town, those who had animals to tend remained outside the walls of the town. Apart from being a commercial entreport, Kulfo and indeed, other trade centres in Nupeland, must have possessed effective administrative mechanisms and security outfits, such that would ensure protection of traders and their goods. This would

---

<sup>422</sup> Richard and J. Lander, *Journal of the Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, London, 1932, p.197.

<sup>423</sup> H. Clapperton *Journal of a second Expedition...*, pp.135 – 139.

<sup>424</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida...* p.59.

have guaranteed security of trade, lives and survival of the business. The expected levy on imports and exports, details of which are not known to us, would seem to have strengthened the position of the political elite and the financial position of the respective communities. This, among other factors might have provided a strong base for the foundation of and consolidation of Nupe Kingdom which lasted for several centuries.

### **c. Pottery**

Pottery is said to have first appeared between 15,000 and 10,000B.C, with the dawn of the Neolithic age.<sup>425</sup> It is also described as “characteristic or symbol of settled life, the appearance and development of which, marked an important stage in the progress of man.”<sup>426</sup> In this regard, the art of pottery can be regarded as part of human civilization. Being a mirror of civilization,<sup>427</sup> it helps man to find out more about himself. The significance of pottery in the historical reconstruction of the human past cannot, therefore, be over emphasized. The abundance of pottery raw material, especially different types of clay in many parts of the Nigerian area, has offered a wider range of production techniques. This, thus, provides evidence of the intelligence and mastery with which the raw materials have been used. Generally speaking, pottery now is of two types: traditional and contemporary; the former being our focus.

Pottery like other crafts formed an important economic activity in early Nupeland. Among the important production centres and markets for this occupation were Eggan, Gbara, Baro, Jebba Island, Badeggi and Bida.<sup>428</sup> Other places which did not capture the

---

<sup>425</sup> B. N., Igwilo, “Traditional Pottery in Nigeria: A Survey”, *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 147, 1983, pp.35 – 46.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid*, p.35

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>428</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*, p.296.

attention of most writers on Nupe were Gudin, Yikangi, Beji and Pai,<sup>429</sup> the last two being a mixture of Gbagyi and Nupe groups. All the four lived in the north – eastern part of Nupeland in the present – day Wushishi, Gbako and Maikunkele Local Government Areas, respectively.

Pottery is reported to have been a recognizably valuable trade in some parts of Africa, despite its fragility.<sup>430</sup> The craft still remained widespread, most probably, because of the availability of main raw material – clay and the fact that it could easily be worked.<sup>431</sup> However, the apparent problem associated with the transportation of the finished products, especially on long distance routes has been expressed. For instance, in addition to the fragile nature of the products (easily perishable), the hollow ware took up more space than the constituent raw materials.<sup>432</sup>

However, the above apparent problem in connection with pottery making and marketing concerning long distance places did not seem to constitute much challenge in Nupeland. Nadel notes that in the 1930's, most of the pottery products found in Kutigi market were not produced in Nupeland, but rather in a Gbagyi town about eighty kilometers by road in the north.<sup>433</sup> This claim may require further clarification. It might not be true that such pottery products came only from the Gbagyi area outside Nupeland. While it is true that there were and to some extent, are still some popular Gbagyi pottery centres, such as Pai, Beji,<sup>434</sup> and Kwali, among others, there were also renowned, but neglected Nupe pottery centres in almost the same direction. These included Gudin and

---

<sup>429</sup> Alh. Alhassan Wasagi – 66 years, interviewed in Minna on 1/11/14.

<sup>430</sup> A. G. Hopkins, *Economic History of West Africa*, London, 1973, p.50.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, p.321.

<sup>434</sup> Oral evidence, Alh. Alhassan Wasagi – *op.cit.*

Yikangi Chikan villages which share borders with the Gbagyi and which many writers did not take note of. It is most likely that these and other Nupe pottery production centres sharing border with the Gbagyi group learnt the art of pot marking by the Gbagyi. It is most probable, therefore, that some of the pottery products observed in Kutigi market by Nadel and, probably other towns, such as Labozhi, Mokwa and Jebba further west might have been the handiwork of both Gbagyi and Nupeland pottery makers. Tradition has it that pottery traders from the south-western part of Nupeland used to travel long distances for many days or even several weeks to those Nupe and Gbagyi towns to purchase pots for resale and for domestic and marriage uses.<sup>435</sup>

Mason argues that both taste and specialized needs might have affected the distance pots were carried.<sup>436</sup> Another advantage for the industry and its marketability in Nupeland was/is the availability of water transportation. This is particularly significant, for, it permitted the economical transport of bulky and fragile goods over long distances. No wonder then, it has been observed that three of the four pottery centres, Jebba, Baro and Badeggi in Nupeland were located along rivers.<sup>437</sup> This source might not have taken note of other important pottery centres located along rivers, such as Eggan and Gbara. It is said that the best clay for pottery is found near the river.<sup>438</sup> This may explain the apparent superiority of the pottery produced in such localities which are all situated on or near the river. It is observed that Eggan-being the greatest river port in Nupeland, “was plainly a centre of (pot) production and a market of first importance”.<sup>439</sup> Both Whitford

---

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>436</sup> M., Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...*, p.51.

<sup>437</sup> S. F. Nadel, *op.cit*, p.296.

<sup>438</sup> D. Ismail, *op.cit*, p.329.

<sup>439</sup> M., Mason, *op.cit*, 329. P.51.



and Schon are reported to have emphasized Eggan as a great centre of pottery production in Nupeland of old as well as the stimulus for pottery trade.<sup>440</sup>

As an economic activity, pottery products served several purposes. They were and are still to some extent, being used for cooking, storage facilities, wedding gifts, room decoration, and water coolant, among others. They were also used as containers for the exports of sheabutter.<sup>441</sup> Some of its light articles are said to have been exported to other parts of Nigeria and Europe.<sup>442</sup>

#### **d. Woodwork**

Like pottery and other crafts, woodwork was an important artwork in early Nupeland. It was widespread in the land, especially in the areas of abundant wood, such as forest and river banks. Some of the goods carved from the hard woods of the Nupe forest areas were too heavy and bulky-hence, less profitable to be transported on roads than on canoes. Canoe-building would appear to have involved the Kyadya (the riverine people) along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna which might have been as old as the evidence of human habitation in the area.

Among the important wood work centres in Nupeland were Eggan, Kwatachi, Fazhi, Gbaradogi, Muregi and Gbajibo, among others. Wood work items produced included household furniture, roofing materials, utensils, canoes, decorated calabashes, wooden mortars and pestles, smoking pipes and wooden shoes. It is, however, observed that the early history of wood works in Nupeland appears neglected. According to

---

<sup>440</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>441</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> NAK Bida District, B.797, p.12

Stephens, apart from the few brief mentions in the Journals kept by explorers on and along the Niger River, “nothing is known about the early history of the tradition of wood carving among the Nupe.”<sup>443</sup> He reports Richard and John Lander to have observed in October, 1830, at a small Island town of Zagozhi “groups of people employed in... making wooden bowls and dishes”.<sup>444</sup> In the same vein, Macgregor Laird and Oldfield, during their 1832-4 expedition, were impressed by the decorative motifs used by the people at Raba in so many of their crafts.<sup>445</sup>

Much later – early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in his visit to Nupeland, Leo Frobenius appears to have recognized and established for the Nupe a place among the artisans of Africa. He noted with high impression the “intricacy of patterns on various items of metal-work and wood-carving..., comparing the style found in Nupe to that employed by the Yoruba to the South and the Hausa and Sudanic tribes in the North.”<sup>446</sup> According to him, “the style prevails in the embellishment of the old palatial edifices in Nupe, as can be seen on carved doors, stools and other products of the Nupe carvers...”<sup>447</sup> Among the important centres of canoe-building *eyadinchi* in Nupeland included Eggan,<sup>448</sup> Kwatachi and Fazhi in Zugurma area<sup>449</sup> and Gbaradogi, Muregi, Banzhi and Gbajibo.<sup>450</sup> The idea and technology of canoe-building may have been as old as the evidence of human habitation along the banks of the rivers. Therefore, the suggestion by Bargery (1934:2)

---

<sup>443</sup> P. Stephens, “Nupe Wood Carving”, *Nigeria Magazine*, No.88, 1966, pp.21-35.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*, p.21

<sup>445</sup> M. Liard, and R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by River Niger in the Stream Vessels of Quora and Alburkah in 1832, 1833 and 1834*, 2 vol., London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. 1971.

<sup>446</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, vol. II,(trans. Rudolf Blind) London: Hutchinson & Co., 1913, p.643.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid*. Also see stephens, Nupe Wood-Carving... pp.24 – 34 for different and various forms of wood works.

<sup>448</sup> S. A. Crowther, and J. Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger*, London, 1885, pp.73 & 84.

<sup>449</sup> D. Ismail, *Nupe in History 1300 – date*, Jos: Olawale Publishing Com. (Nig.) Ltd., 2002, p.330.

<sup>450</sup> Oral evidence from Aliyu Sunlati & Ladan Dokomba on 4/4/14 at Kontagora and 7/4/14 at Dokomba respectively.

quoted in Mason,<sup>451</sup> that “Nupe canoe-building was the end product of a great deal of cultural and technological borrowing” from the Niger Delta and Kakanda in the Southern part of Nupeland, may be taken with caution. What remains undisputable however, was the commercial and cultural interactions between the Nupe and their Southern neighbours, as it was with other parts of the Nigerian area, from time immemorial. In this circumstance, the possibility of exchange of ideas and technology between the Nupe and the southern riverine areas such as, Ida, Budan, Eggan and possibly beyond, cannot be easily dismissed. Both small canoes *eyatetengizhi* (plu) and big ones *eyakozhi* (plu) are reported to have been constructed and maintained in Nupeland.<sup>452</sup> Big canoes were capable of carrying cattle, donkeys, camels and other goods including human passengers in large number on water. Travelling by such canoes from Nupeland to the Niger Delta area in the south would last for ten days.<sup>453</sup> Other items produced by wood carvers – *egbazhi* (plu) in Nupeland included mortars and pestles of various sizes, decorated doors, hoes, axes and cutlass handles – *efuzhi* (plu), chairs and stools – *esazhi* of various sizes and designs, decorated calabashes – *evo/ponto*, smoking pipe – *koko*, wooden spoons – *kpantorozhi* of various sizes and designs, wooden clogs/shoes *Katamkpo*, wooden roof posts – *chigban-ebazun*, among others.<sup>454</sup> Bida and Eggan were famous centres for the production of these household items. Other centres were Latayi,<sup>455</sup> Lafiagi, Patigi, Tsonga in the south bank of River Niger; Lapai, Agaie and Raba<sup>456</sup> in central Nupeland.

---

<sup>451</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...*, p.52.

<sup>452</sup> S. A. Crowther and Taylor, *op.cit*, p.179.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid*, p.148.

<sup>454</sup> Oral evidence Moh’d Yagba – a descendent of wood carvers’ ward – Tako Wasa Bida, 55 years, 31/5/15 at Bida. Also see Mason, *op.cit* p.52.

<sup>455</sup> Oral interview with Fatima Nakodi Latayi 80 years on 22/06/15 at Kontagora.

<sup>456</sup> Crowther and Taylor, *op.cit*, pp.73 & 84.

#### **e. Mat and Hat Weaving**

Mat and hat weaving, though also forming an aspect of economic activity in Nupeland, was not done as full time vocation. The Nupe, in most cases, combined the art with other occupations like farming and fishing, where applicable. The products were almost entirely for local trade, although some might have gone outside the producing area(s). Unlike some other art crafts, mat and hat weaving was more or less practiced by individuals, mostly at leisure times.

The most famous centre of these crafts was and, is still Kutigi in central Nupeland. Among the products turned out were sleeping mats-*zogun*, of various sizes and design; straw – hats – *marfa* of different colour and sizes, hand weaving fan – *Tsofiagi*, hand weaving trays – *Fere*, among others. The major raw materials for mat and hat weaving were and are still leaves of the palm trees and back of the guinea-corn stalks, dyed in different colours. As for Kutigi being the greatest centre of production, two possible reasons had been suggested- the availability of raw materials, which were essential to the artisanal specialization and commercial centrality of the town.<sup>457</sup>

#### **f. Other Works of Arts**

Other works of arts which in one way or the other, contributed to the economy of ancient Nupeland were dyeing, leather works, black, glass, bead and brass smiting, as well as basket weaving. Various centers of these works were located in Nupeland. For instance, Bida, Kutigi, Sakpe, Agaie, Kulfo, Kwatachi, among others, were important

---

<sup>457</sup>*Ibid* p.53

dyeing centres.<sup>458</sup> The researcher's recent visit to Bida – *Bani* (the original Bida settlement) revealed evidence of several old dyeing pits in the area. Similarly, Bida was noted for brass smithing industry. Hence, a particular ward in Bida was named after the craft of brass smithing – *Efunyalechizhi* in the southern part of River Lanza which divides the town into northern and southern parts. Bida was also a great centre of leather work production. It supplied a large proportion of the military equipment for the Nupe army such as saddle and leather shields, sword sheath and quivers for arrows.<sup>459</sup>

Other settlements like Gbara (the ancient capital of Nupe Kingdom) and Mokwa had glass, silver and brass smiths.<sup>460</sup> It has been assumed that the iron glass and brass works with other industries that existed in Nupeland before the Jihad were probably located at Gbara.<sup>461</sup> Thus, Gbara, being the capital and centre of industries, must have occupied not only an important political, but also commercial centre linked with both land and water routes in Nupeland in the early times. Local hand – weaving fans – *tsofyiagi*, baskets – *kasazhi* of various sizes, colours, designs and texture<sup>462</sup>, were produced in many parts of Nupeland, especially in Kutigi.

## (V) TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The importance of transportation and communication systems in the sustenance of trade and commerce – be it internal or external – agriculture, slavery and any other forms of economic activity, cannot be overemphasized. Transportation accounted for the

---

<sup>458</sup> D. Ismaila, op.cit p. 330.

<sup>459</sup> Daryll, Forde, *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London, 1955, p.29.

<sup>460</sup> I. S. Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi...”, p.164.

<sup>461</sup> M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History, Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham, 1973, P.29.

<sup>462</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...*, p.52

movements of goods and services from one place to another. Means of transportation in the olden days can be categorized into land and water. There was the use of animals of burden such as donkeys, horses, camels, cattle and human porter age. Most of the animals were imported into Nupeland from the savanna through Borno and Hausaland. They were exchanged for available needed goods in Nupeland, such as slaves, kolanut, fish,<sup>463</sup> clothe, products of arts and crafts. Aside exchange of goods, trade facilitated by transportation system promoted inter-group relations both within and outside Nigerian areas.

Water transport used to and to some extent, has continued to play significant role in the economic activity in Nupeland. As noted previously, Nupeland has been naturally endowed with the presence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna and their tributaries which are said to have played critical role in trade and commerce in Nupeland in the past.<sup>464</sup>

Prior to the coming of highways, railways and airways, as means of modern transportation, rivers provided the only thorough fares for the cheap transportation of large quantities of commodities over long distances in many parts of Africa.<sup>465</sup> Notwithstanding the availability of pack animals in the savanna areas, they were more expensive to operate than the canoe.

River Niger, in particular, had been a major determinant in the economy of a larger population of the Nupe. In addition to agricultural activities, the river served as the main conveyor of commerce and traffic<sup>466</sup> as well as being the source of providing

---

<sup>463</sup> Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, p.39.

<sup>464</sup> Ajayi and Alagoa, "*Nigeria Before 1800: Aspects of...*",p.229.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

protein in the harvest of fish<sup>467</sup> and other water animals, such as hippopotamus (*Kankuru*), crocodile (*Kasa*), among others, both for local consumption and for export. According to Obayemi, River Niger – *Ndaduma* (father River), was “a vital artery of the political and economic organism”<sup>468</sup>The Kyadya group, as well as the Kakanda canoe men effectively monopolized and controlled trade and commerce up and down the Rivers Niger and Kaduna since time immemorial. Each of these groups had the portion of the River Niger under their control in terms of canoe transportation. Each of them had water and territorial boundaries beyond which they would hardly allow fishing and transportation activities from members outside their group. Thus, in compliance with the above, Sule reports that the Kyadya from upstream had to transfer goods into Kakanda canoes<sup>469</sup> for downstream movement. The same process concerned up-stream movement of goods from the Kakanda to the Kyadya. However, this situation might not have been a hard and fast rule. Traditions collected recently by the researcher from Jebba, Gbara and Nupeko riverain areas<sup>470</sup> affirm trading and canoe – ferrying from Nupeland downstream to the Niger Delta and Onitsha areas and upstream to the neighbouring French territories. As noted earlier,<sup>471</sup> Crowther and Taylor estimate a journey on big canoe lasting for at least ten days between Nupeland and the Niger Delta.

Internally, several river ports or markets emerged to which bulky goods and services were moved. Such river ports in Nupeland in the early times included Raba,

---

<sup>467</sup> A. A. Idrees, “Ganigan War 1881-1882: The Kyadya Reaction to the Political and Economic Domination of Bida in the Middle Niger Area of Nigeria”, *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. 37(I), 1989, pp.5-16.

<sup>468</sup>Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue Confluence Area”, in, I.Obaro, (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd. 1980, p.155.

<sup>469</sup> Sule, *op.cit*, pp.36 – 37.

<sup>470</sup>Alh. Muhammad Garan Jebba, 100years, Alhassan, Chekpan Gbara, 80years and Usman Mu’azu, Village Head of Nupeko, 83years. On 6/12/13, 10/5/13 and 15/6/13 respectively.

<sup>471</sup> See foot note 94 above.

Eggan, Katcha, Jebba, Gudu, Gbaradogi, Kpatagban, Elah,<sup>472</sup> Baro (Gidi) and Nupeko. These and other market centres were not only for domestic transactions, they are also said to have been essentially “international” in the sense that non-Nupe people converged there to buy and sell goods too.<sup>473</sup> Lander brothers on one hand and Schon and Crowther on the other, are reported<sup>474</sup> to have observed at the town of Eggan, variety of goods from Nupe hinterland being sold there. They also noted that apart from Nupe and Kakanda, other numerous languages, such as Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfude, Igbo, among others, were spoken there.<sup>475</sup> This is an indication of the position of Eggan as a melting pot for various merchandise and nationalities. Apart from slaves, other exportable goods at the market were rice, textiles, locally manufactured iron goods and pottery, in exchange for imports, such as salt and potash from Doma and Keana, in what used to be part of Kororofa/Jukun Kingdom, but which now form part of the present-day Nasarawa state, and probably horses from Borno and Hausaland.

## **(VI) TRADE AND COMMERCE**

The importance of trade and commerce to the development and promotion of inter-group relations cannot be underrated. In his assessment, Ochefu stresses that trade and exchange is integral to the material development of any people. Through these activities, various groups of people from different geographical regions, speaking different languages, practicing different religions and observing different cultural beliefs,

---

<sup>472</sup> A. A. Idrees, *Political Change...*, p.4.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>474</sup> M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom...”, p.63.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*



are brought together<sup>476</sup> to share or exchange ideas, goods and services, hence promoting unity and material well-being of those concerned.

Apart from agriculture, the Nupe from time immemorial had been involved in one form of trade and commerce and another. As observed earlier, Nupeland was strategically and favourably located which permitted not only the growth of a variety of crops, but also free movement both within and outside its territories. This made possible internal and external trade and commercial activities to thrive. Due to the texture of soil, varieties of crops were produced in excess of the locality's consumption which other communities were in need of, hence exchange of products between communities.

Though it may be difficult for us to know the details of marketing activities in early times due to dearth of documented records, markets for specific items in one form or another might have existed at various strategic and accessible locations. Such would have facilitated marketability and movements of goods and services, which in turn, required network of trade and commercial routes for both imports and exports.<sup>477</sup> Nupe enjoyed a wide scope of trade routes which were branches of the general trans-Saharan trade routes across West Africa.<sup>478</sup>

Consequently, there emerged in Nupeland ancient commercial and trade centres which might be regarded as entrepôts. Among such centres were Gbara, Egan, Raba,

---

<sup>476</sup>Y.A. Ochefu, "The Development of Legitimate Trade on the Lower Benue Valley: 1850 – 1886", in P.C. Dike, (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger – Benue Confluence Region*, National Gallery of Nigeria, 2005, pp.50-59.

<sup>477</sup> Nadel, *A BlackBzy...*, p.319.

<sup>478</sup>*Ibid*, p.320 provides details of some of such trade routes-both land & water leading to and going out of Nupeland.

Mokwa, Labozhi, Jima, Katcha, Nupeko and Kulfo.<sup>479</sup> Long before the establishment of emirate system in Nupeland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some of such centres served as transit camps for immigrants, clerics and traders coming from Hausaland and Borno to Yorubaland and Gonja<sup>480</sup> and those going to the former from the latter. As a result, these initial transit camps became commercial centres. Apart from being so, most of such places at one time or the other, in early times, became political, as well as socio-cultural melting pots, whose rulers endeavored to extend their authority in order to achieve an effective and perhaps, monopolistic control over trade.

Frobenius for instance, describes Raba as having rapidly grown to be one of the flourishing towns in Nupeland, chief among which was Gbara, so renowned for industrial art. One of his old female informants told him that around 1830 Nupe had “one hundred and twenty towns, each of them as large as Bida”. However, describing Bida among the 120 large towns in Nupeland might have been a mistaken identity. By the 1930’s Bida could best be described as one of the small settlements in Nupe kingdom. Moreover, it never was, at any time, before the emirate period, a capital of Nupe kingdom under Tsoede dynasty, as Nupeko, Gbara, Jima, Mokwa, Raba, among others, had been at one time or the other in the pre-emirate period. Bida assumed a place of political prominence after it became the emirate capital in 1857.

In his assessment, Nupe produced more clothing than the Hausa countries. But Raba took the lead among all the Nupe cities. It was very ancient and had been founded

---

<sup>479</sup> I.S., Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background”, M. A. Thesis, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991, p.164 and M., Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, pp.38 – 39.

<sup>480</sup> Y.B., Usman, *The Transformation of Katsina, 1400-1883: The Emergence and Overthrow of the Saurata System and Establishment of the Emirate*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, Press, 1981, p.16.

before the Edegi (Tsoede) epoch. It was surrounded with a wall (*ebang*) (*eban*) by *Etsu* Madjia (or Magia) at the beginning of the century (19<sup>th</sup> century) before the Fulbe had been banished to Ilorin. In those days, Rabba (Raba) was already so large and its population so wealthy that it had as many as 1,400 horses<sup>481</sup>

Levtzion, believes that trade stimulated a higher level of political organization, while the emergence of extensive states accorded more security to trade routes.<sup>482</sup> Hence, Nupeland in the early period must have witnessed a complex network of intense economic activities, rapid growth of population and emergence of state organizations. For instance, Jima, a one time capital city of Nupe Kingdom during the reigns of *Etsu* Jibrilu and Mu'azu between 1749 and 1818,<sup>483</sup> became one of the most famous commercial centres in Nupeland. It exchanged and traded in various commodities from various parts of the Nigerian area and beyond. The city was surrounded by strong wall which was both wide and several kilometers long.<sup>484</sup> We saw ruins of the broken walls on our visit there recently. It can, therefore, be suggested that the history and success of state formation in early Nupe, like that of other areas in the Western Sudan revolved on two themes – trade and religion. Hardly can any meaningful political organization thrive without strong economic backing of trade, commerce, agriculture, among others.<sup>485</sup>

---

<sup>481</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...* pp.580 – 581.

<sup>482</sup> N. Levtzion, "Early States of the Western Sudan", in, J. F. A., Ajayi, and M., Crowther, (eds), *History of West Africa Vol.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, London: Longman, 1976, pp.144 – 145.

<sup>483</sup> *Etsu* Jibrilu came to power in 1749, but deposed and exiled to Kutigi in 1759. Mu'azu who took over after, is reported to have reigned up to 1818. See Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, p.76.

<sup>484</sup> R.N. Kolo, "The Bini in Nupe History, with, Special Reference to Zhima (Jima). Doko", B.A. Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1973, p.40.

<sup>485</sup> A. Thurstan, "A Note on Trade and Tsoede...", p.236.

Paul Lovejoy stresses the relationship of commerce and clericalism<sup>486</sup> in the central Sudan in the early times. It was observed that little or no marked distinction existed between traders and Islamic clerics in the early introduction of Islam in the region – including Nupeland. Merchants, Islamic clerics, scholars and travellers all played significant role in this regard at least initially. As regards the formation of states, all in general and, the clerics in particular, were instrumental. As discussed elsewhere,<sup>487</sup> the latter did not only take part in the teaching and propagation of Islam in Nupeland, they also served as advisers to and officials in the administration of host governments.

According to Lovejoy,

Relations with the aristocracy were more intimate and in most Diaspora towns, marriage alliances were important. Such arrangements solidified common interests between the government and commercial sector, strengthened Islamic influence, and led to the assimilation of immigrants as a privileged class.<sup>488</sup>

In the same vein, Sule asserts that trading activities by traders from Borno and Hausaland as well as Gonja and Yorubaland in towns in Nupeland left a lot of wealth in the hands of members of the ruling class and economic elite.<sup>489</sup> This, together with other economic potentials might have facilitated political organizations and consolidation of same in Nupeland.

Both Abdullahi Smith and Mahadi Abdullahi emphasize not only the importance of environment and agricultural activities, but also that of trade and commerce as major

---

<sup>486</sup> P. E., Lovejoy, “The Role of Wangarawa in the Economic...”, pp.173 – 174.

<sup>487</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>488</sup> Lovejoy, *op.cit*, p.177.

<sup>489</sup> S. Mohammed, “Significance of the Emirate of Bida in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1833 – 1897”, in, T., Wuam, and M. L., Salahu, (eds), *Aspects of Niger State History – Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: IBB University Press, 2014, pp. 50-70.

factors for state formation and evolution.<sup>490</sup> Like these sources separately argue, establishment of centralized states in Hausaland was made possible by a combination of factors under reference. Obayemi on one hand and Ajayi and Alagoa on the other, consider the same factors – being responsible for “the emergence of mega states”<sup>491</sup> and establishment of “three major kingdoms, Jukun, Nupe and Igala”, respectively along the banks of Rivers Niger and Benue. Opening up of major trade routes between Nupeland and Hausaland, Borno, Gonja, among others and possible immigrations might have boosted the economic, as well as socio-political potentialities of Nupe in antiquity. Although time and manner of movements and inter-group relations between Nupe and those far places may be unknown to us, it is most probable that the stream of immigrants might have brought with them new skills, new crafts, capital, wealth, as well as socio-cultural influences.<sup>492</sup>

As Mahdi reports Kano, being a “melting pot” of the Western Sudan,<sup>493</sup> in the early times, same can be said to have been the situation with Nupeland in the Middle Niger area. One important feature of the domestic economics of Kano and Nupeland is said to have existed in both areas. This, according to Jimada<sup>494</sup> was the strategic locations of Kano and Nupeland in the early times. They served as major routes and gateways for commerce and trade between the Sahara and the coast. Among the

---

<sup>490</sup> Abdullahi Smith, “Some Considerations Relating to the Formation of States in Hausaland”, in, *A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*, Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, Ahmadu Bello University, 1987, pp. 59 – 70. and Mahadi Abdullahi, *The State and Economy: The Sarauta System and its Roles in Shaping the Society and Economy of Kano with particular Reference to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.*; Ph.D Thesis, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1982, pp.99-113.

<sup>491</sup> A. Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo – speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600”, in, J. F. A., Ajayi, and M., Crowder, *History of West Africa...*, pp.196 – 263 and Ajayi & Alagoa, “Nigeria before 1800...” p.229.

<sup>492</sup> Mahdi Abdullahi, “The State and Economy: The Sarauta System...,” p.113.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>494</sup> I.S. Jimada, “Nupe – Kano Economic Relations...pp. 186 – 200.

important routes was the one from Zinder through Kano to Zaria, through Kontagora to Mokwa and Raba in Nupeland, through Bussa, from where it crossed to Oyo – Ile and then to Gwanja.<sup>495</sup> Through this and other routes, movement of *Nufawa* to Kano and *Kanawa* to Nupeland was made possible long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which made migrations one of the most dynamic themes in pre-colonial Nigerian history.<sup>496</sup> As stated earlier, the early trade between Wangarawa and Hausaland and Borno passed through Nupe and Bussa. For instance, before or during the reign of Aliyu Yaji as *Sarkin* Kano (1349-1385),<sup>497</sup> trade in Kolanut became an important economic activity between Nupe and Wangarawa<sup>498</sup> on the one hand and Kano and Borno on the other. These inter-group relations facilitated by this long-distance trade and commercial activities were established many centuries before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mahdi,<sup>499</sup> reports Goody and Mustapha to have said that trade in Kolanut and manufactured goods between the savannah country and the forest belt of West Africa was already important in the time of Leo Africanus earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Kano Chronicle claims that “merchants from Gonja began coming to Katsina”, presumably with Kolanuts, which the Gonja and Nupe produced and marketed. Indeed, this commodity was believed to have been known to the doctors of North Africa as early as 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>500</sup>

---

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid*, p.188.

<sup>496</sup> S. F. Nadel, *Black Byz...*, pp. 319 – 320.

<sup>497</sup> H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs Kano Chronicle...*, p.105.

<sup>498</sup> M. Mason, “The Kingdom of Nupe...” pp.3 – 4.

<sup>499</sup> Mahdi Adamu, “A Hausa Government in Decline: Yawuri in the 19<sup>th</sup> century”, M. A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1968, p.58.

<sup>500</sup> J. Goody and T.N. Mustapha, “The Caravan Trade from Kano to Salaga, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.III, (4), June, 1967, p.?

Against the backdrop of such relations, there began to be immigrations and settlements of Nupe traders and skilled workers in other parts of the Nigerian area. Even though details and precise periods may not be available to us, such settlements might have been earlier than the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when we began to have records of intergroup relations between Nupe and Hausa, Borno and Yorubalands. Lander reports that by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nupe was exporting a variety of manufactured goods such as saddles, stirrups, cloth, hides, glassware beads, horses and slaves to Yorubaland.<sup>501</sup> Other goods exported to Yorubaland by the Nupe included swords, religious books and caps from Hausaland, Borno, Maghreb and Middle East.<sup>502</sup> In return, goods of European manufacture such as guns, shields, muskets, salt and iron bars were exported to Hausaland through Nupe.<sup>503</sup>

Trade and commercial activities formed a strong basis for the early migrations and settlements in various parts of what came to be Nigeria. Mahdi for instance, mentions areas of large concentration of Nupe settlements in *Birni Kano* such as *Jigau* ward which came to be identified as *Tudun Nufawa* (Nupe ward); *Bakin Ruwa* (black water in Hausa); *Dalma*, *Madungurma* and *Marmaro* wards.<sup>504</sup> In these and other Nupe settlements within Kano city and its environs, the Nupe were noted for their skill and specialty in weaving, dyeing and production of royal gowns.<sup>505</sup> Being early great traders and skilled craftsmen, the Nupe are said to have linked Kano commercially with the

---

<sup>501</sup> Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, Vol.I*, London, 1832, pp.205-207.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>503</sup> H. R., Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs, Vol..3...* p: 124 See Jimada, *op.cit*, pp.41-42 for the establishment of trade, relations between, Nupe and some specific Yoruba towns and other places in the early period using both short and long trade routes.

<sup>504</sup> Abdullahi, Mahdi, “The State and Economy: The Sarauta system...”, p.119.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid* p.119 and oral evidence – Isyaku Yageba and Adamu Nma Tete-66yrs and 63yrs respectively – 24/01/15 at Bida. Both of them settled in Kano for a long time.

markets of the Middle Niger and the confluence regions. They, as well, had been the link between Hausa and southern part of the Nigerian area with possible assistance from and, collaboration with the Yoruba immigrants who are also believed to have settled in Kano in the early times.<sup>506</sup>

The above situation in Kano arising from Nupe emigrations out of Nupeland might not have been significantly different from other places commercially connected with Nupe in the early times. Despite the ever-widening web of social and commercial relationships between Nupe and the north, as we have noted above in the case of Kano, we must however, not lose sight of the fact that Nupe culture in time past, was also firmly wedded to that of its neighbours in the Niger area. Both the western and southern banks of the river enjoyed such relationships. For instance, it was the conviction of Rev. Crowther, as reported in Mason,<sup>507</sup> that the western Nupe (Gbede) had once been settled by Yoruba-speaking people, whom, either must have been assimilated or moved south of the river.<sup>508</sup> In the southern bank however, the opposite is believed to have happened. Mason quotes part of Adeyemi's undated paper thus,

It is believed... that the Nupes occupied part of the present Igbomina land before the arrival of the Igbomina. When they came, these Nupes... were presumably driven north eastwards to the Lafiagi-Patigi area or absorbed into the Igbomina community.<sup>509</sup>

In the same vein, Jimada's<sup>510</sup> extensive discourse on the early inter-group relations between Nupe and Yoruba seems to suggest that the latter originated from the

---

<sup>506</sup> Mahdi, *op.cit*, p.120.

<sup>507</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Nupe...* pp.10-11.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid* p.11

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>510</sup> I. S. Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and...*, pp. 40-41.



former. According to him, by the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as we have noted earlier, Nupe was exporting a variety of manufactured goods such as saddles, stirrups, cloth, hides, glassware, beads, horses and slaves to Yoruba land. In return, European manufactured goods such as guns, shields, muskets, salt, iron bars, among others, were exported to Hausaland through Nupe from the coastal areas of Porto Novo, Badagry and Lagos. Manufactured goods from Hausaland, Borno, Maghreb and Middle East, such as swords, religious books, caps, as well as slaves coming from Zinder for re-sale,<sup>511</sup> were exported to Yoruba. The volume of trading items and commercial centres between Nupe and Yoruba would seem to have increased over the years. M.D. May, for instance, reports that by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nupe traders had been well established in Yoruba towns of Ile-Ife, Ikare, Ifaki, Arigidi Ekiti, as well as Ikosi and Ikorodu.<sup>512</sup> Similarly Mahmudu Modibbo's study, quoted in Y.B. Usman, reveals that "before colonial rule came, Zaria had communities of Nupe and Yoruba peoples in *Birnin Zaria* itself, people who had been there for several centuries and some of whom had become *Zazzagawa* of Nupe and of Yoruba origin..."<sup>513</sup>

Nadel describes Nupe traders as well as skilled workers outside Nupeland as more:

Than merely birds of passage. They stayed at a place several months or even years at a time and may possibly settle permanently. We find such settlements of Nupe traders in every larger town of

---

<sup>511</sup> H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries I North and Central Africa*, Vol.2, London 1965, pp. 132 – 135.

<sup>512</sup> M. D. May, "Journey into Nupe and Yoruba Countries in 1858", *Journal of Royal Geographical Society*, 1860, pp.225 – 227.

<sup>513</sup> Y. B. Usman, "History, Tradition and Reaction: The Perception of Nigerian History in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *Beyond Fairy Tales, Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Y. B. Usman*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, Press, ... p.61.

Nigeria.”<sup>514</sup> Lovejoy refers to such community settlements as “commercial Diasporas,”<sup>515</sup>

who formed what Nadel labels as “Nupe colonies – small cultural enclaves in foreign lands”.<sup>516</sup> They shared cultural affinity and identity reflected in their common language and origin. However, at the initial stay in the life of the traders and skilled craftsmen, ethnic and cultural affinities would seem to have been subordinated to business interests.<sup>517</sup> Such a situation might have changed later with the formation of larger Nupe Diaspora communities in their ‘new homes’. No wonder, we hear of *Anguwan Nufawa* – Nupe Wards in Kano, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, Ibadan, Lagos, Sokoto, Benin, Onitsha, among other towns and cities in Nigeria. We should note that while trade and commerce provided the major factors for emigrations out of Nupeland in the early period, another reason could have been attempt to escape from tyranny and persecution in the hands of the political and religious elites. It could also have resulted from dynastic disputes as exemplified in various versions of traditions of origins discussed in chapter two above. Such movements, Abdullahi Smith posits, could not only have resulted in the foundation of new settlements or the argumentation of old ones as potential nuclei of states, but could have also contributed to the states already founded.<sup>518</sup> In any case, Nupe Diaspora communities in various parts of Nigeria, have, from time immemorial, continued to promote economic and political development, socio-cultural bonds among the Nupe themselves, irrespective of state and religion and between them and the host communities on one hand and other ethnic Diaspora groups, on the other.

---

<sup>514</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, p.329.

<sup>515</sup> P. E. Lovejoy, “The Role of Wangarawa...” p.37.

<sup>516</sup> S. F. Nadel, *op.cit*, p.329.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> A. Smith, “Some Considerations Relating to the Formation of States in Hausaland p.72.

As there were Nupe settlements outside Nupeland, so also were there migrant settlements in Nupeland. Stories of the dispersal of Hausa-speaking peoples to non-Hausa areas leading to foundation of states have been told.<sup>519</sup> The two sources under reference, mention such non-Hausa areas on which Hausa state-like institutions were established as Yawuri, Zamfara *Birnin-Gwari*, Wasagu and Mashegu. In the case of Nupe, however, stories of the triumphs of the Hausa rulers over the Nupe such that led to the foundation of Hausa aristocracy in Nupeland are hardly recalled in Nupe tradition. There are however, traditions of Diaspora non-Nupe communities or settlements at the village levels. Mason gives a few examples of these to include Abaji, Eggan, Bokani by the Hausa and Kutigi, Enagi, among others, by Borno.<sup>520</sup> Both Eggan and Abaji towns are said to have been founded by *Katsinawa* - men from Katsina, while Bokani was first settled by an eponymous man from Kano,<sup>521</sup> hence Bokani, a corruption of the Hausa word “Bakano”, translated literally to mean “man from Kano”. Jimada<sup>522</sup> shows how a community called *Kusogi* (small forest), in Patigi area was founded by immigrants from Gobir called Gobirawa between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to him, the Gobirawa’s flight from their zone southwards in the 18<sup>th</sup> century followed the wars and tribulations in their area. The immigrants came for hunting and divination in the ‘small forest’<sup>523</sup> *Kusogi*, from which the name of the village was derived. Up till date, some inhabitants of *Kusogi* identify themselves with the founders by being great hunters and diviners. No wonder, therefore, *Kusogi* used to be and is still being noted for the famous

---

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid*, p.73. Also see Mahdi, “A Hausa Government in Decline: Yawuri in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century...”pp.44 – 48.

<sup>520</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida...* p.10.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>522</sup> I.S. Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background C.1810 – 1898”, M. A. Thesis, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991, pp. 62 – 63.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid*.

and fearful cult- *Ndakogboya*, throughout Nupeland. It also became an important and strategic market centre for the sale of meat and animal skins.<sup>524</sup>

The foundation of Kutigi and Enagi towns, or at least the establishment of the present day ruling classes there, appears to have had more political and socio-cultural impact on certain sections of Nupeland.<sup>525</sup> The Borno emigrants into Nupeland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are believed to have been led by Zanna Abubakar Maina from Borno area due to dynastic disputes there. On arrival at Kutigi area on animals – possibly horses and camels, the then *Etsu Nupe* – Muazu, welcomed and allowed them to settle in Kutigi and its environs.<sup>526</sup> They eventually established a Borno dynasty over the original inhabitants of Nupe – *Zam*, believed to have been the pure Nupe group. The descendants of the new settlers are known as “Benu”, a corruption of Borno, while their leader “Zanna” and “Birma” corrupted as “*Ezonuwon*” and *Bima*<sup>527</sup> – title – heads of Kutigi and Enagi respectively, which have since continued to hold sway in the settlements. The titles are both political and socio-cultural.

As was the case with the Kano and Katsina migrants into Nupe, that of Borno followed the same pattern. Trade, commerce and to some extent, religion were the push-factors. This was facilitated more by the nature of land and environment in Nupeland which permitted movement of goods and services both on land and water with little or no serious barriers. This, in turn, enhanced strong and viable economy, which, A. Smith

---

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> Apart from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad movements which brought a dynastic change in almost the entire Nupeland, Borno diaspora settlements can be seen to have the second dynastic impact on Nupeland.

<sup>526</sup> I. Dauda, *Nda-The Only Nupeman in Africa*. Minna: Murak press, 2010, pp.59 – 63.

<sup>527</sup> A. Smith, “Considerations Relating to the Formation of State...” p.72.

considers as fundamental factor for state formation.<sup>528</sup> According to him, viable economic potentials attract wealth and maintenance of a large and diverse population.<sup>529</sup> Control of trade and trade routes attract tax levy; riches enhance strong and powerful military build-up, which, in turn, promotes and encourages territorial expansion. Migration, whether internal or external, therefore, does not only lead to population increase, generation of revenue and exchange of trade goods, it also leads to intermingling or diffusion of cultures and technology.<sup>530</sup>

## **(VII) LABOUR**

The importance of provision of labour to the economic development in any society in all sections of the economy cannot be overemphasized. These included agriculture, industry, mining, fishing and canoe-ferrying, transportation, trade and commerce, among others. Each family or clan very much counted on its labour force for the productive activities to ensure sustainability. The quantity and quality of labour force might determine the productive capability of families and communities.

The immediate labour force in early Nupeland was provided by members of each family. In most cases, household members, both young and adult took after the occupation of their respective families to ensure continuity. Hence, members from farming communities were most likely to take to farming as a vocation, so also with other vocations.

---

<sup>528</sup>*Ibid.* p.72.

<sup>529</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>530</sup>*Ibid.*

In addition to immediate nuclear family members, labour force was provided by other categories. They included pawns and slaves. The two who appeared similar, provided almost the same services, even though they were different in social status. Both human pawning and slavery in early Nupeland and other parts of the world, started as a result of the desire to expand economic activities<sup>531</sup> and market opportunities. Secondly, both were, at least initially, not bonified members of the households, they served – having been forcefully or willingly made ‘artificial’ members of such families. Thirdly, both provided menial labours or any other service(s) assigned to them by their owners or masters as the case might be. However, they differed in one fundamental social respect. While slaves (*Wuzhizhi*) would essentially be expected to remain so ‘forever’; pawning (*Tsofa*) was a temporary bond arrangement between the creditor and the debtor. Pawns would continue to remain bonded and providing services to the creditors until the time when the debtors would be able to settle the debts. Services provided by pawns remained the interest for the creditor(s).

According to Falola and Lovejoy, a slave was a form of property and consequently, there was no alienation of the slave from his/her labour or use-value. The slave was labour and use – value personified. On the other hand, the pawn was not property; rather the contract involving the pawn was a form of poverty, involved subjecting the victims to servitude until debt was paid in full.<sup>532</sup> This was a common practice among the Nupe in early period. Stigmatization of families involved in this

---

<sup>531</sup>S.Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida...* pp.28 and 30.

<sup>532</sup>F.Toyin and P.E. Lovejoy, “Pawnship in Historical Perspective”, in, F.Toyin and P.E. Lovejoy, (eds.), *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p.11.

practice notwithstanding, the practice would seem to have continued up to the colonial period.

The labour put in by pawns in various sectors of the economy – agriculture, industry, blacksmithing, arts and crafts, weaving, leather working, pot making, transportation, fishing and canoe – ferrying, among others, added value to the economy of the creditors, in particular and that of Nupeland, in general. Even though the services provided were not rewarded at the end of the debt bond, when pawns would be free to return home, the experiences acquired during the period of pawnship might have been useful to themselves and their families. The skills acquired could be a source of livelihood, substance and discipline.<sup>533</sup>

As for slavery, it was a thriving business in pre-colonial Nupe as it was in many parts of Africa. Regarding them as personal properties, they could be purchased and disposed off anytime the need arose. Slaves (*Wuzhizhi*), as against the freeman – *egizhi*, hardly had any freedom. Nadel, describes slaves in the social hierarchy as “the lowest in the complex order of social classes”.<sup>534</sup> Within the slave social class however, could be found distinctions of social status. In the first place, some slaves, in Nupeland, as was the case in other parts of the Nigerian area, are said to have risen to positions of wealth and influence, while others had remained menial workers in the households and on the farms of their masters.<sup>535</sup>

Mason identifies three social classes in pre – colonial Nupe, being slaves (*Wuzhizhi*), freemen (*talakazhi*) and nobles (*Sarakizhi*). We should however note that

---

<sup>533</sup>S. Mohammed, *op. cit*, p.30

<sup>534</sup>S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, p.103

<sup>535</sup>*Ibid.*

*talaka* and *saraki* are Hausa, but not Nupe terms borrowed by the latter from the former. This suggests a pre – 18<sup>th</sup> century contact between the two areas. The number of slaves maintained in a household depended on the financial capability and socio – political status of the families. The prosperous farmers, feudal lords, craftsmen, blacksmiths and weavers, among others, could have owned between 20 and 30 slaves as moderate average number in their households.<sup>536</sup>

Two major sources of obtaining slaves were, through purchase in the slave markets and through wars and raids. Those captured during such wars, called war captives, would become properties of the man to whose share of the booty they had fallen. If the share of the booty – slaves were more than required by a household, the surplus would be taken to the market for sale to either domestic or international buyers.

Sule<sup>537</sup> identifies other sources of obtaining slaves in Nupeland. Since slavery entailed expansion of economic activities, the need for labour to ensure this became imperative. This necessitated rich people engaged in various vocations as mentioned earlier, to acquire additional workforce. Also, in order to strengthen political and military position of state officials, resort was made to obtaining slaves not only as booty, but also for conscription into the military.<sup>538</sup> In some cases, judicial powers were said to have been used by enslaving convicts of crimes, such as murder and theft.<sup>539</sup>

Be that as it may, the contribution of the slave labour to the economy of Nupeland in the past cannot be underrated. The practice of slavery and pawning system became an

---

<sup>536</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup>S.Mohammed, *op. cit.*

<sup>538</sup>J.D. Fage, A.G. Hopkins, S. Marks and R.A. Oliver (eds.), *The Journal of African History*, vol. xiv, Cambridge: University Press, 1973, 453-471.

<sup>539</sup>S. Mohammed, *op.cit.*, p.31



essential labour force in this regard. Mason assesses the importance of captive and client labour to the economy of Bida Emirate. In order to maximize slave labour, special slaves or client villages (*tungazhi*)<sup>540</sup> were established in Nupeland with more concentration in Bida and other *Bini* areas in its environs. The number of *tungazhi* would appear to be smaller in pre – emirate period than it was during the emirate period due to the intensity in the latter. Detailed discussion of this is outside the scope of our study. It would however seem that, most captives – slaves were either adopted by the armies of the rival Nupe princes, or exported to the South in return for guns, or to the North in exchange for horses<sup>541</sup> and other needfuls. Most of the settlers in the *tungazhi* are said to have been captives from other parts of Nupeland, such as Ebe, Benu, Chekpa, while others were from non – Nupe areas such as Yagba, Bunu, Kambari and Hausa.<sup>542</sup> Though it is not possible for us to measure the quantum of slave labour to the economy of early Nupe, human pawning and slavery might have been critical, not only in the economic, but also in political development, notwithstanding the socio – dehumanizing aspects involved in the practices. Since slaves were essentially engaged in economic activities, the large number of slaves involved suggests their importance in the economic development of Nupeland.<sup>543</sup>

---

<sup>540</sup>M.Mason, *Captive and Client Labour*...p.458-459

<sup>541</sup>*Ibid* p.458

<sup>542</sup>NAK BIDDIST, “Lemu District Notebook”, Box 21

<sup>543</sup>S. Mohammed *op. cit.*, pp.31-32.

## (VIII) CONCLUSION

From our discussion thus far, it can be claimed that the economy of ancient Nupe hinged on a number of broad based sectors. These included agriculture, industry, trade/commerce, art, crafts and transportation. These were facilitated more by the strategic geographical location of Nupeland being a commercial gateway between the savanna north and the forest south. It served as an entreport for the two zones which could be said to have strengthened the economic, socio-cultural and political position of Nupeland. The natural presence of the major rivers – Niger and Kaduna almost cutting across the entire land attracted a number of vocations such as virile agricultural production, fishing, canoe-ferrying-transportation and canoe-building craft, as well as enhancing migrations and settlement patterns

The emergence of important trade centres in the early period of Nupeland, linked by both internal and external long distance routes, did not only promote economic activities, but also inter-group relations which, to some extent, led to both emigrant and migrant settlements out of and into Nupeland, respectively.

Our attempt at examining the economic foundation of Nupeland cannot be said to have been exhaustive or the limit of Nupe ingenuity<sup>544</sup> in the production process. There were others, such as bead making, shaping or drilling; bronze works, leather goods produced from imported animal skin, soap making from ashes and palm oil, which, though contributed to the economy of Nupeland, but could not be treated in detail in this chapter due to lack of space.

---

<sup>544</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of...*, p.52.

