

# **Colonial Domination and Political Change in Magajin Gari District, Katsina Emirate, 1903 – 1960**

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## **Abstract**

Following the British occupation of Katsina Emirate in 1903, they engaged in the search for loyal and viable leaders, who would implement colonial policies under the Native Authority system. That was why the British engaged in the imposition and deposition of rulers in Katsina, in order to meet their objectives. The Emir and the officials of the emirate were turned into employees of the colonial government and were paid salary to buttress that point. Also, the emirate system was destroyed and restructured in order to implement British colonial policies. Magajin Gari was carved into a district, and an official Magajin Gari was made the district head, who was responsible for the collection of taxes, maintenance of law and order for the successful operation of the colonial state. Thus the British succeeded in eroding the system of emirate administration, and replaced it with the colonial system, that was centred on the exploitation of human and materials resources of our area of study. The rulers were used as tools in the running of the colonial state, under the guise of Indirect rule system.

## **Introduction**

This paper discusses the British conquest and occupation of Katsina Emirate in 1903, and the establishment and nature of political and administrative control in Magajin Gari district. The political and administrative changes that followed included: search for viable leaders to run the colonial machinery and re-organization of the emirate to ensure maximum exploitation of human and material resources of the area, for the development of Europe. The British used the local rulers to implement colonial policies under the Native Authority system. The establishment of Native authority signaled the incorporation of the area into the British colonial system.

In the first decade of the twentieth century Britain conquered Nigeria and incorporated it into the world capitalist system, in pursuance of imperial and colonial ambitions. The southern part of the country was the first area conquered by the British. The northern part which came to be known as Northern Nigeria was

conquered and declared a Protectorate in 1900, under Frederick Lugard.<sup>1</sup> Lugard sent messages to the rulers of the Northern Protectorate proclaiming sovereignty over them and asked them to pay taxes to him. Some rulers submitted to his control out of fear while some others were conquered militarily.<sup>2</sup>

### **British Occupation of Katsina Emirate**

The British conquest of Sokoto Caliphate (Katsina Emirate inclusive) started even before Lugard's proclamation in 1900. The Royal Niger Company (RNC) had sent an expedition against Nupe and Ilorin in 1897. The British had hoped to exercise an informal political control over the Sokoto Caliphate. This however was abandoned with the growing pressure and competition from the French and the Germans.<sup>3</sup> In order to protect their imperial interest, the British embarked in an active policy, leading to the formal inauguration of British administration of Northern Nigeria at Lokoja by Lugard.

The British conquest of Katsina Emirate in 1903 was a grand act towards the incorporation of the state into the sphere of influence of the British. The British occupation led to the destruction of the political and socio-economic system of Katsina, and in place colonial system and policies were introduced to facilitate the exploitation of resources of the area, for the growth and development of British industries in order to promote capitalism. The conquest of Katsina emirate was not based on humanitarian ground as was depicted by some Imperialists; rather it was a mission which aimed at nothing other than the incorporation of the area into the capitalist system, in quest of territories that guaranty the supply of raw materials for capitalist industries and markets for their finished goods for the continued survival of capitalism.<sup>4</sup>

In an attempt to justify and legitimize the conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate, Lugard sent a letter to the Caliph of Sokoto informing him that, the conquest was not intended to deprive the Fulani of their leadership position. Rather the British were on a mission to develop the Nigerian area, as well as consolidate Fulani rule. This however had little significance, as the presence of the British was continually seen as a threat to the existence of the Caliphate.<sup>5</sup> It rather bred hostility between the Caliph and Lugard, because the former openly expressed unwillingness to submit to British over rule. However, by February 1903 most emirates had been conquered and subjugated to British colonial rule. In fact even Kano emirate was conquered despite its attempt to defy occupation by erecting extensive defensive walls and raising army in defence of its territory.

