

10. The External Factors in the Urbanization Process of Keffi Town from 1800 – 1900

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Introduction

Urbanization in Nigeria is very old, dating back to the period before the advent of Europeans. Before this period, Nigeria had evolved its own system of cities. For instance, Sokoto before the end of the 19th century had emerged as the most populous city in Northern Nigeria. Cities such as Kano, Kukawa, Gumel and Zaria which were the headquarters of emirates had population of about 60,000 and were qualified as cities (Mabogunje, 1988; p16). Such patterns were also observed in the southern part of Nigeria.

Similarly, in the early Yoruba towns especially prior to inter-tribal wars, there were administrative centres located within the regions, provinces and districts. Some of the early towns of this category included Oketo, Eruwa, and Ogbomosho among others. While in the East, Calabar and Port Harcourt emerged as important ports and cities which served as entry points to the country. Cities along these penetration lines particularly Aba, Enugu, Onitsha, Owerri, Ikoti Epene and from Warri to Benin began to develop as major trading ports. These cities gained importance and today are main centres of attraction in Eastern Nigeria (Mabogunje, 1988 p16)

Urbanization in Nigeria began only in 1851, when, slave trade had been eradicated. However, there was the need for a substitute trade, and this led to the development of trading activities. The secret slave routes gave way to better inter-city routes used by businessmen (Mabogunje, 1988, p16). The development of these routes encouraged spatial specialization. The urban centres such as Ijeye, Erunmu Ile, Ogbomosho, Ibadan, Ede, Ife, Oyo and Kano began to be very specialized in their functions, and there came the need to enforce law and order and to ensure efficient administration of urban centres with their associated multifarious functions. Today most satellite towns are at the verge of urbanizing, mostly because of their proximity to the cities.

The Study Area

Keffi, the headquarters of Keffi Local Government Area (LGA), the study area, is situated almost at the centre of the land mass of Nigeria. It shares a common boundary to the west with Karu Local Government Area. It is to the

north east and east by Akwanga and Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Areas. In the north, it has a common frontier with Jama'a Local Government Area in Kaduna State (Nengel, 2006; p493). Keffi town is about fifty kilometers away from the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). It is a home of the Hausa, Fulani, Gade, Eggon and Mada among others (Nengel, In Azgaku 2006 p493).

Urbanization of Keffi

Urbanization, according to L. Mabogunje (1998; p18) is a phenomenon that brings into it train both manifest of good and evil. According to him, urbanization is measured in terms of number of people residing in a particular settlement or in a defined area usually about 20,000 people (Mabogunje, 1988; p18).

Similarly, A. J. Aderamo notes that the major cause of urbanization in developing countries is Rural-Urban migration. This point is buttressed by Hozelite who observes that "urban centres in both developed and developing countries of the world attract population in form of rural-urban migration resulting to urbanization". He is the first to look at urbanization in the context of national economic development by distinguishing between what he calls generative and parasitic cities (Aderamo, 1992: p39). The aforementioned works discuss urbanization only in the light of increase in population. Their demographical ignores the development of infrastructure and other basic amenities which constitute the core of this paper. This does not in any way imply that demography does not constitute part of urbanization process, but a town is said to urbanize if the number of the people in the area increase as development does.

The brief review of existing works suggests direct correlation between economic development and urbanization. The population pressure in the developed cities brings about changes in the satellite towns and thus putting in process of urbanization into play. These works provided the needed insight in understanding current development in the study area.

The Establishment of Keffi Town

Keffi town is said to have been founded in 1802 A.D by a Fulani herdsman known as Abdul-Zanga from Dutsema Local Government Area of Katsina (Filaba p271). Abdul-Zanga's interest in Keffi was because of its richness in grazing land which constituted the bulk of the nomadic interest. Keffi under Abdul-Zanga was a vassal state under the Emir of Zazzau. With the conquest and subjugation of Northern Nigeria, the name "Kapi", which means stockade was corrupted by the British to "Keffi" (Filaba p271). Under the colonial dispensation, the status of most vassal states like that of

Keffi was changed and organized to the full status of emirate. Thus from colonial period to date, the name “Keffi Emirate” has been popularized in most documents. The current name, Keffi Local Government is thus derived from the pre-colonial Keffi Emirate.