A recent source postulates that the ancient Nupe people were masters of high arts and crafts, whose products, Ndagi claims, are “unparalleled in Africa”.<sup>545</sup> He cites the “most naturalistic and the greatest works of art known as Tsoede Bronze at Tada”<sup>546</sup> and the magnificent glass and brass works at Bida as examples. However, the issue of ‘Tsoede bronzes’ found at certain Nupe villages located at the southern bank of River Niger, such as Tada, Giragi and Jebba, as being the art works of Nupe remains controversial. While Sule,<sup>547</sup> drawing conclusions from available archaeological finds, suggests the Yoruba, rather than the Nupe origin of such bronze figures, Jimada<sup>548</sup> on the contrary, seems to argue for the possibility of them being part of Nupe original art works. According to him, there is abundant evidence to show that Nupe, just like Oyo, Owo, Benin and Ile-Ife belongs to the “same cultural milieu and produced these art works that were “destroyed” in the event of the pre-Jihadist Islamic reforms and Jihadist revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.”<sup>549</sup> According to this source the artistic works of the areas in Yorubaland under discussion remained intact because, unlike those of the Nupe, the influences of the Jihadist reformation movements in the 19th century on the former were minimal.<sup>550</sup>

However, considered against the high level of civilization and ingenuity in Nupe of old, which was comparable to other ancient world civilizations, it is possible to assume that the bronzes found at certain Nupe settlements, such as Tada, Jebba and Giragi, might

---

<sup>545</sup> A. Ndagi, “Nupe as Epicentre of Nigerian Arts”, being a Public Lecture delivered at the maiden Nupe Art Conference/Exhibition organized by the National Gallery of Arts, held in Bida between 13 and 15 March, 2014, p.107

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>547</sup> S. Mohammad, *History of the Emirate...*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>548</sup> I. S. Jimada, “Review of History of the Emirate of Bida to C.1899 by Sule Mohammad”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History Vol.7, (I)*, pp. 83 – 88.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid*, p. 88.

not have been beyond the technological ‘capability’ of the Nupe to produce. Tony Cragg, from the Royal Academy of Arts, United Kingdom, for instance, attempts to compare the Nupe Sculptural Technology with that of European Renaissance. The bronze found at Tada, he argues, “shows a sophistication equal to the European Renaissance sculpture of the same period, so much so that many refused to believe that it was the work of an African artist”<sup>551</sup>. Perhaps, the controversy as to the origin of the bronzes found in Nupeland will continue to be an issue of further research, before a “definitive art history of Nigeria can be written”<sup>552</sup> This, the source posits, will go a long way in clearing the ground for a more accurate interpretations of the evidence.

Be that as it may however, the distinctive quality of the Nupe state in old times and the people’s ability to adapt or manipulate local conditions for a wide range of productive activities cannot be easily dismissed. This might have informed Clapperton and Denham to describe the word Nupe as

A label for a range of prestige goods found throughout the whole of Central Sudan...The people (Nupe) possess much knowledge in the fine and rare arts and from their country many elegant and marvelous things are still exported. The source further sees Nupeland as a place where several materially advanced cultures met and produced the technological synthesis which is evident, for instance, in Nupe metal working, weaving, glass-making and carving.<sup>553</sup>

In the same vein, Mason avers that, the Nupe cultivator and artisan formed the armature which was central to the dynamic economy of Nupeland long before the 18<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>551</sup>Royal Academy Magazine and Blog, Autumn 2012, <http://www.org.royalacademy.org.uk/bronze-theartist-eye>, 410, RAMA.html.cons, 1922, p.388.

<sup>552</sup>L. Babatunde, “The Present State of Art Historical Research in Nigeria; Problem and Possibilities”, *Journal of African History*, vol.xviii No.2, 1977, pp.193-216

<sup>553</sup> H. Clapperton and D. Denham, *Narrative of Travels...*, p.165.

century in which the antiquity of the cultural and technical pattern appear clearly manifest.<sup>554</sup>

From the foregoing views and analysis, it requires no laboratory test to deflect the arguments and hamitic hypothesis of the likes of David Hume, George Hegel and Hugh Trevor-Roper, who do not believe that “there was a civilized nation of any other complexion in Africa than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no science”... and as such, do not regard Africa as being a “historical part of the globe”, worthy of intellectual study.<sup>555</sup>

Generally speaking, it can be observed that a combination of favourable factors for state formation existed in Nupeland, as they did in several other ancient societies, including Hausa, Yoruba and Igala lands, which became critical in the evolution of mini and mega state – like structures in the past. The formation of pre-Tsoede mini polities – Bini Confederacy, Kyadya and Kusopa polities and the foundation of larger and more central kingdom in Nupeland, during and post-Tsoede periods in the area, are cases in point. Thus, by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Nupeland can be said to have undergone a fundamental transformation in terms of politics and economy. This feat was achieved essentially, due to the agricultural, industrial, commercial and artistically productive processes.

---

<sup>554</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of the Bida...*, p.50.

<sup>555</sup> O. E., Uya, “Trends and Perspectives in African History, in O. E., Erim and E. U. Okon (eds), *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1984, pp. 1 and 2.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIO – CULTURAL PRACTICES AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN NUPELAND, 1068 – 1500 A.D**

### **(I) INTRODUCTION**

An attempt is made here to discuss Nupe history prior to the emergence of a unifying force – Tsoede. Our examination of this period of Nupe history goes a long way in debunking suggestions that Nupe history never went beyond Tsoede period – 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. From available archaeological and linguistic research findings, however, it has been shown that Nupe as a group and polity had been in existence in the Middle Niger and Niger-Benue confluence areas from the remote past. This has been estimated to be as far back as 9,000B.C or 40,000 years ago.<sup>556</sup> There are suggestions of the existence of several kingdoms and, or mini-state structures, in Nupeland pre-dating Tsoede period. We shall begin discussion of the pre – Tsoede period by looking at the socio – cultural practices.

### **(II) SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES**

The socio-cultural practices among the Nupe, just as it is with other groups can be said to have been as old as Nupe history. Evolution of such practices might have been an attempt to solve both individual and general problems of existence very much related to the environment<sup>557</sup> in which they found themselves. In achieving this, resort was made to the institutionalization of religious belief systems centred on cults and rituals. In all aspects, therefore, religion – whether indigenous or foreign – occupied a centre stage in

---

<sup>556</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundation of the Bida Kingdom*. Zaria: ABU Press, 1981, p.8.

<sup>557</sup> S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D*; Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press 2011,p.50.

all ramifications of people's ways of life. This is captured in the various ways the concept of religion is defined.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, religion is defined as the belief in the existence of a god (God) or gods and the activities that are connected with the worship of them.<sup>558</sup> Nadel sees religion as "all beliefs and practices implying communication with and control of the supernatural, whether this is attempted through appeals and prayers to some transcendental intelligence, in the manner of religion, or quasi-mechanically, by the manipulation of "magic agencies."<sup>559</sup> No wonder then, Goldthorpe sees religion and magic as integral to practically all human cultures<sup>560</sup>. According to him, human cultures consist of a system of tools linked with a system of symbols – being distinctive feature of human cultures. It is this symbolic nature and ability to perform symbolic operations, learnt through culture, that distinguishes man from other animals.<sup>561</sup>

As to the definite and accurate definition of the word religion in Nupe language, there appears to be none. Anywhere in Nupeland today, the name *adini* is what is referred to or regarded as religion. Linguistically speaking, however, *adini* is an Arabic and not a Nupe or Hausa word. According to Mason:

There is no word in Nupe for the non-Islamic or non-Christian religious pursuits. *Adini*, a word borrowed from Hausa (sic) means religion in the exclusive of

---

<sup>558</sup>Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, p.990.

<sup>559</sup>S. F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1954, p.3.

<sup>560</sup>J.E. Goldthorpe, *An Introduction to Sociology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 183-184.

<sup>561</sup>*Ibid.*

one or other of the two monotheistic creeds known to Nupe.<sup>562</sup>

However, this conclusion by Mason may require further comments. It cannot be true that the Nupe did and still do not have a specific concept for religion. The *Adini* being referred to was a relatively later or contemporary concept introduced after the influence of Islam in Nupeland from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Before then, the concept of religion had been there from time immemorial. Our recent investigation to determine Nupe equivalent of the word ‘Religion’ seems to prove wrong Nadel’s and Mason’s submissions.

A number of concepts have been given, which, after subjecting them to critical analysis, seem to mean the same thing. They include, “*Gbigba*”<sup>563</sup> “follow”, technically referring to “standing before your Creator who is greater than you”; “*Wunwun*”<sup>564</sup> – “Worship”, “*Bautajinya*”<sup>565</sup> – “Worship of” and “*Kpatsunta*”<sup>566</sup> “submission”. Nupe Dictionary meanings of most of these concepts/words mean almost the same thing – ranging from “worship” the act of worshipping, reverence, to idolization, glorification and service.<sup>567</sup> An informant<sup>568</sup> says that, there was hardly a single Nupe name for religion that can be said to have been universally accepted throughout the entire Nupeland in the remote past. According to him, each Nupe sub-group or communities would seem to have specific name(s) for deities they worshipped which had become their ‘*Dandan*’ – culture. He suggests that lack of effective and easy communication networks

---

<sup>562</sup>M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History”, Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham University, 1970, p.16.

<sup>563</sup> Oral evidence – Rev Elijah Bokungi- 70 years through my Research Assistant – Mal Salihu Abdullahi on 26/11/15.

<sup>564</sup> Oral evidence – Mal. Salihu Ndagi – 63 years at Bida on 6/2/16.

<sup>565</sup> Oral evidence – Dr. Sheikh Abdullahi ‘60 years at Minna – 30/12/15.

<sup>566</sup> Oral evidence – Alh. Shehu Buhari 55 years at Bida on 30/12/15.

<sup>567</sup> A. Y. Soloman, *Nupe Heritage Dictionary*, Minna: Kochita Resources Ltd. 2013, pp.47 – 85 and 275.

<sup>568</sup> Alh. Alhassan Wasagi; - 67 years, at Minna on 28/11/15.



in the early past, might have impeded the evolution of a single widely acceptable Nupe word for religion. This seems to agree with Nadel's submission that the religious beliefs and practices of the Nupe differ considerably in different parts of the country.<sup>569</sup> Be that as it may, notwithstanding the various ways through which the Nupe of old practiced their religion, it may be difficult to accept the claim that the Nupe did not have equivalent word for religion prior to the introduction of Islam and Christianity into Nupeland, since religious practices in the area far pre-dated the introduction of Islam and Christianity.

Prior to the introduction of foreign religions – Islam and Christianity – traditional religious practices were the prominent belief systems in conjunction with magic-*chigbe* and rituals- *Kutizhi*, regulated people's lives in most ramifications, politically, socially, culturally and economically. The deities or cults served as intermediaries between human and the Super Natural Being – *Soko*. Both 'national' and local Cults existed like *Ndakogboya* and *Gunnu* cults. Others that were local and community – based included *Gugu (Egungu)*, *Kuti Sogba*, *Ketsa Rock (Juju)* and *Kuti Duaga*, among others. Generally speaking, the indigenous belief systems were centred on the worship of idols or deities – *enyawo*,<sup>570</sup> in various forms and diversities. There were differences in the worship of idols. Some deities could belong to certain individual communities and even households worshipped either annually or periodically depending on the 'rule' of practice or, on 'need' bases. Notwithstanding the individuality of certain deities, certain cults which could be regarded as 'national' flourished in all communities throughout Nupeland.<sup>571</sup>

---

<sup>569</sup> S. F. Nadel *Nupe Religion...*, pp.1 – 2.

<sup>570</sup> Sule, *op.cit*, p.50.

<sup>571</sup> S. I. Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background C1810 – 1898." M. A. Thesis Dept of History, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, 1991, p.170.

Among such ‘national’ cults were the *Ndakogboya* masquerades and *Gunnu* ritual. We will discuss more on these shortly.

Meanwhile, it needs to be pointed out that despite the worship of different cults in Nupe of old, the fact remained that the people believed in the existence of a Super Natural Being who was the creator of everything. They called this Being Soko- God, whom they believed resided in the sky. It was believed that God decided to leave this earth for the skies following disobedience by mankind which angered Him.<sup>572</sup> Nadel, illustrates one cosmological myth the Nupe had on the origin of man.<sup>573</sup> They believed, as was the case in many traditional African societies, that the Supreme Being could not be reached or approached directly since He is too far away from man, hence the existence of certain deities/cults that served not only as short-cut, but also as intermediaries between man and God. Such deities could be carved images, revered places, special trees, rocks, riversides and other objects held with great reverence.<sup>574</sup> If, as Nadel<sup>575</sup> notes, “we call the belief in God the creator the first article of the Nupe creed, the second would be this conception of ritual as an intermediary between God and man”. The cosmological view of pre-Islamic Nupe of the world was that the world was composed of human beings – *Zawangizhi*, Animals – *enagontazhi*; Spirits *aljennuzhi* and Rituals – *Kutizhi*.<sup>576</sup>

Apart from the first three that could be said to be God’s creation, the last one – Ritual, was what can be regarded as man’s artificial creation through which to reach out to the Supreme God believed to be far away in the sky. According to Daryll Forde,

---

<sup>572</sup>D. Ismaila, *Nupe in History 300-Date*, Jos: Olawale Publishing Co. (Nig) Ltd., 2002, pp. 237 – 238.

<sup>573</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion...*, pp 8 – 10

<sup>574</sup> D. Ismaila, *opcit*, p.238.

<sup>575</sup>Nadel, *opcit*, p.13.

<sup>576</sup> S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupe: The Emirate of Bida as a Case Study*, Kaduna: Fembo Books and Graphics, p.12.

rituals or cults “are regarded... a delegation of God’s power in compensation for his (His) remoteness in the hands of such tribes and villages.”<sup>577</sup> Besides being an intermediary between man and God, the ritual is generally believed to have other socio-cultural benefits. These included provision of prosperity, fertility, good health, success in farming, fishing, business and other occupations. Others included combating of natural calamities and evils such as drought, flood, illness, barrenness, evil spirits and witchcraft. In addition, the use of medicine *chigbe* of all kinds was essentially relied upon to ‘achieve’ fight against these and other societal problems and calamities.<sup>578</sup> Hence, Nadel suggests that for a discussion of religion in pre-Islamic Nupe, the concept and application of the word *cigbe* - medicine, must be referred to.<sup>579</sup> This is because it occupied an important position in the lives of people. According to him, only those who had the skills and substances for the preparation and application of *Chigbe* that were recognized, respected and revered.

Identification and discussion of some of the cults reflecting indigenous belief system in pre-Islamic Nupe may not be out of place here. The *Ndakogboya* cult, was identifiable with all communities not only in pre-Jihad period, but to some degree, has also continued to hold sway in certain areas of Nupe of today, such as Kusogi near Doko in present-day Lavun Local Government Area; Edati, in Edati Local Government Area in Niger State; Zambufu in Edu Local Government Area; and *Lade*, in Patigi Local Government Area of Kwara State.<sup>580</sup>

---

<sup>577</sup>Daryll, Forde, “The Nupe”, in Daryll, Forde, (ed), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence*, London: Lowe and Brydone Printers, 1970, P.46.

<sup>578</sup>Oral evidence – Moh’d Maigarin Tuwagi and Abubakar Isah Tuwagi 65 and 60 years respectively on 30/11/13 at Tuwagi village – the original leader of *Bini* Confederacy.

<sup>579</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion...*, pp.6& 19.

<sup>580</sup>Drs. M. Ndana & M. M. Shaaba – Lecturers at F.C.E, Kontagora from Niger and Kwara States respectively on 11/04/14. See also, S. T. Sidi, *op.cit*, p.17.

The institution of *Ndakogboya* was headed by a priest called *Majindodo*. All activities including magical and entertainment performances were at the dictate and permission of the *Majindodo*. The cult was believed to have possessed powers which can be used both in secret and public to check or wipe away societal evils. The institution could be seen as antidote against excesses of witchcraft-*ega* and wizardry-*eshe* or to counter their activities all together.<sup>581</sup> With their spiritual and supernatural ‘powers’ the *Ndakogboya* were feared, even by the political and socio-religious elites.<sup>582</sup> It was reported, for instance, that not only the pre-Jihad Kings – *etsuzhi*, but some of those of the Jihad or post Jihad period actively patronized the services of *Ndakogboya* and other rituals. *Etsu* Masaba, the second Fulbe ruler, while at Lade is said to have participated in the appointment of *Majindodo* and other leaders of the institution of *Ndakogboya*.<sup>583</sup> It, like other cults, was regarded as agent for the enforcement of law and order in the community.

*Gunnu Ritual*, like *Ndakogboya* was a common and popular cult generally practiced in pre-Islamic Nupe. It became a unifying factor in Nupe since almost every part of the land especially among the *Bini*, appeared to have participated in its annual ritual activities. Like other rituals, Nadel notes that *Gunnu* was used as a means of ‘harnessing and canalizing’ cosmic power for specific uses.<sup>584</sup> At the annual performance of its ritual acts, specific ‘prescribed’ sacrifices were offered to propitiate and to invoke the cult to safeguard among other things, fertility of the soil, good health, abundant food supply and rainfall. On the basis of need, the *Gunnu* ritual could be performed any other

---

<sup>581</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate system...*, p.12.

<sup>582</sup>Oral evidence, Moh’d Maigarin Tuwagi and Abubakar Isah Tuwagi, *op.cit.*

<sup>583</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion...*, p.13

<sup>584</sup>*Ibid.*

time. Nadel elsewhere describes in detail the celebration of its annual festival.<sup>585</sup> As was the case with *Ndakogboya*, some of the pre-Islamic *etsuzhi*-kings, were reported to have employed the services of the *Gunnu* to effect political control in the Kingdom. They were reported to have not only taken part in the ritual, but also became prominent members of the cult. *Etsu* Ikanko's grandfather, who may have ruled long before the Islamic period, for instance, was believed to have been at one time the *Ndazo* or *Gunnu* priest.<sup>586</sup> The dual role of the *Ndazo* suggests that the pre-Islamic *Etsuzhi* and other title holders combined both the religious and political offices. Jimada notes that the authority of the *Etsu* over Nupeland in the early period and his direct control of the cults ensured complete loyalty.<sup>587</sup> For the rulers and other title holders would be feared – being in possession of both spiritual and political powers. This may have forestalled disloyalty, disrespect and possible recalcitrant behaviours from the led to the leaders. Little wonder, Nupe, from the earliest times to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century could be said to have relatively enjoyed political and socio – economic stability, except for occasional external aggression and attempts of leaders to embark on expansionist policies.

*Gugu* or *Egungu* in Yoruba, was another ritual practiced in Nupeland before the advent of Islam. The origin of this cult is controversial. Nadel suggests the origin of this cult from Yorubaland,<sup>588</sup> through Yoruba war-captives or slaves-*Konu*. This assertion is subject to different views. Mason, for instance, believes the reverse was the case. That

---

<sup>585</sup>Nadel, "Gunu, A Fertility Cult of the Nupe in Northern Nigeria", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol.Lxvi, 1937, pp.91 – 137.

<sup>586</sup>W. B. Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda*, London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd. 1966, p.105.

<sup>587</sup>Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi...", pp.170- 171.

<sup>588</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion...*, p.208.

the *gugu*, instead originated from Nupe to Yoruba land. He cites the works of Crowther, Johnson and Ojo<sup>589</sup> to support his view.

The later view, plausible as it may appear to be, does seem to contradict the traditional view generally held by the Nupe. We have observed generally that in most parts of Nupeland, reference is made to *gugu* cult by qualifying it as *gugu-yagi*. *Yagi* comes from the word *eyagi*, meaning Yoruba in Nupe. Furthermore, the ritual appears more practiced in the south western part of Nupeland which borders Yorubaland. These include Mokwa, Jebba, Gbede, Kutigi and Kpatsuwa. As was the case with other cults noted earlier, *gugu* was worshipped for almost the same purposes – checking of societal evils, provision of success in business, farming, protection against evils and general cleansing of communities with them.

*Kuti-Sogba*, another ritual, which is as old as man in Nupeland and, to some extent, has continued to be practiced in some parts of the area. Unlike *Gunnu* and *Ndakogboya* cults, *Kuti-Sogba* was not celebrated throughout Nupeland, but in certain areas, among which were Yemi, Nuwankota, Jiyako, Kodan, Gbasakun and Sonfadako,<sup>590</sup> as well as Gudugi village near Belle presently in Kwara State.<sup>591</sup> As to the origin of *Kuti Sogba*, there is no incontrovertible written record. Nadel's suggestion linking its origin to the Yagba in North Eastern Yorubaland through the Gbagyi<sup>592</sup> appears unconvincing to Mason and this researcher.<sup>593</sup> There is no evidence of similar

---

<sup>589</sup>Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom..." pp.21 – 22.

<sup>590</sup>Sule, *op.cit*, pp.52 – 53.

<sup>591</sup>Oral interview – Mallam Salihu Abdullahi from Belle in Kwara State, interviewed at FCE K/gora 13/04/14. 63 years, public servant.

<sup>592</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion* pp. 208 – 209.

<sup>593</sup>Mason, "The Kingdom..." p.23, Oral evidence collected recently by us from two *Kuti-Sogba* settlements – Jiyako and Nuwankota believe the indigenality of the cult.

ritual in Yorubaland that might possibly warrant its spread to Nupe through the Gbagyi who had no Yoruba slaves and shared no boundaries with the Yoruba.

The *Kuti-sogba* ritual was and to a lesser degree, still being performed specifically to solve, among other things, infertility and barrenness in women. Women with these and other problems, such as miscarriage and non-survival of children after birth, could approach the ritual through its priest – *Ndazhigi* for “intervention” and possible solution. Medicine would be given to the “clients” or sufferers after performing “prescribed” sacrifices by the priest. Children born after the “intervention” by the cult would be given certain identifiable names to show that they were born through the “powers” of *Kuti-sogba*. For example, the first child would be named after the cult - *Sogba*; the second one – *Tsubeyan*; the third one – *Yebo* and the fourth one *Jinda* or *ejinda*.<sup>594</sup> Others born after the fourth one could be given any name not linked to the cult.

Apart from the occasional and non-fixed performances, there were/are fixed annual communal festivals at which sacrifices were/are offered in secret to the *Kuti*. The annual festival, called *gbazhi*, usually lasts for nearly a week starting from Wednesday. After preparing the preliminaries on the commencement day, Wednesday, at the village settlement, the priest-*Ndazhigi*, together with his subordinates, important dignitaries, clients, the cult’s children *egisogbazhi*, observers, among others, would relocate to the shrine located in the forest – *Kuso*, not far from the village. The priest remains there till Friday evening offering all sorts of sacrifices to appease the *Kuti*.

---

<sup>594</sup>Sule, *op.cit* p.52 and Alh. Hassan Wasagi informant – 14/4/14 at Minna & Dauda Ibrahim, *NDA: The Only Nupe Man in Africa*, Minna: Murak Printers, 2010, p.48.

During the week, activities, ceremonies, commercial businesses and entertainments of all sorts, drumming, singing, display and sale of all types of medicine, believed to have been produced by the cult against different forms of ailment and societal evils, would take place. So strong was people's belief in the *Kuti-Sogba* cult and its activities, especially in its power to give children to the needy, to work in partnership with spirits, to wipe away evil spirits and witchcraft, to provide antidote to thunder storms and diseases, that the "believers compared the cult with God". This is reflected in some songs and folklores contained in the following,

*Sokowacin, Sogba ma wacin,  
Soko-eyagi, Sogba ma yagi,  
Zandoro, utswasoko,  
Zandoro ma utswasogba,<sup>595</sup>*

Meaning;

*God is great, Sogba also is great,  
God gives children to people, so also does Sogba  
Everybody should be careful and fearful of God, as  
they would do of Sogba.*

Nadel also reports from the *Gunnu* cycle of songs:

*(If someone said:) 'Give me for the sake of God',  
I shall give him nothing.  
(If someone said:) 'Give me for the sake of the Gunnu',  
There it is – I give him.<sup>596</sup>*

This means, while it is of little avail to invoke God, the performance of the *Gunnu* or any other *Kuti* is always effective.<sup>597</sup> No wonder therefore, people's reliance and trust on the cults seemed greater than on God, since His reprimand and expected punishment

---

<sup>595</sup> Alh. Hassan Wasagi 14/04/14.

<sup>596</sup> Nadel, *Nupe Religion...*, p.15.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*



may not be instant as those of the cults – *Kutizhi*. Thus, criminality, violation of societal norms, commitment of evils, adultery, disobedience to “constituted” traditional authorities, among others, would appear to have been much greater than what is now in operation in our contemporary societies, in which, relatively, little or no premium is placed on indigenous religious practices with the advent of Islam and Christianity.

Other *Kuti* rituals practiced in Nupeland in the early times include *Ketsa* (Juju Rock), *Ndaduma* (River Niger), *Jinns* or spirits – good or bad, the Ancestors and sacred animals. The *Ketsa* cult has been associated with Tsoede or Edegi, the founder of Nupe kingdom. According to tradition, *Ketsa* was considered by *Kyadya* – the riverine people along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna as a unique spirit living at the site of Tsoede’s sunken canoe. The ritual is believed to have originated following a disastrous flood of the River Niger and its attendant negative consequences on the communities. These include destruction of houses, farmlands which resulted in famine.<sup>598</sup>

It was believed that the *Ketsa* rock spirit must have been offended. In order to appease the spirit, sacrifices were made. Nadel reports that the then *Kuta*, the head of the *Kyadya*, ordered the sacrifice of a white cow, a white cock and some honey at the foot of the *Ketsa* rock<sup>599</sup> located midstream of the River Niger, very close to Jebba Island. From that time onwards, the festival had become an annual event, or would take place whenever there was danger of flood and scarcity of fish, on the orders of the rock priest – *Ndadoro*. In addition, the rock spirit would be appeased to forestall barrenness, cure

---

<sup>598</sup>Salihu Abdullahi Belle-63years, interviewed on 20/12/13 at Kontagora and Alh. Mohammed Garan Jebba – 100 years at Jebba on 6/12/13.

<sup>599</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion...*, pp.208-209.

illness, secure fertility of the soil and ensure success in fishing and trading activities.<sup>600</sup> It was the belief of the people that their success in day-to-day business depended on the appeasement of the ritual.<sup>601</sup>

Traditions collected recently by us at the site of the rock near Jebba further assert that in those days, girls would not be married until they were taken to the *Ketsa* rock spirit for “blessing” and “marriage gifts” to be taken to their husbands’ home.<sup>602</sup> So spiritually strong was the ritual, according to tradition, that all the strong explosives used to break the rock to give way to the construction of the Jebba Hydro Electric Power Dam were unsuccessful. No wonder the rock was known to the Europeans as “Juju Rock”<sup>603</sup>. Thus, the initial site for the Dam had to be moved a little upstream.<sup>604</sup> The rock still stands there on the Island, but most of the traditional religious activities associated with it have been wiped out or reduced to the barest minimum due to the influence of Islam and Christianity.

Like the other cults, *Ketsa* provided a bond of unity in pre-Islamic period. The emblems of their ancestor-Tsoede and the myths and rituals associated with his person served as an overriding factor of unity in the Nupe Kingdom. At this juncture, a point has to be stressed. It is doubtful whether Tsoede could be regarded as the ancestor of this and other cults in Nupeland. This aspect seems to have been ignored by some historians of Nupeland. The general belief was that Tsoede was responsible for the distribution of

---

<sup>600</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of the...*, p.15.

<sup>601</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>602</sup>Alh.Mohammed – Garan Jebba, 100 years, interviewed at Jebba on 06/12/13.

<sup>603</sup>S. F. Nadel, “The Kede: A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria”, in, M. Fortes and E.E. Evans Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems*, International African Institute, 1940, p.191.

<sup>604</sup>Oral evidence Aliyu Mohammed Jebba and Ndaiji Kani Jebba – 53 – 52 years respectively 06/12/13 at Jebba.

various articles or deities which became objects of worship in Nupeland. Even if we accepted this to be true with certain moveable deities, it will be difficult for us to apply this to the *Ketsa* rock. The same sources from Jebba referred to earlier, argued against the belief that Tsoede was the initiator of the worship of the rock. *Ketsa* and the practices associated with its worship had been in existence from time immemorial prior to the emergence of Tsoede in Nupeland. The priest of *Ketsa* – *Ndadoro*, was reported to have informed Crowther in 1857 that “...*Ketsa* was an ancient god held in very great veneration by the kings of Nupe in old times...”<sup>605</sup> Tsoede’s emergence as an important historical figure in Nupeland was between 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. It is possible, Tsoede encouraged continuation of the worship of this and other rituals in the land to strengthen his political and expansionist ambitions. The era of Tsoede, according to Kolo, was to enhance the unity of the *Bini* through religion.<sup>606</sup>

Almost similar to the *Ketsa* cult was *Ndaduma*. This was associated with River Niger, hence the name *Ndaduma* meaning, in Nupe, ‘Father River’. This *Kuti* ritual was performed annually in the villages along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna among the *Kyadya*. At the annual festival, the *Kyadya* would sacrifice two rams to the cult before the commencement of fishing.<sup>607</sup> The ceremony used to be performed at a place called *Edo-ga* at a village called Lenfa-Kuso, not far away from the confluence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna. Traditions have it that Tsoede decided to sink his canoe there to avoid being captured by his pursuers on his flight from Idah to Nupeland.<sup>608</sup> These sources as

---

<sup>605</sup>Rev. Crowther’s Journal, October 1857, CMS CA3 04(b).

<sup>606</sup>R.N. Kolo, “The Bini in Nupe History – with Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko”, B.A. Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, 1973, p.30.

<sup>607</sup>D. Ismaila, *Nupe in History...*, p.240.

<sup>608</sup>Oral evidence – Alh. Abdulkadir Mohammed – Village Head – of Tafyan – 56 years – 10/8/13 at Bida, AlhassanTswako from Dokomba village – 80 years – at Dokomba on 09/06/13.

well as traditions from some riverine people claim that the sunk canoe is ‘still lying inside water’ on that spot glittering and that, with permission from the custodians – the priest at Lenfa-Kuso, the revered and worshipped canoe can still be “seen”. It was after 1960 when the village head – priest of the cult went to Mecca on pilgrimage that the practice of worshipping the cult stopped.<sup>609</sup>

The above “myth” was confirmed to us recently by the current *Etsu* – king of Gwagwade village in Kambari area located between Nasko and Salka towns in the present day - Nasko Local Government Area in Kontagora emirate during our research visit to the area.<sup>610</sup> Tsoede is believed to have met his death at and buried in Gwagwade during one of his expeditions to Kambari and Yauri areas in his expansionist bid. His “grave” and some of his “war implements” together with some ‘fetish’ objects of worship are still being preserved which were shown to us.<sup>611</sup> The people of the village have continued to associate themselves with the Nupe – regarding Tsoede as the founder of their settlement. Hence, their adoption of most of the traditional practices of the Nupe. These include title holding of *Etsu* – king, worship of deities believed to have been left behind by Tsoede, retention of the practice of *Ndakogboya* and *Gunu* cults, as well as, until recently, speaking Nupe as their language.<sup>612</sup> Apart from retaining certain socio – cultural aspects of the Nupe to some extent, the people of Gwagwade have now almost been assimilated into Kambari ethnic group. Now lets go back to our discussion on Kyadya sub - group of the Nupe.

---

<sup>609</sup>R.N. Kolo, “The Bini in Nupe History – wiith Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko”, B.A. Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, 1973, p.29-30.

<sup>610</sup>Oral evidence – Alh. Ahmadu – *Sarkin (Etsu)* Gwagwade, 65 years on 24/7/16 and 20/8/16. According to the *Etsu*, a delegate from their village once travelled to Lemfa Kuso who returned to confirm the story of the ever living spirit of the canoe inside water.

<sup>611</sup> See appendix xi.

<sup>612</sup>*Ibid.*

As a mark of ‘respect’ and ‘veneration’, the Kyadya along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna had taken it upon themselves to offer sacrifices, either annually, or as the situation demanded, believing, doing so, would provide them with the benefits from seasonal floods, success in fishing, canoe – ferrying, farming, protection against water hazards, among others. In the same vein, the Kyadya believed that the Tsoede’s chains *Egban* Tsoede, said to have been ‘brought’ together with other items ‘from Idah’, were magical that deserved to be worshipped and sworn by. Swearing by the chains was believed to have been more fearful than swearing by God, since the former’s punishment could be more ‘instant’ and ‘visible’ than the latter’s.<sup>613</sup> The unique nature of *Egban* Tsoede as ‘living spirit’ in the Niger River and the site of the Tsoede’s sunken canoe, has been noted by Nadel.<sup>614</sup>

There were other deities of worship both by the Kyadya and their surrounding neighbours living on the flood plains – *Bata Kinti*. Among them was a cult called *Kutizawunchi*,<sup>615</sup> a ritual performed annually, or at any other time when the need arose. This was done to cleanse the community, maintain peace and order, remove cruelty and confusion or controversy. The cult, according to the believers could deal with; or even kill identified enemies against the progress of the community.

While *Kutizawunchi* was common for the people of the riverine and those of flood plains, some other cults were peculiar to certain communities. One of these was *Kuti – Dwa – aga*,<sup>616</sup> in Belle town at the Western bank of River Niger. It was believed that success in hunting, fishing, farming and other occupations, or calamities, such as floods,

---

<sup>613</sup> Oral evidence – Mallam Salihu Abdullahi Belle, 63 years on 13/04/14

<sup>614</sup>Nadel, *Nupe Religion*....p.27 – 28.

<sup>615</sup>Oral evidence – Mallam Salihu Abdullahi, Belle, *op.cit.*

<sup>616</sup>*Ibid*

famine, disease, among others, were dependent on the appeasement or displeasure, respectively of the cult. Hence, every effort must be made by way of performing sacrifices to it to avoid its wrath and anger. The existence of the last two cults in pre – jihad Nupe, to the best of our knowledge has not captured the attention of many historians and anthropologists.

Another aspect of belief in pre-Islamic period of Nupe was the belief in localized spirits–*Jennuzhi*. The Nupe do not have equivalent concept of this in Nupe language other than *Jennu*, a shortened form of *Aljennu*, an Arabic word. These are believed to have been inhabiting conspicuous natural landmarks, such as rivers, rocks, bush, dense forests, hills,<sup>617</sup> among others. The *Jennuzhi* are referred to by the Nupe as immaterial beings which exist in their own right and are not derived from humans. However, the general belief of the Nupe is that the *Jennuzhi* possessed some quasi-human attributes, being co – inhabitants with human beings on earth. Nadel suggests that this belief might not have been an original tenet of Nupe creed. This is because the Nupe do not have specific name for it apart from *Jennu* which is derived from the Arabic word – Jinn.<sup>618</sup> Apart from the spirits inhabiting natural places mentioned earlier, Nadel mentions another type of spirits associated with animals at certain identified places in Nupeland. Such places include Mokwa associated with crocodiles-*Kasazhi*; Pici near Bida with leopards,<sup>619</sup> – *nampazhi* and Yemi and Danbo, now in Wushishi Local Government Area, with buffalo – *eyazhi*.<sup>620</sup>

---

<sup>617</sup>Mason, “The Kingdom of ...”, p.25.

<sup>618</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>619</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>620</sup>Sidi, *Establishment of...*, p.17.

The Nupe, like any other ethnic group believe in the existence of both good and evil spirits. The good ones called white spirits are recognized to be friendly and harmless, providing protection, health, wealth and good fortunes to their ‘human friends’.<sup>621</sup> The evil ones called black spirits on the other hand, are noted for being harmful, dangerous and unfriendly. They are believed to have the potentials of inflicting serious harm, such as barrenness, lunacy, deformity, poverty, incapacitation, bad luck and other forms of calamities<sup>622</sup> which can be counter-productive to human existence. In order to maintain good friendly relationship with the good spirits and to ward off the malevolence of the evil ones, sacrifices were offered in their dwelling places.<sup>623</sup>

Like the *Jennuzhi*, the Nupe believe in the powers and efficacy of witches – *gachizhi* and wizards - *eshechizhi*, which could in the same manner, be good and evil, depending on the circumstances of their operation. Some are believed to possess or acquire the art of witchcraft/wizardry not for destruction of life and property, but for self-defense, while the opposite is the case for others. They are generally believed to have medicine – *chigbe*, which makes them invisible, hence enabling them to carry out their art without being easily seen by “ordinary eyes”. In most cases they, operate in the nights.

Generally speaking however, it can be concluded that religion, rituals, taboos, magic and superstitions had considerable influence on the lives of Nupe – speaking people. They played dominant roles in the economic, political and socio-cultural aspects of pre-Jihad Nupe. They provided bond of unity and sense of belonging among various

---

<sup>621</sup>Ismaila, *Nupe in History...*, p.240.

<sup>622</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>623</sup>Nadel, *op.cit*, gives details of such sacrifices, pp. 27-28

Nupe groups. They were believed to have maintained law and order and provided checks against all sorts of societal evils as the position of the *Etsu* – king, who supervised over the religious activities, was “divine”. The various priests had to work hand in hand with the *Etsu*, who was not just a sovereign but a ‘god’ in his own right, which gave him enormous powers. He could order for immediate execution of identified and confirmed criminals. The introduction of Islam and Christianity into Nupe, did not completely wipe out the indigenous religious practices, can be said to have tremendously reduced the practices.

### (III) POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

#### a. The Pre-*Bini* Confederacy

Jimada,<sup>624</sup> among other scholars on Nupe, expresses the difficulty involved in an attempt to reconstruct, in any detail, the political institutions of the early history of Nupe. As the origin of the *Bini* confederacy is hidden in the dim past of the Nupe of which we do not have records,<sup>625</sup> so also do we lack detailed records of their socio-political organization. Idrees also observes same when he says that “details of the administration of the confederacy (the *Bini* Confederacy) are not known apart from the title system.”<sup>626</sup> What we know however, was the formation of *Bini* confederacy as stated earlier and the recognition of the supremacy of leadership of one of the confederal chiefdoms. We also know of the existence of military co-operation among the units to fight against external aggression and or repel imminent threats to the confederacy. Thus, they were bound to fight together and support each other in times of war as situations demanded. Otherwise,

---

<sup>624</sup>I.S. Jimada, “External Relations...”, p.38

<sup>625</sup>Nadel, *Black Byz...*, P. 25.

<sup>626</sup>A.A. Idress, *Political Change...*p.5



we do not have knowledge of a standing army by the confederacy. This, Ismaila,<sup>627</sup> suggests might have been a major factor for its fall when Tsoede appeared later to create another landmark in the history of Nupeland.

Contrary to the generally accepted myth, Tsoede was not the progenitor of Nupe people or the founder of their kingdom, nor an ancestor of the culture group.<sup>628</sup> Even though researchers into early history lack details on the culture, political institutions and social organizations of the Nupe antiquity, due to dearth of written sources, there are now emerging prepositions that suggest the existence of polities in Nupeland that pre-date Tsoede.<sup>629</sup> The traditions surrounding Tsoede as the founder of Nupe kingdom have been strongly entrenched in the consciousness of the people that the later documentors-historians, anthropologists, Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and to some extent, even local historians, have had no alternative, but to hold on to same.<sup>630</sup>

The overwhelming belief and commitment to the Tsoede factor in the history of the Nupe as Obayemi laments, has enjoyed political and cultural supremacy so much that it has obscured the identification, insight and study of the early Nupe history.<sup>631</sup> The narrations of the stories of Tsoede as the founding father of Nupe Kingdom or even the

---

<sup>71</sup>D. Ismaila, *Nupe in History (1300-date)*... p.11

<sup>628</sup>A. Obayemi, "Concerning Tsoede, Etsuzhi and Nupe History before 1800 A.D." Postgraduate Seminar Paper, Department of History Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, October 28, 1978, p.6.Ibid, P. 365

<sup>629</sup>A. Obayemi, "The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600", in, J.F.A Ajayi, and M. Crowther, (eds), *History of West Africa*, London: Longman, 1976, P235; S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, London: Oxford, 1942, ..., L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa* vol.II, London 1913, P.; A. A. Idrees *Political Change and Continuity; Nupeland: Decline and Regeneration of Edegi Ruling Dynasty*, Ibadan: Caltop publications/(Nig) Ltd, 1998, Pp. 5-10; I. S. Jimada, "Preliminary Historical Inferences About the Origin and Antecedents of the Nupe", In, A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds). *The History of Central Nigerian Area*, Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshops Ltd. Vol.1, 2002, P. 96; A. Ndagi, *who are the Nupes? The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identity*, Minna: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012, Pp.38 – 42 among other sources.

<sup>630</sup>Oral evidence collected from Dr. Ndagi Abdullahi, Public servant, 45 Years of age at Bida on 15/07/13.

<sup>631</sup>A. Obayemi, "Concerning Tsoede..." p.6.

origin of the group, have been so spontaneous, such that they have been, to a large extent, uncritically accepted with little questioning. Mason, among others, however, questions such an acceptance – regarding the Tsoede factor in Nupe history as “a political propaganda.”<sup>632</sup> Modern scholars have continued to be confronted with a two-fold task. The task of clarifying the myth, so pervasive and so glib in Africa and the separate task of examining “whatever reality that has been hidden behind it”.<sup>633</sup> In relation to Nupe history beyond the Tsoede period, resort has to be made to linguistic, archaeological, ethnological and oral evidence,<sup>634</sup> to suggest that human habitation in Nupeland pre – dated the emergence of Tsoede in the area. Among the authorities who at least mention the existence of pre-Tsoede Kingdoms in Nupeland were Nadel and Ndagi.<sup>635</sup> Nadel shows that contrary to the ‘popular’ opinion, there existed in early Nupeland, city-states which formed a confederacy called *Bini* Confederacy. However, Nadel’s position here seems to contradict his earlier view which suggests that Nupe history did not go beyond Tsoede. As noted in chapter two, the number of states that formed the *Bini* confederacy differs. Nadel made mention of twelve of them as: *Doko, Essan, Gaba, Tyafyan, Nupeko* (Greal Nupe), *Bida-Bani, Towagi (Tuwagi) Pandzuru, Egbe, Eda, Ewu and Yesa.(Esa?)*.<sup>636</sup> Each of the mini-states enjoyed a measure of independence politically, socially and economically. However, they recognized one of them *Tafyan?* or

---

<sup>632</sup>M. Mason, “The Tsoede Myth and Nupe Kinglists: More Political Propaganda?”, *History in Africa-A Journal of Methods* vol.2, 1975, pp.101 – 112.

<sup>633</sup>P. Bohannan, *Africa and Africans*, Published for the American Museum of National History by The National History, Press, Garden city, New York, 1964, P.1.

<sup>634</sup>Obayemi, op.cit, P. 235, and A. Ndagi, *Who are the Nupes?* op.cit, P. 15. See Chapter two, pp. 13-22 of this work for more details on the linguistic and archaeological evidence suggesting much earlier human existence than the Tsoede Era.

<sup>635</sup>Nadel, *Black Byz...*, op.cit P.25.

<sup>636</sup>*Ibid.*

*Tuwagi?*,<sup>637</sup> as their leader to which they had to pay tribute. Recent oral evidence collected in a number of Nupe communities seems to contest Tafyan's, but support Tuwagi's leadership position of the *Bini* confederacy, at least initially. The movement away of the capital from Tuwagi to *Tafyan*, was relatively a recent development in Nupe history – 19<sup>th</sup> century after the establishment of the Emirate system. Our visits to Tafyan and Tuwagi, old and new sites recently, reveal evidence of relics of strong city walls for fortification, broken pots, iron tools, furnaces for smithing, large human settlements and shrines among others. Even though, there was no standing army, all the confederating units joined forces to fight against any external invasion or any threat to the confederacy. Like Nadel has shown, Ndagi also supports the existence of pre-Tsoede Kingdoms. He identifies at least four different polities that pre-dated Tsoede at different epochs of Nupe history, though without corresponding chronological dates. They include: *Kisra*, *Akanda*, *Atagara* and *Bini Confederacy*,<sup>638</sup> in that chronological order. However, apart from the *Kisra* and *Bini* confederacy periods, which some other sources mention,<sup>639</sup> Ndagi's argument on the existence of other epochs should for now be on the basis of speculation, awaiting scientific proof to that effect. Ndagi may not have been wrong referring to earlier politics in ancient Nupeland may not have been wrong, but his reference to *Akanda* and *Atagara* kingdoms needs more clarifications.

For instance, the *Kisra* which he refers to is said to have been,

A historical figure as ruler of pre – Islamic Persia  
who flourished up to the advent of Islam and heard

---

<sup>637</sup> Among my informants on this are: Alh. Shaba Isah Patigi-Lemu 87years on 18/11/13; at Lemu; Alh. Abdulazeez-Lukpan Nupe 85 years Distinct, Head of Lemu, interviewed at Bida on 9<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2013 and Moh'd MaiGari of Tuwagi, 60years at Tuwagi on 30/11/13.

<sup>638</sup> Ndagi, *Who are the...*, pp.39-50.

<sup>639</sup> A. Smith, :The Legend of the Seifuwa: A Study in the Origins of a Tradition Origin", *A Little New Light – Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*, Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 1987, pp. 40-41 and en.m. Wikipedia.org/wiki/kisra-legend, pp. 4-5.

about the Prophet Muhammad from Arabian merchants in Syria. His fame, as that of Bayazida of the Ottoman Empire in relation to the Daura Bayajidda legend, might have spread to the Central Nigerian area where various groups could claim linkage with them to also enjoy pre – eminence like them e.g the Borgu Kisra Legend.<sup>640</sup>

Contemporary studies suggest that the existence of Nupe polity even goes beyond *Bini* confederacy,<sup>641</sup> as Frobenius reports that a mighty Kingdom flourished in Nupeland as early as 1068A.D. He calls this magnificent ‘Empire’ with its powerful king as “El-Denden” located on the bank of River Niger. According to him, those who created that “Nupean Empire” as a “nation rich in culture and power, with strength and workable constitution... who, before the tenth century, fashioned and inspired it with vitality, must have been deep thinkers with nature and nobler culture”.<sup>642</sup> Such a nation and culture might have been extensive, covering not only the Middle – Niger Area, but also part of the Upper Ogun which brought the emergence of Sango or Shango in Nupe, which is recognizable in Nupe and Yoruba histories.<sup>643</sup> Our investigation has not been able to concretely determine what Frobenius means by “El-Denden”. Could it refer to one of the four historical ‘epochs’ – probably “*Akanda*” or “*Atagara*” which Ndagi previously claimed to have pre-dated the establishment of Nupe Kingdom by Tsoede in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries? Or could it refer to the Fulbe Emirate system established by Mallam Dendo with the initial headquarters at Raba on the Niger River, which later moved to Bida in the hinterland as a consequence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad? However, given the extensive ethnographic studies on Nupeland and the extent of Frobenius familiarity with

---

<sup>640</sup> Professor M. Hamman’s comments on the draft copy of this work, pp. 50-51.

<sup>641</sup>Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*:pp.364-366. Sources of Frobenius information included an 11<sup>th</sup> century Arab traveller and historian, El-Bekri; traditions, writings and records he claimed to have obtained from Mokwa town - the first base of his ethnographical studies of the Nupe. Reports of the earlier European travellers, missionaries and administrators may also have informed his views and claims.

<sup>642</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>643</sup> Professor Jimada’s comments on the draft manuscript of this work, P. 94

the land, it is most unlikely that the later would have been the case. It is not likely that Frobenius would confuse the 19<sup>th</sup> century events in Nupeland with those that happened many centuries earlier. Frobenius is said to have provided evidence of the existence of an ancient ruling dynasty founded in about 641 A.D, centred in the Middle Niger region. It covered an extensive area including Bussa and Yoruba, under King Napata with headquarters at *Nupeko* a big or large Nupe town. Infact, a chronology of Nupe Kings from 641 – 1912 is said to have been written by Frobenius in German.<sup>644</sup>

As to the source(s) of Frobenius' information, probably they came from what was given to the earlier European travelers, missionaries, explorers and administrators. Such records might have included the one written by Umaru Muhammad, a one-time *Alkali-judge* and Chief Imam of Bida on the history of Nupe and its Kinglists.<sup>645</sup> Aside from the stated sources of information above, Frobenius claims obtaining similar information on the existence of pre-Tsoede Kingdoms or Empires in Nupeland and other Sudanese towns, from Bamako-Mali, Timbuktu and Wagadugu in north Africa from slaves, travelers and traders, who had established long standing commercial contacts with West Africa from earliest times. The slaves who provided Frobenius with such information may have done so on their own volition, since they were no longer under any bond between them and their masters, hence entertaining no fear for possible reprimand by their owners for freely giving away such information. Accordingly, he obtained a full

---

<sup>644</sup> I. S. Jimada, "External Relations of the Nupe Kingdom and Emirates C.1650 – 1850: With Special Reference to the Alafinate of Oyo and its Successor States", Ph.D Thesis, ABU, Zaria, 2001, p.21. Also see appendix ix – Nupe Timeline, which appears supportive of this claim.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*

description of Ife and its temples as well as its inhabitants and other Sudanese towns from slaves who never again could hope to see their native homes.<sup>646</sup>

In the same vein, an Arab historian, traveler and geographer, Muhammad Ibn Battuta, in his 14<sup>th</sup> century Arabic literature mentions “*Yufi*” (Nupe?) as one of the “biggest cities of the blacks, where the “Nile” (Niger?) Flows and where gold was transported”<sup>647</sup> Even though Mason questions the authenticity and tenacity of Battuta’s claims, there could be evidence to support the latter’s claims. The former’s argument was premised on the fact that the Nupe never exported gold and Battuta’s identification of “*Yufi*” with Nupe indeed referred to somewhere in East Africa.<sup>648</sup> However, there is one important common characteristic between Frobenius’ and Battuta’s claims. The former mentions a big river along which bank emerged an ancient Nupe Kingdom, while the latter makes reference to the Nile River. Using this common feature – big River (Niger) and Nile, Jimada comments on Mason’s claims thus:

Ibn Battuta’s travels in Songhai (Mali) and apparent awareness of neighbouring states which included those in the Middle Niger area, will make the error of reference to “somewhere else in East Africa” quite remote. It is possible that the ‘Nile’ was mistaken for the Niger by Ibn Battuta’s informants and it is probable the gold could have been exported from Nupe area through the Gwanja trade route that passed through Mokwa, the centre of early commerce in the area.<sup>649</sup>

It is also possible that people from Wangara, a well-known gold producing area in West Africa in the upper Niger, must have traded in gold with other parts of Africa through Bussa and Nupe. From the Arabic writers, we have been informed that by the tenth and eleventh centuries, some Africans of the Western Sudan had acquired a

---

<sup>646</sup> L. Frobenius, *op.cit* p.366.