### **Operation of The Colonial State and Political Changes.**

The conquest and occupation of Katsina Emirate as a whole brought the area under the direct control of Britain and marked its formal subservience to international capitalism. The British used the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to consolidate their control in the area. Whereby, they engaged in the search for suitable and obedient rulers that will aid them in the establishment and consolidation of their rule.

Some scholars have been under the illusion that, the emirate system which the British found in operation over most part of northern Nigeria was admired highly and respected by them, so they did not temper with the social system. The over celebrated 'Indirect rule' system we are told was instituted out of respect for the emirate system<sup>6</sup>. This is very misleading. However the emirate system provided well developed hierarchical feudal structures upon which the capitalists system could be grafted without much and undue institutional strains.

Even the well celebrated emirate system, as in the case of Katsina, had to be destroyed, re-organized and re-structured in order to make possible the institutionalization of the British "New Order". This is because it is believed that, "modernization" cannot stand hand in hand with the "traditional "system. The new order was institutionalized in three broad areas, namely: Administrative re-organization, taxation, and establishment of coercive instruments of domination and control.

Following the conquest of Katsina Emirate, the British found out that, Katsina Metropolis (later Magajin Gari district) was the principal town, and capital of the emirate. Therefore, the British established the divisional headquarters of the division in the metropolis. And it became the centre for the day-to day running of the colonial administration. The metropolis maintained that position up to 1905 when some changes were made. In fact, the only change that was carried out was joining up of the metropolis with villages of Ajiwa, Yan Rakumma, Shinkafi, Kutubi and Kayauki to form Magajin Gari District in 1905.<sup>7</sup> And despite the formation of Magajin Gari district, Katsina Metropolis remained the headquarters of Katsina Division where the instruments of coercion and domination were located. The division comprised of emirates of Katsina, Daura and Kazaure, until in 1923, when the division consisted only Katsina Emirate. Katsina Emirate was further divided into districts and each district was placed under responsible headman, who was directly responsible to the emir for the collection of taxes and general 'prosperity' of his district.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Magajin Gari was one of the districts created by the British in the emirate.

Thus, unlike other districts of Katsina Emirate, the metropolis served dual functions in the colonial period; that is as divisional headquarters of Katsina division and also district head quarters of Magajin Gari. By implication the Colonialists considering cost effectiveness did not establish separate administrative structures for the division and the district. Rather, the jurisdiction of instruments of control such as courts, police and prison extended to the Magajin Gari district. However, the Magajin Gari district was created as a sub-unit of the Native Administration,<sup>9</sup> headed by an official known as Magajin Gari based in the metropolis, who was assisted by *wakilai* and *magaddai* (sectional heads), for the implementation of colonial policies.

The search for viable leaders who assume the position of Magajin Gari made the British to transfer officials from one district to another. Thus, Mallam Abubakar was appointed as the district head of Magajin Gari, at a time when he was the district head of Durbi. He was then transferred from Magajin Gari to Sullubawa district, and was made the district head of Kaita; Malam Zayyana was then

appointed as Magajin Gari to replace Abubakar<sup>10</sup>. Later, Mallam Zayyana was appointed as the Waziri of Katsina, which left the position of Magajin Gari vacant. Therefore, in order to fill the vacancy; Mallam Abubakar was brought back to take his former place as the Magajin Gari 1927<sup>11</sup>. The position of Magajin Gari was significant in Katsina that was why the British appointed him as a member of the Emir's Council in 1928.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the office of Magajin Gari became attached with the rulership of Katsina at a subsequent date. The British appointed Usman Nagogo as Magajin Gari in 1938, and when his father Emir Dikko died in 1944 he succeeded him as emir of Katsina.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Muhammad Kabir the son of Emir Usman Nagogo was appointed as Magajin Gari, and succeeded his father as emir in 1981.<sup>14</sup>

### **Evolution of Divisional Administrative Structures and the Creation of Magajin Gari District**

Following the conquest of Katsina Emirate the British embarked on the establishment and consolidation of the colonial system, as their major pre-occupation. Thus, they embarked on the re-organization of the administrative set-up of the conquered territory for maximum exploitation of resources. In 1903 when Katsina was conquered, British found out that, Katsina Metropolis was the administrative centre and capital of the emirate, and was not administered as a district. However officials who headed various occupations in the metropolis such as black smithing, weaving, dyeing etc were appointed and were placed under a representative of the Emir. The officials regulated and supervised economic production, and collected taxes on various crafts. They then took the taxes to the representatives, who in turn remitted it to the Emir.

