

# The Question Of Sabon Gari Phenomenon In Katsina Metropolis, 1903-2011

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**Abstract:** *The history of Sabon Gari system in Northern Nigeria has received attention from scholars, yet the absence of such settlements in some of the Northern cities and towns has not been addressed. This paper examined the reasons for its absence in Katsina metropolis unlike Kano, Zaria, Sokoto and Gusau- which were settlement that were specially reserved for non-indigene settlers. The paper revealed that the absence of Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada was due to non-declaration of Katsina as a township by the colonial authority during the colonial period so was not economically significant. There was also little influence of missionary schools to attract Igbo, Yoruba and Nupe migrants into Katsina as compared to most Northern cities. The paper also revealed that, the loyalty/liberal disposition of Dikko to the British, and the highly cosmopolitan nature of Katsina metropolis were a contributive factor to that effect.*

**Keywords:** *Katsina, Migration, Sabon Gari, Colonialism, Census*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these paper as stated earlier is to offer an alternative explanation on why the colonial government did not created the *Sabon Gari* and *Tudun Wada* settlement in Katsina metropolis. It is not the intension of this paper to discuss how and why these settlements were established in quite a number of Northern Nigerian cities by the colonial state in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But in the spirit of way forward, the paper in brief, analyzed the historical interpretation of these settlements. *Sabon Gari* dates back to 1913 when it was settled for the veterans of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) and the labourers who worked on the Lagos-Kano railway line. Between 1913 and 1918, approximately 320 plots were carved out and developed to accommodate immigrant groups most of whom were railway workers in Kano, and so it was applied in Zaria, Gusau, and Sokoto. Large scale migration and settlement started after World War I for a number of reasons among which are the groundnut boom, the proliferation of imperialist firms, and the development of a number of administrative departments in Native Authority of these Northern cities. Between the 1920 arid 1945, immigrants of different backgrounds settled in *Sabon Gari*; and the manner of their interaction was

influenced by place of origin, religion, profession, and economic status.

The colonial government encourage the *Sabon Gari* system (and similar types of segregated residential zones) not only in the former emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate but in other British colonies the world over because of the ideas of new town planning policy which developed the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain because the industrial revolution, rapid urbanization poor housing, unsanitary conditions and ill-organized use land. The demand for areas of low population density detached or semi-detached houses was therefore intense.

Britain first experimented the new policy in 19<sup>th</sup> century India to satisfy their military, economic, political .and medical needs. The Indian experience was extended to Nigeria, especially to the Muslim emirates, where *Sabon Gari* and similar settlement were created in the urban centres that expanded as the result of the re-mentation of the economy by colonial conquest. These settlement were characterized by the spatial inequality created to conform to the new economic system.

From this point of view, the establishment of *Sabon Gari* settlements was important for the continued political dominance of a white imperialist oligarchy in the emirates, separation of people was a natural solution to the anxieties of

an insecure administration. It is also pertinent to point out that when the settlements were established, they were all sited far away from the European residential areas cut of consideration for what the colonial administrators called the health of the Europeans. Sabon Gari Zaria was established at a distance of about three miles from the Government Station. In Kano, the colonial authority separated Sabon Gari from European Areas by Building Free-Zone (BFZ) of about 440 yards wide. The objective of the BFZ was to separate Europeans from the natives whose blood was considered to be contaminated with parasites of dreaded diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. Lugard was straightforward on the question of the health of the European in his first Annual Report on Northern Nigeria (1900):

“The policy shall be gradually move to the native town six or seven miles downstream and so do away with the pollution of the water and with other evils such as the proximity of a haven for thieves and prostitutes, the infection of mosquitoes with malaria, germs and the unsanitary condition inevitable and a large native town.”

Throughout the colonial era, the British racially segregated Nigerians in all aspects of life Segregation was even extended to trade and commerce. The creation of separate trading sites for Europeans, Africans, Lebanese and Hausa were part of this racial zoning system. Thus, both economic and racial considerations were used to rationalize the establishment of *Sabon Gari* settlements in the Muslim emirates. The settlements were not established to insulate Muslims from Christian influence but to accommodate both Christians and Muslims irrespective of their regional and national origins. In her study of *Sabon Gari* Sokoto, Risikat Mohammed has shown that when the settlement was established in the mid-1930s, a large proportion of its population was in fact Muslim.