<sup>647</sup> S. Handun, and N. King (eds.) *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*, 1975, p.32.

<sup>648</sup> M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom...,” p.37.

<sup>649</sup> I. S. Jimada, “The External Relations...” p.7.

considerable degree of civilization, possessed cities, organized, administrations and sophisticated systems of trade and taxation.<sup>650</sup>

If our examination of the above is anything to go by, then, Ndagi's repeated claims to the effect that Nupe was already a highly developed culture with enviable advanced civilization long before the time of Tsoede may sound plausible here. According to him, tying the foundation of the Nupe kingdom and its identity to the personality of Tsoede is a historical fallacy. If anything at all, he opines, Tsoede should be considered as "the last of the great historical figures that the Nupe Nation is blessed with".<sup>651</sup> Another source refers to Tsoede – "the culture hero and 'mythical' founder of the Nupe Kingdom as merely the emergence of one of the central government for the Nupe people and not the genesis of the people."<sup>652</sup> Though, details of the pre – Tsoede politics in Nupeland in the past may not be elaborately available to us, our speculation may be premised on the fact that human habitation has been known to have existed in the Middle Niger region where Nupeland is situated from the remote past. Such an existence must have been facilitated and sustained by the evolution of political, economic and socio – cultural systems and practices.

If Al-Bakri is justified by his information to Frobenius to the effect that by 1068A.D; there already had existed in Nupeland a formidable and enviable Kingdom under a very powerful Emperor, then, by inference and deduction, such a Kingdom must have been established much earlier than the 1068 A.D, because, a great nation cannot just come into existence spontaneously. It requires a long period of time to gradually evolve

---

<sup>650</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>651</sup>A. Ndagi, *op.cit*, pp. 38 – 39.

<sup>652</sup>Djibril, Tamsir, *Africa from the 12<sup>th</sup> C to 16<sup>th</sup> C, California: University, Press, 1984, P.283.*

into advanced civilization. A modern source<sup>653</sup> suggests a much longer period. According to the source, establishment of states must have a lengthy process of at least 500 years. In the same vein, Abdullahi Smith notes that it took over 200 years of conflict to establish the state of Kano.<sup>654</sup>

Another account speaks of Nupe-speaking people being resident in the Middle Niger region for over a millennium before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>655</sup> Though details of pre – Tsoede polities in Nupeland may not be elaborately available to us, our speculation may be premised on the fact that human habitation has been known to have existed in the Middle Niger region, where Nupe is situated, from the remote past such an existence must have been facilitated and sustained by evolving certain political, economic and socio – cultural systems and practices. In the same vein, if we must go by Mason’s suggestion that if Tsoede must be regarded as an historical figure at all, then, such a figure must have lived several centuries before the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries generally assigned to him.<sup>656</sup> This by extension would mean that the timeline of the *Bini* Confederacy which pre-dated Tsoede, must also be shifted by several centuries. Accepting all these to be true may raise serious historical implications on the Igala-Nupe master-vassal relationship. For, it appears doubtful, if by that early period of the supposed Nupe history, Igala Kingdom with its Attahship had emerged. If not, then, such a “master-servant” relationship traditionally widely held, remains questionable.

---

<sup>653</sup>Ndagi, *op.cit*, P.38.

<sup>654</sup>A. Smith, “The Early States of the Central Sudan,” in, J.F.A.Ajayi, and M.Crowther, (eds), *History of West Africa*, London: Longman, 1971, P.191.

<sup>655</sup> S. Abubakar, “Political Evolution or Revolution?”, pp. 67-76.

<sup>656</sup> Mason, *op.cit* p. 37.



According to Obayemi, the Idah – Tsoede connection emphasized by a number of sources poses problems. He notes that the Atta at Idah would, on the calculations from the fundamentalist versions of Igala kinglist, be a late seventeenth century figure.<sup>657</sup> This, he posits, would be a historical misplacement to derive the foundation of the Tsoede dynasty from the Idah connection. For this to be accepted the source under reference offers two possible options thus,

To look elsewhere besides Idah for the links with the Tsoede story and even deny any Igala connections altogether. Another option (if we do not mark the Tsoede dates up-wards to fit) is to attempt a revision of the dates for Ayagba.<sup>658</sup>

Ukwedeh, however, asserts that the emergence of Attahship in Igala Kingdom could be between 1200-1450A.D,<sup>659</sup> the former, according to him, represents the beginning of identifiable Igala settlements, while the latter marks the beginning of Attahship system in Igalaland. Perhaps, the preceding discussion, notwithstanding the problem of chronology, gives us a clue to the existence of early polities in Nupeland long before the rise of Tsoede and the emergence of a popular and more recognized United Kingdom of Nupe between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

But in the absence of clear evidence, all that can be said for now will be more of speculation than a definite historical fact. However, our speculation is premised on the fact that human habitation has been known to have existed in the Middle Niger region, where Nupeland is situated from time immemorial.<sup>660</sup> Like Bala Usman posits, “Africans,

---

<sup>657</sup> A. Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede, *Etsuzhi...*” pp.14-15.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.* P.14.

<sup>659</sup> J. N. Ukwedeh, “The Rise of the Attah System in Igalaland C.13<sup>th</sup> Century”. Postgraduate Seminar Paper. Hist. Dept, ABU Zaria, June 16, 1979, P.39.

<sup>660</sup> See footnote 1, above.

like the rest of humanity, exist as peoples and live in polities...”<sup>661</sup>In all human settlements or organizations, no matter how remote, evolution of political, economic and socio-cultural practices for their sustenance and survival cannot be ruled out. According to Obayemi, “accepting the presence... of people in the area under discussion, it is clear that centres of local authorities were emerging in the area under discussion”,<sup>662</sup>most probably along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna and strategic places in the hinterland. What, however, is unknown to us is the details of such practices in the very remote past.

It is most probable however, that authorities were centred on powerful political and religious figures or lineage heads who commanded respect and ability to rally people around them due to their charismatic prowess. The political situation in pre – and – *Bini* confederacy periods in Nupeland, may not be irrelevant and significantly dissimilar to those of Kano and Katsina prior to, or during the *Sarauta* system. Bala Usman informs us that

in the political system prevailing in about 14<sup>th</sup> century (in Katsina for instance), the basic units were autonomous towns and cities...composed of distinct lineages and occupational groups whose corporate existence and considerable authority was partially subordinate to the paramount of the heads of these settlements.<sup>663</sup>

We cannot rule out the possibility of such heads of settlements during the period under review being associated with particular religious cults which determined the

---

<sup>661</sup> Y. B. Usman, “The Historicity of the Peoples and Politics of Nigeria: Observations on Historical Consciousness and Historiography”, *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Y. B. Usman*, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria... p. 121.

<sup>662</sup>A.Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue Confluence Area”, in I. Obaro, (ed) *Groundwork Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann book 1980, p.154.

<sup>663</sup>Y.B. Usman, “ The Transformation of Katsina C.1796-1903: The Overthrow of Sarauta System and Establishment and Evolution of the Emirate”, Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1947 p.

political and, to a considerable degree, socio – cultural directions for governance and religious practices respectively. So mutually related were the two that they could hardly be separated from each other in the remote past.

#### **b. The *Bini* Confederacy**

The *Bini* were one of the major Nupe sub-groups in the past. They were the most numerous section of the Nupe, who occupied the strip between Rivers Kaduna and *Gbako*, while others lived at the Western bank of River Niger in present-day Niger and Kwara States respectively. In the past, the *Bini* were concentrated mainly in and around Bida, Doko, Kutigi, Lemu,<sup>664</sup> Mokwa and Gaba, among others – the areas that are regarded as the core of Nupeland. There were other areas at the western Bank of River Niger where the *Bini* are believed to have settled in the past. They included Kpada, Tada, Patigi, Belle, Giragi and Gbere among the Chekpan and Ebangi sub – groups in present-day Kwara State. It is however probable that some of the *Bini* settlements have gone into extinction.

Generally speaking, the *Bini* were noted for their skill in the art of medicine – *Chigbe*, hence, the name *Bini*. They were so called because of their knowledge of the medicine and other magical powers.<sup>665</sup> As a result of this knowledge and skill, the *Bini* were and to some extent, are still being feared within and outside Nupeland. They were known to have been fearless and courageous. A source describes *Bini* sub-group of the Nupe as “people who opened their mouths freely to speak the truth”,<sup>666</sup> perhaps, banking

---

<sup>664</sup> H. Abubakar, *The Evolution of Etsu Nupe Dynasty*, Kano: Tofa Commercial Press Ltd., 2008, p.20.

<sup>665</sup> O. Temple, *op. cit*, p.332.

<sup>666</sup> Oral evidence – Alh. Moh’d Gana Doko, 80 years at Doko on 12/08/13 and A.M.H. Kirk Greene, *Gazatters of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*. Vol. III....p.83.

on the apparent “magical powers” they were believed to have possessed. This might have been responsible for their recognition and acceptance as the aboriginals and hence, the owners of the land – *kintozhi*. In the past, and even to some degree, in the present, the *Bini* controlled/still control the land firmly in their settlements/villages.<sup>667</sup> Permission is usually sought from *kintozhi* directly or indirectly through their appointed or anointed village representatives holding such land on trust on behalf of the *kintozhi* for farming, fishing and other activities.<sup>668</sup>

There is still no consensus on the actual number of towns or city states that made up the *Bini* Confederacy. A number of sources have given different figures. Nadel<sup>669</sup> and Saidu Ibrahim,<sup>670</sup> for instance, mention twelve each, even though the names differ a little bit thus: *Bida, Tafie (Tafyan), Esa (Essan), Doko, Towagi (Tuwagi), Egbe, Gaba, Nupeko, Eda, Pandzuru, Ewu* and *Yessa*; and *Nku* areas, *Bida, Tafyan, Danko, Sommajiko, Doko, Tuwa, Pichi, Essan, Gaba, Nupeko* and *Mambe* respectively. Mason<sup>671</sup> mentions up to seventeen, including Lemu and Gbandun. But traditions collected recently from Bida, Lemu, Nupeko and Nku among others, mention higher number of *Bini* towns. Some may have gone into extinction. My Bida informant<sup>672</sup> mentions as many as 69 spread over present Niger and Kwara States, even though he cannot remember or mention all of them. Today, the Nupe *Bini* settlements including those on extinction can be found not only in Bida but in almost all the Nupe – speaking emirates in Niger, Kwara and Kogi

---

<sup>667</sup>Some *Bini* settlements, such as Gbandun, Kanba, Pandzuru in the North and Northeastern part of Lemu town in the present – day Bida Emirate still exercises such powers.

<sup>668</sup>Interview with Alhaji Ndatsu Gbadun – a descendant of Bini settlement Gbadun village that has now gone into extinction

<sup>669</sup>Nadel, *Black Byz...* op.cit, p.25.

<sup>670</sup> S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from the 14<sup>th</sup> century*, Ibadan: Heinemann, 1992, p.1.

<sup>671</sup>M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in 19<sup>th</sup> C...” op.cit, p.

<sup>672</sup>Alh. Abdulazeez from Usman Zaki Royal House Bida, 80 years, *Lukpan* Nupe & District Head of Lemu, interviewed at his Bida residence on 09/12/13.

States. They include Agaie, Lafiagi, Patigi, Tsaragi, Tsonga and Eggan.<sup>673</sup> Our investigation reveals additional list of *Bini* villages that the existing literature does not mention. They include Nagenu, Tangwagi, Kanko, Ndashanko, Kwakwagi, Ndakama, Kanba, Gudin, in Lemu.<sup>674</sup> Whatever the number, the *Bini* city-states enjoyed some measure of political, economic and socio-cultural autonomy, even though as stated earlier, one of them, Tuwagi? and later Tafyan? was regarded as the capital of the confederacy.

The circumstances leading to the supposed change of the confederacy capital from Tuwagi to Tafyan remain unclear to us. However, a traditional source<sup>675</sup> from the former seems to suggest that it had to do with an issue concerning a ‘woman’, even though he would not reveal the ‘secret’ and details to us. It is also claimed that the Jihadists on their coming did not find the expected cooperation and assistance from Tuwagi community-hence the change of capital to Tafyan which would seem to have been more cooperative. That might have accounted for the recognition and acceptance of the leadership of Tafyan, such that it became a member of the Bida Emirate council. The traditional title of *Nda-Tafyan* (Father of Tafyan) was given to the chief (*Etsu*) of Tafyan, representing the *Bini* confederacy in the Bida Emirate council. Matters concerning disputes on land, water and other traditional issues were referred to the *Nda-Tafyan* for his investigation and advice to the emirate council.

---

<sup>673</sup> D. Ibrahim, *Political Organization in Nupeland*, Trumpet Publicity Commercial Services Limited, 2013, p.9.

<sup>674</sup> Alh. Mohammed Nagenu – Mai Gari Nagenu – Head of the land (*Kintsozhi*), 79 years, at Nagenu village on 16/5/13.

<sup>675</sup> Mohammed Mai Gari (Town Head)- *Zhitsu*, 75 years at Tuwagi on 15/16/2014

On the part of Tuwagi, an informant,<sup>676</sup>the village head, informed us that it was in recognition of their town being the former capital of the *Bini* confederacy that the missionaries, for the first time in the area, initially wanted to establish their missionary school and activities around *PatiTuwa* or Tuwa Hill. However, due to the people's strict adherence to their traditional religious practices, the missionaries were disallowed. Temple describes them as "a pagan race, and practiced their rites on the hill of Tua (Tuwa)- some 5 to 7 kilometres out of Bida town,"<sup>677</sup> Hence, the missionaries were forced to relocate to a section of Bida now known as Saint Johns-probably, a more relatively friendly environment, as a base for their missionary activities.

As noted earlier,<sup>678</sup> both Tafyan and Tuwa settlements, reveal evidence of large human settlements in the past. In addition to evidence of relics of strong city walls, broken pots, iron tools, furnaces for smithing, both towns had worshipping centres (shrines) in the forests not far away from residences, to which we were disallowed access during our visits. Both of them appear to have relocated from their original settlements to their present abodes. The former are called *Emiwasa* or *Emigbako* – meaning scattered or old home; while the latter are referred to as *Emiworo* – new home. We have also observed that the original settlement areas are much larger and extensive than the present settlements. We may, therefore, possibly suggest that both Tuwagi and Tafyan, at one time or the other, prior to Tsoede era, served as capitals of *Bini* confederacy just as we had various and different capitals of Nupe kingdom after the emergence of Tsoede. Unlike the previous period, the *Bini* era of Nupe history evolved a relatively more

---

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>677</sup> C.L. Temple, *Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*-Being Official Reports compiled by C. Temple, Frank Cass Ltd. 1965, pp.319-335.

<sup>678</sup> See footnote 11 above

elaborate political structure which survived to Tsoede and post – Tsoede periods, in which we had the evolution of the *Bini* confederacy, reflected in the existence of independent city – states or mini – states. They included, Nku, Doko, Gaba, Essan, Tuwagi, Bida – *Banin*, Nupeko and Tafyan.

The basic socio-political structure in Nupeland was the extended family. Male members of such a family could trace their descents to common ancestor. Nadel suggests<sup>679</sup> that the descents could generally be traced to two or three generations. The Nupe term for family is *dangi* which refers to relationship of all sorts, even those whose kinship is a house, *emi*. This is the basic kinship unit consisting of individual rooms (*katazhi*) and granaries (*edozhi*). The eldest surviving male member of the *emi* served as its head – *Ndami*<sup>680</sup> or *Emitso*.<sup>681</sup> The house-*emi* usually had a common entrance called *Katamba*. The number of *Katambazhi* (plural) in a village *ezhi* can be used to determine the number of *emizhi* (plural)<sup>682</sup>. The composition of extended family in African context consisted of father or *emitso*, his wives, children, brothers, their wives and children, unmarried sisters, old relatives, among others.

A number of *emizhi* and wards (*efuzhi*) formed a village, whose size and population depended on the number of the *emizhi* and *efuzhi*. The number of political offices in the village system would entirely depend on the size of each village.<sup>683</sup> It is, however, important to note that no matter the size of the villages and their proximity with each other, a village was politically independent of the other. As much as possible, a

---

<sup>679</sup>Nadel, *op.cit*, P.26.

<sup>680</sup>Jimada, “The External Relations...”p.41.

<sup>681</sup> S. Mohammad, *History of the Emirate...*,pp. 39 – 40.

<sup>682</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>683</sup>*Ibid.*

principle of non-interference among the villages was maintained which was vital to the survival of the system.<sup>684</sup>

The administration of the village was headed by the village head – *Ndazhitsu*, usually assisted by a council of elders representing each house – *emi*. Among the responsibilities of the *Ndazhitsu* were adjudication of disputes, maintenance of peace, law and order, conflict resolution management of the land resources, arbitration, mobilization of the village community for activities considered vital to the interest and development of the village.<sup>685</sup> The number of households – *emizhi* or *katambazhi* determined the size at a village council meeting, which in turn, would be dependent on the size of the village. For instance, villages/settlements with a larger member of *katambazhi* would be larger in both size and population than those with small number of *emizhi*.

Sule, distinguishes the administration of a small village-*ezhigi* with that of a big village or town-*ezhiko*.<sup>686</sup> The difference might be in the composition of councils. According to him, while the *ezhigi* had its leader as *zhitsu*, the *ezhiko* was headed by *etsu* (king). As a result of the size and cosmopolitan nature of the *ezhiko*, there was need for more officials to administer it.<sup>687</sup> Title-holders – *tichizhi* were appointed and given specific responsibilities. These include, *tsadza* – head of the military and *indeiji* head of the civil nobility. In the same vein, Jimada suggests that political power lay with senior chiefs drawn from the wards *efuzhi* who were the title-holders – *tichizhi*, usually recognized for their influence and power in the first place.<sup>688</sup> In each case, the village or

---

<sup>684</sup>Idrees, *Political Change....*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>685</sup>Sule, *op.cit.*, pp.40 – 43

<sup>686</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>687</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup>Jimada, *op.cit.*, p.41



town councils assisted the village or town heads on the day-to-day running of their communities. Decisions reached at each level were communicated to various houses *emizhi* and wards *efuzhi* by their representatives in council.

The council of elders – *nusazhi* and title-holders, *tichizhi*, together with the *Ndazhitsu* – village or town head, formed what can be regarded as an ‘Executive’ arm of government, as we have today in the parliamentary and presidential systems of government, which was responsible for policy decisions and implementation. In the remote past, the same council would appear to shoulder the responsibility of implementing the policies and decisions. The council would see to the execution of whatever the Chief and his advisers decided. From all indications, there were no defined distinctions among the three organs of government as we have them today. The *Etsu* or King would combine the three, notwithstanding the fact that as much as possible, no matter how ‘divine’ or ‘absolute’ as seems to be the case in the past, he would be guided by the advice of his council and title – holders.

In addition to the councils under discussion, Nadel<sup>689</sup> observes the existence of few other titles which reflected the economic pursuits of the elders. He reports some of the titles held by the council as *Ndacheko*, head hunter, *Etsudzán*, head drummer, *Majin Kimpa*, head of leather works, *Majin Tswata*, head of blacksmiths and *Sonkyara-Gozan*, head of barbers. Each of these and other professional artisans had guilds which directed and guided their operations, including maintenance of professional ethics.

---

<sup>689</sup>Nadel, *Black Byz...*Pp. 28.

The existence of age grades, was also important in the running of a village – *ezhi*. Sule mentions three categories of such grades: *ena dzakangizhi*, the children group, *enagbarufuzhi*, young men or youth group, and *enanusazhi*, old men group.<sup>690</sup> The females had their own age grades as: *ena yantsugizhi*, girls' group and *enanyizagizhi*, married women group.<sup>691</sup> Each of these categories played specific roles in the administration of the village. The children group might not have had a particular responsibility other than being errand children, who were expected to be respectful, take up to occupations of the parents and imbibe the societal norms, traditions, customs and the general culture. This is what the sociologists and social anthropologists would regard as the socialization process, which, though dynamic, is critical in the survival and continuity of any community. The youth group on the other hand, was responsible for general maintenance, cleanliness, protection, execution of community development projects, among others. The old men groups were in charge of policy making and execution of same, provision of advice to village heads at elders' council meetings. They also ensured peaceful and harmonious living among village members and between them and other neighbouring communities. The various women age – groups were in charge of issues concerning female folk.

While the *Zhitsu* would appear to be the head of the three organs of government, he was not necessarily the religious head of the village. Before the advent of Islam, the Chief Priest was in charge of indigenous religion. He would be consulted from time to time on religious matters. In consultation with and, permission of the village head, annual or occasional religious activities and festivals would be arranged. Indigenous religions

---

<sup>690</sup>Sule, *op.cit*, p.40.

<sup>691</sup>*Ibid.*

were accorded important roles in checking social vices and in the administration of justice and maintenance of discipline. Religions were believed to administer instance justice and to award appropriate punishment to offenders. Even though the existence of Supernatural God – *Soko* might be in the mind of the people; gods and goddesses were believed to be the intermediaries between them and the Almighty God.<sup>692</sup>

The Priests were in charge of the deities or cults and in fact, the village or town heads were regarded as “God’s” representatives on earth, who were believed to be shortcut, as well as intermediaries that had the greater effectiveness of such a direct access to causes that move the world”.<sup>693</sup> This belief, no doubt, assisted leaders at village, town or even at national levels in the administration of their communities. Even though the religious beliefs and practices of the Nupe of old differed considerably from place to place,<sup>694</sup> the roles played by them remained essentially the same. These included checking the problems of droughts, epidemics, land and human infertility.

Though details of how each confederal unit administered its chiefdom are obscure to us, there existed what Idrees calls the “title system”, which comprised the royal and civil titles.<sup>695</sup> Each of these titles carried out specific responsibilities with them. Although the functions of each title holder in the early period might be unknown to us, it is suggested that they might not have been much different from what survived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this regard, we stand a better ground to speculate that the post-confederacy era’s title system and to some extent, political organization of the Nupe as a whole might

---

<sup>692</sup>S. F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1954, p.15.

<sup>693</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>694</sup>Idrees, *op.cit*, p.9.

<sup>695</sup>Idrees, *op.cit*, P.5.

have originated from the *Bini* system.<sup>696</sup> It is argued that by the time Tsoede emerged as an empire builder, the political system in pre-Tsoede era was gradually “evolving from being an isolated independent village-level organization to a larger union on a wider scale.”<sup>697</sup> Even with this, federations of mini – states, which occasionally was said to have taken place, for purposes of defence, this did not result in any high degree of centralization,<sup>698</sup> such that would seem to have survived up to the period of Tsoede. Under the royal titles are the *Etsu* (King), the overall head of the Chiefdom. Others that follow in that order are *Shaaba* (the heir apparent), *Kpotun*, *Nakorji*, *Makun*, *Benu* among others. Anyone of these and others not mentioned here, who could trace his descent to the nobility class could be made *Etsu*. It has been pointed out some element of dynastic phenomenon in this class, being that only people with common ancestry could be given such titles.<sup>699</sup> Those who fell in the royal lineage and eligible for kingship or royal titles were called *Enagitsuzhi* (royal title holders).<sup>700</sup>

The other class of title holders was that of *Enaindejizhi* (civil title holders). The leader of this class was the *Nda-nya-ezhi* (father of the town). Other titles under this category include *Tsadza*, *Sonkyara*, *Tsowa* and *Lusa*.<sup>701</sup> This group comprised the Kingmakers and councilors who assisted the *Etsu* in the day to-day administration of the confederacy. However, there was one important distinction between it and royal title

---

<sup>696</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>697</sup>S. Abubakar “Political Evolution or Revolution?: The Case of *Kin Nupe* before the Advent of Colonial Rule”, in, J.F.A. Ajayi and I. Bashir, (eds.), *Evolution of Political Culture*, Ibadan: University Press, 1985, pp.67-76.

<sup>698</sup>A. Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo – Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600, in, J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowther, (eds), *History of West Africa*, Vol. 2, London: Longman, 1976, pp. 196-263.

<sup>699</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>700</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government* ...p.9 Also see appendix ix.

<sup>701</sup>Idrees, *op.cit*, p.5

group. The former could only appoint, but could not be appointed as *Etsu*.<sup>702</sup> However, as the father of the town, the *Nda nya ezhi*, shortened as *Ndeji*, deputizes for the *Etsu* and carries out his activities in the absence of the latter. All issues concerning the affairs of the city-state or town were referred to the *Ndeji* for solution, for onward transfer to the *Etsu* on account of the former's inability to solve them. This important position has continued to survive up to date, probably with some modifications in the membership of the class of the title holders, the *Ena Ndejizhi*.

There was yet another group of title-holders in the *Bini* confederacy. This is the group of warriors or military title holders *Enanyakunzhi*, under the leadership of *Ndacheke* or *Tsadza*<sup>703</sup> (the head of hunters). This was an equivalent of *Mayaki* (War commander) during the emirate period. The territorial expansion and defense of the individual chiefdom laid in the hands of this group. This group of title-holders may not have been a general phenomenon in the confederacy, but limited to individual confederal units, since, like we stated previously, there was no standing army in the confederacy. Perhaps, it is possible they had a temporary standing army to cover the entire confederacy in the event of external aggression against the polity, after which they reverted to the status quo. The *Ndacheke* was assisted by other title-holders in the group, among which was the *Etsutanchi* (head of bow and arrow throwers). This title is still being maintained in present-day Bida under *mayaki* (war commander). This class of title holders must have played a very significant role in the pre-and the emirate periods in Nupeland. The continued survival and expansion or otherwise of the class laid squarely on the ability or

---

<sup>702</sup>Sidi, *op.cit*, p.9

<sup>703</sup>Oral interview at Essan – one of the Bini Confederal Chiefdoms on 4/01/14 – Mr Stephen N. Yisa, 73 years. Also see Sidi, *op.cit* p. 89 for other list of titles under *Enakunzhi*.

inability of the title holders. The success in wars and repulsion of threats to the town/Kingdom, as the case may be, would bring fame and greatness to the community. The reverse would be the case of failure and defeat.

There might have been other title-holders in the confederacy which may be outside our knowledge. Due to lengthy period, even the traditional or court historians might have lost their memory. However, the title system became relatively more elaborate, numerous and institutionalized during Tsoede and post-Tsoede periods. Details of these may not be our immediate concern here. A number of sources can, however, be referred to for such details.<sup>704</sup>

Prior to the unification of Nupeland by Tsoede to establish a supra Nupe Kingdom, there was the problem of evolution of national unity.<sup>705</sup> Apart from the fairly centralized *Bini* confederacy and the *Kyadya* political organization on the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna, as we have noted earlier, the other parts of Nupeland including the *Chekpan*, the *Ebangi*, the *Kusopachi* and the *Ebe* sub-groups, were organized under the independent village political system.<sup>706</sup> The deduction we get from this is that prior to the Tsoede era, the greater part of Nupeland was under non-centralized administrative machinery.<sup>707</sup> Nadel also observes that the *Bini* whose individuality today is fast disappearing, might have enjoyed the distinction of political unity and cultural

---

<sup>704</sup>Among such sources are, Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*; M. Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom...", A. A. Idrees, *Political Change...*; I. S. Jimada, "The External Relations of the Nupe..." M. Sule, *History of the Emirate of Bida...*; S.A. Abdullahi, "Nupe Kingdom Before and after the Jihad of Usman Ibn. Fodio: A Survey of its Political and Administrative Set-Up" M. A. Thesis, Department of Islamic Studies, Bayero University, Kano, 1983, chapter 2; etc.

<sup>705</sup>Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom..." p.10.

<sup>706</sup>A. A. Idrees, *Political Change...*, p.8. Also see Nadel, "The Kede: A Riverain...", pp.174 – 178.

<sup>707</sup>*Ibid.*

homogeneity to a degree which distinguished them from other Nupe groups.<sup>708</sup> On the whole, however, a federation of some Nupe sub-groups under different towns in the past in Nupeland has been highlighted thus: the *Bini* under *Tafien*; *Ebangi* under *Rifun*; *Chekpan* under *Kpada* and *Kyadya* under *Kuta (Muregi)*.<sup>709</sup>

From our discussion above, by and large, it can be observed that the entire administrative machinery in the *Bini* Confederacy revolved around the *Etsu* in the case of a town, or *Zhitsu* in the case of a village whose position is said to have been hereditary.<sup>710</sup> Another account, however, asserts that the issue of heredity regarding the appointment of *Zhitsu* must have been a later development. That initially, the *Zhitsu* was not a hereditary officer at all, but was chosen spontaneously on the death of his predecessor in office.<sup>711</sup> In the course of time, however, the position according to him tended to be hereditary.<sup>712</sup> If what is in practice today in Nupeland regarding the nomination or appointment of *Zhitsu*, town or village head, can be taken to be a reflection of the past, then, our support for the non-heredity of the position stands. The appointment might have been based more on certain qualities, such as age, nativity, honesty, courage, experience and acceptability, among others.

We have, in a nutshell attempted to show in the preceding paragraphs the apparent lack of a national political unity placed under a single ruler prior to the emergence of Tsoede. We have also noted that the process towards evolving such a central polity in Nupeland would seem to have been set in motion by the immediate past era before the

---

<sup>708</sup>Nadel, *Black Byzantium... op. cit.*, pp 25-26.

<sup>709</sup>I. S. Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate...", p.171.

<sup>710</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>711</sup>S. A. Abdullahi, "Nupe Kingdom Before and ..." *op. cit.*, p.12.

<sup>712</sup>*Ibid.*

Tsoede dynasty. Certain factors which point to this phenomenon have been suggested.<sup>713</sup> These include the existence of the institution of kingship, the *Etsu*; the administration of the city – states or towns which was placed in the hands of political office and title holders; stable arrangement for succession at least in the remote past, to political leadership position – candidates coming only from a particular lineage. These among other features of state formation provided an enabling political and economic environment for the establishment of a larger Nupe Kingdom – the advantage of which Tsoede might have undoubtedly taken to found a larger Nupe mega state – a structure, akin to what notably took place in Kano, Katsina and Zazzau in Hausaland.

However, if our brief discussion earlier on the existence of kingdoms prior to the *Bini* Confederacy in Nupeland is to be relied upon, then, the widely reported and apparently generally accepted view of Tsoede-being the first ruler to rule under a united Nupe Kingdom between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, may require further re-examination. For, such ancient Kingdoms said to have been founded by the Kisra people; the ‘*Akanda*’ or ‘*Nda*’, the ‘*Atagara*’ and the ‘*Nife*’ all of which are said to have pre-dated Tsoede period, might not have succeeded without one form of central government or the other. Frobenius, referred to earlier, reported the story of Yisa, the Nupe Emperor who was one of the paramount rulers who lived several centuries before Tsoede’s emergence.<sup>714</sup> Among other sources, Frobenius got information, from North African traders, missionaries and travellers, about the existence of a mighty ancient Nupe Kingdom and

---

<sup>713</sup>Idrees, *op.cit*, pp.9-10.

<sup>714</sup>Frobenius, *op.cit*, p. 365 and Ndagi, *Yisa –The Nupe Emperor* Minna: Elemkpe Publishing Company, 2012, pp. 7-9.....*op. cit*, pp. 7 – 9.



its magnificent capital located on the river banks, which motivated his desire to undertake an ethnographic study of the area, among other African communities.<sup>715</sup>

#### **(IV) CONCLUSION**

The chapter has attempted to show that contrary to the general belief that the emergence of Tsoede between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was the beginning of Nupe history, linguistic and archaeological studies have shown<sup>716</sup> the existence of human habitation several centuries in the Nupe area before the emergence of Tsoede. This suggests that far from being the progenitor of the Nupe and the leader of their migration, Tsoede may only be regarded as an important figure in the foundation of a unified and central polity in Nupeland.

The existence of pre-Tsoede polities as pre-*Bini* and *Bini* confederacy has been highlighted in the chapter. Also discussed were the socio-cultural practices in our area of study. We have noted that the peoples' ways of life were regulated and guided by indigenous religion reflected in the worship of deities believed to be the intermediaries between them and the Supernatural God who could not be reached directly. This implies that the existence of God-the Almighty was never doubted by the Nupe.

The political system of old in Nupeland has also been discussed. We have noted that the socio-political structure of the people was centered around the family, even though details of this was sketchy due to lack of records. It appears, however, especially among the *Bini*, that each mini-state was politically, economically and socially independent of the other. Other Nupe sub-groups-such as the *Kyadya*, *Kusopa*, *Batachi*,

---

<sup>715</sup> Frobenius, *op.cit*, p.365

<sup>716</sup> See Chapters two and five. Pp. 13-22 and 11-15 respectively

*Ebangi, Chekpan*, among others, also exercised similar independent posture in the past. Our observations are that such systems facilitated Tsoede's efforts at founding a central authority in Nupeland, following the apparent lack of unity and standing army to seriously challenge him. Secondly, Tsoede did not have to start from the scratch. He, to a large extent, had to make use of the already existing political structure and title systems, no matter how confederal they might appear to be. The title system of the *Bini*, the *Kyadya*, among others, for instance, was adopted with little *or* no modifications, which to some extent, is suggested<sup>717</sup> to have facilitated the evolution of a more unified central authority – the Nupe Kingdom. Apparently agreeing with this, Sa'ad Abubakar asserts,

Quite clearly therefore, the Nupe political system was gradually evolving from being an isolated independent village-level organization to a larger union on a wider scale...thus when Tsoede came on the scene, the political situation of the region (Nupeland) as well as the political orientation of the people in the Niger-Kaduna confluence area was conducive to the emergence of a centralized kingdom.<sup>718</sup>

Thus, while Tsoede could be regarded as the catalyst for the unification of the various Nupe sub-group politics to form a mega-state structure in Nupeland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, achievement of that feat was made much easier by the existing structures he met on ground, or, as the same source posits, “by the political forces that were operative at the time of... Tsoede's advent in the Middle Niger region”.<sup>719</sup>

---

<sup>717</sup>A.A Idrees, *Political change...*, pp.9-10.

<sup>718</sup>S. Abubakar, “Political Evolution or Revolution...”, p.68

<sup>719</sup>*Ibid*, p.69

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE TSOEDE FACTOR IN THE EMERGENCE OF CENTRAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN NUPELAND, 1463 – 1591 A.D**

### **(I) INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important personalities associated with Nupe history was Tsoede or Edegi. This personality has been given much emphasis by traditions and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century European writers, Christian missionaries and later, colonial administrators. Their works have given the impression that there had never been Nupe history prior to the emergence of Tsoede. Both Ndagi and Obayemi lament this erroneous view. According to the latter,

The overwhelming belief and commitment to the Tsoede factor in the history of Nupe has enjoyed political and cultural supremacy so much that it has obscured the identification, insight and study of the pre – Tsoede Nupe history...<sup>720</sup>

In discussing the foundation of Nupe Kingdom therefore, the personality of Tsoede occupies a commanding position. Our understanding of this phenomenon becomes imperative to enable us re-examine the ‘myth’ or historicity surrounding Tsoede in the early history of Nupeland, particularly with regard to its relationship with Igalaland and other neighbours in general.

### **(II) TSOEDE’S BIRTH AND THE SURROUNDING ‘MYTH’**

Different names have been assigned to Tsoede. Clapperton calls him ‘*Thoodyer*’; Crowther-‘*Shorgede*’; Baikie names him ‘*Tsado*’, while Frobenius calls him ‘*Edegi*’ or

---

<sup>720</sup> A. Obayemi, “Tsoede, Etsuzhi and Nupe History before 1800”, in , A.A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, Lagos; CSS Press, 2002, p.174.

‘*Ededi*’.<sup>721</sup> For the purpose of clarity, we have adopted in this work the most popular name-Tsoede. In trying to understand Tsoede factor in Nupe history, therefore, it is very essential for us to re-examine the myth surrounding this phenomenon with particular reference to the master-servant relationship between Idah and Nupe, respectively. Our knowledge of this would enable us clarify fundamental issues in the socio-cultural, political, economic and technological relations between the Nupe and their neighbours.

A number of erroneous accounts are said to have existed on the myth surrounding the birth, formative years and the emergence of Tsoede as the founder of Nupe Kingdom.<sup>722</sup> Due to the problem of documented records and that of chronology, characteristic of early periods, it is hardly possible to incontrovertibly determine Tsoede’s date of birth. There are however conflicting suggestions that put his birth at *Nku* in 1429, 1452 and 1463.<sup>723</sup> Another source puts Tsoede’s death in 1591 after having lived for 120 or 128 years.<sup>724</sup> Taking this to be correct, then Tsoede must have been born in 1463 or 1471 - the former, corresponding with one of the dates mentioned above. In the absence of any agreeable and acceptable date for Tsoedes birth, it will be historically safe for us to conclude that he was born of a Nupe woman in the 15<sup>th</sup> century at *Nku*-one of the original *Bini* settlements in Nupeland.

---

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.

<sup>722</sup> I. S., Jimada, “Traditional” History and the Genesis of the Nupe-Speaking people”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, vol.2(1), March, 2008, p.13.

<sup>723</sup> D. Ibrahim, *Nda: The only Nupe Man in Africa*. Minna: Murak Press, 2010, pp .23, 92 and 82 respectively. Note that it is the same source that gives these conflicting dates whose source(s) we do not know.

<sup>724</sup> I., Saidu, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books PLC, 1992, p.3.

As for Tsoede's parents, most traditions, with one or two exceptions, linked his father to Prince Ayegba-the son to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Attah of Igala land called Idoko.<sup>725</sup> Ayegba used to travel to *Kin Nupe* on hunting and magical expedition. It was during one of such expeditions that he was said to have got married to an *Nku* princess called *Mama*-one of the daughters of *Tsunuku*-the king of *Nku*-called *Zubairu Gana*.<sup>726</sup> Prince Ayegba had to travel back to Idah on hearing about the sickness of his father, Idoko. He left behind his pregnant wife at *Nku* to whom he gave a charm and an identification mark (a piece of red cloth) to hang on the child whenever it was born, so goes the tradition.

On the death of Attah Idoko, Ayegba became his successor at Idah. It had been the traditional practice that annual tribute in form of slaves would be sent to Idah from subject areas, including 'Nupeland'. At the age of thirty years, Tsoede, together with others happened to be among the tribute sent to Idah from Nupe. On getting there the Attah, the acclaimed father recognized 'his son' Tsoede, who was said to have been singled out for special favour to the jealousy and dislike of other half-brothers. Tsoede is reported to have performed wonders and magical feats to save his 'father' from sickness and imminent defeat of Igalaland by the Jukun who were at war with each other.<sup>727</sup> One of the achievements that the traditions ascribed to Tsoede was his bravery of catching a bunch of thorny palm fruits from the top of palm tree without allowing them to reach the ground. He undertook this challenging task to be able to meet the medicine men's condition to cure his father's ailment. In the process of catching the thorny bunch of the

---

<sup>725</sup> J.N. Ukwedeh, "Chronology and the Study of Igala History C. 1830 AD," Post-graduate History Seminar Paper, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Feb. 1984, p.29; J.S., Boston, *The Igala Kingdom* Ibadan: University Press, 1968, p.11, also puts Idoko as the 4<sup>th</sup>Attah.

<sup>726</sup> D. Ibrahim, *op.cit*, p.22.

<sup>727</sup>J.A. Boston, *op.cit*, p.11

fruits, he is said to have sustained some injuries including the cutting and splitting of his upper lip<sup>728</sup>, known in Nupe as *Tsoede*, in addition to some other injuries and scars on his stomach and cheeks. Since that incident, any child born, with a split upper lip in Nupeland is called *Tsoede*.

To a very large extent, people born within the royal nobility, particularly a section of Nupe-Patigi, are given bold tribal marks on one of their cheeks *Eyesa* and chin/jaw called *nungbeka*.<sup>729</sup> This is to identify them as descendants of the eclipsed *Tsoede* ruling dynasty which was regenerated in Patigi in 1898 by establishing a separate emirate out of Bida's Fulbe emirate by the British colonial administration in Bida.<sup>730</sup> The practice may have been dying down or reduced to the barest minimum, perhaps, due to the influence of Islamic religion and Western culture.

When Attah Gara Idoko was finally sensing his death, he advised *Tsoede* to return to his 'maternal land', Nupe, to avoid the already existing hatred and jealousy between him and his half-brothers. Traditions have it that *Tsoede* left Idah with various riches, a bronze canoe with twelve Nupe slaves to man it and various insignia of kinship. These included a long trumpet-*kakaki*, state drums-*Kpadondo* and *Enyadukum*, pot drum with brass bells and a heavy chain and fetters called *Egban-Tsoede* as symbols of his political and judicial powers.<sup>731</sup> This was to prepare *Tsoede* for the great task of founding his dynasty in Nupeland, the land which is said to have been given to him by 'his father' as

---

<sup>728</sup> S. Ibrahim, *op.cit*, p.2

<sup>729</sup> Y. A. Solomon, *Nupe Heritage Dictionary* (Nupe – English) Egan' Yekpe Nupe (Nupe Lo Nasara) Minna: Kochita resources Ltd, 2013, p.505

<sup>730</sup> I. S., Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: Historical Background 1918-1898", M.A. Thesis ABU Zaria, 1991, p.315.

<sup>731</sup> A.J Ohiare, "Nupe Relations with her Southern Neighbours in the Niger – Benue Confluence Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Case of Ebira", in, A.A. Idrees and Y.A. Ochefu, (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, Vol.1, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp.533- 562.

“a parting gift”.<sup>732</sup>The source under reference would seem to assume the sovereignty of Attah Gara over Nupeland, hence, regarding it as his subject land. Sensing the secret plan between Tsoede and his father; the other half brothers are said to have given the former a hot chase upstream to possibly kill him and return the so-called royal gifts to Idah. Among the pursuing brothers were: Akwumabi, Akogwu, Ogado, Aidoko and Ohiemi Ochohi.<sup>733</sup> The pursuit was not successful, as Tsoede eventually reached Nupeland after which he began the process of building a supra state-Nupe Kingdom. Based on our present state of knowledge, we do not have evidence to prove whether or not there was a physical fight between Tsoede and his half-brothers before the former left Idah for Nupeland. It is suggested however, that Tsoede participated in the war between Jukun and Igala on the side of the latter to defeat the former.<sup>734</sup>

Other similar or divergent traditions in connection with Tosede-Idah relationships exist. Boston, for instance, suggests that Tsoede was a Nupe hunter, warrior and magician.<sup>735</sup> He might have used these talents to assist his hosts at Idah to cure the Attah of an ailment in addition to his heroic participation on the side of his hosts to free Igalaland from the imperialistic tendency of the Jukun. A recent tradition collected from *Nku*, by us<sup>736</sup> states that from time immemorial a brotherly relationship existed between Nupeland and Igalaland based, not on slave-mastership respectively, as is commonly believed. The legend claims that on the migration of the Nupe from the East, Saudi Arabia, the eldest of the migrating group, after several years of travel from the East,

---

<sup>732</sup>M.,Clifford, *A Nigerian Chieftom: Some Notes on the Igala Tribe in Nigeria and their Divine king*, Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, Lxvi, 1936, pp. 393 – 436.

<sup>733</sup>D., Ibrahim, *Nda: The Only...* p.25

<sup>734</sup>Boston, *op.cit*, pp.11-12.

<sup>735</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>736</sup>Oral evidence. Mohammed Bin. Abubakar Nku, *op.cit.*

could not continue due to old age. Hence, he decided to settle and ‘found’, what came to be Igalaland. The other members of the group continued until they reached *Nku* which tradition claims to be the first *Bini* settlement in the entire Nupeland. From there, emerged other Nupe settlements such as Doko, Gaba, Essan, Tafien, Nupeko, Tuwagi and Bida-*Bani*, which, according to the same tradition, formed the nucleus or the aboriginal *Bini* Towns or settlements. The homage and annual payment of tribute to Idah, therefore, was not and should not be taken as master-slave relationship, but rather, as a symbol of respect for seniority for which Nupe has been known.<sup>737</sup> Tsoede only escorted the tribute to Idah, but never ever was a slave himself, so this legend claims. That, Tsoede was never a son to an Igala Prince – Idoko, as is generally claimed. Rather, both his parents and grand-parents were *Bini* - from *Nku* settlement. Names of Zubairu Gana and princess *Mama* have been given as Tsoede’s father and mother respectively.<sup>738</sup>

Another source<sup>739</sup> argues against the servant-master relationship commonly believed to have existed between Nupe and Igala. It argues that prior to the emergence of Tsoede, there existed in central Nupeland powerful polities such as ‘Atagara’ empire and ‘Bini’ confederacy-the former being older and greater than the latter. This is why the Nupe traditions in the story of Tsoede maintain that the *Bini* Confederacy had to pay tribute to the Atagara. According to this source, the ancient Atagara Empire in central Nupeland of old was ‘mistaken’ for the modern Atagara of Igalaland with headquarters at

---

<sup>737</sup> M. M., Shaaba, in his recent book, *Zaguru: an African Personality and Democracy in Nigeria*, Minna: Global Links Communications, 2013, p.22, mentions, among others, respect as one of the valued systems among the Nupe.

<sup>738</sup> S.F. Nadel, *Black Byzantium...* This is corroborated by an oral evidence at Nku, Mallam Umaru on 20/6/14

<sup>739</sup> N. Abdullahi, *Who are the Nupes?: The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identity*, Minna, Washington D.C, etc, Elemkpe Publisher, 2012, pp.40-42



Idah, claiming that it was the king of the Atagara of Nupe that was Tsoede's father. Hence referring to Tsoede as the son of Attagara.<sup>740</sup>

However, based on the traditional brotherly relationship between Igala and Nupe, the exchange of occasional visits used to be the practice between the two areas. It was in this process, as the tradition goes, that a prince from Idah called Aliyu-most probably the same as Ayebga earlier mentioned, became a regular visitor to *Nku* in Nupeland as Tsoede might have been to Idah in Igalaland. The Prince is said to have become very close to *Etsu-Nku's* daughter-Princess *Mama*. Traditions differ as to the nature of the closeness. One states that the Idah Prince got married to the *Nku* princess-and the marriage being blessed with a son called Saba or Moh'd Saba,<sup>741</sup> but later Tsoede. The other believes that there was no marriage between the two. That the Idah prince, being a hunter and magician was approached by the princess, when she became pregnant, to pray for her to have surviving child (ren) after having lost all her previous six children.<sup>742</sup> The Idah Prince obliged. The first-tradition appears more popular and generally acceptable to the generality of the Nupe and Igala.

In each case, however, it is generally an accepted tradition that the prince prepared a charm with an instruction which he gave to the pregnant princess when he was leaving Nupe for Idah on the news of his father's sickness. Prince 'Aliyu' succeeded his father as the new Attah of Igala after the former's death. But to what extent can these claims stand as historical facts cannot easily be determined with certainty. However, contacts between

---

<sup>740</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>741</sup>See footnote 14, and Idrisu Gana III, late *Etsu* Patigi, "The History of Nupe Kingdom and Dynasty", undated Pamphlet, p.1.

<sup>742</sup>Oral interview with Moh'd Ibn Abubakar (assistant Village Head of Nku) 85 years on June 9, 2013 at Nku.

Nupe and Igala lands from time immemorial, especially on commercial and trading activities, cannot be dismissed. Rivers Niger and Kaduna provided easy access between the two areas and according to Ohiare,<sup>743</sup> traffic on the two rivers meant human contacts as well as trade and commerce.

It is, for instance, reported that *Nupeko* –great Nupe, one of the *Bini* settlements situated at the confluence of Niger and Kaduna Rivers, among other riverine areas, was an important market centre. Peoples from the upper and most probably, from the lower Niger, including Igalaland, used to come to the then great and popular market at Nupeko to purchase slaves among other trading goods from the Nupe Lords.<sup>744</sup> It should be noted that during that early period, various groups speaking various Igaloid and Nupoid dialects mingled despite much differentiation on ethnic and linguistic basis.<sup>745</sup> It should be noted also that African kingdoms in the past shared political and economic relations just like the Nupe and Igala did. There is hardly any impeccable evidence to suggest that Tsoede was an Igala prince.

Given the various versions on the birth of Tsoede and his relationship with Idah, certain features can be noted. That Tsoede lived in Igalaland before the evolution of a central dynasty recognized as Nupe by neighbours such as Hausa, Gbagyi and Yoruba.<sup>746</sup> That so far, to the best of our knowledge, no concrete evidence to suggest Nupe – Igala servant – master relationship respectively. We are not aware of Igala sending emissaries to supervise activities, or appointments of rulers in Nupe or approvals

---

<sup>743</sup>A.J. Ohiare, “Nupe Relations with her Southern Neighbours in the Niger – Benue Confluence Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Case of Epira”, in A.A Idrees and Y.A Ochefu, (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, vol.1, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp. 533 – 562.

<sup>744</sup>Idris Gana... op.cit, p.1.

<sup>745</sup>I.S. Jimada, “Traditional History and Genesis...,” p.14.