This set up could not be maintained under the colonial administration; therefore, the government utilized the services of some appointed chiefs. The position of the representative was cancelled by the British in order to reduce maintenance cost. Also, the position of the officials who regulated economic production and collected taxes was eradicated, because they were seen as exploitative, that they made a living from the taxes collected. They collected taxes, and took some to the emir's officials, while retaining a large proportion of the taxes for themselves. Therefore, the British saw this as an act of 'depriving' the emir a good source of income; even in the absence of major source of revenue from trade in slaves.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, the British did not only deprive the emir of certain income, but even turned him into a salaried staff.

Thus, for 'efficient administration' Katsina Metropolis was administered as Magajin Gari district in 1905. The district was placed under the Magajin Gari an official appointed by the Resident based on power bestowed on him under section 9 of the Native Revenue Ordinance.<sup>16</sup> The Resident did the appointment in 'consultation' with the Emir. Thus, Resident was the only person bestowed with the power of the appointment, acting Resident could only refer the matter to the office of the Secretary, Northern Province.<sup>17</sup>

The Magajin Gari district comprised of quarters of Katsina Metropolis and the villages of Ajiwa, Shinkafi, Kutubi, Yan Rakumma and Kayauki.<sup>18</sup> The quarters of Katsina metropolis include: Kofar Kaura, Cikin Gida, Galadunchi, Marina,

Gambarawa, Sararin Tsako, Tudu, Makudawa, Yan Kyaure, Masanawa, Kofar Yandaka, Gafai, Tsofuwar Kasuwa, Kofar Marusa, Kofar Durbi, Yar'adua, Kofar Sauri and Rafukka.<sup>19</sup> Each of the quarters was headed by a ward head, who was in turn answerable to a *wakili* (representative). The *wakilai* were four in number, they included: Wakilin Gabas, Yamma, Kudu and Arewa; each of them had wards under his jurisdiction.<sup>20</sup> The villages in the district were headed by *magaddai* (village heads) and further divided into wards. For example, Ajiwa village had the following wards: Unguwar Kurtufa, Maje, Yalwa and Barhim.<sup>21</sup> The *wakilai* and *magaddai* were answerable to the Magajin Gari, head of the district in matters of tax assessment, implementation of colonial policies and all matters affecting their areas.

The Colonialists argued that, changes made in the metropolis reflected 'good governance; as such taxes were collected through efficient methods. Also, village heads and *wakilai* became answerable to Magajin Gari, who in turn was answerable to no one except the Emir who in turn reported matters to the Divisional Officer (D.O).

The British compelled the district head of Magajin Gari to live in his district and was not allowed to live outside the area. He was made to obey colonial laws and orders, as well as ensure the assessment and collection of taxes. By 1907, the district head was even made to stay back in his district during Sallah festivals. This was a British policy introduced in Katsina in 1906 and implemented in the same year, in comparison with Kano where implementation started later.<sup>22</sup> This shows that British policies were dutifully implemented in Katsina emirate. The British did not compel the district head to live in his districts for the progress and development of such district; rather he was made to live there in order to partake in the assessment and collection of taxes, which was one of the major duties which the British paid him salary to carry out.