Thus, population influx with its attendant problems was accompanied by measures from the colonial state to control the migrants politically, economically, and medically through the establishment of segregated settlements under different terminologies. Based on the 1914 Cantonment Proclamation, the settlement was conceived exclusively for housing “natives” and “non-native Africans” working for the government and for commercial firms. In practice, the policy in Kano, Zaria, Sokoto, Gusau as elsewhere, led to the establishment of separate settlements for migrants, most notably for southerners, “non-native Africans”, and Asians, as well as for northerners that were not indigenous to the communities, in areas known as *Tasha* (from the word for station or railway settlement), *Sabon Gari* (new towns or stranger quarters), and *Tudun Wada* (exclusively for northerners that were not indigenous to the communities). Previously, it had been assumed that the segregated settlements in the North were established to protect Islam and Hausa people from the influence of southern Christians. Studies by Ahmed Bako indicate that the settlements were established for political, economic, and medical needs—and not for protecting Islam or Muslims as was previously assumed. According to Bako, the settlements were settled both by Christians and Muslims and included Hausa, and they were not settled exclusively by Christians and southerners. However, whether established to protect Islam and Muslims or

not, it is common knowledge that the colonial segregation policy was a divide-and-rule strategy to prevent Nigerians from forming a common front against colonialism.

## II. MIGRANT SETTLEMENT PATTERN IN KATSINA METROPOLIS AND THE SABON GARI PHENOMENON

Southern and Northern immigrants (Igbo, Yoruba, Nupe and Niger Republic nationals) settlement pattern in Katsina metropolis differed from other Northern cities. Throughout the period of colonialism to the eve of Nigerian Civil War (1929-1966), the migrants lived in mixed settlement with the host community or *Katsinawa*, in Katsina metropolis. In other words, they lived in scattered settlements. Quite a number of them settled at GRA, *Tsohuwar Kasuwa* (opposite Katsina old central market), *Kofar Guga* along Jibia road, *Yar'kasuwa*, *Kofar Marusa*, *Alkali*, *Unguwan MadawakiI*, *Sararin Kuka*, *Sha'iskawa*, Mobil along IBB Way, Opposite Current Katsina Central where *Abutai* Primary School was built, *Unguwan Magajin Gari* (now *Unguwan Madawaki*) and *Sabon Layi* where most Igbo migrants business layout was. However, most of them migrants owned houses at Mobil, *Unguwan Alkali* and *Sararin Kuka* and *Sabon Layi*.

Generally speaking, throughout 1920s to 1966 and even 1970 to 2011 there was nothing like *Sabon Gari* in Katsina metropolis. In other words, throughout the period of colonialism and the post-colonial period, Igbo lived in mixed settlement with the *Katsinawa*, in Katsina metropolis. One may readily ask, why the absence of *Sabon Gari* in Katsina metropolis unlike other places such as Kano, Zaria and Gusau where *Sabon Gari* and *Tudun Wada* wards were established. Was it a deliberate British policy that prevented that or an oversight? Or was the number of the immigrants so insignificant as to warrant the establishment of *Sabon Gari* from them?

Broadly speaking, so many views were expressed concerning the issue first view expressed was by Urguhart who noted that the situation in Katsina was due to lack of railway connection to attract large number of southern migrant communities, as such neither *Tudun Wada* nor *Sabon Gari* was therefore needed in Katsina and consequently Katsina was never declared a township. All migrant communities during the colonial period including the Igbo were thus accommodated together with the *Katsinawa* within the city walls. In like manner Jamilu shehu held similar opinion as he buttressed that, unlike other emirates in the north such as Kano Gusau, Zaria among others, the British did not establish *Sabon Gari* and *Tudun Wada* settlements or “strangers quarters” or “strangers settlements” in Katsina metropolis because of the virtual absence of infrastructures such as railway and many missionary schools which were centres of attraction to immigrant groups like Igbo and Yoruba. However, even the settlement called *Sabon Layi* (New Lay out) which is often seen as the *Sabon Gari* in Katsina was established within the walled city, and it consisted of a mixture of “indigenes” and “strangers” settlements.

Despite the fact that Katsina metropolis had no railway line, quite a number of immigrants were attracted to Katsina

metropolis owing to its employment and business opportunities available for them. This was particularly so after up to the independence of Nigeria and on the eve of Nigerian Civil War. By the 1920s, immigrant population in Katsina metropolis had become significant. Fundamentally a colonial figure put the total figure of Niger immigrants in Katsina to 9, 757 in 1945. The Nupe who had trading relation with Katsina since the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries recorded only 254 in 1945. While 1945, the Yoruba population was 386. By 1949, the Yoruba were believed to have been firmly established in Katsina, as their number rose to 1, 267. In respect to the Igbo Migrant Community in Katsina Metropolis the case was different. For instance, between 1903 and 1931 the total number of Igbo immigrants to Katsina was 0.35% while that of Yoruba 0.21% but by 1945 it was 57 while in 1949 the number rose to 322 then in 1952 to 2,704.