<sup>746</sup>Jimada, *Traditional History and Genesis...*, p.14.

of same by the Attah of Igala in the past, as was the case between Nupe and Gwandu during the emirate period in the former. That Nupe tradition acknowledges Tsoede as a prominent figure who conquered and unified the various hitherto independent polities and Nupe-speaking peoples into a powerful central kingdom. He is believed to have started his conquest from Nku, defeated his maternal uncle, the then *Etsu* of Nku, after which he declared Nku as his capital. He later moved the capital to Gbara at the Bank of River Kaduna for political convenience.<sup>747</sup> It is also important to note here that Tsoede cannot be regarded as the genesis of the Nupe and their polities. An important factor surrounding him is that he was probably “more revolutionary rather than being the progenitor of his people or even the leader of their migrations”.<sup>748</sup> Mason sees Tsoede factor as a “personification of a chain of events, which led to the funding of a supra ethnic state”.<sup>749</sup>

### **(III) FOUNDATION OF A CENTRAL NUPE KINGDOM**

Nupe Kingdom was one of the prominent polities of the Middle Niger Region of Nigeria. Obayemi argues that,

By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Nupe Kingdom (founded by Tsoede) became one of the most powerful autonomous states of the Nigerian area undoubtedly (favourably) competing with its contemporaries for supremacy in the central Sudan.<sup>750</sup>

The emergence of several Kingdoms, Empires, States or Chiefdoms in the Nigerian area has been attributed to one legendary figure or another. For instance, the

---

<sup>747</sup>*ibid*

<sup>748</sup>*ibid*

<sup>749</sup>M. Mason, “The Kingdom of Nupe in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History”, Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham, 1970, pp. 19-20.

<sup>750</sup> A. Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area”, in, I. Obaro (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., 1980, p.155.

establishment of Hausa State; Oyo empire; Kanem and Borno empires; Benin Kingdom, among others, has been associated with Bayajida; Oduduwa. Sayf bn Dhi Yazan and Oranmiyan, respectively.<sup>751</sup> In the same vein, the foundation of Nupe Kingdom is attributed to Tsoede. The transformation of a mini-state or village group into kingdom/empire involves the interplay of a number of forces. One major effective dynamics of change that led to the transformation of the hitherto mini-state structure in Nupeland to a mega-one presented itself to Tsoede. This was essentially the absence of unity among various Nupe sub-groups and lack of a standing army.

Prior to the emergence of Tsoede in Nupeland to establish a central state, there existed in antiquity various independent or semi-independent polities.<sup>752</sup> Such polities had related among themselves and between them and other places outside the frontier of Nupeland. Obayemi, for instance, notes that Nupeland had established relations with places such as Hausa and Yoruba lands before the appearance of Tsoede. Nupeland had also engaged in exchange of trade goods with neighbours and distant peoples. It is reported that “previous to Edegi (Tsoede), one *Etsu Jiga* (Jegu?) at Raba had ravaged the Yorubas on the opposite bank (Ilorin) and sacked Oyo”.<sup>753</sup> Raba was one of the important riverine Nupe towns and centre of trade and commerce in the early time. There were also reports of early relations between Nupe and Hausalands, especially with Katsina and Kano, among others. Trade and commerce can be said to have been fundamental factors for establishing such relations. Efforts to guard and promote economic relations are said

---

<sup>751</sup> R. N., Kolo, “The Bini in Nupe History with Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko.” B. A. Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1973.P. 25.

<sup>752</sup>Nadel, A Black Byz., p.19.

<sup>753</sup>Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede, Etsuzhi...” pp. 13-14. Also see I.S Jimada, *The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba C. 1275 – 1897*, Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2005, pp. 44 – 50 for the Nupe advances and exploits into Yorubaland in the early past.

to have led to wars between the Nupe and the Hausa, probably to exert economic and or political superiority over each other.<sup>754</sup> Back to our discussion on Tsoede.

On arrival to Nupeland, Tsoede is reported to have engaged his maternal uncle the then *Etsu-Nku* – King of *Nku*, in a struggle, aimed at taking over the mantle of leadership from him. This marked the beginning of his conquest and unification ambitions. This, according to tradition, was to pay back his uncle for sending him (Tsoede) to Idah as tribute.<sup>755</sup> Tsoede might not have known that it was his mother – then late, that is said to have requested that her son be among those to be sent, to create an opportunity for him to meet with his ‘father’ who had become the Attah Igala.<sup>756</sup> The circumstances and details of the so-called struggle between Tsoede and his uncle are sketchy. However, a tradition collected from *Nku* town states that it was a taboo for fellow kinsmen to go to war with each other.<sup>757</sup> But Tsoede-the *Amagi* – nephew to the *Etsu* would not listen. In order to avoid breaking the tradition, or possibility of defeat in the hands of his nephew, *Tsunku* Daudu Maza, together with his followers, had to flee *Nku* to a nearby river called *Guntsuwa*.<sup>758</sup>

According to tradition this river into which they disappeared is still ‘harboring them alive’ since there is no news or evidence of their death. That as a mark of honour, sound of drum beat and trumpet blowing are believed to have been heard every Thursday night

---

<sup>754</sup> See appendix viii. Though details of the wars as shown in the appendix are unknown to us, the fact remains that there existed in Nupeland political organizations and economic systems prior to the emergence of Tsoede in the area, pp. 151 and 179 briefly discuss such relations.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid* p.14

<sup>756</sup> Oral evidence from Mohammed Bin Abubakar Nku, *op.cit.*

<sup>757</sup> D., Ibrahim, *Nda: The Only Nupe Man...* p. 25

<sup>758</sup> Oral evidence from Mohammed Bin Abubakar Nku, *op.cit.* It is an unfailing practice in Nupeland till now specially in Bida that *Ekatu*- Royal drum-beat and trumpet-*kakaki* blowing must take place at the palace of a reigning *Etsu*. Another occasion when similar event takes place is on the eve of Sallah celebrations.

and Friday morning to signify their ‘continuous existence.’ The tradition under reference also believes that no legitimate successors of *Tsunku-Nku* king, could go to River *Guntsuwa* and come back alive-believing that the same fate that befell their predecessor would befall them too-disappearance into the river forever. Taking the drum beat and trumpet blowing to be true counters some claims that Tsoede brought them from Idah as part of the royal insignia given to him by the Attah. According to *Nku* tradition, the first king-*Etsu* of *Nku* by name *Baba-Kuku* was the first to have trumpet-*Kakaki* as a symbol of royalty. This had been in practice long before Tsoede’s emergence. The weekly drum-beating and trumpet blowing ceremony is called *Ekatu*<sup>759</sup>-Royal Remembrance. This has become a legacy that has continued to be in practice in most present-day reigning royal houses in Nupeland.<sup>760</sup> No wonder, up till now, every female descendant from either paternal or maternal side of the present day royal houses in Nupeland must be accompanied during marriage to their husbands houses with trumpet-*Kakaki* blowing and drum beat-*Kpandondo*. This is to distinguish them from non – royal ordinary people-*talakazhi*.<sup>761</sup>

After the defeat of his uncle or his ‘mysterious’ disappearance, Tsoede first established his capital at Nupeko town. Here, the process of finding a supra state began by making efforts to unify the hitherto independent or semi-independent *Bini* city-states and other groups of Nupe. Having achieved this, he declared himself as the overall *Etsu*

---

<sup>759</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>760</sup>Oral evidence from Alh.Umaru Nku on 16/07/14 at Nku town.

<sup>761</sup>*Ibid.* and D., Ibrahim, *op.cit.*, p.28.

of the united Nupeland. The initial capital at Nupeko was moved to Gbara-a more suitable political and administrative terrain in 1497.<sup>762</sup>

#### **(IV) THE TSOEDE PHENOMENON AND ITS LEGACY**

On returning to Nupeland from Idah as noted earlier, Tsoede's major aim was to unite, both by persuasion and subjugation, the various Nupe sub-groups, to form a larger and more powerful polity. Details of the processes and conquests of the groups may be unknown to us. A source, however, suggests that it was not difficult to subdue the *Bini* group-probably due to lack of a standing army, and the *Kyadya* sub-group, suggestively due to the guarantee for the continuity of their administrative systems under the *Kuta*.<sup>763</sup> The subjugation of the other sub-groups might not be as easy as the first two mentioned above. The leadership of the new political order is said to have waged series of wars to bring them under the central authority<sup>764</sup>. The foundation of the new central ruling authority under the leadership of Tsoede appears to be the most important achievements associated with him. Commenting on this, Idrees says.

The Edegi (tsoede) phenomenon, whether mythical or real, stands to represent a revolutionary introduction of a new political order that overwhelmed the *Bini* confederacy. Under the new dispensation, the primacy Tafyan had enjoyed earlier was taken over by Nupeko which assumed the role of a new administrative capital.<sup>765</sup>

---

<sup>762</sup>D., Ibrahim, *op.cit.*, p.28.

<sup>763</sup>A. A., Idrees, *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland*, Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig.) Ltd., 1998, p.12.

<sup>764</sup>D., Ibrahim, *op.cit.*, p.28.

<sup>765</sup>A. A., Idrees, *op.cit.*, P.11.

Before the emergence of Tsoede as a mega-state builder, Tafyan town served as what seemed to be the ‘capital’ town of the *Bini* confederacy. Other members of the league used to pay tribute to the *Etsu* – king of Tafyan, even though they enjoyed some measure of independence politically, economically and socially. It was only at war times, or imminent threat of them against the confederacy, that a ‘temporary’ joint military force, far from being a ‘standing army’, would have been formed to fight the common enemy. This political situation appears similar to the pre-Attahship period in Igala history.<sup>766</sup>

As we had “twelve” *Bini* city-states in pre-Tsoede era, so also was the reported existence of *Igala-Mela*- meaning “the nine Igala”.<sup>767</sup> They settled at different times at different parts of Igalaland or within the vicinity of Idah under the eventual leadership of *Etemaihi*?<sup>768</sup> As the *Bini* confederacy became a territorial entity, so also did the *Igala-mela* create a territory within which each clan appeared independent of the other. Apart from the *Bini* settlements which formed a confederacy, there were other independent or semi-independent Nupe sub-group settlements prior to the emergence of Tsoede in Nupeland, which included Kyadya, Batachi, Gbedegi, Checkpan, Ebangi and Kusopa. The same situation would seem to have applied to Igalaland before the emergence of Attahship institution. Ukwedeh lists other settlements apart from the *Igala-Mela* and

---

<sup>766</sup>J.N. Ukwedeh, “The Igala-Mela Factor in the Evolution of Attah Kingship in Ane – Igala”, in A.A. Idress and Y.A. Ochefu (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, Vol. 1, Lagos: CSS Limited, 2002, pp.217-242 and A. Obayemi, “States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area”, in, Obaro I., (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, (Nig.) Ltd., p.155.

<sup>767</sup> J. N. Ukwedeh, *History of the Igala Kingdom C.1534 – 1854: A Political and Cultural Integration in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area of Nigeria*. Kaduna: Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, Press; 2003, pp.32-33.

<sup>768</sup>*Ibid*, pp.33-34.



Igala-Ogwa as At'ankpa, Ayigagwu, Ihiake, Odo-Hane, Achikwu and Ukwo,<sup>769</sup> found on the Ibaji area of the southern part of the Idah plains near big bodies of water. These seemingly independent settlements, lacking unity and standing army might have facilitated the establishment of centralized polities in Nupeland and Igala Kingdoms by Tsoede and Attah Ayegba Om'Idoko respectively.

It is, however, argued that despite the apparent lack of unity and central authority, by the time Tsoede emerged as a unifier of the many independent or semi-independent mini-states, centres of local authorities were gradually emerging.<sup>770</sup> Quite clearly, therefore, the Nupe political system was gradually “evolving from being an isolated independent village-level organization to a larger union on a wider scale”.<sup>771</sup> Prior to the emergence of Tsoede dynasty, at least three distinctive administrative patterns had existed. These were the *Bini* Confederacy, the riverine *Kyadya* polity and the *Batachi*.<sup>772</sup> This form of organization would seem to have survived up to the period of Tsoede, advantage of which might have been taken by the emergent political systems. For, it is suggested that,

The Nupe mega-state that emerged had evolved from village-level organization and Tsoede was the catalyst in that process of political evolution... Even without Tsoede, a mega-state was certain to have (eventually) emerged in the Niger-Kaduna confluence region. This is not however a denial that Tsoede and his associates, the Kyede, played a significant role in the establishment and development of the Nupe Kingdom... Their task was made much

---

<sup>769</sup>*Ibid*, p.41

<sup>770</sup> S. Abubakar, “Political Evolution or Revolution?: The Case of *Kin* Nupe before the Advent of Colonial Rule”, in, J.F.A. Ajayi and B. Ikara (eds). *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria*, Ibadan University Press Ltd, 1985, pp. 68-69.

<sup>771</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>772</sup>A. A. Idrees *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland*, p.5.

easier by the political forces that were operative at the time of their advent in the Middle Niger region.<sup>773</sup>

Having successfully created a larger polity internally, starting from the defeat of his maternal uncle, Daudu Maza – the then *Etsu* of Nku town, to the subjugation of other Nupe sub-groups, Tsoede proclaimed himself the *Etsu* of the entire Nupeland. His next area of focus was territorial expansion beyond the frontiers of Nupeland. Towards this end, he is reported to have successfully waged wars on the neighbouring states.<sup>774</sup> These included Yagba, Bunu, Kakanda, Akoko, Kambari and Kamuku.<sup>775</sup> However, Ohiare does not seem to accept the fact that Tsoede ever embarked on any territorial expansion outside Nupeland. According to him, Tsoede had enough internal problems to contend with, which could not have allowed him to dissipate his energy “embarking on expansionist policy outside Nupe”.<sup>776</sup> He argues that apart from forming a state out of *Bini* Confederacy, Tsoede had the problem of consolidating the newly found dynasty, as according to him, some of the Nupe sub-groups, such as the “Ganagana did not seem to acknowledge one centralized authority founded by Tsoede.”<sup>777</sup>

Ohiare’s position may not be totally correct. There is available evidence pointing to Tsoede’s external territorial expansion. The correct situation may be to say that such expansion was more directed to the north than to the south prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihads. As Sule<sup>778</sup> infers that the reasons for that might be due to vegetational and topographical terrain. According to him, the north might have posed less difficulty for

---

<sup>773</sup> S. Abubakar, *op.cit*, pp 68-69.

<sup>774</sup> I. N. Imam, “A History of Islam in Nupe”, B. A. Dissertation, Islamic Studies Department, Bayero University, Kano, 1983, p.2.

<sup>775</sup> I. N., Imam, *Ibid*.

<sup>776</sup> J. A. Ohiare, “Nupe Relations with...”, pp538 – 539.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid*, pp.578 – 539.

<sup>778</sup> S. Mohammed, “Gbagyi and their South – West Neighbours to 1898”, in, A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area vol. I*, Lagos: CSS Press, 2002, pp.513 – 532.

penetration than the southern frontiers. While the former had thinner vegetation, the latter had thicker one, making land movement by the army relatively more difficult.<sup>779</sup> This, however, may not have completely dismissed the claim that Tsoede did not attempt to extend his expansionist policy to the south. Robin Law, for instance, informs us of the series of clashes between Nupe and old Oyo in the south-west towards the end of 16<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D<sup>780</sup>, in which the former sacked the latter.<sup>781</sup>

Tosedé's successful territorial expansion in the north led to the establishments of a number of Nupe settlements there. He is believed to have died during one of such campaigns<sup>782</sup> at a place called *Gwagwade*,<sup>783</sup> located between the present Nasko and Salka towns in Kontagora Emirate. Mahdi Adamu mentions some settlements founded by Tsoede or his descendants after successful exploits in Kambari, Kamuku and Yawuri areas as Kura, Auna, Genu, Gwagwade, Ebewa and Wara respectively.<sup>784</sup>

From the foregoing, it can be pointed out that Tsoede through persuasion and conquests had to a large extent successfully founded a centralized polity, whose territory extended beyond the frontiers of Nupeland. The dynasty established by Tsoede is said to have lasted for several centuries, ranging from 300, 311 to 500 years.<sup>785</sup> Hence, by the

---

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid*, p.525.

<sup>780</sup> R. Law, *The Old Oyo Empire C.1600 – 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Oxford: University Press, 1977, pp37-43.

<sup>781</sup> R. Smith, "The Alaafin in Exile: A Study of the Igboho Period in Oyo History", *Journal of African History*, vol. VI No.1, Cambridge: University Press, pp57 – 77, and A. Obayemi, "Tsoede, Etsuzhi..." pp.13-14.

<sup>782</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida Kingdom*, Zaria: ABU Press, 1981,p.13.

<sup>783</sup> Our recent investigation shows that the real name of the assumed place of Tsoede death is Gwagwade, contrary to a number of sources that wrongly wrote as *Gbedege; Gbagede; Gbagede* and *Yalugi* as in, M. Mason's "The Kingdom of Nupe...", p.2; S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzan...*, p.76; I. Dauda, *Nda: The Only Nupeman...*, p.30, among others.

<sup>784</sup> Mahdi Adamu, "A Hausa Government in Decline: Yawuri in the 19<sup>th</sup> century", M. A. Thesis, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1968, pp.24 and 29.

<sup>785</sup> Saidu Ibrahim, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, (Nig.),Plc. 1992, p.3; I. Dauda, *op.cit* p.92 and A. A. Idrees, *Political Change and...*, p.10.

time of Tsoede's death at the age of '129 years' in about 1581 or 1591,<sup>786</sup> he is reported to have bequeathed not only a united and powerful kingdom, but a prosperous one to his successors, whose influence was felt not only by the Hausa states, but also the Yoruba and Igalalands as well. Thus, the kingdom founded by this empire builder can be said to have become a renowned centre for culture, arts and sophistication in its time, recognized far and near.

For consolidation and effective control of the Kingdom, Tsoede and later, his descendants, adopted administrative mechanism for both the central and conquered areas. Idrees suggests that the nature of the state system under Tsoede, to a large extent was influenced by the Igala political organization.<sup>787</sup> This should not come to us as a surprise if the tradition that Tsoede spent his formative years at the court of Attah Igala is anything to be relied upon.

The hitherto confederal structure in the *Bini* confederacy was replaced by a powerful single leader – Tsoede, whose descendants had the exclusive right of succession. This entails 'divine' kingship. However, it was not the whole aspects of the old system that were dismantled. As pointed out earlier the 'twelve' *Bini* towns were recognized and accorded some respects. According to a source,<sup>788</sup> the leadership of the old confederal units – which had now been redesignated as 'Districts' of the central authority had remained. Additionally new districts – Kede, Gbedegi and Kupa, among

---

<sup>786</sup> I. N. Imam, *op.cit*, p.2 and Saidu Ibrahim, *op.cit*, p.3 respectively.

<sup>787</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.2 and I. N. Imam, *op.cit*, pp.3-4.

<sup>788</sup> I., Dauda, *The Only Nupe Man...*, pp.29 – 30.

others, were created.<sup>789</sup> This dynastic revolution or modification seems to agree with a suggestion that:

The history of states whether surviving or extinct effectively begins with the dynastic revolution which altered the existing political system in which a hierarchical system of titles, promotional or rotational constituted sovereign authority. In the new arrangement, the earlier class or supreme or executive title holders are discontinued or at least modified or subordinated to the new order.<sup>790</sup>

## (V) ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONQUERED AREAS

For the conquered areas, what can be, in modern sense, regarded as Provincial Governors – *Egbazhi* were appointed as ambassadors of the central authority at the capital, which changed from time to time, first at *Nupeko* and later at Gbara and other places such as Mokwa, Jima<sup>791</sup> and Raba. The change of capitals from one place to another at various times in the past might have been to ensure effective administrative control, as well as for military and economic advantages. Symbols of authority in form of chains – *Egban-Tsoede*; stools – *Esa-dunfye*; brass bangles – *Efin-dzuru*, among others, are said to have been given to town kings and Provincial Governors,<sup>792</sup> as staff of office. Other district insignia of office possessed by the early Nupe Chiefdoms, according to Frobenius and oral tradition, include, *Malfasing* (*Sanyin?*) – metal fillet; *Rogo* (*Takunrogogi?*) – stonesphere and *Tsukunbu* (*Tsukuntsu?*) – chief's office stick.<sup>793</sup> Apart from being symbols of authority for political office – holders, they, in the course of time,

---

<sup>789</sup> I., Dauda, *op.cit*, pp.29 – 30.

<sup>790</sup>J. N. Ukwedeh, "Chronology and the Study of Igala History", p.35.

<sup>791</sup> A. Obayemi, "States and Peoples of the...," p. 157.

<sup>792</sup>An article titled, "The Relevance of Tsoede in Nupe History without date and author's name.

<sup>793</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, Vol. II, London, 1913, pp.608-609 and oral evidence – Alh. Alhassan, Chekpan Gbara from Gbara village, 82 years on 10/05/13 and Mallam Salihu Ndagi, 63 years at Bida on 25/01/16 and 06/02/16.

became objects of worship. The holders and custodians of such relics were feared and revered – being seen as almost infallible.<sup>794</sup> It is reported that some of the descendants of the *Bini* towns still swear<sup>795</sup> by them when the need arises.

In the socio-cultural sphere, Tsoede left behind religious spirit and judicial systems which held sway for several centuries after his demise. The spirit and personality of Tsoede and his successors became centres and objects of worship. For instance, the Tsoede ‘chains’-*Egban-Tsoede* and other bronzes said to have been located in certain Nupe places, like Jebba, Giragi and Tada were feared and worshipped. Also revered and worshipped were the site of Tsoede’s ‘sunken canoe’ at a place called *Lenfa-Kuso*, as well as *Ketsa* Rock at Jebba Island and *Ndaduma*-River Niger.<sup>796</sup> The worship of such centres and relics was believed to secure prosperity, good health, success in business, as well as warding off diseases, drought, women barrenness, land infertility, among others.<sup>797</sup> So powerful and revered were the *Etsuzhi* and Priests that they had the power of life and death as demonstrated by the establishment of certain execution centres or penal settlements, as Ziiri calls them,<sup>798</sup> *Ledzu* (sing) *Ledzuzhi* (pl.). Nadel identifies eight of such *Ledzu* centres as: *Jebba, Tada, Gbere, Sunlati, Giragi, Ceworu, Fofo* and *Tayi*.<sup>799</sup> The moment an offender was sentenced and taken to any of these centers, he/she was sure

---

<sup>794</sup>Oral evidence – Alh. Mohammed 85 years assistant Village Head of Gbara, interviewed at Gbara on 14/8/13.

<sup>795</sup>I. Dauda, *op.cit*, pp..29-30 and oral evidences Moh’d Garan Jebba 100 years and Ndagi Kani 55 years at Jebba on 20/4/14. The latter escorted us on ferry to *Ketsa-Rock* (Juju Rock) at Jebba Island.

<sup>796</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>797</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>798</sup> R. B. Ziri, “The History of Bida Emirate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: A Study in Colonialism and the Transformation of Social Class – 1900 – 1960”, M. A. Thesis, History Dept., ABU, Zaria, 1991, p.65.

<sup>799</sup>S. F., Nadel, “Kede: A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria”, in, M. Fortes and E. E. Evans – Prichard (eds), *African Political Systems*, London: Oxford Up, 1940, p. 164. And S. F. Nadel’s “The King’s Hangman: A Judicial Organization in Central Nigeria...” *MAN* xxxv 143, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, September, 1935, pp. 129-132.

to die instantly. This type of judicial system promoted strict adherence to and belief in the practice of traditional religion which held sway in Nupeland. This, among other factors formed the justification for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadist attack against Nupeland which eventually led to the replacement of Tsoede ruling dynasty with that of Mallam Dendo, a Fulbe.

## **(VI) EFFECTS OF TSOEDE'S CREATION OF CENTRAL NUPE KINGDOM**

After the unification of various chiefdoms by Tsoede, a number of changes were observed in the subsequent power elite as Obayemi<sup>800</sup> states;

1. For the first time in their history, a single ruler had emerged and his authority had extended over all the various Nupe sub-groups.
2. Also for the first time the Nupe-speaking people of central Nigeria were brought under the canopy of a single government. The village 'king' – *Etsu* disappeared in favour of a 'people's king' and the autonomy of villages and communities dissolved in the mega-state.
3. Unlike the previous *Bini* Confederacy which, though autonomous, acknowledged the over-lordship of the Attah of Igala, the new Nupe kingdom was in all respects an independent sovereign state.
4. The unification of the riverine Nupe (Kyede) and their sedentary state kinsmen, the *Bini*, which enabled the emergence of the new kingdom, also provided a solid economic base upon which the prosperity and greatness of Nupeland was built.

---

<sup>800</sup> Obayemi, A., "States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue...p.144", in, Obaro, I. (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980, pp.144-164, also see Sa'ad Abubakar, "Political Evolution or Revolution".P. 69.

## (VII) INTERPRETATION AND HISTORICITY OF THE TSOEDE STORY

The story of Tsoede in Nupe history has been subjected to various interpretations. While most traditions and even some written sources regard the story as historical, others see it as just a mere myth, lacking any historical basis. Mason, for instance, belongs to the latter school of thought, at least initially before later modifying his views. In at least two of his works,<sup>801</sup> Mason as stated before, questions the authenticity of Tsoede story and his king lists as important historical figures in Nupe history. Therefore, he urges that Tsoede tradition concerning Nupe history should be rejected in its entirety, since, in his opinion, it was a “fabrication of the members of the Bida ruling elite in the 19<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>802</sup> In his conclusion, he asserts,

...neither Tsoede and his successors before the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century are demonstrably historical figures, and that Nupe history can be fruitfully discussed without mentioning Tsoede and his successors. The real basis for a reconstruction of the Nupe past comes from sources independent of those created by the colonial officials and anthropologists.<sup>803</sup>

Elsewhere,<sup>804</sup> Mason regards both Queen Amina of Zaria and Tsoede of Nupe as simply the “personification of a chain of events, in Zaria history” and “the founding of supra ethnic state in Nupe...distinct from any smaller unit such as *Bini*”.

Certain “basic structures”<sup>805</sup> or “most consistent themes” that might suggest the historicity of Tsoede story, some of which Mason himself is reported to have identified<sup>806</sup>

---

<sup>801</sup>M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century...”, pp.30-33 and “The Tsoede Myth and Nupe Kinglists: More Political Propaganda?,” *History in Africa- A Journal of Methods*, vol. 2, 1975, pp. 101-111.

<sup>802</sup>*Ibid.* 109

<sup>803</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>804</sup> M.,Mason, *The Kingdom of Nupe in the 19<sup>th</sup>...*p. 33.



include, the Tsoede-Idah connection. Others are the coming in a canoe upstream and the acknowledgement of Tsoede as a prominent figure who conquered and unified the various Nupe sub-groups to found a new and larger political system. Notwithstanding some discrepancies in the narratives on Tsoede as highlighted previously, Obayemi opines that there is still enough stability in them (the narratives) for a meaningful and serious reconstruction to be attempted.<sup>807</sup> Apparently arguing for a possible historicity of Tsoede in Nupe history Nadel avers:

The myth of Tsoede's delivery of Nupe from the Yoke of Idah may well contain a kernel of historical truth... The foundation of an independent Nupe Kingdom might have been one of the historical results of the disintegration of Benin (Edo)? and its vassal states. The ancient contact of Idah and Nupe as well as the former sovereignty of Idah are undoubtedly historical tradition of Tsoede well known in Idah as in Nupe...<sup>808</sup>

A number of sources have, however, faulted the Tsoede-Attah Igala connection as being the genesis for the foundation of Nupe kingdom. While we cannot easily dismiss the inter-group relations based essentially on economic activities, between the two areas prior to the establishment of Nupe and Igala Kingdoms respectively, it is difficult to assume that the latter influenced the emergence of the former. It appears doubtful, if by the early history of Nupe, the Igala kingdom with its *Attahship* (to which traditions attached the emergence of Tsoede) had ever emerged. If not, then, the popular 'servant-master' relationship widely held remains questionable. For, the Attahship in Igala kingdom would seem to have evolved later in history-late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>809</sup>Ukwedeh, however, has a different time frame. He argues that the emergence of Attahship in Igala

---

<sup>805</sup> Jimada, "Traditional History and the Genesis", ...p.14.

<sup>806</sup> Obayemi, "Tsoede, *Etsuzhi*..." p.12

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>808</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, P.75.

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid*

kingdom would have been between 1200 and 1450 AD.<sup>810</sup> According to him, while the former marks the beginning of identifiable Igala settlements, the latter represents the beginning of Attahship system in Igala land. Whatever the case might have been, both Igala and Nupe existed each as state groups with cultural and linguistic identities which could and indeed ante-date the Attah and Tsoede dynasties in Igala and Nupelands respectively.

Ndagi<sup>811</sup> has consistently argued, like Sule, in certain respect does, that the master-servant relationship issue between Igala and Nupe respectively was only perpetuated and promoted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ndagi claims that the 19<sup>th</sup> century European writers, Christian Missionaries and Colonial administrators have confused the “modern Attah of Igala kingdom’ with the ‘Attah Gara of antiquity in Nupe”. He posits that Nupe, in time perspective, was divided into southern Nupe-*Nupe Kintako* and northern Nupe-*Nupe Kintifin* which represents respectively Nupe *Attah Gara* and Nupe *Bini*. That the popularly acclaimed marriage between the Idah prince and *Bini* princess resulting into Tsoede’s birth was a mistaken identity. The marriage was, instead, between the southern Nupe prince and Northern Nupe princess to broker peace between the two warring Nupe sections.<sup>812</sup> In the absence of any incontrovertible historical evidence however, these claims should be taken with caution. However, as stated previously, we have been able to establish that before Tsoede’s emergence, there had been longstanding contacts between Nupe and Igala lands, as well as other areas in the Middle Niger and confluence areas through commerce and socio – cultural activities. So, by the time

---

<sup>810</sup>J.N.,Ukwedeh, “The Rise of Attah System in Igala C. 13<sup>th</sup> Century” ..., p.38.

<sup>811</sup>A.,Ndagi, *Who Are the Nupes?...* p.40. Also see his *Ashadu Was Nupe: How the Igala people Originated from Nupe*, Minna Elemkpe publishers, 2012, p. 13, and Sule, *History of...* pp.47-49

<sup>812</sup>A.,Ndagi, *Who Are the Nupes?...* p.40.

Tsoede emerged as an empire builder in Nupeland, the two areas cannot be said to have been ignorant of each other's existence as ethnic groups in the North Central part of Nigeria.

While we await such impeccable historical evidence, the story of master-servant connection between Igala and Nupe might have been a victim of hamitic hypothesis. Nupe probably might have wished to associate with the former which was claimed to have been more politically, economically and socio-culturally advanced.<sup>813</sup> Taking this to be so might have been as a result of the position Idah had occupied in relation to the neighbouring communities such as Ebira, Kakanda and Nupe. They are said to have looked upon Idah "whose sovereign acted as the head of a commonwealth of nations."<sup>814</sup> Idah might have achieved this feat following its control and regulation of economic activities on the Niger and Benue Rivers both above and below their confluence. Traffic on both rivers would have facilitated human contacts and boosting of trade and commerce. While we may not dispute the strategic economic position of Idah in relation to the neighbouring groups, it cannot be said, as Ohiare above would want us to believe, that Igala was the epicenter for Nupe's economic activities in the early times. Economic and social advancements seemed to have followed a more North (Hausa) - Southwards movement than that existed between Nupe and Idah.

Nadel's claim which links the origin of certain Nupe sub-groups and appointment of certain titles has suffered credibility problem in a number of sources. As pointed out earlier, Tsoede was never ever the genesis of the Nupe as a whole or any of its sub-

---

<sup>813</sup>A., Ohiare, Joseph, "Nupe Relations with her Southern Neighbours...", p.538.

<sup>814</sup>*Ibid*, 538 and J.N., Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to 1830 with Special Reference to the Rise of the Attah kingship," Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1987, p.504.

groups nor the leader of their migration.<sup>815</sup> Also flawed is the claim that Tsoede created the title of *Kuta* as head of the *Kyadya* state. It has been shown that the existence of *Kuta* title pre-dated the emergence of Tsoede.<sup>816</sup> The first *Kuta* called *Magani* according to this source, was the head of hippopotamus-hunters – the occupation he is said to have later abandoned for fishing and canoe-ferrying,<sup>817</sup> hence assuming the head of riverine people – the *Kede*.

Similarly, Sule disagrees with the claims that the bronze figures called Tsoede bronzes, found in certain Nupe settlements such as Jebba, Tada and Giragi were brought from Idah to Nupe by Tsoede.<sup>818</sup> This source refers us to studies and analysis of the bronzes which do not suggest Idah origin. Rather, the styles of the bronzes are identified with and traced to Ife, Oyo-Ile and Owo.<sup>819</sup> Apparently casting his doubts on Tsoedian tradition, Sule further asserts that associating the origin of Tsoede with the influence and authority of the Attah Igala could be a ploy for getting “easy acceptance among the generality of Nupe population” as well as an ego-booster and “honour to the Attah”.<sup>820</sup> It was also a ploy to later justify the Jihadists’ take-over of Nupe kingdom which they considered having been established by a foreigner-Tsoede. Being foreigners themselves, the Jihadists might not have seen anything wrong taking over the kingdom. Sharing the same opinion with Idrees and Ndagi referred to earlier, Sule posits that Nupe kingdom emerged not so much as a result of the external links. Rather, it was as a result of the need to take care of the greater challenges the *Bini* confederacy was facing. These

---

<sup>815</sup>Jimada, “Traditional History and the Genesis...”, p. 13.

<sup>816</sup>A.A., Idrees, “Domination and Reaction in Nupe land Central Nigeria: The Kyadya Revolt, 1857-1905, New York: The Edwin Press, 1996, p.3.

<sup>817</sup>Sule, *History of the Emirate of Bida...*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>818</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>819</sup>*Ibid* for details of such studies.

<sup>820</sup>*Ibid*

included wars, control of trade routes and tapping of the resources of the *Bini* area. As he puts it,

The challenges must have increased the authority of the Bini Confederacy. The increase of authority, must have then led to more unification of the confederacy and establishment of a ruling dynasty. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Etsu Nupezhi-Nupe kings...were (already) exchanging gifts with the rulers in Hausaland.<sup>821</sup>

Details of the above challenges in terms of the causes, course, leadership and personalities involved in tackling the challenges are not known to us. If however, inferences and logic can be permitted in historical discourse, then, certain inferences and deductions can be logically made on the historicity of Tsoede personality in Nupe history.

On the origin of bronze figures found in certain Nupe settlements, Jimada<sup>822</sup> shares a different view with Sule's position stated above. The former argues for the possibility of them being part of the original art works of the Nupe. According to him, there is 'abundant evidence' to show that Nupeland, just like Oyo, Owo, Benin and Ile-Ife (where Sule refers to as the possible sources of origin of the bronzes) belongs in the "same cultural milieu and produced art works that were destroyed in the event of the Pre-Jihadist Islamic reforms and Jihadist revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries".<sup>823</sup> The fact that Yorubaland in that period was less affected by these Jihad movements might have made it possible for the works of art to remain intact or less affected.

---

<sup>821</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>822</sup> I.S Jimada, "Review of History of the Emirate of Bida to C.1899 by Sule Moh'd" *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, Vol. 7, (1) 2013, pp.83-88.

<sup>823</sup>*Ibid* pp. 85-86. Chapter three, pp. 131-32 provide possible evidence for the destruction.

Another source<sup>824</sup>, while recognizing the similarity between Nupe bronze works on the one hand and those of Benin and Ife on the other, also notes distinct difference between them. For instance, Ostriches and elephant bronze sculptures found in Nupeland do not show any traits of any previously known bronze sculpting. These distinctive differences show that “the works were created by entirely different cultures”.<sup>825</sup> The controversy surrounding the origin of ‘Tsoede bronzes’ found in Nupeland remains a subject of further research to enable us arrive at a more definitive and accurate interpretation of Nigeria’s art history.<sup>826</sup>

Against the background of the foregoing examination on the historicity or otherwise of the personality of Tsoede, the following observations are made thus,

- That the popularity and widespread story of Tsoede within Nupeland and beyond cannot be disputed, even though, such popularity does not necessarily make him incontrovertibly historical.
- That the existence of pre-Tsoede polity can hardly be historically dismissed. What can however, be dismissed is to regard Tsoede as the genesis of Nupe ethnic group, or taken as the leader of their migration.
- Equally, there cannot be denying the fact that at a time in the past, there evolved a centralized polity as we had in other parts of the Nigerian area. In the process of evolution of such a polity, there must have been rallying or facilitating factors in terms of human leadership and other resources. What seems controversial and

---

<sup>824</sup> An anonymous and undated 14-page document titled “Tsoede: of Nupe Kingdom”, p.4. The document refers us to the National Museum in Lagos, where, according to it, such Nupe bronze artifacts are on display, which we were able to confirm through internet.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>826</sup> B. Lawal, “Present State of Art Historical Research in Nigeria: Problems and Possibilities”, *Journal of African History*, Vol XVIII (2), 1977, pp.193-216

doubtful is whether or not, it was Tsoede that provided that rallying point for the foundation of Nupe Kingdom between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. Traditions and legends appear popular among the Nupe and Igala groups on the ‘servant-master’ relationship respectively between the two groups, as it was so in the areas of inter-group contacts between them from time immemorial as we noted above on page 163.

According to Okita,<sup>827</sup> multi-dimensional contacts of different degrees and intensity were maintained between Nupe and Igala on the one hand and between them and other ethnic groups within the region and their neighbours on the other. Such interactions and inter-group relations far pre-dated the colonial intervention. The importance of river system in the promotion and facilitation of early inter-group relations cannot be over-emphasized. In addition, it is further suggested that:

The presence of river system was instrumental to the emergence and expansion of Nupe, Igala and Jukun Kingdoms and the subsequent dominant political, economic and cultural positions they occupied among the peoples of the Niger Benue confluence region and their immediate neighbours.<sup>828</sup>

### **(VIII) LOGICAL EXPLANATION**

It is said that every society is a product of certain historical events and situations.<sup>829</sup> The history of states, kingdoms or empires, whether surviving or extinct effectively begins with dynastic revolution which altered the existing political system, in which a hierarchical system of titles constituted sovereign authority. According to

---

<sup>827</sup>S. I. O. Okita, *Cultural Affinity in the Niger-Benue Confluence Region*, in, C.D. Paul, (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger-Benue confluence Region*, National Gallery of Art, 2005, p.130.

<sup>828</sup>*Ibid*, pp.130 – 131.

<sup>829</sup> Kabir Mato, “Today is a Reflection of Yesterday”, in, *Weekly Trust Newspaper* of 29/11/14, p.40.

Akubor “man in history does not live in vacuum, but, operates within a particular environment”<sup>830</sup>

Given the fact that: nobody can build something on nothing, nobody can develop something on nothing and nobody can originate something from nothing, the fundamental worth that a number of oral traditions and even documented records attach to Tsoede phenomenon in the history of Nupe cannot totally be dismissed as a mere myth lacking historical facts. There is no doubt about the existence of Nupe in confederal states or in what Obayemi calls “mini-states”<sup>831</sup> prior to the emergence of Tsoede. Also, there has not been any historical dispute so far on the emergence of a single powerful central state over the confederal states of Nupeland. Naturally, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for such mini-but independent polities to build a single unified Kingdom without a strong and powerful leadership which Tsoede provided. This is in furtherance of our earlier claim that something can only be built on something and not on a vacuum. A powerful leader and possibly, with the support of lieutenants and a team of other trusted personalities, have always been the rallying point in the evolution of states and kingdoms.

Given the then prevailing circumstances in Nupeland, which Sule<sup>832</sup> earlier on enumerates, is it not possible for a personality like Tsoede, ambitiously driven by a desire for stronger and more centralized authority to emerge with a view to tackling such challenges? Hence the unification of the hitherto various *Bini* city-states and other Nupe

---

<sup>830</sup> E. O., Akubor, “The Role of Geography in Fostering Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: A Case Study of Igala of Central Nigeria and Esan People of Southern Nigeria 1500 – 1850 A.D.” *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, Vol.1(I), 2007, pp. 22-30.

<sup>831</sup>A., Obayemi, “The Yoruba and Edo-speaking peoples and their Neighbours before 1600” in, Ajayi, J. F. A, and M., Crowther, (eds), *History of West Africa*. London: Longman, 1976, pp.196 – 263.

<sup>832</sup>Sule, *op.cit* p.49.



sub-groups. So far, no other personality, other than that of Tsoede has been associated with the achievement of this feat. Also as argued by Obayemi, “no other centre in Nupeland is known to have advanced claims of being the base of a line of kings other than the line of Tsoede”.<sup>833</sup> We do not also have concrete evidence that powerful chief-tenses have ever emerged prior to Tsoede rea, to embark on a nationwide unification aimed at creating a powerful central authority over the entire Nupeland.

Although some aspects associated with Tsoede can be regarded mythical as we have noted previously, we may be cautious in dismissing with a wave of the hand the entire aspects of Tsoede factor in Nupe history as non-historical! We may, however, in synergy with other areas of human endeavour, such as archaeology, linguistics and ethnology, continue to search for more evidence. Meanwhile, we should be guided by Abdullahi Smith’s<sup>834</sup> urge to professional historians not to throw away or dismiss new historical discoveries, interpretations and perspectives. Rather, we should be open minded.

## **(IX) CONCLUSION**

An attempt has been made in this chapter to discuss an issue which forms one of the most important phenomenons in early Nupe history-the Tsoede factor. The myth surrounding Tsoede’s birth, his connection with Igalaland and establishment of supra Nupe kingdom absorbed the attention of this chapter. While Tsoede cannot be regarded as the progenitor or genesis of the Nupe as a group, he can be regarded as revolutionary

---

<sup>833</sup> A. Obayemi, “Tsoede, Etsuzhi...”, p. 181

<sup>834</sup> A. Smith, *Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Professor Abdullahi Smith, vol.I*, Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith centre for Historical Research, 1987, p.vii.

or even evolutionary<sup>835</sup> in the unification of various Nupe nationalities or mini-states to found a more powerful, central and larger polity recognized as Nupe kingdom by neighbours such as Gbagyi, Hausa and Yoruba. Comparatively speaking, Abdullahi Smith's argument on Bayajida legend of Daura apparently applies to the Tsoede story in Nupe. According to him: Bayajida legend of Daura (however interpreted) can hardly be thought to have referred to the creation of a new people. If anything at all, it must be referred to the political changes brought in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D in Hausaland.<sup>836</sup>

Concerning the historicity of Tsoede story in Nupe history, we have attempted to highlight, to some extent, different scholarly views on the issue. Mason, among others, initially views the story as mere myth "fabricated by the Bida ruling elite" in collaboration with the colonial officials and anthropologists. He however modified his original view which he himself admitted as being "unnecessarily severe".<sup>837</sup> Obayemi, among others, faults Mason's view and conclusions. He argues that some differences observed in the kinglists under Tsoede dynasty do not completely negate the historicity of Tsoede as opined thus,

The variety of forms in which the memories of the Etsuzhi-have been presented to us are in my view the proof of their overall authenticity: and of a dynastic history whose exact sequence is no longer clear.<sup>838</sup>

The above view can be supported by the fact that paucity of any written form of records in any society almost makes it impossible to determine the correct generation position of each ruler in the dynasty. This similar problem is shown to have existed in Igalaland as

---

<sup>835</sup> S.,Abubakar, "Political Evolution or Revolution?:..., pp. 67-76.

<sup>836</sup> A. Smith, *Selected Historical Writings...*, p. 62.

<sup>837</sup> Obayemi, "Tsoede, *Etsuzhi...*," p. 5.

<sup>838</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

it affects the dynastic chronology of Igala Kingship.<sup>839</sup>The fact that a number of sources<sup>840</sup> speak freely of pre-Tsoede kings, different capitals and settlements may suggest the historicity of Tsoede. The inferences and logical explanation offered in the chapter gives us the impression of Tsoede personality being more of historical figure than a mythical empire builder. However, certain socio-cultural aspects associated with Tsoede; his birth, his relationship with Igalaland on the bases of servant – mastership appears more mythical than real when critically examined. However, as stated earlier on, we shall continue to search for more evidence.

Finally, while the Tsoede legend might have probably been embellished with the passage of time, as such myths usually are, it is suggested that the external evidence shows that there is nothing inherently improbable in it.<sup>841</sup>This may be premised on the fact that there was certainly contact between Nupe and Igala. According to Nadel, “the ancient contact of Idah and Nupe as well as the former sovereignty of Idah are undoubtedly historical. The tradition of Tsoede is as well known in Idah as in Nupe”.<sup>842</sup> A source describes Tsoede as “simply one of the many re-founders of the Nupe nation in ancient times. However, while Tsoede’s fame survived into history, those of others have simply disappeared into history.”<sup>843</sup>

Whatever the contents of historical truth, the legend of Tsoede was of political and socio-cultural significance. It was treasured by the Nupe people particularly among

---

<sup>839</sup>J.N. Ukwedeh. “Chronology and the Study of Igala”, p.10.

<sup>840</sup> Among such sources are Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*; Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*; Sule, *History of the...*; Ndagi, *Who are the Nupes?...and Jimada*, “Traditions and Genesis of...”

<sup>841</sup><http://www.amanaonline.com/sokoto-13.htm> (Historical Excursion) who are the Nupes? Also see foot note 29.

<sup>842</sup> S. F., Nadel, *A Black Byzantium...*, p.75.

<sup>843</sup>“Amagi Tsoede and the Lost Name of the Founder of Nupe”, an anonymous undated one-page write-up.

the *Bini* sub-group and the general Knowledge and acceptance of it is said to have been one of the foundations of the political and cultural unity which they gradually evolved.<sup>844</sup>

---

<sup>844</sup> See footnote 49 above.

## CHAPTER SIX: ISLAM IN NUPELAND, 15<sup>TH</sup> – 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES AD

### (I) INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Islam into Nupeland followed the same pattern as in other parts of Western and Central Sudan. As would be seen in the chapter, the Islamic influence came to Nupeland and other areas at least initially, not through any organized method, but through emigrants, merchants and missionaries from the already Islamized states. Sidi reports M. A. Al-Hajj to have suggested that the first pioneers of Islamic propagation in the Western Sudan were the Wangarawa.<sup>845</sup> They were a group representing the Dyala branch of the Mande of Mali, who are said to have spread from an early period over a large area of West Africa,<sup>846</sup> after the fall of Songhai Empire.

This chapter focuses on the various sources through which Islam penetrated into Nupeland in the early period, far predating the 19<sup>th</sup> century Islamic reformation movements in Northern Nigeria. We have, therefore, argued that contrary to general belief and suggestions, Islam had existed in Nupeland long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad. It came through a number of sources. They include the efforts of Arab scholars, migrants, traders and Muslim clerics. Other sources were from Songhai, Hausa and Kanem-Borno areas.

Even though the impact of Islamic influence in the entire Nupeland in the early period cannot easily be accessed, we note the emergence of certain indigenous Islamic reformers in the area. They include, one of the *Etsuzhi* (Kings) called Jibrilu, 1746-1759,<sup>847</sup> under Tsoede Dynasty.

---

<sup>845</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of the Emirate System in Nupeland: The Emirate of Bida as a case study*, Kaduna: Fembo books and Graphics, 2000, p.19.

<sup>846</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>847</sup>R. M. East, (ed.), *Labarum Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, 2 vols., Zaria: Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, 1932, pp.56 – 57. Other sources give slightly different dates. S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press, p.406, gives 1746 – 1759.

Another one was undertaken by one Abdulrahman bn Muhammad Sharif, 1778 – 1830.<sup>848</sup> Both reformers embarked on commendable reform activities aimed at making Islam a state religion. In the same vein, however, such efforts were met with strong resistance from both the ruling and, to some extent, even the religious elites as will be shown later in the chapter. Despite the hostility, however, there was evidence to show that the reformers' efforts in Nupeland were not all in vain. There emerged in the area certain important religious centres that have been acknowledged for their high standard of Islamic scholarship.<sup>849</sup>

## (II) SOURCES OF EARLY ISLAMIC INFLUENCE

### a. Arab Travellers, Migrants, Muslim Scholars

Contacts between the Western and Central Sudanese areas and Arabs and North Africa date to as far back as 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>850</sup> The initial contacts might have been facilitated more by trade and commerce. This might have been followed by a curious desire by Arab geographers, historians, travelers and Islamic clerics to know about the Sudanese areas. Through the writings of such scholars and travelers, the Nupe might have begun to have the knowledge of Islam and its practices. For instance, from records and writings of some Arab Muslim chroniclers, such as Ibn Munnabel in A.D. 738 and Al – Mas'udi in A.D. 947, a lot of information on West Africa might have been obtained. By extension, therefore, it is not unlikely that such information on early Nupe and their polity, among other groups, were obtained by later ethnographic and anthropological evidence produced by Frobenius and Nadel,<sup>851</sup> respectively. Levtzion,<sup>852</sup> for

---

<sup>848</sup>S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2011, P.66.

<sup>849</sup>Sidi, *op.cit*, p. 29.

<sup>850</sup>C.C. Ifemesia, "The Peoples of West Africa Around 1000 A.D.," in, J.F.A. Ajayi, and I. Espie,, (eds). *A Thousand Years of West African History*. Ibadan: UP. 1965, pp. 39 – 54.

<sup>851</sup>L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, Vol. 2, New York and London: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1913 and S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzh*

instance, refers us to the works of Al-Bakri, Ibn Batuta, Ibn Khaldun, among others, on the Sudanese areas and North Africa.

Al-Bakri's work on "Book of Roads and Kingdoms", written between 1067 and 1068 A.D, among his several other works, gives a detailed description of ancient "Ghana and its neighbours."<sup>853</sup> Nupe might have been one of such neighbours, if not geographically, at least, on trade and commercial relations. We have noted Al-Bakri's claim that by 1068 A.D, there already existed a mighty and expansive kingdom called Al-Denden in Nupeland headed by a powerful ruler.<sup>854</sup> If such a kingdom did actually exist, it is probable that it maintained a wide range of relations with other places. Under this situation, though without concrete evidence, the possibility of Islam informally penetrating into Nupeland cannot be easily dismissed.