It has been stated that as soon as Abdul-Zanga established “Kapi”, he invited his kinsmen obviously from Zanga in Katsina. Keffi soon afterwards became a major “centre for trade”, for the entire region. A development made possible with the policy of “Ganuwa” or city wall which made it “easy for the people to freely perform their economic activities, including trade and the rearing of animals without any fear of intimidation” (Filba p267). This favourable economic atmosphere must have attracted people from far and near into Keffi. Economic factor has been one of the most important factors in attracting people to a particular place since the time of recorded human history.

Some of the earlier inhabitants of the territory occupying the country at the time of Abdullahi's included Gade, Yeskwa and Bassa. Traditions of origin of these groups have been blurred. However, suffice it to mention here that these groups emerged from the surrounding Keffi town and pushed into this area because of the atmosphere created by the strategic location of Keffi with its stockades which helped in the protection of both lives and properties. Other earlier tribes in Keffi were the Hausa from the north who are described as the Gwandara. There are also the Toni and the Koro (Ayih,2006 p43).

Economic Factor in the Urbanization Process of Pre-colonial Keffi

Keffi's location in the middle belt area gave it both features of guinea and forest region. Among other regions or zones in Nigeria, it is only the middle belt area that enjoyed this advantage of both guinea and forest region (Buhari, 2006 p12). This position provides it with the fertile soil it needs for food production. Most of the crops produced in this area are for domestic consumption, such as guinea corn, maize, millet among others. Besides, there are root crops that are produced within Keffi which include yams, cassava while rice and vegetables are also grown in swampy areas within the locality. The product of the latter provides the much needed vegetables that are consumed within Keffi and its environs. This is achieved through small scale fadama farming popularly called Lambu (Oral interview with Alh. Yamusa)

Another notable economic activity besides farming is hunting and fishing. Hunting among the inhabitants of this area is done as a leisure activity. It is always carried out during the dry season when there is less farm work to do. Games hunted are consumed. Both animals hunted and fished are also consumed by the households.

Apart from tilling the soil and rearing of animals, blacksmithing was a very important craft in the area. The blacksmiths provided the implements needed for the cultivation of the land. Such implements included both big and small hoes, cutlasses, knives, etc.

The production of hide and skin also constituted the bulk of the economic activities of the people in the area under study. This industry was run by the Hausa inhabitants of Keffi. The products from this industry were not only for domestic consumption but for commercial purposes. This led to the arrival of more and more traders from far and near, first as itinerant traders and as time passed by some decided to establish permanent settlements in the town. These categories of traders were later to serve as link between the traders from far away north and the traders of Keffi town. Its production became prominent within the area today referred to as Angwan Majera in Keffi. Besides hides and skin, the people also participated in textile production. This, just like the other industries also formed an important economic activity. Loop weaving, which is locally called Masaka runs side by side with the dyeing pit called Korofi. Textile materials of different designs are produced for both domestic and commercial consumption.

It is important to note that one of the far reaching effects of the above industries was that they did not only supplement farming activities within the area under study but also led to the emergence of occupational specialization necessitated by the formation of guild system. Each guild was under a leader who served in the collective interests of his members. Prominent among the leaders were Sarkin Noma (Chief Farmer), Sarkin Dawa, Sarkin Kera and Sarkin Korofi.

With each of this leaders struggling for the interest of its group for space and market, the far-reaching effect of this was that it led to the emergence of Kasuwa (market) system within Keffi; where people converged after every four days with their products and produce for sale. This practice still exists.