A district head that successfully assessed taxes, recruited forced labour for colonial projects and encouraged the production of cash crops needed by capitalists industries was regarded by the British as good, intelligent, and hard working. If a district head performed duties the British expected of him, he was favoured, even if he had oppressed and exploited the peasants under his control. This was due to the fact that colonial rule itself was repressive, and the colonialists exploited human and natural resources at all levels for their selfish interest. There was no instance that a district head was deposed on charges of exploiting his subjects. Rather, some of them were deposed for defying British orders; and some others for withholding record or for embezzling tax money.<sup>23</sup> In fact, district reorganization in Katsina emirate was carried out whenever a chief was found out to have committed any offence.<sup>24</sup>

To ensure that British policies and ordinances were implemented, the Assistant Resident embarked on the supervision of the Magajin Gari district, in order to assess the work of district head.<sup>25</sup> This created suspicion and distrust instead of understanding and harmony between the two groups.

It should be pointed out that, Magajin Gari district was further divided into villages for easy administration.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the five villages of Magajin Gari district

were part of the 503 villages which Katsina Emirate had in 1930.<sup>27</sup> The district head of Magajin Gari and his subordinates performed their functions in the context of the colonial Native Authority system under the Sole Native Authority (Emir). The Sole Native Authority in turn was answerable to the Resident through the Divisional Officers (D.O.s).

### **Administrative and Political Change in Magajin Gari District**

The British termed their mission in Nigeria as a dual mandate that is promoting the interest of Britain, the colonial power, as well as developing the colonies and their people.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, they developed a system of administration involving the British colonial officers and traditional authorities referred to as Indirect rule. The emirate system was used as a beacon of experimenting Indirect Rule system for maximum exploitation of resources in the colonial period. The British created the central administration for the implementation of colonial policies. Thus, Magajin Gari district was the area where the central administration and its departments such as village administration, education, and health e.t.c were based. Similarly, agencies for enforcing law and order using instruments of coercion such as police and army were put in place in Magajin Gari district. Also, the office of the *dogarai* (palace guards) which was in existence before the colonial period was utilized by the colonial government for the administration of local government, and for the maintenance of law and order.<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that, though the native Administration was based in Katsina Metropolis, it was not under the Magajin Gari district. It was only that, due to the location of the departments in Katsina Metropolis their jurisdiction was extended to the people of Magajin Gari district.

The emirates constituted major units of local government, which depended on emirs and chiefs as sole Native Authority in the colonial system. The emirs and chiefs were accorded institutional and executive responsibilities for the smooth running of the local government. In Katsina Emirate, the emir was the sole Native Authority, and together with the officials who assisted him in the administration of the emirate formed machinery known as the Native Authority.<sup>30</sup> The Native Authority (NA) was therefore established to serve as a mechanism through which the emirate was ruled, and the implementation of colonial policies in the emirate.

In the Native Authority system, Magajin Gari district was created as a sub-unit under the Magajin Gari an official responsible for the implementation of colonial policies in the districts, and was assisted by four *wakilai* (representatives) based in Katsina metropolis. Each of the *wakilai* had group of wards under his jurisdiction, which means the metropolis was divided into four units for easy administration. The work of *wakilai* included: collection of taxes, sanitation, adult classes, and ensuring that 74 pupils placed under each of them went to school.<sup>31</sup> The ward heads were answerable to the *wakilai* and were responsible for registration of birth and death; as well as collection of taxes in their wards. Also, *magadai* (village heads) of Ajiwa, shinkafi, Yan Rakumma, Kutubi and Kayauki performed jobs similar to that of the *wakilai*, but not as rigorous as that of the *wakilai*; yet they received the same salary.<sup>32</sup> The villages were further divided into wards for easy implementation of colonial policies.