#### **b. Trade and Commerce**

Trade and Commerce played significant role in the introduction of Islam into Nupeland in the early period. Mason and Sule,<sup>855</sup> emphasize the importance of this factor. Through trade and commerce, between West Africa (Nupeland inclusive) and the Arabs, through North Africa, exchange of goods between the two areas became a common phenomenon. The Arab traders, in addition to trading, must have attempted introducing the religion of Islam to their hosts. The hosts must have been receptive and accommodative, even if it was nominal, of the religion and its practices brought by their guests. Such reception, accommodation and liberality might have accounted for the involvement of Muslim scholars and clerics in the administration of the local kings. They are, for instance, reported to have served as advisers, interpreters, diviners,

---

<sup>852</sup> N. Levtzion, "Early States of the Western Sudan", in J.F.A. Ajayi, and Crowther, M. (eds), *History of West Africa*, Vol.I, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Longman, 1976, p.120.

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>855</sup> Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham University, 1970, p.42 Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, p.54.

chaplains on spiritual and secular matters among the court officials of the Nupe kings,<sup>856</sup> long before Mallam Dendo's arrival in Nupeland.

The *Ndaduma*, River Niger, provided a source of communication and transportation for the traders and Muslim clerics. Paul E. Lovejoy asserts that by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Wangarawa communities had already existed at *Nikki* and Bussa in the Borgu area in the Middle Niger region.<sup>857</sup> It is possible such communities extended to Nupeland which formed their neighbour. M. A. Al-Hajj suggests that the first pioneers of Islamic propagation in the Western Sudan were the Wangarawa.<sup>858</sup> Wangara is noted to have been well known in West Africa as the gold-producing country of the Upper Niger, from which the wealth of ancient Ghana and Mali was derived.<sup>859</sup>

### c. Songhai

The political instability following the dynastic disputes in Mali in the 15<sup>th</sup> century might have accounted for the wide spread and dispersal of Wangarawa traders and Islamic *Ulama*. With insecurity and fear in the empire, they were compelled to look for safety elsewhere, hence the migration of all sorts – traders, Muslim clerics and preachers in search of markets, new homes and security.<sup>860</sup> While some of these categories of people are said to have settled in Nupeland, others only visited the area for trading and adventurous missions.<sup>861</sup>

---

<sup>856</sup>Levtzion, "The Early States of..." p. 121 and Nadel, *Nupe Religion, Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom*, London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954, p.232.

<sup>857</sup>P.E. Lovejoy, "The Role of Wangarawa in the Economic Transformation of the Central Sudan in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries", *Journal of African History*, xix, 2, 1978, p.80.

<sup>858</sup>M. A. Al-Hajj, "A 17<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicles on the Origins and Missionary Activities of the Wangarawa", in *Kano Studies vol. I (4)* 1968, pp. 7-16.

<sup>859</sup>Abdullahi Smith, "The Early States of the Central Sudan", in J.F.A. Ajayi, and M. Crowther, (eds), *History of west Africa*, Vol. I, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1976, pp. 158 – 201.

<sup>860</sup>Sidi, *Establishment of the ...*, p. 19.

<sup>861</sup>S. A. Abdullahi, "Nupe Kingdom Before and After the Jihad of Uthman Ibn Fodio: A Survey of its Political and Administrative Set-up". M. A. Thesis, Islamic Dept., BUK Kano, 1983, p.34.



Since the introduction of Islam to Nupeland took place through trade, *Ulama* and other sources, it is not surprising that the already established commercial centres in the area received the early influence of the religion. Imam, Sule and Sidi,<sup>862</sup> mention such centres as Nku, Nupeko, Gbara, Zhima (Jima), Mokwa, Labozhi, Raba, Eggan, Kulfo, among others. Most of these towns at one time or another in history, served as capitals of Nupe Kingdom. As stated earlier,<sup>863</sup> the political and economic elite in such centers might have, at least initially, provided enabling environment for the Muslim traders and clerics to operate.

**d. Hausa and Borno Axis**

The long established political and economic inter-group relations between Nupeland and Hausaland and Borno had significantly facilitated the pace of Islamization in Nupeland long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad movements. It has been suggested that between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, Islam had become well established in Kano and the process of extending it to other places had begun.<sup>864</sup> Regarding Kano as a “melting pot”, Mahadi<sup>865</sup> shows the long standing trade, commercial and inter-group relations between Nupe, Kano and Borno, in which exchange of trading goods took place, as well as settlement of Nupe traders and skilled workers in many parts of Kano and its environs. Another account relates that by the 1450, Kano had begun to import slaves and Kolanuts from Nupeland in return for horses and potash.<sup>866</sup> This was facilitated by the existence of trading route from Zinder to Katsina – Kano – Zaria – Kontagora – Kulfo – Labozhi – to Raba – Mokwa – Bussa and Oyo – Ile.

---

<sup>862</sup>I.N. Imam, “A History of Islam in Nupe” B. A. Dissertation, Bayero University, Kano. 1973, p.9; Sule, *History of the ...* pp.26 – 27 and Sidi, *op.cit*, p.27.

<sup>863</sup>See footnote 12 above.

<sup>864</sup>I.N. Imam, “History of Islam...”, p.5.

<sup>865</sup>A. Mahdi, “The State and the Economy: The Sarauta System and its Role in Shaping the Society and Economy of Kano with particular Reference to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1982, p.119.

<sup>866</sup>Sidi, *op.cit*, I p.20.

According to M. G. Smith,<sup>867</sup> the first Muslim ruler of Kano, AliyuYaji (C1349 – 1385) led religious wars into the neighbouring states of Attagara (Igala Kingdom) and Jukun in the Gongola valley. If this account is to be relied upon, then, it is most probable Nupe felt the influence of these wars. This is because Nupe used to be ‘part’ of, or at least, shared border with the Igala Kingdom of old ruled by the Attagara.

Another area in Hausaland which would seem to have facilitated the Islamization of Nupeland between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries was Katsina. The “first” Muslim King of Katsina Muhammad Korau (1492 -1541), for instance, is reported to have fought the Nupe due to border disputes between the two areas. Details of such disputes are not known to us. However, a peace treaty is said to have been signed between them to resolve the impasse and to keep the trade route passing through Nupeland to Katsina safe for the Wangara traders.<sup>868</sup> It is possible that Muslim clerics and traders from Katsina and Wangara did influence Nupeland by introducing Islam there. It is probable, the popular and long – standing joking relationship between *Nufawa* and *Katsinawa* may have started then. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Katsina, among other Hausa states such as Kano, Zaria and even Bussa and Gonja had already become important commercial and Islamic centres.

Nupe’s relation with Katsina might have, however, been earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Traditions<sup>869</sup> from Nupe have it that sometime in the early past, one of the sisters of the King (*Etsu*) of *Jima* – one of the oldest historical settlements in Nupeland, left the town for Katsina.

---

<sup>867</sup>M. G. Smith, “The Kano Chronicle as History”, in, Bawuro M. Barkindo, (ed), *Studies in the History of Kano*. Kano: Bayero UP. 1983, pp.31 – 56, does seem to accept AliyuYaji as being the first Muslim king of Kano. To him, the preceding King – Usmanu Zamnagawa (1343 – 1349) was more likely to having been “the second chief to bear an Islamic name”, pp.37 – 40.

<sup>868</sup>H. R. Palmer, *The Sudanese Memoirs*, vol.3, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1928, p.87.

<sup>869</sup>Oral source group interview with Alh. Moh’d Ndayisa – Village Head of Jima town 58years and Alh. Abubakar Naibi – the assistant Chief Imam of Jima 70 years, at Jima on 11/05/13. Also Alh. AlhassanWasagi – 66 years gave similar information on 26/09/13 at Minna.

Details of the circumstances leading to her departure are unknown to us. However, according to the traditions under reference, her departure was to avoid witnessing an imminent defeat in the hands of invading aggressors. Before that time, there had been internal disputes within the ruling class, which, unexpectedly, weakened the unity and strength hitherto enjoyed by the town. That, in the history of wars, Jima had never been defeated. As a prominent member of the ruling class, she would not stay to witness the apparent defeat, hence her migration northwards to Katsina where she got married and had children, so the story goes.

In Nupe tradition, there exists a joking relationship between children of sisters and those of brothers. No wonder, therefore, this might have been the genesis of the longstanding joking relationship that has since continued to exist between Nupe (*Nufawa*) and Katsina (*Katsinawa*). The former has always claimed 'superiority' for being the master of the latter, while, according to the latter, the reverse is the case as stated above.<sup>870</sup> It is also claimed that in time past, especially during the reign of Korau as *Sarkin* Katsina (1492-1541) an expedition southward was undertaken in which Attah of Igalaland under whose "sovereignty" was Nupeland, was defeated by Katsina. Hence, they regarded the defeated peoples as subjects or slaves.

Now back to the early influence of Islam in Nupeland, the spread of Islam in the area increased steadily as more Muslim traders as well as scholars and travelers came in with high concentration of their activities found in the political and commercial centres as noted previously.<sup>871</sup> Meanwhile, scholars and Muslim travelers had continued to traverse the length and breadth of Nupeland<sup>872</sup> in search of converts. It is difficult however, as noted earlier, to access the extent to which the Muslim immigrants influenced the people of Nupe in the early

---

<sup>870</sup> See footnote 24

<sup>871</sup> See footnote 18 above.

<sup>872</sup> Sule, *History of the...*, p.58

period. It is suggestive, however, that they settled among and intermarried with the local people as was the case with Sheikh Muhammad Sharif, as will be discussed later. Under this type of situation, the possibility of conversion can hardly be dismissed.

**e. Formal Islamization Process**

What we have discussed above can be regarded as an informal or accidental way of the introduction of Islam to Nupeland. The first clear statement relating to the formal Islamization of Nupe took place in the 1650's. A number of modern sources<sup>873</sup> refer to the importance of Islamic scholars of Yemeni origin who first settled in Borno before migrating southwards to settle in Nupe. According to Mason, either during or after the reign of *Mai* Ali bn. Haj. Umar, C.1641/2-1681/2, these *Ullama* abandoned their settlement at Belbec in Borno and went south-westwards.<sup>874</sup> A number of them are believed to have settled in Nupeland where they remained for sometimes before returning to Yemen,<sup>875</sup> their original home. There is no doubt that during their stay, they must have engaged in the formal spread of Islam and doing other things which must have affected the lives of many people. As Smith puts it,

It is generally accepted that the influence of these people (Yemeni immigrants) later on extended beyond homeland of the Kanuri and affected the lives of a great variety of peoples of differing cultural traditions both Islamic and non-Islamic.<sup>876</sup>

From Borno also came certain immigrants to settle in Nupeland at *Kutigi*, *Enagi* and other places around the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They came as traders and Muslim clerics. The present

---

<sup>873</sup>A. Smith, "The Legend of the Seifuwa: A Study in the Origins of a Tradition of Origin," in, *A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*. Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 1987, pp.23 – 24; Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom...", p.44; Sule, *op.cit*, p.56, among others.

<sup>874</sup>Mason, *op.cit*, p.44.

<sup>875</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>876</sup>A. Smith, *op.cit*, p.23.

ruling dynasty in *Kutigi* and other places around it were founded by the Borno immigrant Muslims and traders. They still call themselves after their country of origin *Benu*, the Nupe corruption of Borno.<sup>877</sup> Nadel describes them as ‘Mohammadans’ (Muslims), who came as wealthy traders with horses and cattle and soon gained political and economic supremacy over the other sections and were recognized as the official rulers of *Kutigi* and the neighbouring villages by *Etsu* (King) Majiya of Nupe.<sup>878</sup> In addition to political and economic activities they must have played role in the conversion and propagation of Islam among the local populace. The annual socio-cultural festival called *Gani* in *Kutigi* and its environs was introduced by the Borno immigrants. The festival is believed to have originated from *Kukawa* in Borno.<sup>879</sup>

### (III) INDIGENOUS ISLAMIC REFORMERS IN NUPELAND

In spite of the influence of Islam on Nupeland during the period under reference, the practice of some aspects of indigenous religion had continued. For instance, the worship of *Ndaduma* (River Niger) *Ketsa Rock*, among other rituals, had continued. This implies mixing of Islamic and non-Islamic practices were still predominant among the nominal Muslims. Sule<sup>880</sup> reports that this practice cut across all social classes. According to him, common people, economic elite, members of the ruling class and even learned people in Islam – *manzhi*, were involved. Attempt to reform such practices and to practice Islam purely led to the emergence of indigenous reform efforts in Nupeland before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad in Northern Nigeria. The situation in Nupeland which led to the reform efforts can be likened to that in Gobir under

---

<sup>877</sup>S. F. Nadel, “Social Symbiosis and Tribal Organization”, in, *MAN*, vol.38, (85), 1938, pp.85-90.

<sup>878</sup>*Ibid*, p.86. Also see Chapter two of this work, pp. 23-24?

<sup>879</sup>For details of this Festival, see Nadel, “The *Gani* Ritual of Nupe: A Study of Social Symbiosis”, *Journal of the international Institute*, Vol.xi, (3), 1949, pp.178 – 186.

<sup>880</sup>Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, p.61.

Bawa Jan Gwarzo which led to Usman bn Fodio's advocacy for the return to and practice of orthodox Islam.<sup>881</sup>This situation was capable of warranting a pious leader's intervention, hence, *Etsu Jibrilu* of Nupe.

**d. *Etsu Jibrilu*, 1746 – 1759**

Different king lists assign different positions to *Etsu Jibrilu* on the genealogical tree of Tsoede dynasty. These range from 12<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> positions (see appendixes v and vi). Nupe tradition has it that *Etsu Jibrilu* was the first on the Tsoede kinglist to become a Muslim.<sup>882</sup> We may be cautious in taking such tradition as true. For, contact between Nupe and other Islamised states, noted previously, was much earlier than Jibril's reign. Some of his predecessors professed the religion of Islam, at least, nominally. Moreover, the genealogies of the *Etsuzhi* in the appendixes referred to above, show names of his predecessors suggesting Islamic influence.<sup>883</sup>Another source affirms,

As from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century all the *Etsuzhi* (Kings) had been Muslims. *Etsu Maman Wari* (1670 – 79), *Etsu Abdullahi Waliyu* (1679 – 1700), *Etsu Aliyu* (1700-797), *Etsu Ibrahim* (1713 – 1717, *Etsu Abubakar Kolo* and *Abdullahi Tsado*, all bore Muslim names.<sup>884</sup>

In the light of the above, therefore, rather than being the first Muslim *Etsu*, *Jibrilu* can safely be described as the first pious and Islamic *Etsu* reformer in Nupeland. At the early stage, *Jibrilu* is said to have developed interest in the acquisition of Islamic knowledge at Jima and

---

<sup>881</sup> Abdullahi R. Augi, "The Gobir Factor in the Social and Political History of the Rima Basin, C.1650-1808 A.D.", Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1984, p.459.

<sup>882</sup>I.N. Imam, "A History of Islam in Nupe", ...p.12.

<sup>883</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>884</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland:...* pp.22 – 23 and 39.

Kutigi towns.<sup>885</sup> He is said to have built the first Central Mosque at Jima and institutionalized *Eid– El* prayers there. At Kutigi, he is believed to have learnt under Borno an scholars who had already settled there as emigrants from Borno.

Like Muhammad Rumfa of Kano, Idris Aloma of Borno and Ibrahim Maje of Katsina, *Etsu* Jibrilu who mounted the throne in 1746 was jealously determined to reform Islam in his kingdom.<sup>886</sup> It is said that, while the previous three *Etuzhi* did not go beyond answering Muslim names, *Etsu* Jibrilu became an enthusiastic practicing Muslim, which according to Nupe traditions gave him the honour of being the first Muslim *Etsu* in Nupeland.<sup>887</sup> Towards this end, he is reported to have waged series of religious wars, both military and non-military Jihad,<sup>888</sup> against the pre-Islamic Nupe religious practices. It was possible the *Etsu* might have first replaced the traditional religion with the *Sharia* as the law of the land as a step towards making Islam a state religion. The *Etsu* is reported to have appointed a great Islamic scholar – Umar B. Muhammadu – a grandfather of the author of *Kitab al-Tarikh*, as the Chief Qadi of Nupeland with his seat at *Gbara* town.<sup>889</sup>

Efforts were made to impose Islam on all parts of Nupeland and beyond. Institutionalization of Islam from the centre to the local level was made. In this regard, certain towns such as Abaji, Dabban, Eggan, Agaie, Bida, Jima, Katcha became important Islamic

---

<sup>885</sup> R.N. Kolo, "The Bini in Nupe History, with Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko," B.A. Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, 1973, p. 37. I.S. Jimada, during informal chat on 21/9/16, mentions Kutigi as Jibrilu's learning centre. Perhaps, that might have been responsible for his exile there after his deposition as the *Etsu* from Gbara.

<sup>886</sup> Imam, *op. cit*, P.12

<sup>887</sup> S. Abubakar, "Political Evolution or Revolution?: The Case of 'Kin Nupe' Before the Advent of Colonial Rule, in, J.F.A. Ajayi and I. Bashir (eds.), *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria*, Ibadan: University Press, 1985, Pp. 67 – 84.

<sup>888</sup> Sule, *History of the... 69 – 76.*

<sup>889</sup> Imam, *op. cit*, p.12

centres.<sup>890</sup> Another device towards making Islam a state religion was the appointment of judges throughout the kingdom and the encouragement of the common people to accept Islam by ordering polytheists to pay heavy tribute while exempting the converts.<sup>891</sup>

As would be expected, especially in a situation where Islam had not been deeply rooted, *Etsu* Jibrilu's reform efforts were not without challenges; both within and outside the ruling elite. According to Adullahi,

The *Etsu*'s reformist activities no doubt created enmity between him and his subjects. This accounted for his deposition and exile to Kutigi where he finally died.<sup>892</sup>

The site of his grave at Birma (Bima) ward, the original settlement of the Borno immigrants, was shown to this researcher on his visit to Kutigi recently. An informant<sup>893</sup> informed this researcher that the grandfather of the present *Etsu* of Patigi, *Etsu* Umaru, used to visit the site to pay homage and respect when the grave was still physically visible. However, due to lack of preservation, the grave is no longer visible as building structures have over-taken the site.

It was not only the subjects that refused to wholeheartedly accept *Etsu* Jibrilu's Islamic reform agenda, opposition also came from the ruling class. The succeeding *Etsuzhi*, at least, the immediate ones, did not pursue the same religious cause with zeal as did Jibrilu, for fear of

---

<sup>890</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate...*, pp.24 – 2.

<sup>891</sup>Imam *op.cit*, pp. 14 – 15.

<sup>892</sup>S. A. Abdullah, "Nupe Kingdom Before and After...pp.37 – 39.

<sup>893</sup>Oral evidence – Alhaji Salihu Babayafu Kutigi, 90 years at Kutigi on 14/08/16.



probable enmity between them and their subjects.<sup>894</sup> But even as *Etsu Jibrilu* could not realize making Islam a state religion in Nupeland, his efforts attracted attention from far and wide.<sup>895</sup>

In the same vein, Sultan Bello of Sokoto is reported to have written a century later of *Etsu Jibrilu* as,

There was a certain just Sarki (King) Jibrilu who ruled over them (Nupe) in former times. Islam spread because of him. And they hated him because of his firmness and strict observance of the religion. They deposed him and installed one who agreed with them in their folly and shamelessness.<sup>896</sup>

**e. Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Muhammad Sharif (1778 – 1830)**

There emerged yet another indigenous Islamic religious reformer in Nupe. Conflicting reports exist on the birth place of this reformer.<sup>897</sup> Similarity of the names can be observed- *Abaji* and *Gbaji*. However, the latter appears more likely to be the correct place. This is because Gbaji lies in the core – Nupeland around the present – day Agaie town, while Abaji lies further South of Nupeland in the present – day Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. Abdulrahman’s Arab father – Muhammad Sharif is said to have settled in Nupeland<sup>898</sup> as an Islamic cleric for sometime before returning to his Arab home. The cleric got married to a Nupe girl who gave

---

<sup>894</sup>Sidi, *op.cit*, p.24.

<sup>895</sup>M. Mason, “The Antecedents of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic Government in Nupe”, *the International Journal of African Historical Studies* vol. 10 (1), 1977, p. 65.

<sup>896</sup>E. J. Arnett, (trans.) *The Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, London: Frank Cass, 1920, p.16.

<sup>897</sup>Both Mason, “The Antecedents of the ...” p.678 and Saidu Ibrahim, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from the 14<sup>th</sup> century*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.), Plc., 1992, P.23, refer to Abaji presently part of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as his place of birth, while Ndatsu, Imam – “A History of Islam...” p.16, puts Abdulrahman’s birth place at *Gbaji*, a Nupe village near Agaie town of Niger State.

<sup>898</sup>Sule, *History of the...*, p.67.

birth to a son named Abdulrahman, who the father left behind in *Kin Nupe*<sup>899</sup> when he was returning to his home land.

Abdulrahman grew up under the care of his mother and maternal grandfather. He started his Islamic education from his grandfather at *Gbaji*. He is reported to have been attached to various Islamic scholars at various times and places. Such places included Cetukpan, Agaie, Abugi, Abaji,<sup>900</sup> among others. Under his teaching, various aspects of Islamic religion were learnt. They included Quranic sciences, theology, jurisprudence morphology and Hadith.<sup>901</sup> Before long, Abdulrahman became a great scholar and at the age of 22 years,<sup>902</sup> had started his itinerant journeys to the surrounding towns and villages preaching and teaching. These included Kupa and Kakanda areas before turning his attention to Kusopa, the area that had the largest population of Muslims. Abdulrahman's religious activities in Kutigi, Mokwa, Jebba, among others, earned him fame as *Mujahidum* which spread far and wide.

Both oral and written sources agree that Abdulrahman was specially talented and gifted with knowledge.<sup>903</sup> This ability attracted peoples from far and near to him for the acquisition of knowledge. Apart from the Nupe, other groups such as Gbagyi, Yoruba, Hausa and others,<sup>904</sup> are said to have always visited the Sheikh for his tutorship. As a strategy, Abdulrahman adopted public places, such as market places and frequently trekked roads for his preaching and teaching to large numbers of people. He was accorded special recognition in Nupeland and beyond because of his Islamic religious activities. He became known in Nupe tradition as Shehu or

---

<sup>899</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>900</sup>Imam, *op.cit*, p.16

<sup>901</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>902</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>903</sup>Oral source – Alh. Nma Kiyakiya Bida – 83 years 20/12/13 at Bida and, R. M. East (ed), *Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, 2 vols., Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, Zaria 1932, p.80.

<sup>904</sup>Sule, *op.cit*, p.69.

Sheikh (great scholar) and was credited as being a Waliyi (saint, or the beloved one of Allah). As a result of his piety, he was referred to as Abdulrahman *Tsatsa* (a holy or pure man).<sup>905</sup>

Apart from teaching and preaching, Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Muhammad is reported to have written more than 70 pamphlets<sup>906</sup> on different aspects of Islam. He was full of zeal not only to spread, but to purify Islam in Nupeland and beyond.<sup>907</sup> As a contemporary of Sheikh Usman Bin Fodio, Abdulrahman might have been influenced by the former's *Jihad* activities. This according to a source,<sup>908</sup> should not be surprising, given the fact that Dan Fodio started his teaching and preaching in Gobir in 1774, while Abdulrahman started his in Nupeland in 1778. The latter's visit to the former at *Degei* might have been as a result of the Jihadist zeal exhibited by the two scholars. While there, the latter is said to have demonstrated to Bin Fodio and his brother, Abdullahi, his unshakable scholarship beyond the expectation of his hosts.<sup>909</sup>

The show of knowledge demonstrated by Abdulrahman seemed to have been a source of friction between him and Abdullahi, as the latter felt highly disgraced<sup>910</sup> and belittled for his inability to tutor the former. He was found to be more knowledgeable than Abdullahi bn Fodio. He seemed to have joined forces with Bn Fodio to fight against Gobir. The hostility between Abdulrahman and Abdullahi may have accounted for the latter handing the Flag of the Jihad to Dendo, rather than the former.<sup>911</sup> Be that as it may, Sheikh Abdulrahman's existence as an indigenous reformer, like that of the *Etsu* Jibrilu before him, contradicts an assumption that the Jihad in Nupe was necessarily undertaken by immigrant preachers and diviners.<sup>912</sup> On his return

---

<sup>905</sup>Oral evidence Alh. Nma Kiyakiya, *op.cit.*

<sup>906</sup>Imam *op.cit.*, p.17.

<sup>907</sup>Sidi, *Establishment of...*, p.26.

<sup>908</sup>Sule, *op.cit.*, p.70.

<sup>909</sup>R. M. East, *op.cit.*

<sup>910</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>911</sup> M. Mason, "The Kingdom of Nupe...", pp.59 – 60.

<sup>912</sup>*Ibid.*

to Nupe, Sheikh Abdulrahman became more determined to wage a *Jihad* against un-Islamic practices. However, the extent to which he was able to achieve his reform agenda in the area is difficult to access.

Taking *Agaie* town as his base, Abdulrahman is known to have spread and settled in other places in Nupeland and beyond. Among such places were Dabban, Akere, Abaji, Bida, Katcha, Eggan and Jima.<sup>913</sup> Meanwhile, the growing popularity of the reformer earned him some displeasure from the ruling class in Nupeland and, to some extent, even, from the Caliphate. The reigning *Etsuzhi* – Muazu and later Majiya, saw the reformer not only as a religious, but also as a political threat to their authority. Sule posits that this development forced Abdulrahman to adopt the ‘military aspect of the Jihad’<sup>914</sup> as against the earlier non – military approach. This was confirmed by later events between him and the Nupe rulers on the one hand and the Sokoto Jihadists on the other. Details of these may be outside the scope of our focus.<sup>915</sup> However, Clappertan, who, incidentally was in Nupe during the Jihad campaigns in 1826 reports that Abdulrahman was much feared by both the Muhammadans (muslims) and the Kaffir (pagans).<sup>916</sup> So powerful and strong was Abdulrahman, the *mujahid*, that he once over-ran Nupeland and took possession of its capital for six months.<sup>917</sup>

#### **f. Mallam Musa**

Another indigenous Islamic reformer in Nupeland prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad was Mallam Musa. He is said to have been born at Mairanu in Gobir area to the family of one

---

<sup>913</sup>Sule, *op.cit* p. 72 and, Sidi, *op.cit*, p.26.

<sup>914</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 71 – 72.

<sup>915</sup>For greater details, see I. Saidu, *The Nupe and their...* pp.23 – 28; Isa Ndatsu Imam, “A History of Islam in...”, pp.16 – 21; M. Sule, *History of the Emirate...*, pp. 66-78, among others.

<sup>916</sup> H. Clappertan, *Journal of A Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo (Sokoto)*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966, p.133. The Sheikh requested in writing to see and discuss issues with Clappertan, but for lack of time, the latter could not oblige.

<sup>917</sup>*Ibid*.

Mallam Ahmadu.<sup>918</sup> Desirous of institutionalizing Islam in Nupeland, Musa is reported to have participated in the capture of Mokwa – *Etsu Yikanko's* capital and *Ragada*, *Etsu Jimada's* capital, before he finally joined Mallam Dendo in his missionary work<sup>919</sup>. Later, Musa focused his reformist activities to the eastern part of Nupeland around Bida and its environs. Like Sheikh Abdulrahman did, Musa is said to have gone to Sokoto probably to get a mandate from Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio to secure<sup>920</sup> Nupeland as part of a larger Sokoto Caliphate. Finding the Sheikh dead, he returned to Nupeland to continue with his reformist activities around Bida. His area of residence was named after him called *Efu – Man – Musa – Kodogi*<sup>921</sup> which still remains as such in Bida. A river was also named after him, called River Musa.

On the whole, however, the role played by the Nupe indigenous Islamic reformers in Nupeland cannot be over-emphasized. Even though they could not achieve desirable envisaged success in their Jihad movements in the area, such attempts had left indelible foot prints in the annals of Islamic education and propagation in Nupeland. For instance, *Etsu Jibrilu's* fall is seen more as a failure of a party, rather than a failure of an ideology.<sup>922</sup> For, the *Etsu's* religious activities continued to enjoy support from people even after his exile and finally his death at Kutigi.

As for Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin. Muhammad Sharif, no less significant Islamic impact was made in Nupeland during and after his reformist attempts. Several places visited by him in the cause of his religious campaigns in Nupeland still identify themselves with him. This demonstrates the extent to which such places must have been influenced by his religious ideas.

---

<sup>918</sup> M. Mason, "The Kingdom of Nupe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century...", p.64,citing Arnett (trans) 1922, P.23.

<sup>919</sup> NAK SNP, 4437

<sup>920</sup>M.Mason, *op. cit*, Pp. 64-65.

<sup>921</sup> Interview with Alhaji Shehu Alfa – the Chief Imam of Bida – *Baninat Bida* on 14/08/13 and I. Saidu, *The Nupe and their Neighbours...*, Pp. 18-22.

<sup>922</sup>Sidi *op.cit*, p.29.

Up till the present day, places like Bida, Eggan, Abaji, Agaie, Kere, Dabban, among others, are being acknowledged throughout Northern Nigeria for their high standard in Islamic scholarship.<sup>923</sup> In fact, it is claimed that the descendents of Sheikh Abdulrahman can still be found in an area called *Katambako* in Bida.<sup>924</sup>

However, this does not imply that the efforts of the two reformers made Islam acceptable by everybody in Nupeland. Urban and commercial centres, given the nature of their political and economic positions, were more influenced by the religion than the rural areas. This seems to have been the situation even after the Sokoto Jihad and eventual establishment of Fulbe dynasties in Nupeland.

#### **(IV) CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, we have noted that Islam came to Nupeland much earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihads carried out by indigenous Islamic and Sokoto reformers, respectively. As was the case with many other places in West Africa, Nupeland received early Islamic contact and influence from several sources. These included Hausaland, Borno and Gonja. Its strategic natural and geographical location accounted for the multi-directional

---

<sup>923</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>924</sup>I. Saidu, *The Nupe and their...*, pp.27 – 28. Also see appendix ix.

influence of the religion on it.<sup>925</sup> It is also noted that the fall of the Muslim towns of Timbuktu, Jenne and others in West Africa, around the 1460's, led to the massive migration of Muslim clerics, traders and scholars to less troubled areas in the south including Nupeland. This, probably would have avoided their apparent persecution in the hands of Sonni Ali.<sup>926</sup>

In the same vein, early trade and inter-group relations established between Nupe and Hausaland on the one hand and Borno on the other, facilitated the penetration of Islam into Nupeland in the early times. We have observed that as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier, Nupeland and Kano, as well as other areas in Hausaland had maintained long distance trade and commercial relations. It has further been noted that a group of Muslim scholars of Yemeni origin who first settled in Borno migrated southwards to Nupe. They, in no small measure contributed to the propagation of Islam in the area. In fact, a descendant of such migrant Islamic scholars, Sheikh Abdulrahman Muhammad Sharif became one of the indigenous Islamic reformers in Nupeland. At different times, this descendent and *Etsu* Jibrilu of Tsoede dynasty in their reformist efforts to some extent, ensured adherence to and practice of the religion of Islam in Nupeland.

The introduction of Islam in Nupeland can be said to have further strengthened the already established trade and commercial, as well as the inter-group relations between it and other places-both far and near. Mason suggests that by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Nupeland was known as far away as Lake Chad, most likely as a country through which roads to both Gonja and the sea coast passed.<sup>927</sup> According to him, knowledge of the existence of Nupe as an important "nation" had gone even beyond Borno and Magreb. For the first time, the name 'Nouffy' (Nupe), along with others such as "Bousa" (Bussa), "Borgou" (Borgu), "Yaorry" (Yauri) "Gabi"

---

<sup>925</sup>Sidi, *op.cit*, p.29.

<sup>926</sup>M.Mason, *The Kingdom of Nupe*.....p.43

<sup>927</sup>*Ibid*, pp.44-45.

(Kebbi) and “Courourfa” (Kororofa) as important commercial states in the Niger – Benue valley, appeared on the 1772 map, drawn by a French cartographer, Del’Isle.<sup>928</sup> The early Islamic influence in Nupeland might have prepared grounds for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad movements in the area.

Finally, the existence of indigenous reformers such as *Etsu* Jibrilu (1746 – 1759); Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Muhammadu Sherif, (1778 – 1830), among others,<sup>929</sup> contradicts an assumption that “the Nupe Jihad, like that in Hausaland was necessarily undertaken by expatriates because local leaders were too much involved in their own society to be able to assess its failings and too willing to accept the status-quo”.<sup>930</sup> It can be recalled that *Etsu* Jibrilu<sup>931</sup> in particular and most probably, the other reformers mentioned above were recognized, even by Sultan Bello as reformers, who had flourished in Nupeland before the Jihad in Gobir had got underway.

---

<sup>928</sup> *Ibid*, p.45. For the Map, this source refers us to the British Museum map collection, K117 – 14.

<sup>929</sup> Another Islamic reformer in Nupeland prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihads was one Mallam Musa whose arrival in *Kin* Nupe pre-dated that of Dendo and his family. See Saidu Ibrahim, *The Nupe and their...*, pp.18 – 22; M. Mason, *op.cit*, pp. 64 – 65; oral evidence, the Chief Imam of Bida – Banin mosque, Alhaji Shehu Alfa – 52 years at Bida on 14/08/13, among others.

<sup>930</sup> D. M. Last, *The Sokoto Chaliphate*, London: Longman, 1967, p.lxxvi.

<sup>931</sup> M. Mason, *The Kingdom of Nupe...*, p.59.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: NUPELAND FROM 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO 1810 AD

### (I) INTRODUCTION

The formidable kingdom founded by Tsoede in Nupeland is said to have lasted from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>932</sup> covering a period of about three hundred years.<sup>933</sup> From the beginning of the kingdom up to the time of its eclipse, Nupeland can be said to have witnessed relative peace asides the wars of expansion and consolidation. However, due to certain factors – both internal and external, the long established polity in Nupeland become engulfed in series of crisis in response to such factors. The crisis became an immediate cause for the intervention of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadists, which eventually led to the fall of Tsoede dynasty.

Tsoede, who is said to have died in 1591,<sup>934</sup> was succeeded by a number of *Etsus* (Kings) including his four sons who consolidated the political, economic and socio-cultural gains of Nupe under his dynasty. From the time of Tsoede's reign, up to 1776 AD, Nupeland can be said to have witnessed peace, political stability and economic prosperity. The genealogical tree of the successors may differ slightly depending on different written records and oral traditions depending on available information.<sup>935</sup> In a predominantly non-literate traditional society, such differences on the kinglists and reign cannot be totally unexpected. However, such should not be taken as the basis for the

---

<sup>932</sup>A. A. Idrees, *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland*. Ibadan: Caltop Publishers (Nig) Limited, 1998, p.14.

<sup>933</sup> I. Saidu, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Plc, 1992, p.3.

<sup>934</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>935</sup> See Appendixes 5 A – D.

invalidation of the Tsoede phenomena in Nupe history as Mason<sup>936</sup> would want us to believe. Until recently, colonial historiography used to label something that was not immediately clear to them as having belonged to the realm of myth, rather than history. Both Ukwedeh and Obayemi argue against such erroneous views in relation to the kinglists of early Igala and Nupe kingdoms, respectively. According to the former, “one of the major problems of the colonial historiography is that issues in African history carrying serious historical import, but otherwise not immediately clear are labeled as mythical”<sup>937</sup>

This chapter attempts to reexamine the genesis for the internal political crisis which were essentially based on succession disputes following which the hitherto united kingdom later became factionalized. There was the eastern Nupe kingdom with headquarters at Gbara and the Western Kingdom with its capital at Raba and later at Zugurma. The rulers, in each of the capital were claiming rightful ownership of the entire Kingdom. Unexpectedly, claims and counter claims of rightful and legitimate leadership led to series of wars between the two factions the *Yisazhi* and *Gwagbazhi* as will be discussed shortly.

Meanwhile, Nupeland had been infiltrated by the two categories of the Fulbe,<sup>938</sup> who became the champions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in the area. The group was led by Mallam Dendo or Manko as he was also called. The political schism between the two

---

<sup>936</sup> M. Mason, “The Tsoede Myth and Nupe Kinglist: More Political Propaganda?” *History in Africa – A Journal of Methods*, vol. 2, 1975, pp. 101-111.

<sup>937</sup> J. N. Ukwedeh, “Chronology and the Study of Igala History C1830A.D” Post-graduate Seminar paper, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, February. 1984, p22 and A. Obayemi, “Concerning Tsoede, *Etsuzhi* and Nupe History before 1800” Post-graduate History Seminar Paper, ABU Zaria, 1978, p.18.

<sup>938</sup> The two categories were the Town Fulbe (Goyizhi) and the cattle Fulbe (Borrorozhi). The latter’s penetration into Nupeland would seem to have pre – dated the former’s details on this are discussed later.

factions of the Nupe kingdom provided the Jihad campaigners “golden” opportunity to interfere in the politics of Nupeland. ‘Divide’ and ‘Rule’ tactic was employed by the Fulbe by siding one faction and leadership of one against the other. The inter-play of this political dynamics went on for some time, until finally the Fulbe succeeded in replacing the Tsoede ruling dynasty with the former’s dynasty, headed by Dendo and later his descendents. By 1833, the later can be said to have firmly established its leadership over greater part of Nupeland.

But for the schism in Nupe politics in the second half of the 18 century, we may hypothetically ask, “would it have been possible for the establishment and consolidation of the Fulbe dynasty at least, the time they did?” or, “would it have been impossible or taken much longer period far beyond the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?” Instead of the intra-dynastic succession feud leading to lack of unity which made it easy prey for foreign intervention, the best and most natural thing would have been “for all the old families to have combined against the foreign invaders...”<sup>939</sup>

## **(II) TSOEDE’S SUCCESSORS**

After Tsoede’s death in about 1591, he was succeeded by a number of *Etsuzhi*–Kings under the dynasty he founded. The number of such successors ranges from 18 to 23 as shown by different kinglists,<sup>940</sup> most of which agree that Tsoede was succeeded first by his four sons in turn. They were:

---

<sup>939</sup>L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa, being An account of the Travels of the German Inter-African Exploration Expedition in the Years 1910-1912*, New York and London: Benjamin Blom, Inc. 1913, p.589.

<sup>940</sup> See chapters 4 and 5. Also see appendix V – A – D.

1. *Etsu* Shaaba (1591 – 1600)
2. *Etsu* Zagunla (1600 – 1625)
3. *Etsu* Jiya (1625 – 1670)
4. *Etsu* Mamman Wari (1670 – 1679)<sup>941</sup>

There is no impeccable evidence, however, to suggest that the above list of succession arrangement was based on seniority or not. It is most probable that was the case, going by what happened between Majiya and Jimada to fill the then vacant position of *Etsu*. This will be discussed later in this chapter. All that needs to be said is that all of them were direct paternal descendents of Tsoede. Tsoede might not have categorically stated the succession criteria before his demise. Perhaps, this might have been the basis for dynastic succession disputes which characterized the kingdom after the death of *Etsu* Muazu (1785 – 1808)<sup>942</sup>.

Apart from reigning at different Nupe capitals; Gbara, Mokwa, Raba and Jima,<sup>943</sup> we do not know much of the development that could specifically be ascribed to Tsoede's immediate successors. However, a number of later successors could be identified as 'great achievers' in terms of their respective contributions to the political, social and

---

<sup>941</sup>A. A. Idrees, *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland...*, p.20.

<sup>942</sup> I. S. Jimada, "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background, 1810 – 1898", M. A. Thesis, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991, pp. 203 – 204. However, differences of reign and death of *Etsu* Mu'azu have been recorded. For instance, O. Temple, *Tribes, Provinces and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1965, p.525, puts Mu'azu's death in 1795; S. F. Nadel, *Black Byz...*, p.76, in 1810+. He says "During his (Muazu's) reign about 1810, Mallam Dendo... a Fulani from Kebbi who was destined to change the whole fate of Nupe Kingdom, is said to have first appeared in Nupe country as an itinerant preacher, diviner and seller of charms", ; Journal of Rev. J. F. Schoen and S. A. Crowther, *Expedition up the Niger*, 1942, p. 191. Sule Mohammed, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899A.D*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2011, p.83, suggests 1805, being the date for *Etsu* Muhammadu death, who was the second successor to *Etsu* Mu'azu and I. S. Jimada, *op.cit*, p.203, puts *Etsu* Mu'azu's first and second reigns at 1759 – 1767 and 1785 – 1808 respectively.

<sup>943</sup>S. F. Nadel, *op.cit*, p.77; L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, p.575; E.G.M. Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, London: Waterlow and Sons Ltd. 1920, p.8 among others.

economic development of Nupe Kingdom. Among them were *Etsu* Jibrilu, who has been discussed in the previous chapter, Mu'azu and Muhammad Kolo.

The *Etsu* might have considered Kutigi more conducive and appropriate a place of his exile than any other place in the kingdom. By this time, the town of Kutigi had started witnessing settlement of Muslim migrants and merchants from Borno, in whom he may have thought of finding alliance and friendship. After all, as we noted earlier, Kutigi town was one of the areas where *Etsu* Jubrilu is said to have acquired Islamic Education from the Barnoan scholars before he became the *Etsu*. Perhaps, if he had lived longer, such an alliance and friendship, which might have enhanced his Jihad campaigns, could have been achieved. The succeeding *Etsus*, at least, the immediate ones, did not pursue the same religious cause with zeal and passion as Jibrilu did, for fear of probable enmity between them and their subjects,<sup>944</sup> as was faced by *Etsu* Jibrilu – their predecessor.

### ***Etsu* Muazu and Muhammadu Kolo**

After the deposition of *Etsu* Jibrilu, *Etsu* Muazu took over the leadership of Nupe kingdom. Unlike his predecessor, however, Muazu was not keen in the cause of Islam. The revival of non-Islamic practices appeared more pronounced during his reign, probably to win the hearts of the non-muslims to avoid the wrath that befell *Etsu* Jibrilu.

Chronological controversies apart, the periods of *Etsu* Mu'azu and that of his successor, *Etsu* Muhammadu Kolo, have been described as the apogee<sup>945</sup> or the climax of Nupe kingdom prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadist onslaught. Johnson also reports *Etsu*

---

<sup>944</sup>E. J. Arnett op.cit, p.16.

<sup>945</sup> M. Mason, "The Kingdom of Nupe...", p.53; A. A. Idrees, *Political Change...*, P.14, among others.

Mu'azu being "the last of the Kings that held the different parts of the kingdom in one universal sway and with him ended the tranquility and prosperity of the country".<sup>946</sup>

In the same vein, *Etsu* Muhammadu, like Mu'azu, contributed greatly to the expansion of Nupe kingdom beyond its borders to the north east and north west of Yorubaland. He is also said to have established diplomatic and commercial relationship with the king of Gobir, Bawa Jan Gwarzo. There was exchange of gifts in form of slaves, palm oil, shea butter, kolanuts with thousands of cattle and horses, respectively.<sup>947</sup> The movement of cattle and horses from Gobir to Nupe was accountable for the creation of an international highway called *Ekpa nanko*<sup>948</sup> (Cattle road). This development undoubtedly strengthened the political, military and economic position of Nupeland under *Etsu* Muhammadu. The periods of reign of these *Etsuzhi* under discussion range from 1759-1767- Mu'azu's first reign, 1778 – 1795 – his second reign, to 1795 – 1796 – Muhammadu's reign.<sup>949</sup>

Even before the emergence of Mu'azu and Muhammadu as *Etsuzhi* in Nupeland, the area seems to have maintained a high degree of fame and popularity beyond its borders. By the mid-17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, for instance, Nupeland is reported to have been known in far away Lake Chad area and even Maghreb, most likely a transit point for traders to the sea coast and Gonja. As noted in chapters three and six, Nupe,

---

<sup>946</sup>S. Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba from the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos, 1921 (reprinted 1960), p.186. Also see R. East (ed), *Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu Lillafi* na Farko, Zaria: Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, 1933, p.56 and S. F. Nadel, *Black Byz...*, p.76.

<sup>947</sup>NAK SNP 17/25355, Notes on Nupe" p.10 and A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.14. Winding passages and cutting corners as well as narrowness appear to be the characteristic features of such roads created by the cattle, horses and other animals. Perhaps, the first motorable roads constructed by the colonial administrators may have followed the same pattern.

<sup>948</sup> A. A. Idrees *op.cit*, p.14 and H. K. Palmer, *The Sudanese Memars*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1916, p.269.

<sup>949</sup> See different kinglists at the appendices.

along with other states in the Niger-Benue valley appeared for the first time on the 1722 map drawn by a French cartographer Del'Isle.<sup>950</sup> The cartographer might have collected information to that effect from merchants in Tripoli who had maintained early trade and commercial relations with Nupe and other states in the zone.

By and large, the kingdom of Nupe 'founded' and consolidated by Tsoede and his descendents, respectively, became a "highly centralized polity".<sup>951</sup> During the reigns of *Etsu* Jibrilu, Mu'azu and Muhammadu, discussed above, for instance, a considerable political stability was maintained with the capital at Gbara and later at Raba.<sup>952</sup> The powerful Nupe Kingdom attracted foreign traders from Hausa and Yorubalands, among other areas. This, in no small measure, as noted previously, increased the political and military strength, as well as the economic prosperity by controlling the trans-Niger trade and traffic.<sup>953</sup> This feat was maintained up to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the situation began to change to the 'disadvantage and advantage' of the indigeneous Nupe ruling dynasty and the Fulbe dynasty, respectively. Reasons for this will be our next focus.

### **(III) DYNASTIC SUCCESSION DISPUTES**

Let it be noted here, that unlike the earlier period of Nupe history, a lot of literature have relatively existed on the political instability arising from succession disputes, which accounted essentially for the demise of Tsoede dynasty between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many sources, both foreign and local have commented on this.

---

<sup>950</sup>M. Mason "The Kingdom of...", p.45.

<sup>951</sup>A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.14 and M. Mason, *op.cit*, pp 49 – 52.

<sup>952</sup> A.A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.14

<sup>953</sup>*Ibid.* p.18

Among the former, were the European travelers' accounts, as well as those of administrators, missionaries, anthropologists and ethnographers. Such accounts include that of Clapperton; Lander Brothers; Baikie; Leo Frobenius; Elphinstone and Dupigny. M. Mason and S. F. Nadel are among the 20<sup>th</sup> century European writers, who have written extensively on Nupe. Among the indigenous modern sources, are A. Obayemi, A. A. Idrees; I. S. Jimada, Sule Mohammed; Saidu Ibrahim; D. Ismaila; S. A. Abdullah and S. T. Sidi. Most of the above sources and others not listed here, discuss in greater detail the events leading to the eclipse of Tsoede dynasty in Nupeland and the eventual institutionalization of the Fulbe Emirate system of government over the entire core Nupeland – Bida, Agaie, Lapai in Niger State and Lafiagi and Tsonga in Kwara State, respectively, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence no attempt will be made here to give all the details that are already contained in existing literature. What needs to be done here is to give a summary and possibly, analysis of existing literature.

The succession disputes among members of the Tsoede dynasty have been traced to the period far pre-dating the unification and creation of a central authority on Nupeland. This arose as a result of an “inconsistent pattern of succession among the ruling class of the *Bini* confederacy”.<sup>954</sup> According to Frobenius, the system of succession prior to Tsoede period was on the “male maternal side”,<sup>955</sup> and this system seems to have worked perfectly well without a hitch.<sup>956</sup>

What Frobenius seems to be saying suggests that in the remote past – probably, even before *Bini* confederacy, there was no paternal succession rule in Nupeland. That

---

<sup>954</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, p.575.

<sup>955</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>956</sup> *Ibid*



the latter only came into being as a result of Nupe's contact with outside, perhaps with Songhai or was it a pre-Islamite (Islamic) social philosophy?<sup>957</sup> Idrees, however, suggests that 'that outside' could most probably be the Igala kingdom which was then the 'dominant political entity' in the Niger Benue confluence region.<sup>958</sup>

If it was true that the maternal succession rule held sway before the *Bini* confederacy, such a practice ceased either before, or during the *Bini* confederacy era as supported by both written and oral sources. It has been shown that the political leadership in Tafyan – a one time capital of the *Bini* Confederacy, had always been confined to the male descendents of the ruling family.<sup>959</sup> Thus, according to another source:

The Etsu of Tafyan was usually succeeded by his brother or if there was no brother alive by his eldest nephew or son whichever of the two should be older. And if there was a peculiarly able and powerful son alive, he would succeed in spite of his uncle being alive.<sup>960</sup>

Our recent investigations at Tafyan and Kopa (ancient *Bini* settlements in the present Doko District of Lavun Local Government Area) confirm the above. The current chief<sup>961</sup> (*Etsu nyankpa*) of Tafyan identifies two categories of the *Bini* as *Bini Dzurugi* (Red Bini) and *Bini Zhikogi* (Black Bini). The former were the direct descendants on the paternal side of the ruling dynasty. They could appoint and be appointed as *Etsuzhi*. The latter were the descendants from the maternal side whose mothers were married out to

---

<sup>957</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>958</sup>A. A. Idrees, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19

<sup>959</sup>*Ibid.* p.19.

<sup>960</sup>NAK Bid 655 'Nupe History 1897'.