The Colonial Factors in the Growth of Keffi as Urban Centre

The conquest and imposition of colonial rule in Keffi cannot hold us here too long, as much of this has been discussed in several literatures. However, for the sake of coherence, reference to the episode is necessary. It is claimed that the most important reason the British troops attacked Keffi was the stubborn inclination of the leadership to slave trade.

Throughout the 19th century, Keffi was engaged in slave raiding and slaves were sent to Zaria (because Keffi at this point in time was a vassal state of Zaria). The far-reaching effect of this was that it led to depopulation of the area. This slave raid and slave activities climaxed in 1902, when Magaji Dan Yamusa emerged as a powerful warrior in Keffi (Filaba, p.

424). His military prowess accounted for the subordination of all the surrounding chiefdoms such as Karshi, Yeskwa, Toni and Akwanga (Ayih, 2006). The determination of British colonial masters to stop slave trade and slave activities in Keffi and its environs led to the death of Captain Maloney in 1902 (Ayih, 2006). This attracted punitive expedition to Keffi and led to the British occupation of Keffi. Following the British occupation of Keffi, all pre-colonial structures were dismantled and new colonial structures to facilitate colonial ventures and administrative expediency were put in place. This includes the moving of the administrative seat from Keffi to Nasarawa, placing Keffi under Nasarawa Division. Also placed under Nasarawa Division were Nasarawa district, and Karu district among others. However, this was a temporary measure as the headquarters of the Division was later moved back to Keffi.

The colonial records indicate the beginning of urbanization of Keffi with the establishment of the Native Treasury in 1911. However the growth of Keffi was very slow as the colonial government did not deem it fit to site many infrastructures there. Some individuals exonerate the slow growth of Keffi compared to the rapid development of Kaduna and Jos as a punishment for killing Captain Maloney in 1902. It seems the colonial government was not interested in infrastructural development of the country, not the issue of punishment. The urbanization of Keffi in terms of infrastructural development started with the colonial development of G.R.A, building culverts and roads and bridges across river Antau, sitting of primary schools of Abdu- Zanga and Ahmadu Maikoto, the Native Courts, Emir's palace, police station, prison yard and hospital using recruited labour. It was mandatory for every village to bring able-bodied men and women to work in Keffi on specific days. They also built the Roman Catholic Church, and later Sudan Interior Mission (SIM now ECWA), and Abdu- Zanga and Ahmadu Maikoto Primary Schools. Later they built Government College, Keffi and Government Teachers College, Keffi.

Other establishments during the colonial era were the veterinary, immunization centre, hospital, leprosy centre, airport, forest, deep wells (Kwakwara), native court, market, water board, Keffi club and Keffi hotel.

Conclusion

Perhaps, Keffi urbanization was part of the general transformation of the central Nigeria in the 19th Century. Both oral tradition and European eye-witness accounts are very clear that the 19th Century marked the turning point in the settlement patterns of the whole Central Nigeria and attribute such phenomenon to the Jihadists' activities and the European interest in trade.

The process of state formation and urbanization in central Nigeria in the 19th century was complex. It brought about several changes like reduction in

size of some autochthonous kingdoms, depopulated some parts, urbanized and culturally diffused others, increased production and trade relations, new polities emerged and a new balance of power and the evolution of new alliances, which with the intervention of the Royal Niger Company culminated into the colonial conquest by 1900.

Positively also, Keffi used some of the slaves as servants, wives, Dogarai (security agents) and soldiers, which increased the population of Keffi. However, Keffi became a populated town in the region because of its location. The land there is very fertile and thus boosted agriculture and green pasture. The trade routes through Kanunkoro gradually shifted to Keffi and it became the major trading centre. Its market was filled with goods from the surrounding Gbagyi, Mada, Afo, Gwandara, Yeskwa, Jaba and Gade villages.

Its korofi (dye pits) became the dominant centre of dyeing in the whole region. Keffi came to have concentration of weavers, dyers, butchers, carvers, guilds of all sorts more than any other town in the area. Most of the Hausa artisans and traders that brought trans-Saharan goods stationed in Keffi.

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