The virtual absence of the railways lines in Katsina metropolis seemed to have lessened the increasing number of migrant group into the area. This could be the reason why up to 1945 immigrants population in Katsina were that significant but 1952, it became more significant, even though such figure cannot be compared with northern cities that has Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada. These could be seen from the four table below:

Katsina Population	Population
Indigenes	22, 568
Native Migrants	22
Foreigners	30
Total Number of Katsina Population	22, 620

Source: Census of Nigeria, 1931. Vol. II. Census of Northern Provinces by N.J Brooke, District

Table 1: Population of Katsina Metropolis: 1931 Census Classified by Number of Native Migrants and Foreigners

Officer, Northern Provinces. Published on behalf of the Government of Nigeria by Crown Agent for the Colonics. London: 4 Millbank, S.W.I, 1933

S/No	Nationality And Ethnic Group	Katsina	Daura
1	Habe	420201	66290
2	Fuani	366563	42987
3	Bari bari	74005	2847
4	Bugaje	38094	2067
5	Yoruba	1267	13
6	Maguzawa	114604	-
7	Gobirawa	14329	-
8	Tu'areg	19315	-
9	Gwari	1128	-
10	Ibo	322	-
11	Daura	2373	-
12	Zanfara	3787	-
13	Kebbi	721	-
14	Bedde	336	-
15	Nupe	221	-
16	Miscellaneous	13	-

Source: NAK/KAT/PROF 3818 Katsina Province General Information: Minutes 3716 Annual Reports on Development Scheme

Table 2: Tribal Statistics of Katsina Metropolis 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1949

S/No	Nationality And Ethnic Group	Katsina Division
1	Fulani	527,742
2	Hausa	612,033
3	Ibo	2,704
4	Kaburi	148,893
5	Nupe	1,785
6	Yoruba	1,381
7	Other Northern Tribes	179,504
8	Other Nigerian Tribes	6,525
9	None-Nigerians	2,558
	Total Population	1, 483,125

Source: Population Census of 1952; Population Census of the Northern Region of Nigeria, 1952

Table 3: African Population of Katsina Province Classified According to Divisions, Emirate and Districts by Main Language Groups, July 1952

Thus, the figure in table 1, 2, 3 and 4 (below) of migrants into Katsina metropolis show a gradual process of migration throughout the colonial era unlike other Northern cities . Thus it is of paramount importance to draw our attention to the fact that the period 1930 -1945 was characterized by economic depression, recovery and the impact of the Second World War. As such migration of southerners into Katsina metropolis became relaxed; slow and gradual. From 1946-1965, however, Igbo migration to Katsina metropolis increased i.e. the character of their migration changed demographically both in pace and pattern. There was a large influx of immigrants from different socio-cultural backgrounds in search of jobs in both private and public sectors of Nigeria and informal sector as well.

S/No	Nationality and Ethnic Group	Zaria Division	Kano Division	Sokoto Division	Total
1	Edo	1,451	4,681	-	6,132
2	Fulani	82,287	872,377	316,972	1,271,636
3	Hausa	360,443	1,857,050	1,423,103	3,640,596
4	Ibibio	-	4,188	-	4,188
5	Ibo	17,994	12,279	3,059	33,332
6	Kanuri	13,416	128,715	21,377	163,508
7	Nupe	3,516	1,864	12,627	18,007
8	Tiv	-	301	-	301
9	Yoruba	9,531	7,533	2,764	19,828
10	Gwari	35,937	-	-	35,937
11	Jaba	41,042	-	-	41,042
12	Kaje	35,722	-	-	35,722
13	Kadara	30,652	-	-	30,652
14	Katab	28,602	-	-	28,602
15	Maguzawa	-	49,385	-	49,385
16	Adarawa	-	-	199,562	199,562
17	Arawa	-	-	14,665	14,665
18	Zabermawa	-	-	10,771	10,771
19	Other Northern Pagan Language Group	-	-	5,531	5,531
20	Other Northern Language Group	130,420	18,022	6,835	155,277
21	Other Nigerian Language Group	3,985	3,385	882	8252
22	None-Nigerians	924	2,393	2,192	5,509
23	Unspecified	6,873	-	-	6,873
	Total	795,922	2,969,046	2,020,340	5,785,308

Population				
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Source: Population Census of 1952; Population Census of the Northern Region of Nigeria, 1952