<sup>961</sup>Alh. Abdulkadir Mohammed 58years at Bida on 10/08/13 and on 28/09/15 also at Bida. To what extent have these statuses continued to be maintained cannot be ascertained. Most of the existing *Bini* settlements visited by us would hardly accept being socially and culturally inferior to the other category of the *Bini*.

other places from the 'original' *Bini* settlements. They might take part in the appointment of or hold certain royal titles, but could not be appointed as *Etsuzhi* and *Shaabazhi* heir apparents. According to the chief of Tafyan, there were 'seven' original *Bini* settlements, viz; Tafyan, Nku, Essan, Doko, Gaba, Bida-Banin and Tuwa (Tuwagi). These are the *Bini Dzurugi*. Among the *Bini Zhikogi* settlements were Pici, Ndakama, Saku, Sommajiko, Pandzuru and Kanba. The former, by virtue of their acclaimed originality, were feared more and held in higher esteem than the latter category of the *Bini*.

Therefore, the type of patriarchal rule of succession described above might have been inherited by Tsoede which became firmly entrenched with the evolution of a single ruling dynasty over Nupe Kingdom. The determining criteria for appointment seemed to be patrilineal, capability and age. Adherence to this system, most probably, might have accounted for the relative peace and stability enjoyed in the kingdom prior to the second half of the eighteenth century. For, there is no evidence to show any serious succession dispute, despite the apparent non-existence of a definite pattern of succession among the rulers. This was unlike in the early times which plunged the kingdom into chaos and eventual collapse as was witnessed in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The introduction of the position of *Shaaba* - the heir apparent, is said to have strengthened the patriarchal system of succession.<sup>962</sup> As the second in command, the *Shaaba* was expected to automatically ascend the throne in the event of any vacancy. This implies that the *Shaaba* was always regarded as a stand-by in case of any eventuality. This method, when adhered to religiously might have forestalled any

---

<sup>962</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.19

succession crisis in the kingdom. Unfortunately, however, the rigidity of the system was not maintained as events later showed. Strickly speaking, the positions of *Etsu* and *Shaaba* ought not to have come from the same ruling house simultaneously<sup>963</sup> where you have more than one ruling house. This was to ensure rotation system between, or among various ruling houses. The system could only be abused when a ‘selfish’ and ‘greedy’ *Etsu* deliberately left the position of the heir apparent vacant, with the possible intention of grooming his son or any other favourite prince.<sup>964</sup>

An example of the above scenario is cited by Jimada and Frobenius<sup>965</sup> when *Etsu* Mu’azu appointed his son, Mamman Kolo, as heir apparent (*Shaaba*). This seemingly unpopular and unprecedented situation did not go down well with members of the royal family, hence, the beginning of series of tribulations that continued until the aftermath of the Jihad campaigns in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>966</sup> According to Frobenius,

Be that as it may, the era of misfortune of the last hundred years commenced in this breach of the law of succession and ended in the final suppression of the venerable matriarchate.<sup>967</sup>

Notwithstanding reactions against the breakage of the rule of alternate succession between the ‘male and female’ royal lines, Muhammadu Kolo succeeded his father – *Etsu* Mu’azu in 1795 in the midst of crisis. This led to his short reign,<sup>968</sup> as he was deposed shortly after. While some sources,<sup>969</sup> attribute the deposition to Kolo’s weakness, others

---

<sup>963</sup>S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate System of Government...*p.37.

<sup>964</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>965</sup> I. S. Jimada, “The Establishment of, ...,” pp.206 – 207 and L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, p.575.

<sup>966</sup>*Ibid*, p. 207.

<sup>967</sup> L. Frobenius, *op.cit* p. 576.

<sup>968</sup> E. G. M. Dupigry, *Gazatteers of NupeProvince*, London: Waterlow & sons Ltd., 1920, p.8.

<sup>969</sup> W. B. Baikie, “Notes of a Journey from Bida in Nupe to Kano in Hausa, performed in 1862”, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* vol.37, 1867, pp.92 – 108.

argue that the deposition was more on the break of succession<sup>970</sup> rule than on account of his weakness.

Be that as it may, the beginning of crisis was already imminent in the Kingdom. After *Etsu* Kolo's deposition, he fled to Zugurma in the north-western side of Nupeland, being the land of his paternal lineage.<sup>971</sup> He might have died soon after. By the time of *Etsu* Muhammadu Kolo's death in about 1809, his son, Jimada was 33 years old. The position of the heir apparent – *Shaaba* – was then vacant. This made it possible for a number of contenders to emerge for the position of *Etsu*. They were Jimada Kolo, Muhammadu Majiya and Abdullahi Yikanko.<sup>972</sup> While the first two contenders considered themselves on the basis of legality and legitimacy – being descendents of Tsoede, either patrinely or matrinely the third was neither of the two. Sule and Mason describe him as a usurper.<sup>973</sup> He was a war general to *Etsu* Muhammadu Kolo, after whose death 'Yikanko' or 'Nikeka' or 'Ikako'<sup>974</sup> took over the leadership of the Kingdom as *Etsu*. This was challenged by Jimada and Majiya each of whom was claiming the right ownership of the position of *Etsu*. No wonder, Yikanko's reign at Mokwa was so short that his name did not appear on most kinglists.<sup>975</sup> In addition, as a usurper, he might not have been considered appropriate to be included on the Kinglist.

At a time leadership in Nupeland was factionalized into three, as Jimada and Majiya, while challenging Yikanko's assumption, also put forward their claims. Each carved a niche for himself and might have earned support in and around their respective

---

<sup>970</sup> M. Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom...", p.54.

<sup>971</sup> I. S. Jimada, *op.cit*, p.208.

<sup>972</sup> *Ibid* p.209 and S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate...*, pp. 83 – 84.

<sup>973</sup> *Ibid*, p. 83 and M. Mason, *The Foundations of...*, p.25.

<sup>974</sup> I.S. Jimada, *op.cit*, p.209.

<sup>975</sup> *Ibid*.

capitals – Mokwa for Yikanko, Gbara for Jimada and Raba for Majiya.<sup>976</sup> This situation continued to hold sway until Yikanko was assassinated in about 1810 in Mokwa by the combined forces of the Jihadists.<sup>977</sup> The Jihadists might have found him a greater enemy than the other two claimants, since he was said to have been a non-muslim “engaged in polytheistic practices.”<sup>978</sup>

The death of Yikanko, therefore, reduced the power struggle between Jimada and Majiya, each of whom might have been hoping for assistance from the Fulbe to liquidate the other to maintain an indivisible Kingdom. This was, however far fetched, due to the ‘divide and rule’ policy adopted by the intervening party under Mallam Dendo. Claims and counter-claims were put forward by Jimada and Majiya, though the latter was older and had held the traditional royal title of *Nakodi*, who would seem to have been more qualified in terms of age, experience and exposure to the affairs of the kingdom. By promotion, Majiya could have been promoted to the position of *Shaaba*, the heir apparent, but for the fact that he was from the matrilineal lineage – his mother being late *Etsu* Muhammadu Kolo’s sister. This, according to Idrees<sup>979</sup>, might have accounted for his non-consideration for the position of heir-apparent *Shaaba* and possibly *Etsu* which had been reserved for the direct paternal descendants in the dynasty.

In the same vein, Jimada’s claims for eligibility were based, among other criteria, on his father and grandfather’s glorious reign as *Etsus*, being a direct paternal descendent and being in possession of more wives, though less children than his arch rival, Majiya. It is generally assumed in Nupe tradition, that possession of many wives could be one of

---

<sup>976</sup> S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, pp. 83 – 84, Also see A. A. Idrees, *Political Change and...*, p.22.

<sup>977</sup> M. Mason “The Kingdom of Nupe...” pp.57 – 58. Also see S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, p.84.

<sup>978</sup> W. Baikie, *op.cit*, p. 105.

<sup>979</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p. 20.

the determining factors to measure one's administrative and managerial capability. Going by the above criteria, Jimada, but for his age, would appear to have had an age over Majiya.

Despite all odds, Majiya, in the long run, became the *Etsu* and made Raba his seat of government. Age and experience might have worked in his favour. The elder palace statesmen, some of who were the kingmakers, might have preferred to work with Majiya, who might have been older, or at best, their contemporaries in age.<sup>980</sup> Having succeeded in seizing the staff of office, in form of trumpets, royal hat and silver horse saddles,<sup>981</sup> he considered himself the legitimate *Etsu* in the Kingdom. As would be expected, Jimada, in apparent disagreement and out of anger, together with his supporters fled Raba to Gbara and later to Ragada, a small place at the western bank of River Niger near Patigi. He claimed to be the *Etsu* in that part of the Kingdom. The stage was now set for war between the two claimants to determine the “survival for the fittest”.

The intra-dynastic feud which erupted between Jimada and Majiya, after the death of Yikanko, the third contender noted previously, now led to the balkanization<sup>982</sup> of the hitherto expansive Nupe Kingdom into two halves,<sup>983</sup> the eastern part with capital at Ragada under Jimada and the western part under Majiya with headquarters at Raba. The leader of each faction was accorded the respect, loyalty and status of an *Etsu* and maintained a standing army, parallel titled chiefs and other state officials.<sup>984</sup>

---

<sup>980</sup>*Ibid*, p.21

<sup>981</sup>*Ibid*, p.22.

<sup>982</sup> S. T. Sdi, *Establishment of Emirate...*, p.36.

<sup>983</sup>*Ibid*; Nadel, A. *Black Byz...*, p.77 and A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.22.

<sup>984</sup> Idrees, *Ibid*, p.22

The implication arising from the above scenario, was that each faction became identified or stigmatized with a name – *Yissazhi* and *Gwagbazhi* for the Jimada and Majiya factions respectively. The former was identified as the legitimate faction, having descended from *Etsu* Mu'azu Yissa, Jimada's grandfather.<sup>985</sup> The latter faction, *Gwagbazhi*, meaning feeble in the hands was identified with *Etsu* Majiya and his supporters. The claim to the position of *Etsu* by the *Gwagbazi* was seen to be a relatively weak one<sup>986</sup> in comparison with Jimada's faction, the *Yissazhi*.

Viewed against the above background and perhaps, the rising suspicion and mistrust, each faction prepared militarily, socially, politically and economically for any possible eventuality. Majiya was apprehensive and had to be cautious not to attack first. The presence of large militant Fulbe group in existence in Jimada's area of jurisdiction, assisting him in slave raid campaigns, might have accounted for such. Jimada was noted for his constant military expeditions to the neighbouring areas, including the Yagba area,<sup>987</sup> from which the militant Fulbe might have benefitted, hence their closeness with Jimada. The closeness of the Fulbe with Jimada could have strengthened his military, economic and political position at Ragada. *Etsu* Majiya at Raba had to contend with this until 1810, when the balance of power tilted in his favour.<sup>988</sup>

By about the 1810, a large number of Fulbe Muslim clerics, diviners, cattle rearers, to whom Nupeland, had become a second home in their nomadic life, had found their way in many parts of the area, especially around Raba and other non-Nupe

---

<sup>985</sup> NAK SNP 17/25355, "Notes on Nupe" by P.G. Harries and NAKSNP/17/8 "Historical and Anthropological Reports on the Zugurma District by A.B. Methuns and I.S. Jimada, "Establishment of Patigi"...pp.224-225.

<sup>986</sup> A.A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.22 and Jimada, "The Establishment of ...p.225.

<sup>987</sup> NAK.SNAP 142/P/1917, Historical Notes on Nupe".

<sup>988</sup> A.A. Idrees *op.cit* p. 23.

neighbours.<sup>989</sup> Others included traders, merchants and mercenaries from the northern towns of Hausaland. This, together with the undiplomatic manner in which *Etsu* Jimada expelled the Fulbe mercenaries from Ragada, on account of mistrust for and suspicion in them, provided a golden opportunity for *Etsu* Majiya at Raba. In addition to the already existing Fulbe, in and around Raba, most of those expelled from Ragada joined their colleagues at Raba under the leadership of Mallam Dendo or Manko. Meanwhile, *Etsu* Majiya had accepted being a host to Dendo and his followers.<sup>990</sup>

Hence, Jimada's decision to expel the Fulbe mercenaries, who, as we noted earlier, had assisted him in his expansionist and slave raiding campaigns, can be said to have been a serious "political miscalculation". This eventually cost him his life and, at least, a temporary demise of his section of Nupe Kingdom. Majiya, his arch rival, getting the secret of Jimada from the expelled mercenaries, formed a strong alliance with them with a strong military and spiritual support given the backing of Dendo.<sup>991</sup> Before the attack on Jimada, Dendo is reported to have built a strong army of between 1000 and 1500 forces from men of all sections, including, nomadic Fulbe, town Fulbe and Hausa mercenary soldiers, as well as Islamic clerics, missionaries and merchants from Hausaland.<sup>992</sup>

Combining this with Majiya's indigeneous standing army, an attack was launched on Ragada in 1810. In what can be regarded as "the Ragada massacre",<sup>993</sup> Jimada and many of his men and relations were mercilessly killed. Only few people survived, among

---

<sup>989</sup> S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate...*, pp.82-83.

<sup>990</sup> A.A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.23

<sup>991</sup> S. F. Nadel, *Black Byz...*, p.77.

<sup>992</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>993</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.23 and M. Mason, "The Kingdom of Nupe", p.



whom were his young son, Idrisu Gana and his war chief called Makolo. For safety and protection, they fled to a far place called Adama-Lelu<sup>994</sup>, near Eggan, an important port and commercial centre at the eastern bank of River Niger. The Ragada massacre was a turning point in the intra-dynastic succession disputes in Nupe Kingdom. Idrees describes it as “the zenith of the succession dispute between the *Gwagbazhi* and the *Yissazhi*.”<sup>995</sup> It also officially marked the beginning of what could be regarded as an “opportunistic” interference by the Fulbe in the political crisis in Nupeland. This might have been an opportunity they were waiting for to enable them achieve their ‘skillfully conceived’ intention to establish their ruling dynasty in place of the Nupe indigenous one as unfolding future events showed. But as we stated earlier, details of such events are not our primary objective here.

However, a conceptual framework of the subsequent events leading to the eclipse and installation of the Nupe dynasty and the Fulbe aristocracy respectively, may be necessary here. Our understanding of this may go a long way in enabling us to make a judgment as to whether, or not the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in Nupeland was essentially motivated by religious reform or otherwise.

The development in Nupe up to the time of the Ragada massacre in 1810 to 1833, when the first Pullo was appointed to take over the leadership position of Nupe Kingdom, had implications on not only the factions of Nupe dynasty, but also on the Fulbe themselves. In the first place, Majiya’s faction in alliance with the Fulbe which succeeded in eliminating Jimada- its arch rival, might not have known that the seemingly

---

<sup>994</sup> L. Frobenius *op.cit* p.576.

<sup>995</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.23.

protracted disputes had not come to an end. In the same vein, little would Jimada's *Yissazhi* faction have expected that the tide of events would in future tilt in their favour as seen in the subsequent alliance(s) with the Fulbe against Majiya's *Gwagbazhi* group. On the part of the Jihadists, little they might have realized that the Majiya faction with which they allied to defeat Jimada's would not subsequently turn to work against them (the Jihadists). This was demonstrated when *Etsu* Majiya decided to expel Dendo and his men from Raba to Ilorin on account of the latter's increasing followership and popularity in his area of jurisdiction in Nupeland.

What manifested later were series of political maneuvers, employed by the Jihadists against the 'unsuspecting' factions of the Nupe dynasty of the ultimate objective of the former. Perhaps, if they had realized such, they would not have allowed themselves to be so manipulated to achieve the pre-conceived intention of the Jihadists. A combined force of the Nupe, could have made it impossible, or rather difficult for Dendo and his co-Jihadists within and outside Nupe Kingdom to take over the mantle of leadership in the area.

However, the initial patronage and services enjoyed by Dendo from the ruling elite and the general public contributed to his growing fame and popularity in Nupeland. His inclusion in the government of *Etsu* Majiya at Raba made him more influential, powerful and popular than even Majiya, his host and his fellow Fulbe in and around Nupeland.<sup>996</sup> A number of sources<sup>997</sup> can be referred to for details of the unfolding events, as they are outside the scope of our work.

---

<sup>996</sup> D. Ismaila, *Nupe in History – 1300 – Date*. Jos: Olawole publishing Company, 2002, p.50.

Another issue that may require proper conceptualization in relation to post *Etsu* Mu'azu political turmoil in Nupe Kingdom is the influence of other outside factors in addition to the internal causes for the instability. Only few sources capture this as a possible factor. Mason, for instance, draws our attention to the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, happenings in the neighbourhood of Nupe. According to him, “the decline of the Oyo Empire and the political turbulence in Gobir, Kebbi and Zamfara, might have dislocated Nupe’s trading economy and unbalanced further, the precarious political equilibrium of the country”.<sup>998</sup>

In the same vein, the political uncertainty in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Hausaland could have affected Nupeland with which, among other places, such as Katsina, Gobir, Borno, Zazzau, it had maintained long standing commercial links. According to an account,<sup>999</sup> before the Usman bn. Fodio’s Jihad across Hausaland and beyond, there was a political disintegration and economic decline in the West African region. On the eve of the Jihad, the political might of the Islamic rulers in the region had begun to weaken, while social behaviours hardly conformed with the teachings of Islam.

The political turbulence, disintegration and economic decline led to the movement of immigrant groups, some of who are said to have been the *Ullama* merchants and professionals. Some of these settled in different parts of Nupe Kingdom, especially in the urban centres. Jimada emphasizes the importance of such settlements in the demographic

---

<sup>997</sup> Among such sources are: A. M. H. Kirk-Greene, *Gazetteer of Nupe History*, pp.9-20; A. A. Idrees *Political change and ...*, pp.23 – 36; I. S. Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi...”. Pp.203ff; M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...*, pp.53-72; S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate...*, pp84-138; S. F. Nadel, *A. Black Byz...*, pp.76 – 92; L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, pp.573 – 583, among others.

<sup>998</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...*, pp.15 and 23.

<sup>999</sup> U. Jar, “General Disintegration in the West African Region”, being a lecture delivered at Bayero University, Kano, on October 18, 1979.

profile and change in the order of things.<sup>1000</sup> According to him, it could lead to creation of different interest groups – a fertile ground for instability.<sup>1001</sup> It is to be noted, however, that much as the external factors highlighted above including the Jihadists intervention, which can be said to have contributed to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries political crisis and instability which plagued Nupe kingdom after the demise of *Etsu Mu’azu*, it cannot be said that they were the cause of the crisis. They merely aggravated the situation, especially to the advantage of the Jihadists. In this regard, one cannot, but accept Mason’s conclusion thus,

...and there seems to have been only the most fragile set of rules concerning the eligibility and election of kings. The intruders from the north in no way caused the political instability of Nupe; they merely exploited it...<sup>1002</sup>

In the same vein, Frobenius describes the internal political stability in Nupeland before the “schemed and calculated” intervention of the Fulbe as “a radical evil... and this worm at its root brought the dynastic tree to the ground.”<sup>1003</sup>

#### **(IV) THE JIHADISTS’ CAMPAIGNS/INTERVENTION IN NUPELAND**

The Fulbe (plural), Pullo (sing.) that led the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in Northern Nigeria formed one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. They are believed to have come from Tukolor, along the Middle of Senegal River in the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1004</sup>. A large number of these ethnic groups were converted to Islam as far back as the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, they

---

<sup>1000</sup> I. S. Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi...”, p.210.

<sup>1001</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1002</sup> M. Mason, “*The Nupe Kingdom...*”, P.114.

<sup>1003</sup> L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa...*, p.575.

<sup>1004</sup> S. T. Sidi, *Establishment of Emirate...*, p.31.

became instrumental in the process of Islamization in the early time and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Islamic reformation movements in West Africa.<sup>1005</sup>

Two major categories of the Fulbe must be mentioned. They are the cattle Fulbe and the town or settled Fulbe called in Nupe *Bororozhi* – shortened as *Borozhi* (plu) and *Goyizhi* (plu), respectively. The former are associated with nomadic or pastoral life without permanent settlement, while the latter have permanent dwellings especially in towns and urban centres. Through trade, commerce, immigration and missionary activities, the town Fulani – *Goyizhi* later came to settle in many parts of Northern Nigeria as *Ulama*, ‘diviners’ merchants and political or administrative advisers to the indigeneous ruling elite. Consequently, the town Fulbe became gradually assimilated in various degrees with the local population over whom they eventually established political and socio-cultural authority.<sup>1006</sup>

Conversely however, the cattle Fulbe, because of their pastoral nature, hardly had permanent settlement as their *Goyizhi* counterparts. They go about from place to place in search of pasture and water for their cattle, which is the source of their livelihood. Characteristically, they did not use to interact with the local population to the degree as the town Fulbe did. However, general observation now shows that the situation seems to have changed. There is now a higher degree of social interaction and cooperation. It is common these days to see, even marriage contract taking place between the *Bororozhi* and local community members. This social interaction between the locals and the pastoralists had led to the emergence of agropastoralism – the practice of combining

---

<sup>1005</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1006</sup> *Ibid*, p.32.

farming by sedentarizing the household with pastoral stock farming.<sup>1007</sup> This form of sedentarization in many parts of northern Nigeria in particular and Nigeria in general, facilitates access to medical care, school, and supplies, as well as facilitating participation in the political life of the country.<sup>1008</sup>

Nupeland witnessed the influx of the two categories of the Fulbe before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihads. However, the penetration of the cattle Fulbe would seem to have preceded the other category, even though the precise date may be obscure to us, though Blench suggests 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1009</sup> It is most likely, their coming to Nupeland followed the same pattern and time as the importation of horses, camels and donkeys, among other animals, by traders from Hausa and Borno areas, which pre – dated the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad. The *Bororozhi* appears to have been more widespread in Northern Nigeria than the *Goyizhi* considering the nomadic nature of the former. Favourable climate and topographic conditions for grazing might have attracted pastoralists into Nupeland, which Nadel observes to have become the second home<sup>1010</sup> for the nomads.

As stated earlier, the geographical position of Nupeland favoured the settlement of both the *Bororozhi* and *Goyizhi*. The land was fertile for grazing, open for easy movement and for Islamic receptive teaching.<sup>1011</sup> The latter in Nupeland is almost synonymous with the ruling class. Mere mention of *Goyizhi* in Nupeland suggests ruling elite with its attendant exploitative tendencies usually metted out to the ruled. In fact, our

---

<sup>1007</sup>Fanny Granval, “Pastoralism in Sub – Saharan Africa: Know its Advantages, Understand its Challenges, Act for its Sustainability”, Inter – Reseaux, May, 2012, Translated by Andahazy – Colo, p.3.

<sup>1008</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>1009</sup>R. Blench “Conflict Between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria”, Review Paper Prepared for DFID, Nigeria, Cambridge, August, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>1010</sup>Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, p. 77.

<sup>1011</sup>*Ibid.*

recent investigation shows that the name *Goyizhi* is made up of three Nupe words, *Go-Eyi-zhi*. This literally means “those who receive grains”.<sup>1012</sup> This indicates that the Fulbe Mallams (scholars) on their arrival were not farmers, hence they had to depend on the grains and food stuff given to them as *sadaqat* by the local people/hosts for their survival. Later on, they, (*Goyizhi*) took this to mean submission of the local people to their authority and lordship over them, hence marking the beginning of exploitation, servitude and oppression. At least, the above seems to be the general view of the non-royal members of Lafiagi emirate. People from other emirates equate the term *Goyizhi* to political, socio-economic domination and control of their land and people. According to Usman, the term “Fulani” in the political discourse of the emirate of Kano came to mean members of the ruling aristocracy.<sup>1013</sup>

However, having been integrated fully and assimilated into the Nupe culture, the Fulbe no longer consider themselves alien, but rather, the ruling elite in their various respective emirates. People living outside the emirate capitals used to be and, to some extent, are still being seen as *Gberi* or *Latichi*, meaning uncivilized or bushmen living outside towns and cities, whose lifestyle, Nupe phonology, among other features, hardly conform with those in towns and cities. This has continued to be the bane of unity and genuine socio – cultural harmony in Nupeland, even still, in the face of current moves/attempts towards eliminating such counter – productive forces.

---

<sup>1012</sup>Oral interview with Dr. M. M. Shaaba Lafiagi, 58years at Federal College of Education (FCE) Kontagora on 12/12/15.

<sup>1013</sup>Y.B. Usman, “Nations, Nation – States and the Future of Mankind: Some Observations on the Historical Experience of the Formation of *Kanawa* in 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium A.D.”, in, *Beyond Fairy Tales*, vol.1, *Selected Historical Writings of Yusuf Bala Usman*, Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, Ahmadu Bello University, 2006, p.155.

In the midst of the town Fulbe, as we earlier pointed out, were the Muslim clerics missionaries “diviners” and merchants. They settled among local community members, especially in political and commercial centres in Nupeland. These included, Raba, Jima, Gbara, Eggan, Dabban, Akere and Agaie. While some of the Fulbe might have come to Nupeland as itinerant preachers, diviners and magicians, some are said to have come at the invitation of Nupe rulers who needed them for “charms and divination”.<sup>1014</sup>

Among the Fulbe that came to Nupeland and eventually succeeded in founding various Fulbe emirates in different parts of the land, were Muhammadu Ibn Fate Bangana – Bida Emirate. Mallam Maliki and Manzuma – Lafiagi Emirate, Daudu Maza – Lapai Emirate, Mallam Babba-Agaie Emirate and Mallam Aliyu - Tsonga Emirate.<sup>1015</sup> Of all these, Mallam Muhammadu Bin Fate, Bangana, who came to be known as Dendo or Manko, was the most popular in changing the political history of the greater part of Nupeland. Perhaps, a little profile of the man may not be out of place here.<sup>1016</sup>

All sources, both written and oral agree that Muhammadu Bangana came from around Kebbi in the present day Kebbi State. He is believed to be a native of Bangana, a small village rear *Birnin* Kebbi.<sup>1017</sup> It is claimed that he came as herbalist, soothsayer and spiritual leader<sup>1018</sup> around 1810 or possibly earlier, may be, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The latter sounds more plausible, going by the belief that Dendo married a lunatic princess by name Fatumako, a daughter to the then Nupe Chief of Dabban called

---

<sup>1014</sup> M. Mason, *The Foundations of Bida...*, pp.18-21.

<sup>1015</sup> I. Saidu, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours...*, pp.37-57.

<sup>1016</sup> For greater details on the life of Dendo, see M. Sule, *op.cit.*, pp.78 – 95, I. Saidu, *op.cit.*, pp. 5- 9, I. S; Jimada, *op.cit* pp.229 – 244, among others.

<sup>1017</sup> S. T. Sidi *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.

<sup>1018</sup> NAKSNP 17/25355, “Notes on Nupe.



Alhassan,<sup>1019</sup> before the Jihad campaigns proper. This was after the lunatic was cured of her ailment by Dendo. Be that as it may, it appears to be the consensus of many sources<sup>1020</sup> that the marriage between Dendo and princess Fatumako was blessed three sons, Mustapha, Mamudu and Muhammadu Saba (Masaba).

Dendo is however believed to have come to Nupeland with his Pullo wife called Adama Gboya and three sons, Muhammadu Majigi, Abdul Gboya and Usman Zaki.<sup>1021</sup> Oral traditions have it that on arrival, Dendo went to the then seat of Nupe Kingdom, Raba, to obtain permission from the reigning *Etsu* – Mu’azu, to go round his Kingdom as a preacher and ‘professional herbalist’. Consequently, his popularity and power (of charms) earned him the name *Manko*, meaning great scholar or *Mallam*. Later, he assumed a more popular nickname *Dendo*, a word made up of three words, *Dan Nyan Dondo*. This means “the man on whose shoulders hung all sorts of things”.<sup>1022</sup> This seems to be the characteristic feature of Mallams and herbalists, who would hang bag(s) *Gafaka* containing the Qur’an and other religious books, different herbs, charms, gourd of water, hides and skins and mats for praying and sleeping.

Tradition further has it that it was during his travels, preaching and providing herbs and charms to the needy, that Manko arrived at Dabban, one of the important towns in central Nupe. As stated previously,<sup>1023</sup> he succeeded in curing the lunatic princess,

---

<sup>1019</sup> While almost all Nupe traditions and some written sources agree that the princess – Fatumako was a daughter to the Chief or Imam of Dabban town, who was cured of her mental illness by Dendo, “Sule, *op.cit* p.85, however suggests the possibility of her being *Etsu Majiya*’s daughter.

<sup>1020</sup> Among such sources are, oral evidence, Alh. Mustapha – *Tswaidan*, Nupe 85years at Bida, Nov. 2012; M. Sule, *op.cit.*, p.85; A.A. Idrees, *op.cit.*, p.24; I. Dauda, *Political Organization in Nupeland*, Trumpet Publicity Commercial Services, Ltd, 2013, p.123 and S.T. Sidi, *op.cit.*, pp.33, among others.

<sup>1021</sup> Oral evidence, Tswaidan Nupe, 85 years at Bida November, 2012; A.A. Idrees *op.cit*, p.24 and NAK SNP, 17/2,25355, Note on Nupe”.

<sup>1022</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.24 and NAK SNP 17/2, 25355.

<sup>1023</sup> See footnote 88 above.

(who later became his wife), after all efforts to cure her before his arrival had failed. This feat further increased the already growing fame and popularity of Dendo throughout the Kingdom.

From then on, the services of Mallam Dendo either as a religious leader, political advisor or diviner were being hired. Such services were hired mostly by members of the royal nobility to ‘strengthen’ their political power or to liquidate<sup>1024</sup> possible opposition. Consequently Dendo’s position in Nupeland became well established as his sources of income increased. The wealth and slaves he is said to have collected in return for his services for the public and in the court of the rulers, no doubt accounted for his rapid popularity and solid foundation in Nupeland.<sup>1025</sup> Initially, the Fulbe in general and Dendo in particular, were given high regard and esteem by the Nupe rulers and their subjects. *Etsu Majiyya*, for instance, is said to have gained the friendship of Dendo and his Fulbe group of followers and trusted his prophecies.<sup>1026</sup> In return, Majiyya is reported to have given two of his daughters Safia and Nnoga (Nnaga?) to Dendo’s son – Usman Zaki and his war commander-Goga, as wives respectively.<sup>1027</sup> In addition, two, or one of Dendo’s sons Masaba and Mustapha were believed to have been fostered by *Etsu Majiyya*. There were also cordial relationships, though, not on a permanent basis, between the Fulbe and the other Nupe. For example, late *Etsu Jimada*’s son, Idrisu Gana, after his father’s death allied with the Fulbe at one time or the other, against Majiyya.

---

<sup>1024</sup>S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, p. 84. S.F. Nadel *A Black Byz...*, pp.77-78.

<sup>1025</sup> J. S. Hogden and H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London: Oxford Press, 1966.

<sup>1026</sup> S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byz...*, pp.77-78.

<sup>1027</sup>*Ibid*; A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Gagatteers of Nupe*.Provinces, p. 10 and M. Last, “Reform in West Africa: The Jihad Movements of 19<sup>th</sup> century”, in, A. J. F. Ajayi and M. Crowder, (eds.) *History of West Africa*, Vol. two, Longman Group Ltd, 1974, pp. 7-9.

As noted earlier, politics of divide and rule, diplomacy and manoeuvres became an adopted strategy by the Fulbe in Nupeland. This situation can be equated with the American foreign policy which does not seem to have permanent friend, but permanent interest to achieve ultimate goals. This, the Nupe groups failed to realize or refused to do so, until the gradual elimination of their dynasty.

The initial cordial relations maintained between Nupe and Dendo can be contrasted with what obtained between Gobir and Usman bn. Fodio before and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihads. While at Degel and Gobir, the Muslims under Usman bn Fodio were maltreated and persecuted by kings Nafata and Yunfa, the opposite of this scenario seemed to have played out in Nupe at least, initially, considering the high regard, respect and friendship accorded their purported ‘guests’ The Fulbe in Nupe right from the beginning, would seem not to have been restricted in their preachings and other activities, never realizing, or realized too late, the gradual strong community Dendo and his men were building in the kingdom. On the contrary however, the king of Gobir, was quick to realize that the community Usman bn Fodio was building was becoming “too great a threat to his authority to be overlooked”.<sup>1028</sup> The king immediately took action against the Muslims. Among such actions, were withdrawing the rights of teaching and conversion, sanctioning the carrying of arms by Ibn Fodio’s followers, threatening the Sheikh by drawing a ‘pistol’ at his face in the court of king Yunfa.<sup>1029</sup> The time the Nupe kings would have taken to checkmate the later excesses of their ‘guests’ was the one they used in tearing, rather than building themselves following intra-dynastic squabbles. This

---

<sup>1028</sup>*Ibid*, p.7.

<sup>1029</sup>*Ibid*.

situation, as we remarked earlier, made it relatively easier for the eventual takeover of the leadership of Nupe kingdom by the Jihadists.

## **(V) THE FALL OF NUPE KINGDOM**

The Fulbe conquest of Hausaland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad is said to have been achieved in two phases and by two methods: “a gradual infiltration of the foreign country by Mohammadan Fulani (Fulani Muslims) and then ultimately, a military conquest”.<sup>1030</sup> This quotation may require further clarification. It suggests the gradual penetration of the Jihadist campaigners headed by the Fulbe into Hausaland, which preceded the military conquest of the land by the Jihadists. The same policy was adopted in Nupe. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sokoto caliphate was divided into two, the eastern and western parts, respectively. The former had its headquarters at Gwandu, while the latter had its own at Sokoto under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullahi and Muhammadu Bello, Bn Fodio’s brother and son, respectively. Nupe, Ilorin, Kontagora, Yauri, among other northern areas, fell under Gwandu’s jurisdiction.

As we have stated earlier, Muhammadu Bin Fate, Bangana – Dendo/Manko was one of the Fulbe preachers and emissaries to Nupeland, who was instrumental to changing the whole fate of Nupe kingdom.<sup>1031</sup> In the course of time, Dendo was able to gather a large following from various sections of the Nupe population.<sup>1032</sup> With this, Dendo might have felt strong enough to launch his Jihadist campaigns. But even with that, he would seem to have been waiting for an opportunity to do that.

---

<sup>1030</sup> S. F. Nadel, *op.cit*, p.77

<sup>1031</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1032</sup> See footnotes 84 and 85.

Meanwhile, he would appear to have been embarking on what Sule regards as non-military aspect of Jihad<sup>1033</sup> before the military one. Fortunately for him and unfortunately for the Nupe groups, opportunity for the latter aspect of the Jihad appeared to have availed itself to Dendo when Nupe kingdom became factionalized at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each of the two claimants to the position of *Etsu* carved a niche for himself in his area of jurisdiction, Jimada at Ragada and Majiya at Raba. Each was trying to undo the other for supremacy over the entire Kingdom. The latter – Majiya sought for the military and spiritual assistance<sup>1034</sup> from Dendo, being his friend and host. Prior to this, having felt strong militarily, Dendo is reported to have requested for an official staff of office-*tuta* (flag) from Gwandu to signify his official recognition as a “leader and accepted feudal chief of the Fulani (Fulbe) empire”<sup>1035</sup>

We have earlier commented on the battle and results between Jimada on the one hand and Majiya – Dendo allied forces on the other.<sup>1036</sup> One important outcome after the conclusion of the Ragada offensive, was the emergence of *Etsu* Majiya as the (temporary) undisputed Nupe ruler, but, not unexpectedly, without the adherents of late *Etsu* Jimada. His major focus would seem to have been the consolidation of his gains, at Raba and the best way to go about this was to make the Fulbe group around him and their leader – Dendo, as comfortable as possible.<sup>1037</sup> Majiya rewarded Dendo for his services during the war against Jimada at Ragada. Perhaps, in order to ensure sustainable support of the Mallam and his followers, Majiya involved Dendo in his court. As we have noted previously, the former adopted at least one of the latter’s children – Masaba, as his foster

---

<sup>1033</sup> S. Mohammed, *History of the Emirate...*, pp.80-84.

<sup>1034</sup> S. F. Nadel, *op.cit.*, p. 77

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1036</sup> See footnotes 56, 58 & 59.

<sup>1037</sup> A.A. Idrees *op.cit.* pp.25-26.

son.<sup>1038</sup> This step might have been taken to further strengthen the already existing friendship bond between the two. Slaves and other booties of the war(s) and money and horses are reported to have been awarded to Dendo. Among such slaves were two beautiful females, as reported by Frobenius.<sup>1039</sup> One of the slaves or war – captives was kept by Dendo himself, who later gave birth to a daughter, called Gogo Habiba,<sup>1040</sup> who became one of the most prominent women in politics and business at that time.

While *Etsu* Majiya was consolidating his gains at Raba and regarding Dendo as his “permanent” friend and “supporter” the latter, perhaps, unknown to Majiya, was at the same time establishing himself as the Jihad leader in Nupeland.<sup>1041</sup> However, the perceived permanent ‘friendship’ and support which might have informed Majiya to award generous gifts to Dendo, was soon to change to that of enmity, suspicion and mistrust. Meanwhile, Dendo’s respect, popularity and military position had continued to increase, in Nupeland, most likely, to the disdain of Nupe rulers and elders. A number of activities from the Fulbe group might have heightened the level of suspicion and doubt from the Nupe group. Firstly, Dendo’s fame and popularity, as stated earlier was becoming more overwhelming than that of the *Etsu* Majiya, his host. The former’s preaching activities were becoming more wide-spread, hence, increasing his acceptability and admiration. In addition, Dendo’s children are said to have been increasingly

---

<sup>1038</sup> *Ibid*, S. F. Nadel, *op.cit*, p.78.

<sup>1039</sup> Frobenius, *op.cit*, p.576.

<sup>1040</sup> A.A. Idrees, “Gogo Habiba of Bida: The Rise and Demise of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nupe Merchant, Princess and Politician”, *African Study Monographs*, vol.12, No. 1, 1991, pp.1 – 9.

<sup>1041</sup> S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, 87 – 88.

becoming authoritative and over-zealous. According to Balogun, one of Dendo's sons, Usman Zaki arrogated to himself the position of *Sarkin Samari* or leader of the youth.<sup>1042</sup>

Although *Etsu* Majiya would appear not to have shown any concern over such popularity and 'excesses' by the Fulbe group in his domain, the elder statesmen, are said to have been apprehensive.<sup>1043</sup> This led to series of meetings by the elder statesmen to convince the *Etsu* to take immediate action against Dendo and his group on account of the danger the continuous alliance and friendship with the foreigners portended. A resolution at one of such meetings was that Dendo and his men should be expelled from Nupeland<sup>1044</sup> to avoid any possible assumption of leadership of the area in future, considering the admiration he was gathering.

However, the above resolution did not seem to have gone down well with the *Etsu*. His doubts might have been premised on the 'assumed' 'trust' and 'confidence' he had built on Dendo. The desire of the *Etsu* to maintain, in particular, good military, social and spiritual relations with Dendo might still be paramount in his mind. Apart from marrying a Nupe woman, as we noted previously, Dendo's son- Masaba was being fostered by the *Etsu*. No wonder, therefore, when, Majiya, on account of mounting pressure from his palace elder statesmen, finally decided to yield to the pressure, he initially avoided direct attack on Dendo at Raba. Rather, attacks were directed at the Fulbe in the peripheries outside the capital in such areas as Bata, Dukuninya and Sachi in

---

<sup>1042</sup> A. S. Balogun, "Gwandu Emirates in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with Special Reference to Political Relations: 1817 – 1903", Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1970, p.135.

<sup>1043</sup> A.A. Idrees, *Political Change and...*, pp.27-28. M. Sule, *op.cit*, p.88.

<sup>1044</sup> *Ibid*, Frobenius, *op.cit*, p.577 also gives similar information.

Nupeland and Magongo in Kamberi area, being Majiyya's targets, as mentioned by Idrees and Sule.<sup>1045</sup>

The defeat of most of the above areas by Majiyya group and expulsion of the Fulbe therein, still fell short of the Nupe elders' demand in Raba because with Dendo still resident in Raba, the war could not be said to have been won. *Etsu* Majiyya from all indications was finally forced to drive Dendo and his group out of Raba.<sup>1046</sup> So, together with other Fulbe clerics and preachers, Dendo went to Ilorin to meet another group of Fulbe under Alimi. 'Alimi' is a corruption of the Arabic *Mu'alim*.<sup>1047</sup> By the time of Dendo's expulsion from Raba, Alimi had already established himself as the leader in Ilorin. Welcoming and comforting his fellow Fulbe might not be difficult for him to do. For Dendo and his men, Ilorin might be their second home-being the nearest "Fulani base to which they run, as Gwandu and Zaria that were already under the Jihadists (by the time of Dendo's expulsion from Raba) were too far from Nupeland in times of emergency".<sup>1048</sup> Alimi is reported to have assured Dendo and other Fulbe fugitives from Nupeland support, adequate protection and security"<sup>1049</sup>

As observed earlier, the Fulbe did not seem to have a permanent friend, but permanent interest as demonstrated in Ilorin. The same scenario can be said of *Etsu* Majiyya when he broke the earlier alliance between him and Dendo after the latter had assisted him to defeat *Etsu* Jimada – his arch – rival at Ragada in about 1810 AD, after

---

<sup>1045</sup> Idrees *op.cit* 27-28 and Sule, *op.cit*, p.88.

<sup>1046</sup> *Ibid*. Idrees, however, suggests that Dendo might have left Raba before the expulsion notice got to him. Initially, he was to have been captured in the night and drowned in River Niger, since expulsion was likely to attract counter-reactions.

<sup>1047</sup> M. Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom...", p.71.

<sup>1048</sup> A.A. Idrees, *op.cit*, pp.28-29.

<sup>1049</sup> L. Frobenius, *op.cit*, p.576.



which the *Etsu* drove Dendo and his fellow Fulbe to Ilorin. Dendo and Majiya who had been very good friends before now had abandoned themselves and became arch rivals of each other. Meanwhile, Jimada's son, Idrisu Gana, whom the former appointed as heir presumptive-*Shaaba* before his death at the Ragada massacre, had risen against Majiya. As noted previously, Idrisu and his father's war commander, Makolo who survived the Ragada massacre, fled to Adama-Lelu after the Ragada invasion. He might have now felt strong enough together with his supporters to challenge *Etsu* Majiya. The now strained relation between the latter and Dendo, leading to the expulsion of the *Mallam* from Raba to Ilorin, might have been an added advantage to Idrisu.

In their tactics, scheming and manoeuvres, Dendo and his colleagues at Ilorin are said to have invited Idrisu Gana to join them there<sup>1050</sup>. This was to form an alliance and a formidable force against *Etsu* Majiya. The *Etsu* became alarmed, shocked and probably threatened on learning of the 'arrival' at Ilorin of Idrisu and his father's commander – Makolo in response to Dendo's invitation for an alliance. All diplomatic efforts made by Majiya to foil the alliance, including his letter to Ilorin requesting for the extradition of Idrisu failed.<sup>1051</sup> The only option left for the *Etsu* was to launch an attack on Ilorin between 1825 and 1826, with a view to eliminating Dendo and his group there. Majiya set out with his numerous cavalry and foot soldiers, marching up to the walls of the enemy's stronghold.<sup>1052</sup> The ensuing encounter was called the *Mugba-Mugba*

---

<sup>1050</sup>S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, pp.89 – 90 and A.A. Idrees *op.cit*, p.29. However, sources collected by Jimada *op.cit* p. 237, doubt the authenticity of Idrisu Gana's flight to Ilorin to join forces with the Fulbe against Majiya. That, Idrisu Gana never participated in the *Mugba – Mugba* war which ensued between the Fulbe and Majiya. While one cannot totally dismiss such sources, we have, however, observed that the sources suggesting Idrisu's invitation and flight to Ilorin appear more overwhelming.

<sup>1051</sup>*Ibid*, p.30.

<sup>1052</sup> M. Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom...", p.71.

war.<sup>1053</sup> Johnson<sup>1054</sup> reports of an attempted alliance between the Alaafin of Oyo and Majiya against the Fulbe at Ilorin. But, to what extent was this achieved remains unclear.

Detailed discussion on this and those that followed later either between the Jihadists and Nupe on the one hand and the different factions of the Nupe, on the other hand, are outside the scope of our work. Certain observations may, however, be needed here in the first place, Majiya was defeated and forced to go back to Nupeland. The implications of this defeat were many-folds. It had reduced whatever military and political strength Majiya and his supporters might have been boasting of.<sup>1055</sup> By this time, it should have dawned on Majiya about the unreliability of and undependability on the Fulbe group in Nupeland. Also, his position as the overall *Etsu* in the kingdom had weakened. For instance, the *Kyadya*, who formed an important segment of the kingdom are said to have ferried the Fulbe pursuing Majiya from Ilorin to Nupeland across the Niger River.<sup>1056</sup> This suggests that Majiya was no longer enjoying the support of the Kyede as well as that of other groups in the Kingdom.

Another implication of the loss suffered in the hands of the jihadists by the *Etsu* was the fact that, like, his arch-rival, late *Etsu* Jimada's son at Ragada, Majiya was at a time, forced to vacate Raba for another place, Zugurma, in the north western part of Nupe kingdom. For Idrisu Gana I, whom, several accounts<sup>1057</sup> report to have allied with Dendo against Majiya, regaining his position of *Etsu* for the entire kingdom might not be

---

<sup>1053</sup> *Ibid*; I.S. Jimada, *op.cit*, 237; M. Sule, *op.cit*, p.92 and footnotes 123 below, p. 201.

<sup>1054</sup> S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British protectorate*, Lagos: CSS Bookshop Ltd, 1921, p.201.

<sup>1055</sup> Wilmot Brook, cited in M. Mason, *The Kingdom of...*, p.71, was told that *Etsu* Majiya in addition to thousands of Infantry soldiers, had 26,000 horses.

<sup>1056</sup> I.S. Jimma *op.cit*, p.237.

<sup>1057</sup> See footnotes 108 and 109 above.

difficult. He might have ‘assumed’ Dendo would pay him back for his alliance with him (Dendo). Unfortunately, however, this was not to be, as Dendo refused to recognize him as the overall leader over Nupe kingdom, as he had expected. According to Nadel, Idrisu was to “remain a puppet king of Nupe exiled to Eggan, while he (Dendo) installed himself in the capital, Raba, as the real ruler”.<sup>1058</sup> Another source says that Idrisu Gana I (C1819-1849) now temporarily powerless, had stayed with his court in Adamagi near Kpada, this time around, in the extreme south eastern part of the kingdom.<sup>1059</sup>

Meanwhile, with Majiya’s defeat and expulsion from Raba to Zugurma, the Fulbe jihadists settled to share up the large kingdom. To each of the five important towns in the kingdom was appointed a leader from amongst the Fulbe, who established emirate system of government in their respective areas. Raba and latter Bida for Dendo; Agaie for Mallam Babba; Lapai for Mallam Daudu Maza; Lafiagi for Mallam Abdulmaliki/Manzuma and Tsonga for Mallam Aliyu?<sup>1060</sup> It should be noted however, that Patigi was not among the towns to which a Fulbe was sent to establish an emirate but was left under the sovereignty of Raba and later, Bida, when the Emirate capital moved there in 1857. The historical prominence of Patigi came to the limelight immediately after the British conquest of Bida in 1897.<sup>1061</sup> Perhaps, in response to the support enjoyed by the British from members of the eclipsed Tsoede Dynasty, during the 1897 conquest of Bida, the former decided to pay back to the latter by creating Patigi emirate under the leadership of the descendants of Tsoede in 1898. Hence, Patigi chiefdom, unlike most of

---

<sup>1058</sup> S.F. Nadel, *op.cit*,p.79.

<sup>1059</sup> I. S. Jimada, *op.cit*, pp237 – 238.

<sup>1060</sup> S. T. Sidi, *op.cit*, p.33

<sup>1061</sup> I. S. Jimada, “The Establishment of Patigi Emirate”.

the emirates in northern Nigeria, was not created by the jihadists, but, by the British colonial administration.

As we have noted previously, of the five emirates created by the jihadists in Nupeland, that of Bida under Dendo and his descendants, was the most strategic and prominent. A number of factors might have accounted for this. Firstly, Bida emirate formed the central part of Nupe kingdom. Strategically, it contained the economically prosperous centres of agriculture and commerce. Apart from having a number of entrepôts such as Kpatagban, Jebba, Mokwa, Raba, Gbara, Jima, Katcha, Labozhi, Eggan, among others, “Rivers Niger and Kaduna, the main arteries of trade and traffic traversed Nupeland in this area.<sup>1062</sup> The situation of Raba, the capital, along an international trade route from Yorubaland through Nupeland to Hausaland, became an added advantage to the central part of Nupeland of which Bida was part.

Perhaps, these unlimited economic and political advantages in the central part, which the Nupes looked on to for leadership, even after the eclipse of the Edegi (Tsoede) dynasty,<sup>1063</sup> might have attracted Dendo to allocate that part of Nupe kingdom to himself.<sup>1064</sup> This leadership position of central Nupe under Bida emirate would seem to have been maintained up to this moment. This manifests in the nomenclature of the emirs. While in the peripheries of Nupeland, emirs are called by the names of their respective emirate capitals, such as the Emir (*Etsu*) of Lapai, Agaie, Lafiagi, Tsonga and Patigi, that of Bida is popularly called the *Etsu* Nupe and rarely as *Etsu* Bida.

---

<sup>1062</sup> A.A. Idrees, *op.cit*, pp.33 – 34. Also see our discussion on trade and commerce in chapter six of this work, pp. 114 – 125.

<sup>1063</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.34.

<sup>1064</sup> S. Mohammed, *op.cit*, p.95.