Magajin Gari, head of the district, was placed under the Emir that was why whenever he was on tour to his district he gave out orders to the people as *dokar Sarki* (Emir's orders).<sup>33</sup> It was only in theory that the Emir was shown to be in control of affairs of the emirate, but in practice, District Officer was the one who instructed the Magajin Gari on how to do his job.<sup>34</sup> Though the Emir was the sole Native Authority in the emirate, he did not act on his own accord; rather he was subject to the advice and control of the colonial government. He was always under the 'guidance' and control of District Officer and Resident in the Division and Province respectively. In the view of Heussler the direction, mode of operation and pace of each division depended on the way Europeans and Africans worked together for the 'smooth' operation of government.<sup>35</sup> That means the level to which local rulers co-operated with the Europeans to vandalize and rape the resources of Africa.

The function of the N.A was assessment of taxation, justice, and the regulation of the emirate economy,<sup>36</sup> in the interest of the colonial government and at the detriment of local population. Native Administration was an important instrument of rule under the Native Authority system. The power of the N.A was consolidated by administrative and organizational roles, such as the regulation of social and economic activities, the creation of jobs and the maintenance of law and order.<sup>37</sup>

Native Authority system was divided into Native Administration, Native Treasury and Native Courts. The Native Treasury was responsible for designing government regularized method of assessment and the collection of taxes in the emirate. And this was shared according to Margery Perham in the following ratio: the colonial government took half of the general revenue, while the remaining half was allocated to Native Authority for the running of the government and payment of salary of N.A officials including the Magajin Gari.<sup>38</sup>

Also, it was argued that, the Colonial government did not 'interfere' with the Native Authority share of revenue; because it even became known as *kudin Sarki* (emir's share).<sup>39</sup> And the colonial officers were always available to 'advise' the emir on how to spend 'his' revenue. The N.A share was not in any way at the discretion of the emir. Even if the N.A share of revenue was called *kudin sarki* that was not enough evidence to conclude that the revenue belonged to the emir. In fact, all expenditures in the emirate were carried out subject to the approval of the Resident. The impression given that, the emir controlled the N.A. share of revenue is misleading. Similarly, Magajin Gari accounted for all taxes collected in his district to the Emir, who in turn did the same to the D.O. This shows that a hierarchical structure developed in the colonial period, with the British at the top and the African rulers at the bottom.<sup>40</sup>

The Native administration was divided into units and departments based in Katsina Metropolis for easy implementation of colonial projects. The departments included, central administration, district administration, village administration, police, prison, education, health, welfare service, judiciary, markets, commercial services,<sup>41</sup> and public works department.<sup>42</sup> Also, sub units were created and placed under the district heads, officials who were in turn responsible to the N.A for easy

administration.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the jurisdiction of the departments extended to Magajin Gari district which had its headquarter in the metropolis.

It should be pointed out that, the British and native rulers lived in two different worlds, and had different perceptions and world views;<sup>44</sup> the British always had the feeling of superiority over local rulers (Magajin Gari inclusive), therefore they could not have given autonomy to the rulers in running the N.A. Moreover, in Colonial parlance, an African was always considered a subject, and an inferior being, no matter the position acquired by that African. Also, the District Officers and Residents were always ready to call the attention of the local rulers to what Europeans referred to as bad manners.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Heussler argued that “the British Officer played a role that was concerned first and last with educating and discipline. For the average District Officer the day was full of pushing the N.A, including everyone from the emir to village heads.”<sup>46</sup> This shows that the British assumed a position of ‘guiding’ and ‘directing’ the affairs of the subject population in order to teach them system of ‘good governance’.

Treasury (*Baital Mal*) was not new in Katsina, what was new was sharing of acquired revenue between the Emir and the British. The British went to the extent of determining how such revenue was spent by the emir. The first colonial Native Treasury was started in Katsina in 1908 by Palmer; who asked Emir Dikko to provide a budget for the expenditure of the 50% N.A share of revenue.<sup>47</sup> The institution of Native Treasury has led to increase in revenue through the elaboration of machinery of tax assessment in Katsina Division. The Jangali (cattle) tax increased to £ 253,571 in 1912 from £222,786 in 1911 in Katsina Division.<sup>48</sup> The increase was due to critical manner by which taxes were assessed in the colonial period.