Table 4: A summary of African Population of Zaria, Kano and Sokoto Divisions extracted from African Population of Katsina, Zaria and Sokoto Provinces Classified According to Divisions, Emirates and Districts by Main Language Groups, July 1952

The second view expressed is that, it was the influences of Emir Muhammadu Dikko (installed as Emir by British January 25, 1907 and died January 29, 1944) and his son who succeeded him Sir Usman Nagogo (May 19, 1944 to March 18, 1981) who were loyalist of the British to the core; that prevented the British from establishing such segregated settlements as *Sabon Gari* and *Tudun Wada*, as well as the construction of rail line. This opinion is significant especially when one considers how Emir Muhammadu Dikko came to into Katsina power and his willingness to do what they wanted. The colonial records captured his attitude as thus:

“During the time of the Satiru disturbances the Resident of Katsina was instructed to build a fort as rapidly as possible. He called the Emir and his leading men and asked them to arranged for the work to be done. One by one they made excuses, till Muhammadu Dikko, who held the title of Durbi, and was district head of Mani, was asked. He at once volunteered to produce so many thousands men, and to complete the work in so many days. Within the period he fulfilled his promise. When asked to name his reward he asked not half, but whole of the Kingdom. Not long afterwards the Emir was deposed and his request granted.

Events have proved that the chioiced was amply justified. Muhammadu Dikko ax quitted himself successfully and was recognized as one of the progressive native Ruler. He travelled wide much having made the pilgrimage to Mecca twice and visited England on five separate occasions. He was honoured with C.B.E and the Kings medal of African Chiefs.”

In like manner his son, Sir Usman Nagogo continued with the same policy and made sure that immigrants from southern Nigeria were prevented from concentrating in one particular area but spread from one ward *Unguwa* to another. It was further suggested that Emir Nagogo feared that having areas like *Sabon Gari* would not only pollute the cultures and religious values of Katsina but also an area of social vices, tension and easy target during violence and conflict as the case in Kano, Zaria and Gusau. In addition was the fact that areas with a *Sabon Gari* settlement were not directly under the control of the Native Authority or the Emirate Council and then State Government since the area tended to be “No Go Area.” So it was for security reasons on one hand, and then on the other hand was to enhance as well as to promote inter-group relation/unity in diversity between *Katsinawa* and migrant communities in Katsina. This could be true in the sense that oral sources revealed that in 1979 Igbo and Yoruba migrants requested Emir for an area to establish *Sabon Gari* but the request was rejected. He maintained that they were part of Katsina community and he did not want his people, *Katsinawa* and migrants communities to be divided or discriminated. More so, the establishment of such a settlement was not within the power of the emir but the state government. It was also the case during the time of the late Emir Kabir

Usman (1981-2008) and especially after the experiences of the Sharia crises of the year 2000, but the emir strongly kicked against such an ideas. The emir believed that immigrant communities regardless of where they came from were supposed to live together with the host communities as brothers and sisters. Of equal importance is the fact that allowing such settlements would go contrary to what Katsina people were known for as a – home of heritage and hospitality. So the emirs felt that the *Sabon Gari* and *Tudun Wada* system was of no significance.

### III. CONCLUSION

Therefore, the absence of *Sabon Gari* and even *Tudun Wada* in Katsina metropolis could be associated with the fact that Katsina at the time of colonialism was not a strategic location compared to certain cities and towns in relating it to economic interest of the British which was more important to the development these settlements for “non-indigene,” coupled with insignificance in number of immigrant as compared to Funtua, Kano, Gusau and Zaria as well as the absence of infrastructure like the railway, adequate number of missionary schools, fear of the immigrant communities dominating a particular area as was the case in Kano, security considerations and the need to protect the image of Katsina as the home of hospitality. More so Katsina metropolis at the time of colonialism was more of administrative centre than commercial because after the conquest in 1903, the British chose Katsina city as Divisional administrative headquarters under the charge of a Third Class Resident, Mr. Oliver, but responsible to Kano Province. A further reorganization of the province was made in 1924 and Katsina along with Daura were transferred to the newly created Zaria Province. By 1934 however Katsina emerged as an independent province following the merger of the two emirates Katsina and Daura. Mr. W. Nash was appointed as the first Resident, and was succeeded by Mr. C.C. Feisty in 1935. Indeed Katsina city became an administrative centre, benefitted from the modern infrastructural facilities such as schools, electricity; health institution among others by the British brought modern development to the city resulting to its physical expansion considerably. In fact during the first half of colonial rule Katsina city had prospered to the extent that its began to attract immigrants communities from the southern parts of the country as clerks in the Native Authority and in the European commercial firms, because there were no adequate literate natives to occupy the positions.

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