With the partitioning of Nupe kingdom among the Fulbe, it can be said that the indigenous Tsoede dynasty had been eclipsed and replaced by a foreign one-the Fulbe dynasty. Even though there were pockets of resistance from various Nupe groups, they were not strong enough to dismantle the Fulbe dynasty. The jihad movements which started with the infiltration of the Fulbe elements between the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries can be said to have succeeded in dislodging the old political, social and economic practices in Nupeland. Even though we lack evidence to suggest that Dendo assumed a political leadership position in Nupeland, there is evidence to show that his descendents did. After his death in 1833, Usman Zaki crowned himself as the first Pullo ruler-emir of the largest section of Nupe, with his capital at Raba and later Bida. A source remarks that in the event of transforming a polytheistic society into a monotheistic one, the religious reform was out of necessity, subordinated to the immediate needs of military and political security...<sup>1065</sup> With this, Nupeland had entered another epoch of history.

## **(VI) CONCLUSION**

From our discussion thus far, it can be observed that the period between 1800 and 1833 in Nupeland was characterized by complex pattern of growth, decline and even a prelude to the installation of a foreign dynasty in the volatile Nupe heartland. Particularly, the period between 1795 and 1810 witnessed in quick succession, the death of three *Etsus* (kings), Kolo, Yikanko and Muhammadu Kolo. This can be regarded as a serious misfortune for a society that has hitherto recorded unprecedented development and political stability. Secondly, it was during the period that a foreign group-the

---

<sup>1065</sup> I. S. Jimada, *op.cit*, p.273.

jihadists, who were later to change the course of Nupe history, had begun to occupy sensitive positions as Islamic clerics, political advisors and diviners in Nupeland. The foreign elements most especially settled in the already established political and commercial centres, such as Raba, Gbara, Jima, Eggan, Mokwa, Dabban, among others. Thirdly, the death of *Etsu* Muhammadu Kolo in about 1805 signaled a protracted intra dynastic succession disputes and schism among the Tsoede descendents. The attendant political instability which followed was reflected in intensive political competitions arising from disagreement over succession rights.<sup>1066</sup> As we have noted earlier, the disagreement led to the factionalization of the kingdom into three, but later into two- the eastern and western parts with Gbara/Ragada and Raba/Zugurma as capitals respectively.

The implication of this development both on the Nupe groups and the jihadists cannot be over emphasized. It provided an immediate opportunity for the Fulbe to intervene in the political affairs in the kingdom of Nupe. The chaotic situation therein created the window of opportunity to realize their ‘conceived’ goal of eventually taking over the leadership position in Nupeland. To this end, the religious motive of the Jihad taking precedence over the other motives remains questionable. Unfortunately, however, while Dendo realized his ultimate goal, the Nupe groups due to internal dynastic factions failed, or refused to realize perhaps, due to selfish ambition, the need for patriotism, unity and formation of a formidable united force against the intruders. According to Mason, “chisms, rather than nationalism worsened the political situation in Nupe during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>1067</sup> In the same vein, Jimada asserts,

---

<sup>1066</sup> S. T. Sidi, *op.cit*, pp.41 – 42.

<sup>1067</sup> M. Mason, “The Nupe Kingdom...”, p.63.

The individualistic ambition (of the rival rulers) seemed to have been the bane of the dynasty. The situation, whereby the political system was weakened and rival factions of the dynasty looked upon each with suspicion was to create a situation that enhanced the revolutionary potentials of certain influential class of intelligentsia in the kingdom. On the eve of the jihad campaigns, the Tsoede dynasty was on the path to losing central political power in Nupeland.<sup>1068</sup>

Capitalizing on the above situation, the jihadists resorted to the use of various tactics and maneuver to exploits the precarious political situation in Nupeland. These range from ‘divide and rule-policy, providing administrative advice, ‘spiritual guidance’ to formation of multiple alliances with any Nupe rival faction at the appropriate time of need for the jihadists. Perhaps, the aim of this scheme might not have been conceptualized by the Nupe. But, obviously the Fulbe group understood what they wanted in Nupe politics.<sup>1069</sup> This was demonstrated in the case of *Etsu Majiyya*’s alliance with Dendo against *Etsu Jimada*, his arch-rival. There was also the alliance of Jimada’s son, Idris Gana I, wih Dendo and other Fulbe in Nupe and Ilorin against *Etsu Majiyya*’s faction. This type of scenario had continued to play out in the kingdom until the eclipse of Tsoede dynasty and enthronement of the one by the jihadists in 1833.

---

<sup>1068</sup>I. S. Jimada *op.cit*, p.226.

<sup>1069</sup> A. A. Idrees, *op.cit*, p.36.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Our discussion of the early history of Nupe in this work has enabled us to understand and appreciate the fact that prior to the emergence of Tsoede as an important figure, there existed in Nupeland various groups of peoples and principalities. The discussion has dispelled claims by both local and foreign peoples who regard Tsoede as the genesis of the Nupe as a group and nation. The discussion begins with the geographical location of the Nupe within the Middle Niger region in particular and Nigeria in general.

Our knowledge of geographical location assists us to form a theoretical framework in terms of the advantages derivable therein for state formation. We have noted the strategic location of Nupeland for political transformation and economic prosperity. The fertility and topography of the land, its centrality for both domestic trade and international commerce and the presence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna, together with their tributaries, provided and sustained early human habitation and evolution of civilization.

The study has also advanced some evidence to dismiss the hamitic hypothesis of the origin of the Nupe and indeed, that of other ethnic groups within the Middle Niger region as claimed by European and Arabian historiography. From the archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic evidence, shown in this study, it can be concluded that the origin of the Nupe and other groups could not have been outside the Middle Niger region. Tracing the origin of these groups to the Middle East, Egypt, the Sudan, among other places outside the Nigerian area, or even within Nigeria, but outside the region under



reference, can only be regarded as cheap socio-cultural and political propagation. For the indigenous peoples, such propagation either deliberately or ignorantly, might have been adopted for socio-cultural superiority and aggrandizement. It was believed that, those places outside Nigeria to which they traced their origin were more civilized, hence, their association with such ‘civilizations’. For the Europeans, they refused to accept that Africans had their own civilization in all ramifications long before their contact with them.

The existence of polities and administrative structure in Nupeland long before the emergence of Tsoede between the 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries has been shown in the work. This is to dismiss claims from certain quarters which suggest that Tsoede was the progenitor of Nupe polity and group. We have observed the evolution of polities, especially along the banks of Rivers Niger and Kaduna from time immemorial, which continued up to the time of the *Bini* Confederacy, all of which pre-dated Tsoede period. A number of sources, both local and foreign, as cited in the work make reference to such earlier politics. However, we lack a reliable chronology and, to some extent, consensus kinglists of rulers in the remote past, especially the periods preceding Tsoede era.

The study has brought out historical evidence to show the existence, practice and sources of Islam in Nupeland prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad. This was demonstrated by the emergence of indigeneous Islamic reformers or Jihadists before the ones that emerged later during the Sokoto Jihad campaigns. Among this was *Etsu* Jibrilu, 1746 – 1759, a descendent of Tsoede, who like the other indigeneous reformers – Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Muhammad Sheriff and Mallam Musa that emerged after him, attempted to make Islam a state religion. This cost the *Etsu* expulsion to Kutigi on exile

where he died. Sheikh Abdulraman in particular, traversed almost every part of Nupeland and beyond in his Jihad campaigns. His efforts led to the emergence of important Islamic centres which became the centres of learning, Such as Agaie, Bida, Gbara, Kere, Raba, Eggan and Abaji. In fact, he became known in Nupeland as Sheikh Abdulrahman (*Tsatsa*), pure or saint, whose reformist activities were known and recognized by Usman Dan Fodio when he visited him in Sokoto at the beginning of the latter's Jihad campaigns.

The emergence of Tsoede as the revolutionary empire builder can be seen as an important epoch in Nupe history. The hitherto various independent sub-groups and their polities, such as Bini, Kyadya, Batachi, Kusopa, Ebangi, Chekpan, among others were united by Tsoede to form a supra-Nupe Kingdom. Such a kingdom is believed to have lasted for between 300 and 500 years before its eclipse in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the intervention of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad campaigners. Before then, however, Nupe kingdom under its founder–Tsoede and his descendents extended beyond the core Nupeland to demonstrate its political superiority, military prowess and strength over such non-Nupe areas, such as Yorubaland, Kabba, Yagba, Ebira, Kamuku, Kambari, Yauri and Hausa areas. We have noted the ‘myth’ and or ‘historicity’ surrounding Tsoede factor in Nupe history as well as the legacy left behind by his dynasty which, to a very large extent, was adopted and, or modified by the subsequent conquerors as administrative and socio-economic strategies.

We have also discussed the economic activities in early Nupeland and the advantages of such in the foundation and sustenance of the kingdom. The economic activities include agriculture, trade and commerce, industrial economy in form of textiles,

arts and crafts, pottery, brass and glass works, transport and communication. The industrial and manufacturing activities, in particular, show the ingenuity, skill and high technology of the Nupe which were appreciated both within the Nigerian area and beyond. This became a strong base for the establishment of friendly and inter-group relations between the Nupe and other groups within and outside the Nigerian area.

Finally, the study has examined both the remote and immediate factors responsible for the demise of Tsoede dynasty and the enthronement of an alien Fulbe aristocracy in the entire Nupeland in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century majorly caused by intra – dynastic succession disputes after *Etsu* Mu’azu. We have observed that the remote cause of the crisis in Nupeland which made it easy prey for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadists, was lack of definite succession rule. This was clearly demonstrated after the death of *Etsu* Muazu in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From then on, the existence of a united indivisible Nupe Kingdom appeared elusive, as different contenders for the position of *Etsu* began to appear, hence, the factionalization of the kingdom into three and finally two between Jimada and Majiya at Ragada and Raba as capitals, respectively. The followers of the former and latter became known as *Yisazhi* and *Gwagbazhi*, respectively.

The internal political dynamics reflected in the intra – dynastic succession disputes created an opportunity for the Fulbe elements, who by that time could be found in large number in different parts of Nupe kingdom as itinerant preachers, magicians and Islamic clerics. The inter-play of scheme, tactics and maneuvers became seemingly an adopted ploy or strategy by the Jihadists. Support for one faction against the other became an adopted strategy by the Jihadists under Mallam Dendo. This was to forestall any attempt at forming a united force by the Nupe groups against the Fulbe. Had this

unity of purpose existed among the Nupe groups, could that have totally forestalled the eventual defeat, or delayed it by the Jihadists?

As would be expected, the kingdom and its dynasty eventually fell to the Jihadists, who, in turn, established their own system of administration – the Emirate System of Government in Nupeland. In each of the emirates so established, was appointed an Emir – the *Etsu* Fulbe, rather than the indigeneous *Etsu* Nupe that had held sway for more than 300 years. The emirates were/are Bida, Agaie and Lapai in the present day Niger State, Lafiagi and Tsonga in the present-day Kwara State. We have also noted in the study why Patigi Emirate was not a creation of the Jihadists. Thus, we can in the final analysis conclude that the existence of politics and human habitation in Nupeland far pre-dated the emergence of Tsoede in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the Tsoede phenomenon can only be seen as an evolutionary and revolutionary epoch in Nupe history. In the same manner, the involvement of the Fulbe group in the political instability, arising from dynastic problem introduced another dimension into the 19<sup>th</sup> century Nupe politics. The primary motive for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in Nupeland, being religious, has been questioned, as other motives, such as politics and economy, appeared more predominant.

## NOTES ON SOURCES

In the course of this work, various sources have been used, categorized into primary and secondary sources.

### 1. PRIMARY SOURCES

The primary sources are in different forms. They include Arabic manuscripts, travellers' accounts, oral sources and archival records. Before looking at such sources, it has to be noted that there is general dearth of source material on early history of Nupe. The earliest few sources one can find for the period are those written in Arabic by Arab scholars, travelers, Muslim clerics, traders and geographers, generally on Bilad-as-Sudan. There are others that were written by indigenous *Ulama* which deal with events in the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century Nupe Kingdom.

#### Arabic Manuscripts

- i. **“Tarikh Tsoede wa Dhurriyatihi”.** This work is said to have been completed in about 1833, by *Dan Makaranta Salihu*, a Nupe-based scholar.<sup>1070</sup> The work gives an account of Tsoede, his dynasty, successors and regional length of Nupe Kings.
- ii. **“Infaqal-Maisur” by Sultan Muhammadu Bello.** This is one of the major works of Muhammadu Bello in Arabic. It was translated by E. J. Arnet under the title of *The Rise of Sokoto Fulani*.<sup>1071</sup> Even though the translated work cannot be said to have been perfect, due to some omissions, improper translation, which is capable of distorting information contained in original text, the work is informative on the activities of the Jihadists, (both indigenous and alien) in Nupeland.
- iii. **Works of Sheikh Abdulrahman b Muhammad Sherrif.** Sheik Abdulrahman was a prominent Islamic scholar of Nupe “origin”, but born of an Arab father. His wide travels within and outside Nupeland propagating Islam attracted

---

<sup>1070</sup> I. S. Jimada, “The External Relations of the Nupe Kingdom and Emirates” C.1650 – 1850: With particular Reference to the Alafinate of Oyo and its Successor States, Ph.D Thesis, ABU, Zaria, 2001, p.xix.

<sup>1071</sup>E. J. Arnt, *The Rise of Sokoto Fulani*, a translation of the work under reference, Kano: 1922.

attention from all walks of life. He is reported to have written many works about 70, on various aspects of Islam<sup>1072</sup> and his intention to wage Jihad in Nupeland, not only to spread, but also to purify the religion of Islam-hence becoming the second Nupe indigeneous Jihadist campaigner pre-dating the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sokoto Jihad in Nupeland. The oral stories told of the Sheikh and his works are informative to our work when supplemented with other source material.

- iv. **Raudat al-Afkar.** The work written by Abdul Qadir Bn Mustapha, has been translated into English by H. R. Palmer as *Western Sudan History*.<sup>1073</sup> Al Mustapha's work classifies the Sudan Area into three distinctive zones as: the Upper Sudan, the Middle Sudan and the Lower Sudan. By this classification, Nupeland, along with Yoruba, Hausa Bariba lands, among others, falls within the Middle Lower Sudan.<sup>1074</sup>
- v. **Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu.** The story of the Hausa and their neighbours, was originally written in Arabic, but translated into English by the Translation Bureau of Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, edited by R. M. East in 1932. Nupeland being one of the neighbours of Hausaland is discussed, particularly on commercial, trade and diplomatic relations. This gives us information on pre-19<sup>th</sup> century Nupe relations with the Hausa.

## 2. TRAVELLERS' ACCOUNTS

By the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nupeland together with other areas in the Middle Niger regions had witnessed influx of European travelers and explorers. Accounts of this provide significant information for the study of Nupe history. By 1722, Nupe as a nation or important commercial centre had appeared for the first time on a map drawn by a French cartographer – Del'Isle. Other areas that appeared on the map as important commercial centres included Borgu, Yauri, Kebbi and Kwararafa. We may not be sure of

---

<sup>1072</sup>I. N. Imam, "A History of Islam in Nupe", B. A. Dissertation, B. U. Knao 1973, p.17.

<sup>1073</sup>H.R. Palmer, (tans), "Western Sudan History", *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. 5(59), 1916, p.26-273.

<sup>1074</sup> For more details, see Y. B. Usman, "The Assessment of Primary Sources: Heinrich Barth in Katsina 1851 – 1854", in *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Y. B. Usman*, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, 1976/1976, p. 216.

the source of information of the cartographer. It can be speculated however, that De'I'Isle got such from the French Consul at Tripoli, who in turn, as Mason suggests, may have obtained same from merchants returning from the Western Sudan.<sup>1075</sup> Reports of the earlier Arab travelers to the Sudan, such as Al-Bakr, Ibn Battuta and Ibn Khaldum, might have provided information to the French cartographer.

Worthy of note in connection with the study of Nupe history were reports of European travelers, explorers, missionaries and administrators. Among these were those of Captain Hugh Clapperton and Richard Lander as contained in *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, London, 1829. This account provides useful information to the study of Nupe. Their travel from Badagry 1825/26, through Oyo-Ile and Nupeland to Hausaland facilitated their knowledge of these and other areas. Other European travelers, whose accounts on Nupe and other places were not less important, were Richard Lander and his brother John Lander. Their *Journal of an Exploration to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, three volumes, London, 1832, is informative.

### **Macgregor Laird and R.A.K Oldfield**

These European travellers followed Lander brothers. They travelled upstream from the termination of the Niger River in the Atlantic Ocean to Raba through Eggan. In their *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by River Niger in the Steam-Vessels, Quorra and Alburah in 1832, 1833 and 1834, 2 vols*, London: Frank Cass and Co. Limited, 1837, they provided information on Nupeland particularly on Eggan and Raba settlements as important market centres for both domestic and international transactions. They observed traders from Tripoli, Kano, Sokoto, among others, doing businesses in Raba. They also met *Etsu* Majiya, Idrisu, rival royal members under Tsoede dynasty and the emerging Fulbe King- Usman Zaki as well as Mallam Dendo at Raba by the end of 1833. They reported the military capability of the then king of Raba (most probably *Etsu* Majiya) being in command of 5, 000 cavalry and 20, 000 infantry

---

<sup>1075</sup> M. Mason, "The Kingdom of Nupe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: A Political History", Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham University, 1970, p.86.

### 3. LOCAL ACCOUNTS

Apart from foreign travellers' accounts, our study also made use of local accounts written in several languages – Nupe, Hausa and English.

- (a) One of such write-ups is the one written in English by Late *Etsu* Patigi – Alh. Idris Gana III, titled “The History of Nupe Kingdom and Nupe Dynasty”. It traces the history of Nupe tribe (group) to Nubia and that of Tsoede to an Idah King (Attah), who, before becoming the Attah of Igala, used to visit Nupeland as a hunter and magician. He got married to a Nupe princess from Nku town, who gave birth to Tsoede or Edegi, born in Nupe, after the ‘father’ had left Nupeland to succeed his father as the Attah of Igala. This five-page undated document informs us how Tsoede was taken to Idah to meet his ‘father’ and the eventual departure of Tsoede from Idah to Nupeland to found a ruling dynasty – The Nupe Kingdom, lasted from (1461 – 1733) according to the Kinglist provided by the writer. This document was made available to me by Professor I. S. Jimada of History Department ABU, Zaria. The *Etsu's* geneology of kinglist did not go beyond 1733.
- (b) There is also what appears to be an abridged Nupe version of the ‘same document’ written by an anonymous writer. The two-page document was handed over to me by my late cousin brother, Alhaji Nma Kiyakiya Bida. Perhaps, this may be the same document Jimada refers to as having been written by one S. D. Nagenu Bida.<sup>1076</sup> The document traces the history of Nupe dynasty to Tsoede as the founder, even though it recognizes the existence of pre-Tsoede polities in Nupeland. However, such apparently independent polities were not united to form a central authority. The document gives a chronological information on the Nupe rulers from Tsoede up to 1800 A.D. This was about the period of Fulbe intervention in Nupe politics, which coincided with the political crisis and

---

<sup>1076</sup> I. S. Jimada “External Relations of the Nupe...”, p. xix.



- instability which made it easy for the Fulbe to take over control of the Nupe kingdom.
- (c) Another local account *Tarihin Nupe* (Nupe History) was written by a highly influential and respected Nupe scholar, Muhammad Kologwa. The work, in its manuscript form was written in January, 1926. It attempts to give accounts of the history of Nupe from, the period of Tsoede (Edegi) to the Fulbe period. The work describes Tsoede as a son to the Attah of Igala, but born of a Nupe woman – daughter of one time king of Nku town. The work describes Tsoede as having been mythically endowed with magic and spiritual powers, which according to him, ‘assisted’ him in making himself powerful and feared – making it possible to establish a central government over Nupeland. The work is informative, even though it suffers from lack of critical historical analysis on certain aspects of Tsoede and the foundation of Nupe Kingdom.
- (d) Yet, there is another local account on Nupeland written by one time famous and learned *Ulama* by name Umar Muhammad popularly called Alkali Umaru. Apart from being the *alkali* – judge, his scholarstic activities were then known throughout Nupeland, especially in the central part of the land. In one of his works, he gives a list of kings from Tsoede to *Etsu* Muazu. The list contains 16 names of the *Etsus* under Tsoede dynasty, with *Etsu* Muazu appearing twice. The work is useful to our study. However, contrary to other accounts Alkali Umaru attributes the death of Sheikh Abdulrahman *Tsatsa* to the orders of *Etsu* Majiya. Muhammad Kologwa, among other sources, believes that the orders for the assassination of the Sheikh came from Mallam Dendo, his co-Jihadist, and not from the *Etsu* as claimed by the *Alkali*.
- (e) There are numerous local accounts on the Nupe. These include works by Saidu Ibrahim, A. A. Idrees, I. S. Jimada, S. Mohammed, M. Mason, S. F. Nadel, A. Obayemi, D. Ismaila, S. T. Sidi, I. Dauda, A. Ndagi, among many others, details of which are provided in the bibliography. They discuss Nupeland in various respects – political, economic, socio-cultural, origin and intergroup relations. All of them are useful to our work.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### (i) Oral evidence

AA – Ameer Abubakar, 55 years, Public servant – Kuje Area Council, FCT, Abuja on 23/01/13 at Abuja. He informed me of the existence of Nupe-speaking people in the FCT, Abuja, Kogi and Nasarawa States.

AAA – Alh. Abdul-Azeez 85 years *Lukpan* Nupe and District Head of Lemu, by the time of interview on 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2013. He believes that the number of *Bini* settlements in early Nupe is far greater than 12 or 17 many sources claim. He mentions not less than 69 scattered all over ancient Nupeland, some of which may have gone into extinction.

AAM – Alh. Abdulkadir Mohammed 56 years, current village Head of Tafyan village, which was commonly believed to be the capital of *Bini* Confederacy, interviewed on 10/8/13, 30/10/15 and 22/3/16 at Bida.

AAMW – Alh. Alhassan Mohammed Wasagi, 66 years at Minna on 14/4/14 informs us about the annual celebration of *Kuti Sogba* cults in Jiyako and Nuwankota villages in the present day Gbako Local Government Area. He stresses peoples belief in the powers of the cult to, among other things, give children to the baren women and different names that such children will be given by the cult, such as *Sogba*, *Tsubenya*, *Yebo* and *Ejinda*. He also mentions some important pottery centres in Nupe and Gbagyi areas.

AANJ – Alhaji Abubakar Naibi – Assistant Chief Imam of Jima – 70 years and late Alhaji Ndayisa – Village Head of Jima. Both interviewed at Jima on 11/05/13. They traced the relationship between the Nupe and the people of Katsina and the genesis for the joking relationship between the two areas.

ACG – Alhassan Chekpa Gbara, 78 years, interviewed at Gbara village on 10/5/13. Provides information on how the Bassa – Nge group of the Nupe relocated from Gbara – their original homeland to their present – day abode in Kogi State.

AMAJI – Dr. Muhammed Aliyu Jebba, 55 years interviewed at Jebba. Assisted us to travel on water to *Ketsa* Rock at Jebba Island.

AMGD – Alhaji Muhammed Gana Doko, 80 years, a retired public servant, presently holding a traditional title of *Mayaki* (War Chief) of Doko. He informed this researcher on 12/8/13 about the *Bini* Confederacy and their inter relationships that existed between some of them, especially between Doko, Gaba and Essan. According to him, the *Bini* were feared because of their skill in medicine. He also gave an insight into how the present Doko and environs were once covered with thick forests which attracted hunters from far and near. The latter is supported by other informants.

AMGJ – Alh. Muhammed Garan Jebba, 100 years, informs us about the trade and commercial links in the early time between Nupe and the Niger Delta and Onitsha areas and transportation of goods and services on the Niger River. He explained the “significance” of *Ketsa* Rock, a ritual, called *Juju* Rock, which stands upstream on the Jebba Island. That in the past, no girl in the area could get married without visiting the cult for ‘gift’ and ‘blessings’ from the rock. The appeasement of the rock brought success in fishing, canoe – ferrying, and agricultural produce, among others.

AMN – Alh. Muhammed Nagenu, *Kintso* (Head of the original owners of land of Nagenu village and its environs in the present – day Wushishi Local Government Area. Aged 75 years, interviewed at Nagenu on 20/6/13.

ANKB – Alh. Nma Kiyakiya Bida, (now late) 83 years interviewed on 20/12/13 at Bida, appears knowledgeable on Sheikh Abdulrahman *Tsatsa*, one of the indigeneous Islamic reformers in Nupelad-believing that he was born in Bida.

ANTB – Adamu Nma Tete Bida - 64 years, interviewed on 24/1/15 at Bida. He settled and worked in Kano for many years. He informs us specific areas in Kano that had witnessed high concentration of Nupe settlers as traders and skilled workers in the early period.

AS – Aliyu Sunlati, 54 years. Interviewed at Kontagora, but from Kede area. He mentions some Kyadya settlements and canoe building centres in Nupeland.

ASIPL – Alh. Sha’aba Isah Patigi – Lemu, the late village Head of Lemu, 87 years, interviewed at Lemu on 18/11/13. Informs us of the story of Lemu town, being founded by the Gbagyi group in the north – eastern part of Lemu.

ASNB – Alhaji Salihu Ndagi Bida 63 years, retired public servant, but now a politician, interviewed on 25/01/16 and 6/02/16 at Bida. He attempts to give his own interpretation of the term ‘Religion’ in Nupe language as *Wunwun*, meaning worship. He also describes Nupe- Igala relationship as real in the past, but could not affirm which of the two that predominated the other, leading to the master – servant relationship. He observes almost the same traditional body and facial markings among the Nupe, Igala and Bassan-Nge groups as evidence of cultural affinity among the groups.

AT – Alhassan Tswako Dokomba, 80 years at Dokomba on 9/6/13. He believes in the historicity of Tsoede and his flight from Idah to Nupeland, his maternal home. Hot chase and pursuit by his half-brothers from Idah forced Tsoede to “sink” his canoe at a place called Lenfa-Kuso.

AUN – Alh. Umar Nku, 65 years at Nku village on 16/7/14. He traces the practice of drum beating and trumpet blowing to the nobility class to the dynastic struggle between Tsoede and his maternal uncle at Nku. The latter staged a war against the uncle to strip him of his *Etsuship* (kingship). Considering this to be against the tradition, the uncle is said to have fled with his supporters to a river called *Guntsuwa*.

AZUW – Alh Zakariya Usman Wunangi, 72 years, interviewed at Bida on 14/8/13. He informs this researcher of the early settlement of people at Wunangi which has now gone into extinction. He affirms the existence of huge human beings beyond human imagination as claimed by Obayemi, whom the latter calls *Epazhi*. The former claims that so giant were they that no hand could round their bodies.

DMMS – Dr. Muhammed Man Shaaba identifies areas, both in Niger and Kwara State, where the practice of *Ndakogboya* cult was and to some extent, is still popular. He also gives the etymological meaning of *Goyizhi* (the Fulani aristocracy).

DNML – Dr. Ndana Muhammad (Lasagi) now late, identifies important centres of *Ndakogboya* cult in Nupeland.

DSA – Dr. Sheikh Abdullah – 60 years a retired banker and educationist. Informal chats on 21/01/16 at Minna, gives equivalent Nupe word of Religion as *Bautajinya* -

- submission to and worship of the Supreme Being. This definition appears supportive of the one given by the previous informants.
- FNL – Fatima Nakodi Latayi in Kwara State, 80 years interviewed on 26/6/15 at Kontagora. She mentions important woodwork Nupe centres such as Latayi, Lafiagi, Patigi, Tsonga, among other areas in Kwara State.
- IYB - Ishaku Yageba Bida, 66 years lived and worked in Kano for many years. He identifies many area of Nupe settlements in Kano and its environs, as skilled workers.
- MIA – Muhammed Ibn Abubakar (Assistant Village (Head) of Nku village, 85 years, interviewed at Nku village on 9/6/13. He and ACG above alluded to the existence of human habitation in Nupeland long before the emergence of Tsoede. He informed us of how the present Bassa-Nge Nupe group in Kogi State originated from Gbara town. He never believes in the generally held tradition of servant – master relationship between Nupe and Igala respectively, but that of brotherly relationship between them.
- MMA – Musa Mohammed Agaie – 47 years, public servant interviewed at Suleja on 3/4/15, gave me information on the location of a village called Wunangi located between Katcha in Niger State and Eggan in Kogi State. Obayemi mentions the village as being an ancient Nupe settlement inhabited by giant human race, the *Epazhi*, whose sizes were beyond human imagination.
- MMGT – Muhammed Mai *Gari* Tuwagi, 75 years interviewed at Tuwagi village, one of the original *Bini* settlements on 30/11/13. He and the other elders present at the time of interview believe that Tuwagi was the initial capital of the *Bini* confederacy, and not the Tafyan as is commonly claimed.
- MSNY – Mr Stephen N. Yisa 73 years of Essan village on 4/1/14 claimed to be the descendents of the various *Bini* settlements. That even though, the settlements were independent, annual tributes were paid by all the federating units to the confederacy capital. Essan village proved to be one of the large *Bini* original settlements under popular and renowned leadership structure under the *Etsu*.
- MYB – Muhammed Yagba Bida, 55 years, a descendent of wood carvers ward – Tako Wasa Bida. Took us round specific houses noted in the past and to some extent,

- are still noted for wood carving of different materials, wooden spoons, plates, stools, chairs, etc. interview and interaction on 31/5/15 at Bida.
- NKJ – Ndaji (Kani) Jebba, 54 years. Informs us on the spiritual importance of *Ketsa* rock in Jebba. He escorted us to the rock site on canoe.
- RE – Rev. Elizah Bokungi, 70 years – through phone discussion on 26/11/15 defines Religion in Nupe as *Gbigba*, which literally means followership. This is a Christian terminology of religion. All the various definitions of religion in Nupe are informative and suggestive of the fact that contrary to Nadel’s and other writers’ claim that the Nupe do not have an equivalent name or concept of religion apart from the Arabic concept of *Adini*, the group have their own concept of the religion they were practising before the introduction of Islam and Christianity.
- SA – Salihu Abdullahi, 64 years, public servant, through informal chats at Kontagora on 20/05/14 and 21/9/15. He identifies major rice growing areas in Nupeland.
- YLD – Yababa Ladan Dokomba 65 years, a rice farmer, interviewed at Dokomba village on 15/2/14. He explains the growth of rice and other cereals in the marshy areas of Nupeland in large quantity, beyond the subsistence level. He gives information on various *batachi* settlements who are major rice growing areas in both Niger and Kwara States.
- UMMG – Usman Muazu MaiGari of Nupeko village, 80 years? At Nupeko village on 15/6/13. He expresses the importance of Nupeko as a commercial centre in the past. It was one of the first places of Tsoede settlement – hence his initial capital.

## ACHIVAL RECORDS

### National Archives, Kaduna (NAK)

- NAK B375 Bida Div Introduction to certain notes.
- NAK Bid 655 Nupe History, 1897.
- NAK Iloprof 5/599 “History of Patigi”.
- NAK Iloprof 5/6999/5.1 “Patigi Local Custom and Tradition compiled in 1953”.
- NAK Iloprof 6,593 “Lafiagi Historical and Assessment Report”.
- NAK Kadcaptory 2,22 TARIKH Min Bilad wa Tarikh al-Bilad min Bilad Gbara.
- NAK Minprof 223/1912 “Report on Nupe”.
- NAK Minprof 7/1225/1921 Historical notes on Bida.
- NAK Minprof 8/207821 “Notes on Nupe Life and Customs”
- NAK SNP 142/p/1917 – “Historical Notes on Nupe”.
- NAK SNP 1724355 “Notes on Nupe”
- NAK SNP 266P/1918 Assessment Report: “Eggan, Kakanda and Kupa Districts”.
- NAK Sok Prof S. 2840 “Notes on Emirates and Tribes in Northern Nigeria”.
- NAK Uoprof 213/1912 Nupe and others: “Linguistic and Ethnographic notes”.
- NAK, BID DIV, B, 1420, “Bida Glass Industry”
- NAK, Bida District, B. 797, p.12
- NAK, P.1 “A Report of the Kola Plantations in Nupe (Division III) M 4105 = Kola Development.”
- NAKM/654 “Historical Notes on Zugurma”.
- NAKM4105 “A Report of the Kola Plantations in Nupe (Division III) = Kola Development”, P.1.
- NAKSNP 17, 25(a) 355 on “Nupe History” by Mallam Aliyu Bida and H. G. Harris.
- NAKSNP 17/21563 Vol.2 “Kisra legends”.
- NAKSNP 17/25355, “Notes on Nupe Province”

## **NIGERIA MAGAZINES**

- Bowers, C. “Nupe Singers”, *Nigeria Magazine*, 84, March, 1965, pp. 53 – 56.
- Cyprian, E., “Patigi Regatta”, *Nigeria Magazine*, No.85, June, 1965, pp. 101 – 110.
- Eccles, P. “Nupe Bronzes”, *Nigeria Magazine Lxxxii*, 1962, pp.13- 25.
- Igwilo, B. N. “Traditional Pottery in Nigeria”, *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 147, 1983, pp.39-46.
- MacRow, D. W. “Bida Industries Crafts of Bida”, *Nigeria Magazine*, Vol. xxx, No. 74, Sept. 1962, pp.55 – 60.
- Stephens, P., “Nupe Wood Carving”, *Nigeria Magazine*, No.88, March, 1966, pp. 21 – 35.

## **NEWSPAPERS**

- Kperogi, F. A. “Language Families in Nigeria” *Sunday Trust Newspaper*, August 19, 2012, p.38.
- Mato, K., “Today is a Reflection of Yesterday”, *Weekly Trust Newspaper*, November 29, 2014, p.40.

## **GAZETTEERS & COLONIAL REPORTS**

- Arnett, E. J. (trans), *The Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, London: Frank Cass, 1920.
- Dupigny, E. G. M. “The Gazetteer of Nupe province”, in, *Gazatteer of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, London, Walerlow & Sons Ltd, 1920.
- Green, A. H. M. *Gazetteer of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, Vol. 3, London, Frank Cass,...
- Kirk – Green, A. H. M. *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London: Oxford Press, 1966.
- Temple, C. L. *Native Races and their Rulers* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) London: Frauk Cass, 1968.
- Kirk-Green, A. H. M., *Gazetteer of Nupe*, London: Oxford Press, 1966.
- Meek, C. K, *Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, London: Frank Cass, 1925.
- Reports on Zugurma District by Methuns, A. B..



- Temple, O., *Notes on Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and State in Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, in Temple, C. L. (ed), London.

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Imam, I. N., “The Spread of Islam in Nupe 1400 – 1790”, History Departmental Seminar Paper, Bayero University, Kano (BUK), April 6, 1976.
- Jar, U., “General Disintegration in the West African Region”, being a Public lecture delivered at Bayero University, Kano,(BUK), on October 18, 1979.
- Mason, M., “Trade and the State in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nupe”, Conference Paper on Economic History of the Central Sudan, Kano, January 5-10, 1976.
- Musa, H., “Methods and Techniques of Collecting Oral Traditions as Historical Source Material”, Post-graduate Seminar Paper, History Department, ABU, Zaria, 1983.
- Ndagi, A., “Nupe as Epicentre of Nigerian Arts”, being a Public Lecture delivered at the maiden Nupe Art Conference/Exhibition, organized by the National Gallery of Arts, at Bida on 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.
- Obayemi, A., “Conceptual and Methodological Considerations of the Early History of Nigerian Peoples”, in, *History Research at Ahmadu Bello University,(ABU), Zaria*, Vol.2, The Post-graduate Seminar Papers, 1977/1978.
- Ukwedeh, J. N., “Chronology and the Study of Igala History to C1830A.D.”, Post-graduate History Seminar Paper, ABU, Zaria, Feb. 1984.
- Ukwedeh, J. N., “The Rise of the Attah System in Igalaland C.13<sup>th</sup> Century”, Post-graduate Seminar Paper, History Department, ABU, Zaria, June 16, 1979.

## DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Abdullahi, A. R., "The Gobir Factor in the Social and Political History of the Rima Basin, C.1650 – 1808 A.D", Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1984.
- Abdullahi, S. A. "Nupe Kingdom Before and After the Jihad of Uthman bn Fodio: A Survey of its Political and Administrative Set-up", M. A. Thesis, Bayero University, Kano, 1983.
- Adamu, M., "A Hausa Government in Decline: Yawuri in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", M. A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1968.
- Aiyedun, K.D., "Subsistence and Settlement Patterns in the Wushishi Area of Kaduna Valley, Niger State", Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 1989, pp. 30-31
- Balogun, S.A. "Gwandu Emirates in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with Special Reference to Political Relations: 1817 – 1903", Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1970.
- Imam, I. N. "A History of Islam in Nupe", B. A. Dissertation, Bayero University, Kano, 1973.
- Jimada, I. S. "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: Historical Background 1819 – 1898", M. A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991.
- Jimada, I. S. "The External Relations of the Nupe Kingdom and Emirate C.1650 – 1850 with Special Reference to the Alafinate of Oyo and its Successor States", Ph.D Thesis, ABU, Zaria, 2001.
- Kolo, R. N., "The Bini in Nupe History, with Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko", B. A. Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1973.
- Mahdi, A., "The State and the Economy: The Sarauta System and its Role in Shaping the Society and Economy of Kano with Particular Reference to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1982.
- Manko, M. K. M., "Lemu Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries", B.A. Dissertation, History Department, University of Ilorin, 1983.
- Mason, M. "The Nupe Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Political History", Ph.D Thesis, Birmingham, 1970.
- Mohammed. S., "Historical Development of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D.", Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2007.
- Usman, A. A. "The Emergence of Bida Emirate: Establishment and Consolidation. 1857 – 1900", B. A. Dissertation, History Department, University of Ilorin, 1987.

- Usman, Y. B., “The Transformation of Katsina C.1796 – 1903: The Overthrow of Sarauta System and the Establishment and Evolution of the Emirate”, Ph.D Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1974.
- Ziri, R. B., “The History of Bida Emirate in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: A Study in Colonialism and the Transformation of Social Class – 1900 – 1960”, M. A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 1991.

## ARTICLES

- Abdullahi, S., “Early States in the Central Sudan”, in, Ajayi, J.F.A. and Crowther, M., (eds), *History of West Africa*, London: Longman, 1971, pp.158 – 201.
- Abdullahi, S., “Some Considerations Relating to the Formation of States in Hausaland”, *A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*, Zaria: The Abdullahi. Smith Centre for Historical Research, Zaria, 1987, pp. 59-79.
- Abdullahi, S., “The Legend of Seifuwa: A Study of the Origins of a Tradition of Origin”, *A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*, Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, Zaria, pp. 22-56
- Abdul-Rasheed, N., “The Origin of Egungun: A Critical Literary Appraisal”, *African Study Monographs*, 17(2), 1996, pp.59-68.
- Abubakar, S., “Political Evolution or Revolution?: The Case of *Kin Nupe* before the Advent of Colonial Rule”, in, Ajayi, J.F.A. and Bashir I.(eds), *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria*, Ibadan: University Press, 1985, pp.67 – 76.
- Adefuye, A., “The Use and Abuse of Oral Tradition”, in, Atanda, J. A. (ed.),*Tarikh* vol.8, Published for *HSN*, Longman (Nig Ltd), 1987, pp.37 – 52.
- Ajayi, J.F.A., and Alagoa, E. J., “Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of Economic Development and Inter-group Relations”, in, Obaro, I., (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980, pp 224 – 235.
- Akubor, E. O., “The Role of Geography in Fostering Inter-group Relations in Nigeria: A Case Study of Igala of Central Nigeria and Esan People of Southern Nigeria-1500 – 1850”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, Vol.I, 2007, pp.22 – 30.
- Alagoa, E. J. “The Present State of Oral Traditional Studies”, in Uya, O. E. and Erim, E. O. (eds), *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*, Enugu: Fouth Dimension Publishers Ltd, 1984, pp.33-37.
- Al-Hajj, M. A., “A 17<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicles on the Origins and Missionary Activities of Wangarawa”, in, *Kano Studies vol.I, No.4*, 1968, pp. 7-16.

- Andah, B. W., “Iron Age Beginnings in West Africa: Reflections and Suggestions” in, Andah, B. W. (ed.) *West African Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 9, 1979, pp. 125 – 140.
- Andah, B. W. and Okpoto, A. I., “Oral Traditions and West African Culture History: A New Direction”, in, Andah, B.W., (ed.) *West African Journal of Archaeology*, Vol.9, 1979, pp. 201 – 224.
- Armstrong, R. G., “The Use of Linguistic and Ethnographic Data in the Study of Idoma and Yoruba History”, in, Vansina, J., et al (eds.) *The Historian in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp 127 – 139.
- Arnett, E. J., (trans), *The Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, London: Frank Cass Ltd., 1920.
- Ashley, Crossman, form About.com Guide *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia/file://D: Structural ufunctionalism.htm/*.
- Atanda, J. A., “The Historian and Problem of Origins of Peoples in Nigerian Society”, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria,(HSN)*, vol 10, No3, Dec. 1980, pp. 63 – 77.
- Babalo, D. O., “Egungun Elewe of the Igbomina”, in, *Odu, A Journal of West African Studies, New Series, No 26*, Ile-Ife: University Press, July, 1984, pp. 139 – 143.
- Babayemi, S. O., “The Oyo, Ife and Benin Relationship Reconsidered”, in, *African Notes*, vol.viii, No 2, October, 1979, pp. 15-26.
- Ballard, J. A., “Historical Inferences from the Linguistic Geography of the Nigerian Middle Belt”, *Africa*, 41, 1971.
- Barth, H., “Routes from Kano to Nuffe (Nupe) and from Mozambique to Lake Nyasa... Extracted from letters from Dr. Barth to Baikie” *Journal of Royal Geographical Society,(JRGS)*, 24, 1854, PP.283 – 288.
- Birmingham, D. “Historians and West Africa” in, Fagg, J. D. (ed.), *Africa Discovers her Past*, London, 1970.
- Blench, R. M. “Nupoid”, in, John Bender Samuel (ed.), *The Congo Languages: A Classification and Description of Africa’s Largest Language Family*, Lanham: University Press, 1989, pp. 305 – 312.
- Boston, J., “Notes on the Origin of Igala”, *Journal of HSN*, Vol.11, No3, Dec. 1962, pp. 373 – 387.
- Brown, P., “The Igala”, in, Forde, D. (ed.), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London: International African Institute, 1955 (repr. 1970), pp.55 – 73.

- Clapperton, H., *Journal of the Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Sokoto*, London, 1929.
- Clifford, M., “A Nigerian Chiefdom: Some Notes on the Igala Tribe in Nigeria and their Divine King”, *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute Lxvi*, 1936, pp. 393 – 436.
- Daniels, S. G. H., “The Early Stone Age”, in, Shaw, T. (ed.), *Lectures on Nigerian Pre-History and Archaeology*, Ibadan: University Press, 1969, pp. 14-22.
- Daryll, Forde, “The Nupe”, in, Daryll, Forde (ed.), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London: International African Institute, 1955, pp. 17 – 54.
- Elemesia, C.C., “The Peoples of West Africa Around 1000 A.D.”, in, Ajayi, J.F.A. and Espie, I., *A Thousand Years of West African History*, Ibadan: University Press, 1965, pp.39 – 54.
- Fayam, F. N., “The Traditions of Origin of the Bassa-Nge Ethnic Group of Niger – Benue Confluence of Nigeria”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History, vol.1, No.1*, Dec 2007, pp.31 – 40.
- Fraiser, D., “The Tsoede Bronzes and Owo Yoruba Arts, *African Arts, vol. viii*, 1975, pp. 30 – 35.
- Goody, J. and Mustapha, T. N., “The Caravan Trade from Kano to Salaga”, *Journal of HSN*, vol.III, No. 4, June, 1967, pp...
- Haruna, A., “A Concise History of Bassan-Nge Nupe”, Pankshim, 1975, pp. 16-18.
- Henige, D.P., “Dating the Past from Oral Tradition”, in, Atanda, J. A. (ed.), *Tarikh*, Vol. 8, Published for the HSN, Longman (Nig) Ltd., 1987, pp. 43-52.
- Henry, G., (Google search), “The Meaning of Political Economy” in the *Science of Political Economy...*
- Horton, R., “Ancient Ife: A Re assessment, *JHSN, Vol. 9, No 4*, June, 1979, pp. 69 – 149.
- Idrees, A. A., “Ganigan War-1881-1882. The Kyadya Reaction to the Political and Economic Domination of Bida in the Middle Niger Area of Nigeria”, *Journal of the Paskistan Historical Society*, vol.xxxvii, part 1, 1989, pp. 5-16.
- Idrees, A. A., “Gogo Habiba of Bida: The Rise and Demise of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Merchant Princess and Politician”, *African Study Monographs, vol. 12, No.1*, 1991, pp. 1- 9.
- Idrees, A. A., “Ilorin Factor in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nupe Politics: A Study in the Inter-Emirate Relations with Sokoto Caliphate, Nigeria”, *Trans African Journal of History, vol.20*, 1991, pp. 181-189.

- Idrees, A.A. “Fishing and Canoe-Ferrying among the Nupe in Central Nigeria: A Cultural Historical Perspective”, *Ife Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies, No.4*, 1993, pp. 72 – 82.
- Idrees, A.A., “Colonial Conquest and Reaction in the Middle Niger: The British Subjugation of the Nupe 1897 – 1900”, in, Idrees, A.A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp. 639 – 660.
- Idrees, A.A., “The Aganchu of Kakanda: The Origin and Development of Reverine Ruling Dynasty”, in Z.O Akpata and Y. Akinwumi, (eds.), *The Groundwork of Niger – Benue Confluence History*, Ibadan: Cresthill Publishers Ltd., 2011, pp. 104-114.
- Jidda, I. M., “Agriculture in Nupeland: Rice production and others”, in, Idrees, A.A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.) *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, Vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Ltd. 2002, pp. 333 – 366.
- Jimada, I. S., “Some Reflections on the Early History of the Peoples of the Middle Niger and Upper Ogun River Areas before 1500”, *ZAHIR, Zaria: Historical Research Journal of the Department of History, vol.1*, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 2001.
- Jimada, I. S., “Preliminary Historical Inferences about the Origins and Antecedents of the Nupe”, in, Idrees, A.A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp. 93-106.
- Jimada, I. S., *The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba C1275 – 1897*, Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2005.
- Jimada, I.S., “The Environment and the Early Peopling of the Middle Niger Basin Area”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History Vol.1*, 2007, pp. 15 – 21.
- Jimada, I.S., “Traditional History and the Genesis of the Nupe-Speaking People”, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History, Vol.2 No.1*, March, 2008, pp. 9 – 15.
- Jimada, I. S. “Review of *History of the Emirate of Bida to C1899*, by Sule Moh’d, *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History, vol.7, No.1*, 2013, pp.83 – 88.
- Jimada, I. S., “The Foundation of Nupe, Benin and Ife Relations”, in, Wuam, T. and M. L. Salahu (eds.), *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Press, 2014.
- Ki – Zerbo, J., “*Methodology and African Pre – History*”, *General History of Africa*, (Abridged Edition), California, UNESCO: James Currey Ltd, 1990

- Last, M., "Reform in West Africa: The Jihad Movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", in, Ajayi J.F.A. and Crowther, M. (eds.) *History of West Africa, Vol.2*, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1974.
- Lawal, B., "Present State of Art Historical Research in Nigeria: Problems and Possibilities", *Journal of African History, vol.xvii, No.2, pp. 193 – 216*.
- Levtzion, N., "The Early States of the Western Sudan to 1500", in, Ajayi, J.F.A and Crowther, M., (eds.), *History of West Africa, vol.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, London: Longman, 1975, pp...
- Lovejoy, P. E., "The Role of Wangarawa in the Economic Transformation of the Central Sudan in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *Journal of African History, xix, No 2, 1978, pp. 173 – 193*.
- Martine, J., "Oral Traditions and African Historical Reconstruction", in, Uya O. E. and Erim, E. O. (eds) *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension publishers Ltd. 1984 pp. 69 – 76.
- Mason, M., Population Density and Slave Raiding: The Case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria", *Journal of African History, vol.10, No. 4, 1969, pp. 551 – 564*.
- Mason, M., "Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of Bida Emirate", *Journal of African History, (JAH), Vol.xiv, No.3,1973, pp. 453 – 471*.
- Mason, M., "The Tsoede Myth and Nupe Kinglists: More Political Propaganda?", *History in Africa, vol.2, 1975, pp. 101 – 112*.
- Mason, M. "The Antecedent of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic Government in Nupe", *The International Journal of Historical Studies, vol.10, No.1, 1977, pp. 63 – 76*.
- May, M. D., "Journey into Nupe and Yoruba Countries in 1858", *Journal of Royal Geographical Society, 1860, pp. 225 – 227*.
- Nadel, S. F., "Witchcraft and Anti-witchcraft in Nupe Society, *Africa, Vol.viii, No.4, 1935, pp. 423 – 447*.
- Nadel, S.F., "The King's Hangman: A Judicial Organisation in Central Nigeria," *MANxxxv 143, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, September, 1935, pp. 129-132*.
- Nadel, S. F., "Gunu: A Fertility Cult of the Nupe in Northern Nigeria", *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (JRAI) 47, 1937, PP. 91-132*.
- Nadel, S. F., "The Kede: A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria", in, Fortes, M. and Evans, E.E. Pritchard (eds.) *African Political Systems*, International African Institute, 1940, pp.165 – 195.