In Katsina Metropolis and villages the critical manner in which taxes were assessed led to increase in revenue generation in the period 1922-23. The table below shows the revenue derived from taxation in Katsina metropolis and the villages:

#### Tables Showing Increase in Taxation in Magajin gari District

Year	General Tax	Incidence	Increase
1922	£ 1103.10.10	£2/10.5d	
1923	£ 1343.19.0	£ 3/3	£240.09.10

Source: NNAK KATPROF 1018, Katsina Division Annual Report, 1923.

Year	Cattle Tax	General Tax	Total	Increase
1935	£ 1, 40.23	£ 1,960.150	£ 2,100.38	
1936	£ 1, 57.26	£2,286.150	£2,443.42	£343.04

Source: NNAK KATPROF 1/1/17, Magajin Gari 1935-36



Similarly, by 1916-1917 the general taxes of Katsina emirate increased, due to the critical manner which taxes were assessed in Magajin Gari district and other districts. The data below shows the increase in the revenue of Katsina Emirate:

**A Table Showing Increase in Taxation in Katsina Emirate**

Year	General Tax	Jangali	Total	Increase
1916	£36,095.1.8	£22,875.15.0	£58,970.25	
1917	£37,021.13.6	£28,208.17.0	£65,229.3.6	£6,259.05.6

Source: NNAK KATROF 1243, Katsina Division Annual Report 1917.

It was out of the generated revenue that Magajin Gari, *wakilai* (sectional heads), *magadai* (village heads) and *masu unguwa* (ward heads) were paid their salary on a monthly basis. They were employees of the colonial government who could be dismissed at will. In fact, they only worked in the interest of the colonial government, whose main motive was the exploitation of human and material resources of the area for the development of Europe.

It should be noted that, the whole structure of the Native Authority revolved around the Treasury.<sup>49</sup> Apart from payment of salary of officials, resources of the Native Treasury were used to carry out projects such as construction of roads and railways, well digging, building of schools, hospitals etc. It should be noted that, these infrastructures were not provided by the colonial government for philanthropic reason, rather they were put in place for the Colonialists to achieve their mission in Nigeria, which is maximum exploitation of resources in the interest of capitalism.

In 1924, Native Treasury revenue was £127,127.17.8 out of this amount, the sum of £10,000 was used in the construction of Kano-Katsina road and apart of the money was used for investment abroad. By 1924, the total investment made abroad from the resources of Katsina Division was £59,887.<sup>50</sup> This points that, the British were in our area of study in order to repatriate resources for the development of the metropole to the neglect of colonized people

### Conclusion

Katsina was occupied and subdued by the British Colonialist in 1903, without fighting any battle. The British joined Katsina Metropolis with other villages and formed Magajin Gari district in 1905. Following the formation of the district, the British started searching for viable and loyal leaders to head the district, that was why they engaged in transferring officials from one district to another. In fact, the whole emirate witnessed great political change with the deposition of Emir Abubukar and the installation of Emir Dikko, who was loyal to the British cause in Katsina. Also, the British established the Native Authority system in the emirate under the pretext of 'good governance'. Magajin Gari district was created as a sub-

unit under an official Magajin Gari, who was assisted by *wakilai* and *magadai* (sectional heads) in the implementation of colonial policies. These political office holders were reduced to tax collectors, and that was why rigorous method of collection of taxes was introduced. Thus, a political change has occurred in Magajin Mari District whereby the officials became salaried officials of the colonial government in order to show the superiority of the colonial regime over the native rule. The survival of these political officials in the colonial regime rested solely on their loyalty to the colonial government, whose sole existence lied on the exploitation of human and material resources of the Magajin Gari area for the development of Europe.

### Endnotes

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6. Margery Perham and Charles Orr are the proponents of this argument.
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