- Nadel, S. F., "Glass Making in Nupe", *MAN*, Vol.40, 1940, pp.85 – 86.
- Nadel, S.F., "The Gani Ritual in Nupe: A Study in Social Symbiosis", *Africa*, Vol.19, No.3, 1949, pp.77 – 186?
- Obayemi, A., "The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600", in, Ajayi, J.F.A. and Crowther, M. (eds.), *History of West Africa*, Vol.2, London: Longman, 1976, pp.196 – 263.
- Obayemi, A., "Kakanda: A People, A History, An Identity", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria,(JHSN)* Vol.ix, No.3, 1978, pp. 1-22.
- Obayemi, A., "Ancient Ile-Ife: Another Cultural Historical Reinterpretation", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria, (JHSN)*, Vol.9, No.4, June, 1979, pp. 151 – 185.
- Obayemi, A., "States and Peoples of the Niger – Benue Confluence Area", in, Obaro, I. (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig. Ltd., 1980, pp. 144 – 164.
- Obayemi, A., "Tsoede, Etsuzhi and Nupe History Before 1800", in, Idrees, A.A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, Vol.1, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp. 167 – 196.
- Oguagha, P. A., "The Igala People: A Socio-Historical Examination", in *Odu- A Journal of West African Studies*, No. 21, Ife: University Press, 1981, pp. 168 – 192.
- Ohiare, J. A. "Nupe Relations with her Southern Neighbours in the Niger –Benue Confluence Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Case of Ebira", in, Idrees, A.A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.) *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area*, Vol.1, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp. 533 – 562.
- Okita, S. I.O., "Cultural Affinity in the Niger Benue Confluence Region", in Paul, C. D. (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger – Benue Confluence Region*, National Gallery of Art, 2005, pp. 127 – 133.
- Ologo, R. O. "The Environmental Background to Man, History and Culture in the Niger – Benue", in, Paul, C.D. (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger-Benue Confluence Region*, national Gallery of Art, 2005, pp. 155 – 170.
- Olufemi, O., Reviewing, Hamdun S. and King N. (eds.), "Ibn Battuta in Black Africa", in *Journal of African History*, Vol.8 No.1, London: Rex Collins, 1975, pp. 145 – 146.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A., "The Dating of Oral Tradition", in, Atanda, J. A. (ed.), *Tarikh*, Vol.8, Published for the HSN, Longman (Nig) Ltd, 1987 pp. 53 – 70.
- Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, Vol.1, London, 1832.

- Shaw, T. "An Introduction to Archaeological Methods", in, Shaw, T. (ed.) *Lectures on Nigerian Pre-History and Archaeology*, Ibadan: University Press, 1969, pp.1-13.
- Shaw, T., "Preliminary Report on the Second Session's Archaeological Work in the Wushishi Area", *Zaria Archaeological Paper No.4, 1976 – 1977*.
- Schon, J. and Crowther, S., *Journals of Rev. T. F. Schon and S., Crowther, 1842*.
- Sean, Field "Oral History and Methodology", in, *SEPHIS*, A Publication of the University of the Philippines, being a Lecture delivered at the University of Cape Town, January, 2007.
- Smith, M. G. "The Kano Chronicle as History", in, Bawuro, M. B. (ed.) *Studies in the History of Kano*, Kano: Bayero University Press, 1983, pp. 31 – 56.
- Smith, R., "The Alafin in Exile: A Study of the Igboho Period in Oyo History", *The Journal of African History, Vol.vi, No.1* Cambridge: University Press, pp. 57 – 77.
- Sule M., "Gbagyi and their South-West Neighbours to 1898", in, Idrees, A. A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, Vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Ltd, 2002, pp. 513 – 532.
- Sule M., "The Significance of the Emirate of Bida in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1833 – 1897", in Wuam, T., and Salahu, M. ,L. (eds.) *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB)University Press, 2014, pp. 50 – 70.
- Sule M., "Some Notes on Pre-Colonial Gbagyi Environment and Economic Activities", in, Wuam, T. and Salahu, M. L. (eds.), *Aspects of Niger State History: Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo*, Lapai: Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) University Press, 2014, pp. 201 – 213.
- Tamuno, T. N., "Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence", in, Ajayi, J.F.A. and Espie, I, (eds.), *A Thousand years of West African History*, Ibadan: University Press, 1976, pp.206 – 216.
- Temple, C. L., *Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, being official Reports Compiled by C. Temple, London: Frank Cass, 1965, pp. 319 – 335.
- Udo, R. K. "Environments and Peoples of Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria," in, Obaro, I. (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History* Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1980, pp. 7 – 24.
- Ukwedeh, J. N., "The Igala – Mela Factor in the Evolution of the Attah Kingship in Ane-Igala", in, Idrees, A. A. and Ochefu, Y. A. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area, Vol.1*, Lagos: CSS Ltd., 2002, pp.217 – 242.

- Usman, Y. B. “The Historicity of the Peoples and Politics of Nigeria: Observations on Historical Consciousness and Historiography”, in, *Beyond Fairy Tales, Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Y. B. Usman*, ABU, Zaria, December, 2006, pp. 123-142.
- Usman, Y. B., “Abdullahi Smith and State Formation in the Central Sudan: Limitations of Kinship and Evasions of Fage and Oliver”, in, *Beyond Fairy Tales, Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Y. B. Usman*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, December, 2006, pp. 77 – 97.
- Usman, Y. B., “History, Tradition and Reaction: The Perception of Nigerian History in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”. In, *Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Y. B. Usman*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, December, 2006, pp. 39-64.
- Uya, O. E., “Trends and Perspectives in African History”, in, Uya, O. E. and Erim, E. O. (eds.), *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd., 1984, pp.1 – 9.
- Willianson, K., “Indigenous Languages of the Benue – Congo Region: Their Classification and its implication for Pre-history”, in, Paul, C. D. (ed.), *Man, History and Culture in the Niger – Benue Confluence Region*, National Gallery of Art, 2005, pp.148 – 154.

## BOOKS

- Adogo, P. M., *Research Methods in Humanities*, Lagos: Mathous Press Ltd, 2002.
- Ahmadou, M'Bow, "General Introduction", in, Ki-zerbo (ed.), *General History of Africa I*, California UNESCO, 1990.
- Anthony, O. E., *Political Economy of Nigeria*, Onitsha: Bookpoint Ltd. 2005.
- Baikie, W. B., *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda*, London: Frank Cass Ltd, 1966.
- Banfield, A. W., *Life Among the Nupe Tribe in West Africa*, Berlin: H. S. Hallman, 1905.
- Bohannon, P., *Africa and Africans*, published for the American Museum of National History, New York: Garden City Press, 1964.
- Boston, J., *The Igala Kingdom*, Ibadan: University Press, 1968.
- Buchanan, K. M. and Pugh, J. C., *Land and People in Nigeria: The Human Geography of Nigeria and its Environmental Background*, London: University Press Ltd., 1955.
- Crowther, S. A. and Taylor, J.C., *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger*, London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968.
- Dauda, I., *Nda: The Only Nupeman in Africa*, Minna: Murak Press, 2010.
- Djibril, Tamsir, *Africa from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century*, California: University Press.
- Fage, J. D., *History of West Africa*, Cambridge: University Press, 1969.
- Frobenius, L., *The Voice of Africa, Vol. 2*, being an Account of the Travels of the German Explorer into the inner Africa – 1910 – 1912, (tran) Rudolt Blind, London, 1913.
- Goldthorpe, J. E. *An Introduction to Sociology* 2nd edition, Cambridge: University Press, 1974.
- Greerberg, J. H., "*The Languages of Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968
- Hadiza, A., *The Evolution of Etsu Nupe Dynasty*, Kano: Tofa Commercial Press Ltd., 2008.
- Henige, D. P., *The Chronology of Oral Traditions*, London: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Hogben, J. S. and Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

- Hopkins, A. G., *Economic History of Africa*, London, 1973.
- Ibrahim, I. B., *Eganmaganzhi Nupe (Nupe Proverbs) with English Translation with Explanations*, Minna: Gandzo Enterprises, 2009.
- Idrees, A.A., *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland: Decline and Regeneration of Edegi Ruling Dynasty*, Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig) Ltd., 1998.
- Ismail, D., *Nupe in History 1300 – Date*, Jos: Olawale Publishing Co. (Nig) Ltd., 2002.
- Johnson, S. (Rev), *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd. 1921.
- Karl, Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1997.
- Last, M., *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London: Longman, 1967.
- Les Editions, J.A., *Africa Atlases*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Produced by Atlas of Nigeria, 2002.
- Mason, M., *The Foundations of the Bida Kingdom*, Zaria: ABU Press, 1981.
- Mayer, C. S., *In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy*, Cambridge: University Press, 1987.
- Mohammed, S., *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 A.D*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Press, 2011.
- Nadel, S. F., “*A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, London: Oxford University Press, 1942.
- Nadel, S. F., *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam on a West Africa Chiefdom*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1954.
- Ndagi, A., *Nupe: The Origin – How All the Tribes in Nigeria Originated from Nupe*, Bida, Abuja and Washington D.C.: Elemkpe Publishers, 2008 and 2012.
- Ndagi, A., *Who are the Nupes?: The Evolving Definition of the Nupe Identity*, Abuja: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.
- Ndagi, A., *Ashadu was Nupe: How the Igala People Originated from Nupe*, Minna: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.
- Ndagi, A., *Yisa the Nupe Emperor: The Kisra Nupe People and Early Christianity in Pre-historic Kin Nupe*, Minna: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.
- Ndagi, A., *Ifa is Nupe: The Ancient Nupe Religion of Eba*, Bida: Elemkpe publishers, 2012.

- Ndagi, A., *Bayajida was Nupe: How the Hausa People Originated from Nupe*, Abuja: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.
- Ndagi, A., *Queen Amina of Zaria was a Nupe Woman: How the People of Zaria Originated from Nupe*, Abuja and Washington D.C.: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.
- Ndagi, A., *Nupe Timeline – A Pocket Timetable of Nupe History*, Minna: Elemkpe Publishers, 2012.
- Ogunremi, G. O. and Faluyi, E. K., (eds.), *Economic History of West Africa Since 1750*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication, 1966.
- Palmer, H. R., “Kano Chronicle”, in, *Sudanese Memoirs, Vol.III*, Lagos, 1928, pp. 109 – 111.
- Robin, L., *The Old Oyo Empire C.1600 – 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Oxford: university Press, 1977.
- Saidu, I., *The Nupe and their Neighbours from 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ibadan: Heinemann Books (Nig.) Ltd. 1992.
- Shaaba, M. M., *Zaguru: An African Personality and Democracy in Nigeria*, Minna: Global Links Communications, 2013.
- Sidi, T. S., *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland: The Emirate of Bida as a Case Study*, Kaduna: Fembo Books and Graphics, 2000.
- Solomon, A.Y., *Nupe Heritage Dictionay*, Minna: Kochita Resources Ltd., 2013
- Talcott, P., *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory*, New York: The Free Press, 1975.
- Toyin, F. and Lovejoy, P. E. (eds.) *Pawnship in Africa – Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective*, United Kingdom: West view Press, 1994.
- Udo, R. K., *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*, London: Heinemann, 1970.
- Ukwedeh, J. N., *History of the Igala Kingdom C.1534 – 1854: A Political and Cultural Integration in the Niger – Benue Confluence Area of Nigeria*, Kaduna: Arewa House, ABU Press, 2003.
- Vansina, J., *Oral Tradition – A Study in Historical Methodology (tran) by Wright, H. M.*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Willet, F., *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, Thamos and Hudson Plate, 1967.

## ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

Ashly, Grossman, from About.com Guide Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia/file:D: Structural Ufunctionalism.html/.

De-Ross Deb, “The Structural Functional Theoretical Approach: (<http://www.wise-online.com/objects/viewobject.aspx?id=1253404>). Accessed, February 24, 2012. en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/kisra-legend, The Kisra Legend, p.4.

Gabriel, S., “Introduction to Political Economy”  
<https://www.methyoke.edu/coursel/sqraie//politicalUconomyUmain.thm2002>.  
Accessed on 23/06/2013.

[http://www.amanaonline.com/sokoto-13htm\(Historical Excursion\) who are the Nupes?](http://www.amanaonline.com/sokoto-13htm(Historical%20Excursion)who%20are%20the%20Nupes?)  
<https://www.metholyoke.edu/ourse/sgabriel/politicalueconomyumain.htm2002>.accessed  
on 23/6/2013.

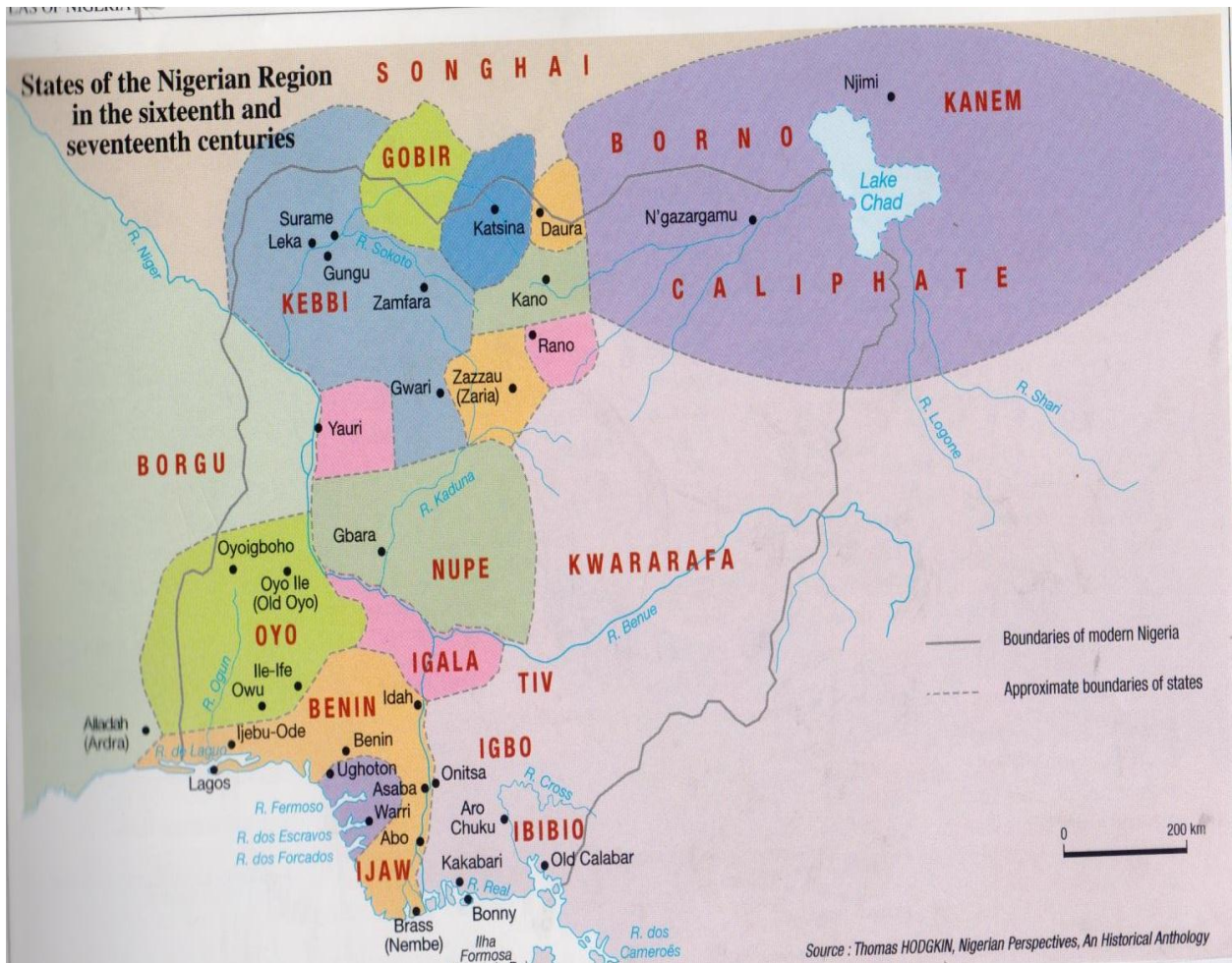
Suleiman, M. A. and Adamu, I.N. “Nupe: The Past, the Present and the Future”,  
<http://newsdiaryonline/nupe.thepast-thepresent-future-by-prof-.m-a-t-suleiman-dr.-ndaji-adamu/nathash.wkmat4dput>.

Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia*.www.



## APPENDIX I

### States of the Nigerian Region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

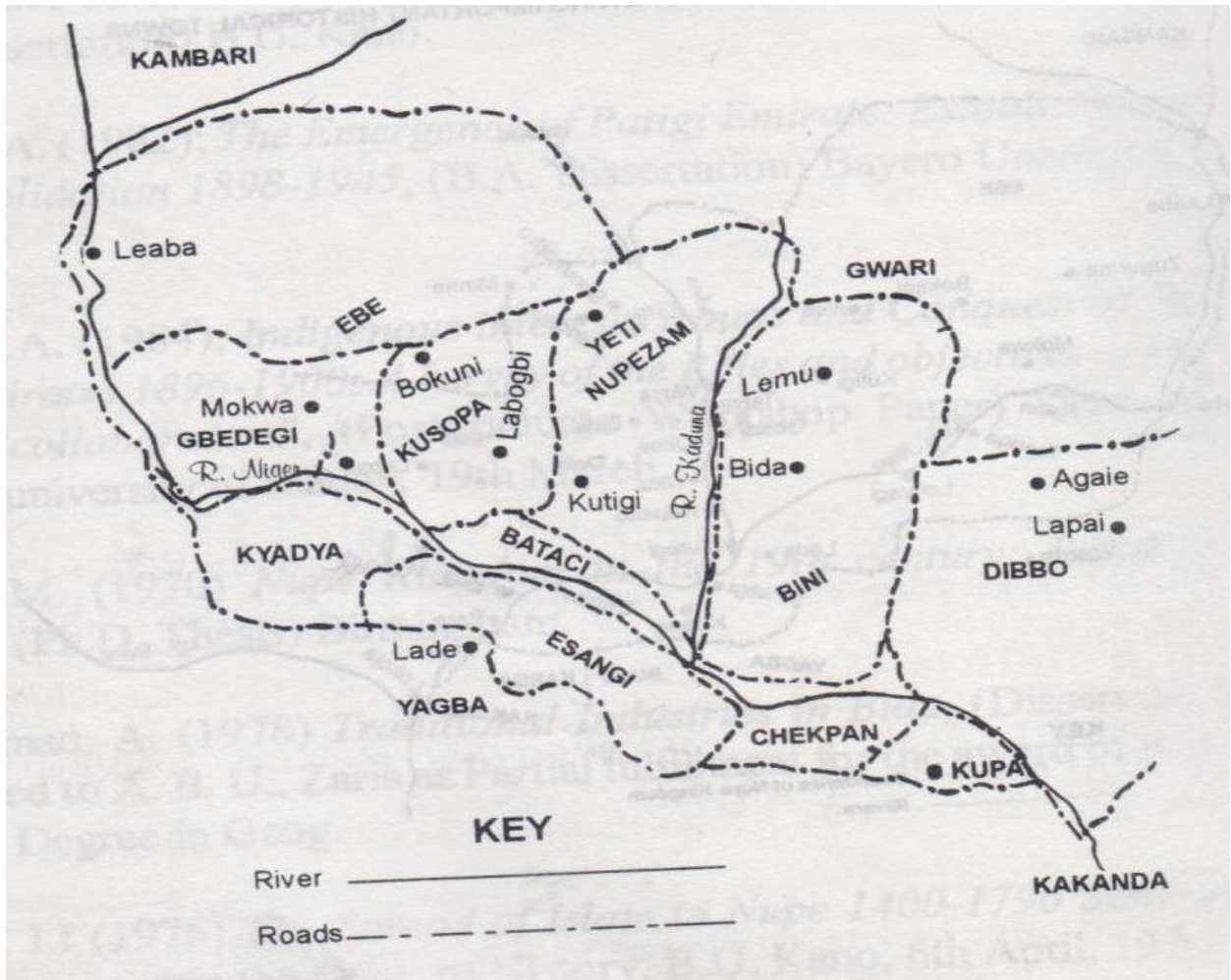


Source: Thomas HODGKIN, *Nigerian perspectives, An Historical Anthology*, p. 73.



## APPENDIX II

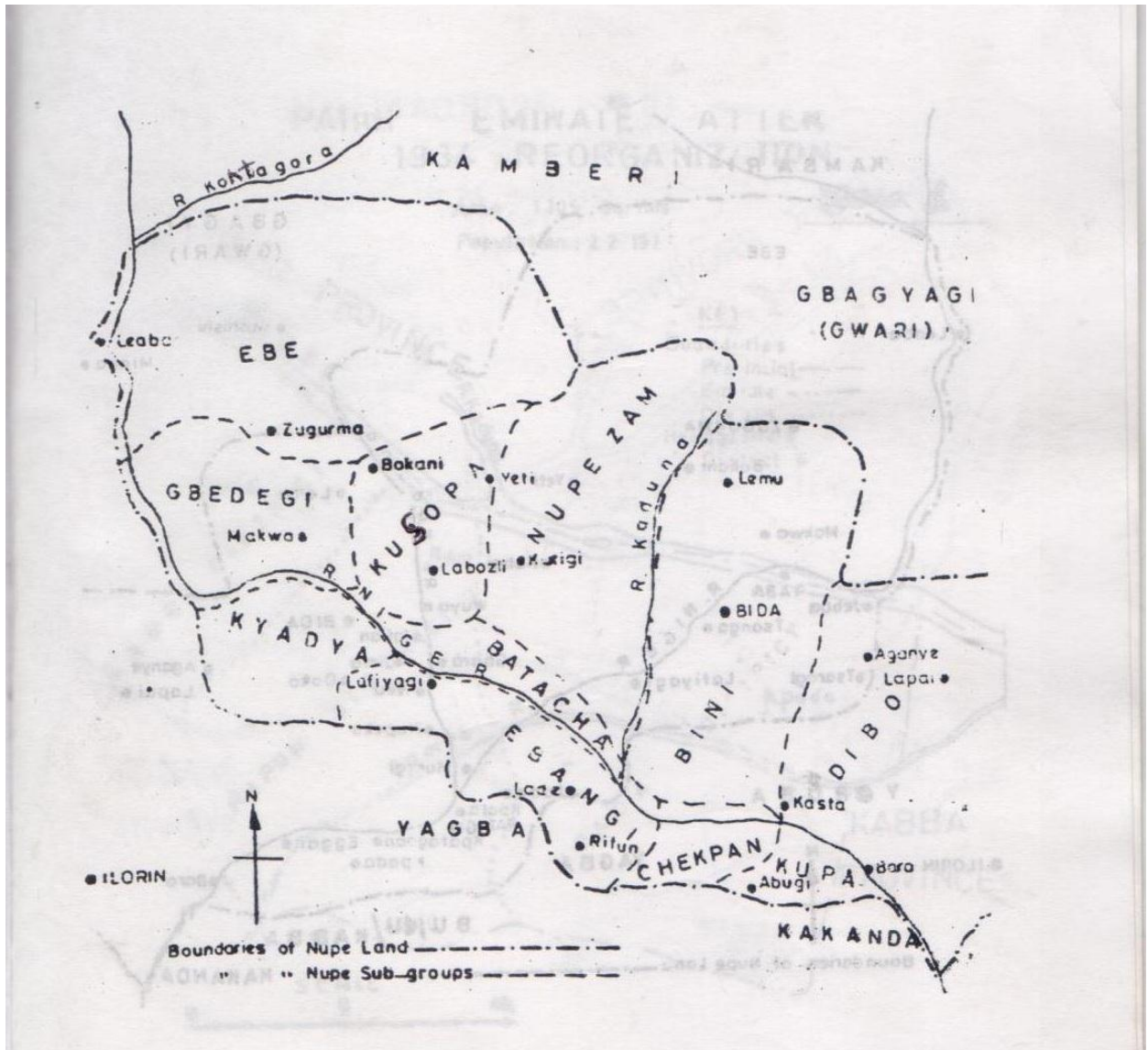
Map Showing the Various Nupe Sub – Groups before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad



Source: Sidi, S. T., *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland: The Emirate of Bida as a case study*, Kaduna: Fembo Books and Graphics, 2000, p. 75.

### APPENDIX III

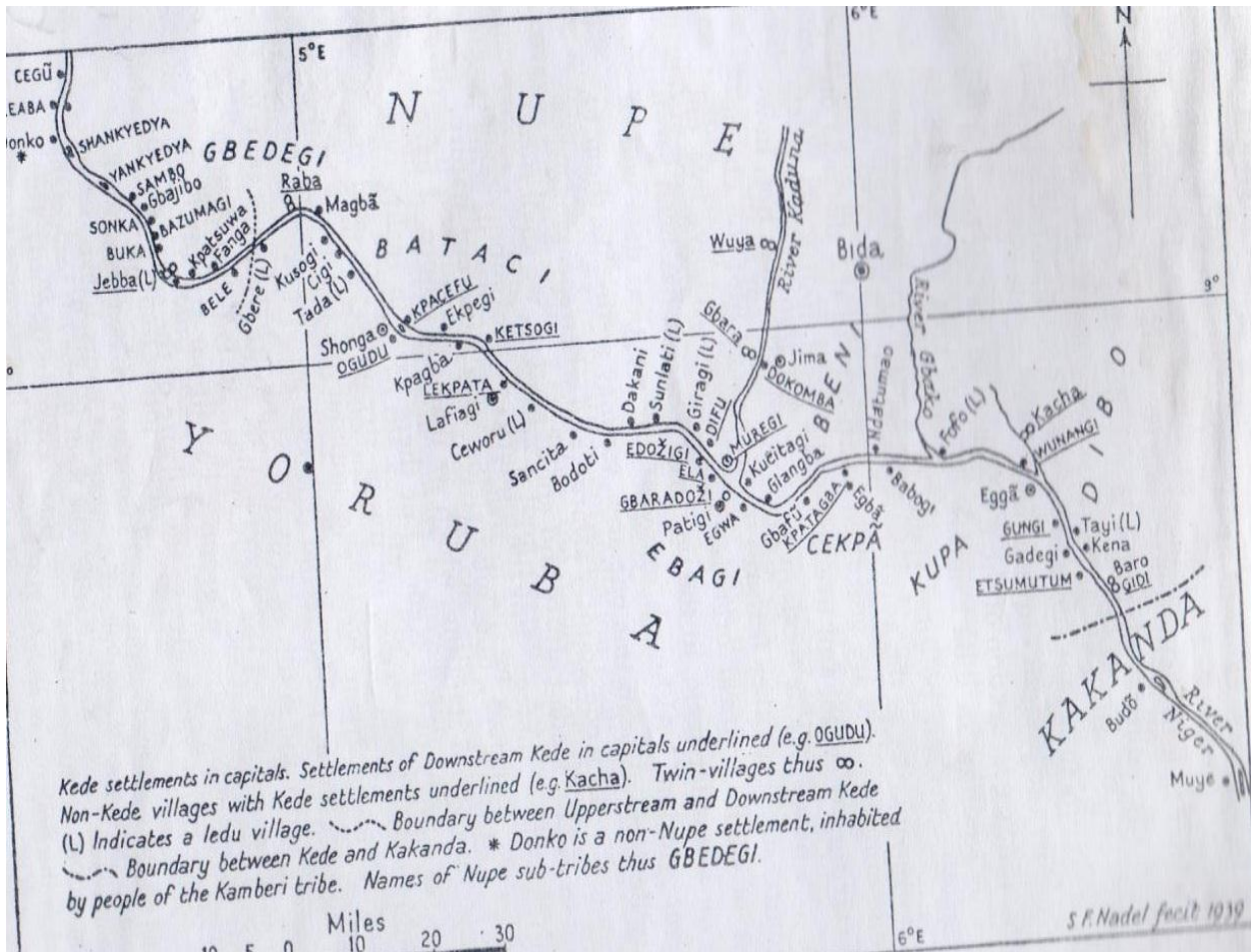
#### Nupe Showing Key Nupe Towns in History



Source: Idrees, A. A.: *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland*, Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig.) Ltd., 1998, p. 182.

## APPENDIX IV

Map Showing Kede Area of Nupeland before the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad



Source: S. F. Nadel "Kede, A Riverine State in Northern Nigeria", in, Fortes, M., and Pritchard, E. E. Evans (eds.), *Africa Political Systems*, London: Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 164.

## Appendix V

### SUCCESSION OF ETSU NUPE OF TSOEDE DYNASTY AND THEIR CAPITALS FROM 1512 TO 1823

ETSUZHI DURATION	THEIR CAPITALS	YEARS OF REIGN	
1. Tsoede	Nupeko	1512-1521	9 Years
2. Tsoede	Gbara	1521-1580	59 Years
3. Ishaba	Mokwa	1580-1589	9 Years
4. Zagunla	Mokwa	1589-1624	35 Years
5. Jigba	Mokwa	1624-1669	45 Years
6. Mamma Wari	Gbara	1669-1678	9 Years
7. Abdullawuya	Gbara	within 1678	few months
8. Aliyu	Zhima	1678-1699	21 Years
9. Idirisu Ibrahim	Zhima	1711-1715	4 Year
10. Sachi Gana Mache	Zhima	1699-1708	9 Years
11. Abdull-Wari (Tsado)	Gbara	1715-1719	4 Years
12. Abubakar Kolo	Gbara	1719-1740	21 Years
13. Jibrilu	Zhima	1740-1744	4 Years
14. Muazun (1 <sup>st</sup> reign)	Zhima	1744-1757	13Years
15. Zubairu Jiya I	Zhima	1757-1765	8 Years
16. Iliyasu (abdicated)	Zhima	1775-1765	6 Years
17. Muazun (2 <sup>nd</sup> reign)	Gbara	1781-1800	19 Years
18. Alikolo Tankali	Zugurma	1800-1804	4 Years
19. Muhammadu (Mamma)	Raba	1804-1805	1 Year
20. { Jimada Majiya II }	Gbara	1805-1806	1 Year
{ Jimada Majiya II }	Zhima		
	Raba	1806-1823	17Years



21. Majiya II (Continued) Raba		1823-1831	8 Years
22. Idrisu Gana I (son of Jimada)	Ragada	1823-1839	16 Years
23. Muazu (son of Idrisu Gana)	Ragada	1839-1857	41 Years
24. Yissa (son of Muazu) held Hostage in Bida		1857-1871	15 Years
Yissa (son of Muazu) went back to Gbara in 1871, where he died in 1872.			
25. Idrisu Gana II (son of Yissa 1 <sup>st</sup> Etsu of Patigi)		1898-1900	2 Years

**Source:** Ibrahim, D., *The Political Organisation in Nupeland*, Trumpet Publicity Commercial Services Ltd, 2013, pp.20-21.

## APPENDIX VI (A)

### DIFFERENT GENEALOGICAL TREES AND KING LISTS OF NUPE ETSUZHI

#### (TSOEDE DYNASTY)

#### NOTE:

Slightly different and varying genealogies and king lists of the Nupe *Etsuzhi* have been given. Among these are those of Goldsmith, H. S. in Dupigny (1920), Elphinstone (1921) and Nadel (1942). While some of the lists give dates of reign, others merely indicate names of the *Etsus* in their chronological order.

#### (A) GOLDSMITH'S LIST (See Dupigny 1920:8)

NAME OF ETSU	PERIOD OF REIGN
1. <i>Etsu</i> Shaba	09 years
2. <i>Etsu</i> Zangunla	35 years
3. <i>Etsu</i> Jiga	45 years
4. <i>Etsu</i> Mamman Wari	09 years
5. <i>Etsu</i> Abdullahi Wiya	21 years
6. <i>Etsu</i> Aliyu	09 years
7. <i>Etsu</i> Saci Ganamache	03 years
8. <i>Etsu</i> Ibrahim	04 years
9. <i>Etsu</i> Idrisa	04 years
10. <i>Etsu</i> Abdullahi Sado	21 years
11. <i>Etsu</i> Abubakar Kolo	04 years
12. <i>Etsu</i> Jibrilu	13 years
13. <i>Etsu</i> Muazu	18 years
14. <i>Etsu</i> Zebeiru	10 years
15. <i>Etsu</i> Iliasa	06 years
16. <i>Etsu</i> Muazu (reinstated)	19 years
17. <i>Etsu</i> Kolo	

Few months, driven out on account of his manners.

18. *Etsu* Muhammadu

01 years.

Killed in a war.

Source: Dupigny, E.G. M. *The Gazetteers of Nupe Province in the Gazetteers of Northern Provinces of Nigeria* London, 1920, p.8.

## APPENDIX VI (B)

### (B) ELPHINSTONE'S LIST (See Elphinstone, 1920:43.44).

1. Tsoede 98 years, died at Yanlugi
2. Shaba 09 years, died at Mokwa
3. Zagunla 35 years, died at Mokwa
4. Jiya 45 years, died at Mokwa
5. Mamman Wari 09 years, died at Zhima
6. Abdulla Wuya 21 years, died at Zhima
7. Aliu 09 years, died at Zhima
8. Sachi Ganaomache 03 years, died at Zhima
9. Ibrahim 28 years, died at Zhima
10. Idrisu 04 years, died at Nupeko
11. Abdullahi Tsado 21 years, died at Nupeko
12. Jibrilu 13 years, died at Kutigi
13. Abubakar Kolo 11 years, died at Gbara
14. Muazu son of Abdullahi Returned and reigned  
for another 08 years  
left Nupeland to Yawuri
15. Zubairu Jiya 10 years, died at Kpada
16. Iliasa 09 years, (abdicated)
17. Muazu son of Abdullahi Returned and reigned for  
Another 10 years, died at Gbara
18. Kolo Dauda 04 years, died at Gbara
19. Ikanko 04 years, died at Tsolugi
20. Mamman Jimada 18 years, killed at Ragada
21. Idrisu, son of Jimada 16 years, died at Gbara
22. Muazu son of Idrisu 18 years, died at Bida
23. Idrisu Gana so of Muazu 31 years at Bida  
Mr. Wallace settled him at Patigi Reigned 02 years here and died in 1900.
24. Muazu Yissa, son of Idrisu, succeeded November, 1900 (present Etsu Patigi and  
was born C. 1882).

Source: Elphinstone, *Gazetteers of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, Vol.III, London, 1821 pp.43 -44.



## APPENDIX VI (C)

### (C) NADEL'S LIST (See Nadel, 1942:406 Historical Chart of Nupe Rullers)

1. Birth of Tsoede	1463?
2. Tsoede taken as slave to Idah	1493
3. Tsoede's flight from Idah	1523
4. Tsoede	1531
Established himself as King of Nupe in Nupeko	
5. Tsoede's death	1591
6. <i>Etsu</i> Shaba	1591 – 1600
7. <i>Etsu</i> Zavaunla	1600 – 1625
8. <i>Etsu</i> Jigba	1925 – 1670
9. <i>Etsu</i> Mamman Wari	1670 – 1679
10. <i>Etsu</i> Abdul Waliyi	1679 – 1700
Foundation of the capital Jima	
11. <i>Etsu</i> Aliyu	1700 – 1709
12. <i>Etsu</i> Etsu Ganamace or Saci	1710 – 1713
13. <i>Etsu</i> Ibrahim	1713 – 1717
14. <i>Etsu</i> Idrisu	1717 – 1721
15. <i>Etsu</i> Tsado	1721 – 1742
16. <i>Etsu</i> Abubakari Koro (Kolo)	1742 – 1746
17. <i>Etsu</i> Jibiri	1746 – 1759
He was the first Mohammedan King of Nupe. He was driven from his kingdom after 13 years reign, died in exile in Kutigi, where his grave can still be seen.	
18. <i>Etsu</i> Ma'azu first reign	1759 – 1767
Power of Jima at its height. He resigned the throne and left Nupe to live in Yauri.	
19. <i>Etsu</i> Majiya I	1767 -1777
20. <i>Etsu</i> Iliyasu	1778 – 1778
He is said to have disappeared suddenly	
21. <i>Etsu</i> Ma'azu's second reign	1778 – 1795
After having been requested by the people to return to Nupe, Mallam Dendo (Manko), the Fulani emissary, appeared in Nupe.	
22. <i>Etsu</i> Ali Kolo Tankari	1795
Reigned for only 8 months and was deposed by the people.	
23. <i>Etsu</i> Mamman	1795 – 1796
Laid foundation of the capital at Raba.	

- Division of the Kingdom.
24. *Etsu* Jimada 1796 – 1805  
Reigning at jIma. War with Majiyya II Jimada was killed in battle in Ragada.
  25. *Etsu* Majiyya II reigning at Raba 1796 – 1810
  26. *Etsu* Majiyya's war against the Fulani 1806  
Siege of Ilorin and defeat of Nupe Armies
  27. The Fulani conquered Raba 1810?  
Supported by Idrisu, son of Jimada. Majiyya fled to Zugurma. Idrisu (Yisa) installed as shadow king of Nupe in Adama Lelu near Egga, by Fulani.
  28. *Etsu* Idrisu (Yisa) reigning at Adama Lelu 1810 – (1813-1830)
  29. Idrisu rebellion against the Fulani 1830  
He was killed in the battle. Mallam Dendo recalled Majiyya from his exile and made him shadow king of Nupe in Zugurma.
  30. *Etsu* Majiyya's second reign in Zugurma 1830 – 1834

Source: Nadel, S.F., *A Black Byzantium: A Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, London: Oxford University Press, 1942, p.406.

## APPENDIX VI (D)

### (D) NUPE KING-LIST (GENEOLOGY) UNDER TSOEDE DYNASTY

1. Tsoede (1461 – 1529?) at Gbara
2. *Etsu* Sha'aba (Tsoede's son) (1529 – 1537) at *Mokwa*
3. *Etsu* Zagunla (Tsoede's grandson) (1537 – 1592) at Gbara
4. *Etsu* Jibrilu (1592 – 1637)
5. *Etsu* Mamman Wari (1637 – 1647?)
6. *Etsu* Abdullahi Wiya (1646? – 1667)
7. *Etsu* Aliyu (1667 – 1676)
8. *Etsu* Sachi Ganao mace (1676 0 1679)
9. *Etsu* Ibrahim (1679 – 1708)
10. Idrisu (1708 – 1712)
11. *Etsu* Abdullahi Tsado (1712 – 1733)
12. *Etsu* Jibrilu (son to Abdullahi Tsado) 1733 - ??) He was the first Muslim *Etsu* (King) under Tsoede Dynasty.

Source: Idrisu Gana III, (Late *Etsu* Patigi) “The History of Nupe Kingdom and Nupe Dynasty”, undated, pp 3 – 4.

## APPENDIX VII

### (i) Ena Gitsuzhi – Royal Council Titles

<i>Titles</i>	<i>Salutation</i>
Etsu (King)	Zaki, Bagigandozhi, Chiwo bankali, Samazagudu
Shaaba (Crown Prince)	Dawudu, Kpako Nyankpa
Kpotun	Daninya, Dada wu dzodzo, Gbadarigi, Baba rankashi
Nakorji	Yanma, Gboyafaru, Suyibini, Elu dzuru ko dondo
Benu	Kigudu, Dawudu
Makun	Daninya, Adanbiriche La Dibo gun Lazhin, La kupa nashe
Lukpan	Dodon dawa
Ganya	Kobo
Lakpianne	Nyandalu, Dagba da yaa
Rani	Dan Saraki, Lerama, Chiyan Saraki
Nagya	Yanma, Murogachi, Bishi, La Doko chi du, Kigudu
Tsoeda	Dzaka, Mawore, Edzakukumaku Gandzwo Bisa Daninya
Sachi	Ganaomache, Giganka, Lerema
Tsaduya	Takun, Lerama
Fogun	Daninya
Lefaruma	Kobo
Shaaba ginini	Dawudu, Kpako Nyankpa
Kusodu	Daninya, Ewon na tso du na
Chekpa	Suku, Dodon da wa
Checheko	Daninya, Dakun, Gabo
Danma	Lerama

Rofyen	Kobo
Chata	Chegi nasun, Dodondawa
Gbagbaruku	Chegi nasun, Dodondawa
Tswashiako	Gate
Tswanku	Gidi, chin mbo a ga
Taka	Giwa, Lerama
Tswayi	Lerama
Nagenu	Gimba, chiwo be allah yin
Gara	Adi dia
Nkochi	Lerama

**(ii) Civil Titles**

Ndeji (Prime Minister and Chairman Kingmakers Class)	Amali, Giwa, Gbakoko, Dagba, Eduwo ba a
Nnafyene	Gimba
Sonlawotsu	Tuzhi, Garin gwaza
Tsonfarako	Tunkura, Ebo ti wa
Swajiya	Kawata
Sakiwa	Duwatsu
Tswakoko	Kure
Tsaduko	Amali, Gadanji
Mizindadi	Dawudu

**(iii) Enakun – Military Titles**

Tsadza ( <i>Commander-In-Chief</i> )	Dodon dawa
Ubandawaki ( <i>Commander Cavalry</i> )	Giwa
Ejiko ( <i>Infantry Commander</i> )	Lakawusi
Sondzamitsu	Kure
Mammasun	Daninya
Swagannuwon ( <i>Chief of Tsoede Shrine</i> )	Lerama

Dokoyiringi	Giwa
Sanaji	Sokun la ba ge
Sonmasuntsu	Daninya, Kerenkpe
Tsowa	Mayito
Magun	Ga n de za
Luchi	Daninya
Somfarakwa	Tunkura
Barizhe	Kasuwan kura
Songubi	Daninya
Sonkali ( <i>Infantry</i> )	Guruza, Kpako cika
Sojetsu ( <i>Scout</i> )	Gata

**(iv) Baratsuzhi, King's Domestic Servants**

Gabi Seyidi ( <i>Chief Servant</i> )	Agaba, Dzo wo dzo, Ena tsara
Nda twaki	Dawudu, Kashia dubu
Dzwafu	Agaba
Ndamaraki	Gialu, kpache finni
Santali	Damawu
Nda todo	Lerama
Manfada	Tunkura
Somazhi	Wasi, Waka tsuna
Manlawo	Dodondawa
Nda dari	Agira, Dindoro be Gbogun, Manyiche
Shangbo	Agaba
Tswana	Agaba

**(v) Ena Yinzagizhi – Women's Titles**

Sagi (Head of Women)	Dawudu, Kpako Nyankpa
Shaaba – Sagi (Deputy Head)	Atuwo
Soninya	Giwa mata

Ninwoye	Aluwo
---------	-------

**(vi) Kyadya Titles, Riverine State System Titles**

Kuta (Head of the Riverine Organization)	Dombashi, Wuzawuna
Egba (Crown Prince)	Lerama
Tswadya	Dodon dawa
Kofyan	Kobo, Dawudu
Nnagbaki or Liman gyadya	Lerama
Lifiti	Baru
Ekpan	Tsukun la n gboka

**(vii) Head of the Guilds**

Bagba (Head, Wood Workers)	Che yekotu
Dokodza (Head, Blacksmiths)	Bo lu le ba
Muku (Head, Brass Workers)	Dombashi
Tswatswana (Head, Cloth Makers)	Leba, Dombashi Lerama
Somfawa (Head, Butchers)	Kure
Nadakoleshe (Head, Weavers)	
Masaga (Head, Glass Workers)	Dombashi
Sonkyarye Gozan (Head, Barbers)	Aliyara
Majin Kimpa (Head, Leathher Workers)	Gado
Ndacheke (Head, Hunters)	Eche, Ga kna bo
Majin Lantana (Head, Bead Workers)	Tsa na ba wu

**(viii) Village Headmen's Titles**

- a. The Bini, Chekpan and Ebangi village heads are *Zhitsu, Lile*
- b. The Kusopachizhi village head is *Wangwa*
- c. The Gbedegi village head is either *Lile* or *Tswankwa*

Source: Idrees, A.A., *Political Change and Continuity in Nupe*, Ibadan: Caltop Publications Ltd. 1998, pp.149-154.

## APPENDIX VIII

### Descendants of Shehu Abdurrahman Abaji with Friends



Source: Saidu Ibrahim, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) PLC. 1992, p. 27.



## APPENDIX IX

Gbazami's grave beside that of Tsoede at Gwagwade village. He is believed to have been the killer of Tsoede. Before the latter's death, he is believed by the tradition to have ordered the arrest of Gbazami. On the event of Tsoede's death, his killer must also be killed.



Source: *Etsu – Sarkin Gwagwade*, Alh. Ahmadu on 24/07/16

## APPENDIX X

Samples of fetish relics hung outside the wall of a room of confinement for the newly appointed *Etsu*, who must stay inside for seven days, undergoing certain rituals which are believed to have the powers of Tsoede to ‘protect’ him throughout his reign. We were shown the room, but were not allowed to enter.



Source: The *Etsu*, Alhaji Ahmadu on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2016

## APPENDIX XI

The *Etsu* (Sarkin) Gwagwade with the researcher holding the supposedly Tsoede horse riding shoe, backing the room where this and other relics believed to have been left by Tsoede, are kept. Some of them were by the permission of the *Etsu*, shown to us during our visit on July, 24, 2016.



Source: The *Etsu*, Alhaji Ahmadu on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2016



## APPENDIX XII

The researcher and *Etsu* Gwagwade Alhaji Ahmadu, backing Tsoede's supposed "grave" on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2016



### APPENDIX XIII

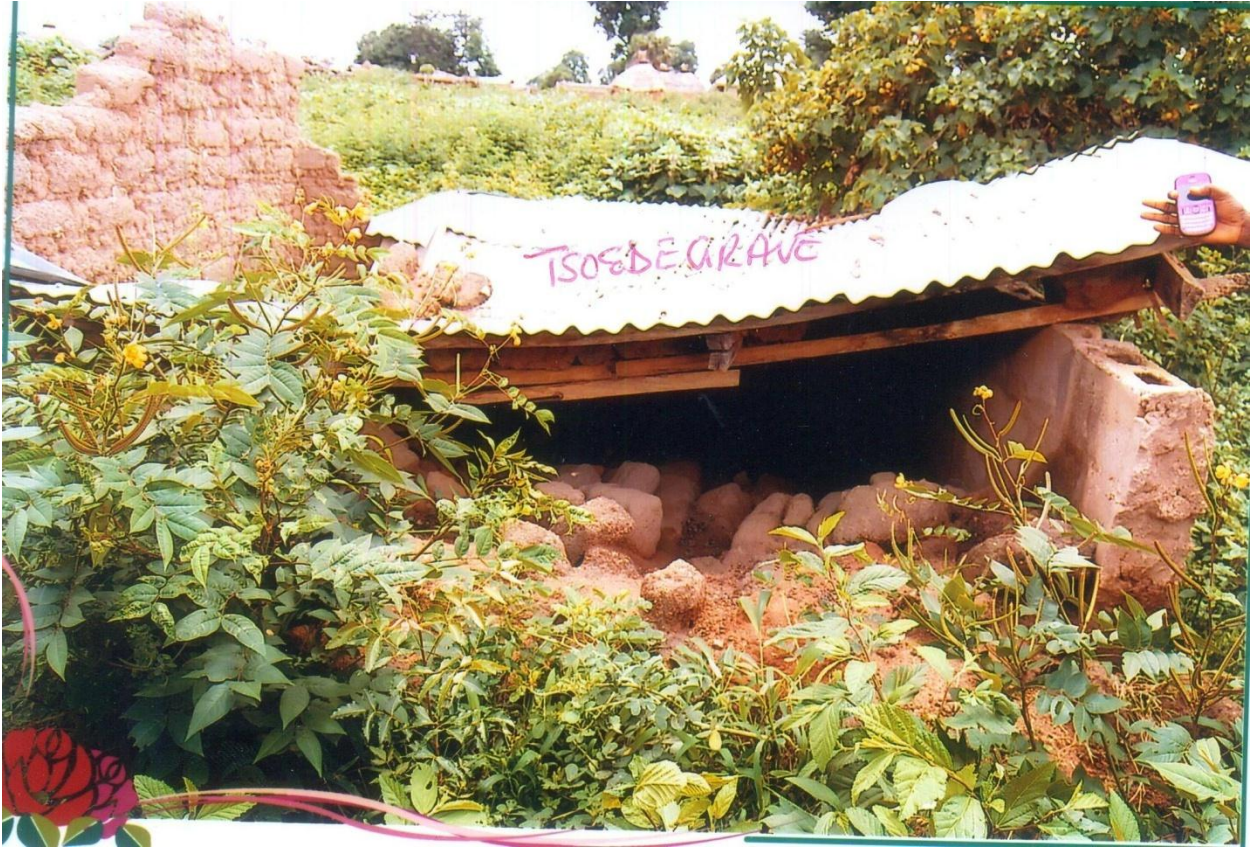
The researcher and his research assistants in a group photograph with the *Etsu* – (*Sarkin*) Gwagwade and the village Imam.





## APPENDIX XIV

Tsoede “grave site” at Gwagwade village in Kambari area, where he is believed and widely reported to have been killed during one of his expeditions there – 1591.



Source: *Etsu* Gwagwade, Alhaji Ahmadu, who led us to the site on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2016



## APPENDIX XV

“Tsoede’s footmark” on a stone by a small river site near Gwagwade after being hit with a poisonous arrow (*ekpa*) by a Kambari warrior called Gbazami, whom Tsoede arrested and ordered to be killed should the former die. The mysterious thing about the still – visible footmark is that it matches with any foot – be it, that of adult or children when “placed on top of it”. We were taken to the site by two villagers on the order of the *Etsu* on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2016





## APPENDIX XVI

Those who took us to the site of “Tsoede’s footmark”, on the instruction of *Etsu*  
Gwagwade on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2016

