

THE FORMATION OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF GOBIRAWA SETTLEMENTS NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper seeks to highlight the establishment and growth of Gobirawa migrant community in Niger State, Nigeria. Beginning with a pioneer group of a few men in 1973, the migrants are now found in many rural areas in the state; some in wholly Gobirawa settlements, others living in Gwari-based communities. It is also the aim of the paper to discuss the occupational activities – both farming and non-farming – of the migrants. While it re-affirms that farming remains their major occupation, some migrants do engage themselves in non-farming activities such as hunting and trading, most especially after farm harvest season. The paper concludes that migration of labour and humans as well as inter-group relations and cultural integration have been part of the history of Nigerian societies.

Keywords: Migration, settlement, land, inter-group relations, integration

Growth and Development of Gobirawa Settlements

Prior to 1972/74 drought, there was no established Gobirawa settlement in what is now Niger State.⁸ However, the consequent famine and hardship of the drought forced those affected to seek for alternative strategies of survival. The works of Ahmed,⁹ Aliyu¹⁰ and Audu¹¹ provide valuable clue

¹ Before 1972, there were only evidences of Gobirawa seasonal migrants frequenting the area under discussion. As seasonal migrants, they did not develop interest in land acquisition or establishing permanent settlements but instead either lived in urban centres or for those who chose rural areas hunting and petty-trading were their main occupations.

⁹ U. Ahmed, 'Niger – Nigeria Boundary: Cross Boundary Movement in Sokoto Area with Special Reference to Periods of Political and Economic Crisis', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1976

¹⁰ M. Aliyu, 'Modification of Agricultural Techniques to the Drought Situation in Illela Village, Gwadbawa District, Sokoto State, 1972/73', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Geography, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1976

on how drought and famine served as ‘push factors’ that compelled rural dwellers migrate from Sokoto area to southwards in search of productive land. The Gobirawa of Gatawa District in Sabon-Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State came to discover certain rural areas of Niger State as a conducive environment where land was (and is still) believed to be more agriculturally productive. Not only that the more remote it is, the easier it is for land to be acquired, purchased or leased.¹² Initially, the indigenous communities did not resist the inflow of Gobirawa Migrants. With time, and based on information passed by the migrants to those they have left behind, the number of migrants continued to rise significantly.¹³ Through this way, the migrants succeeded in establishing a number of communities in the state; some of these settlements are new and wholly inhabited by the migrants and in others are found Gobirawa migrants living in Gwari settlements.

Rafin Sarkin Fawa

This is the first town where migrants settled. It remains the most popular destination town known even at the source region to date. It has the highest concentrations of migrants from Gatawa District. It is now the headquarters of Munya Local Government Area. Pioneer migrants to this settlement include Isah Gwiwa, Danbaba Na Sahabi, Amadu Dan Mata, Amasa, Hamza Na Doki, Sa’adu Dan Gajo, Ragazo and Dan Baki.

Being the first place the migrants discovered following the 1972/74 drought, the continued influx of migrants had, by 1980s, compelled them to seek for more land on which to build more houses. In response to this, a new layout, Hayin Dogo, was allocated to the teeming migrants. It is here the migrants become concentrated. Though the Sarkin Hausawa of Rafin Sarkin Fada, Alhaji Nadaden, is from Kano, the Gobirawa community has its own leadership structure but under the Sarkin Hausawa. Generally, the Hausa community plays an important role in the socio-economic and political life of the town.¹⁴ For, besides agricultural production the migrants dominate the commercial life of the settlements. Also in politics, their votes count a lot in determining the outcome of the Local Government Elections.

¹¹ P.S. Audu, ‘Drought – Caused Migration Around Illela: The Case of Tozai, Sonnani and Amarawa, Gwadabawa District, Sokoto Division in Sokoto State’, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Geography, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1976

¹² This might explain the continuity in the trend whereby those who seek for land to cultivate have to move into the remotest areas of the State.

⁶ All attempt to number the migrants in settlements visited proved abortive; hence all numbers used here are estimates, based on information given by respondents.

⁷ For instance, a respondent, Alhaji Tukrt Shaba, who was then the Local Government Secretary, attributed the success of the ruling party in the LGA to the support given to it by the migrant group.

In spite of the peaceful co-existence between the migrants and the indigenous groups, minor conflicting issues often arise. One such conflict was witnessed in early 1980s over the site of a market. The indigenous Gwari wanted it be sited in the town centre (where they are concentrated) while the Hausa favoured Hayin Dogo, by the Railway station (where the migrants are concentrated). The issue was later resolved by the Local Government Authority by siting the market in between the two disputed quarters. The market days remain Sunday and Tuesday.

Dan Mangoro

This settlement lies between Kaduna- Abuja High Way and Sarkin Fawa. It is the second popular settlement after Sarkin Fawa to be founded by the Gobirawa migrants. The beginning of Gobirawa settlement here is traced to Yar-Buhari¹⁵ and the pioneer migrant was one Hassan Dan haya from Gatawa. By the year 2000, the number of migrant men with their wives and children was put at one hundred.¹⁶ Like the pioneer founder, they are mostly from Gatawa town. Also like Sarkin Fawa, Dan Mangoro is a Gwari community, amidst which the Gobirawa settled. However, besides Gobirawa, there is the presence of Fulani cattle rearers around the settlement. Interestingly, to date, there is no record of conflict between the ‘guests’ and their ‘hosts’ in Dan Mangoro.

Lambata

Another town where Gobirawa migrants are found is Lambata, the headquarters of Gurara LGA. It lies along Suleja-Minna Road. The pioneer migrants here, beginning with *yar Buhari*, are mostly from Teke. However, from 1997, seasonal migrants from Gatawa do frequent the town. The leader of the seasonal migrants is Mallam Saminu Gatawa.

Zazzaga, Gwada and Farin Doki.

These are inhabited by migrants mostly from Gangara. All are, however, indigenous settlements accommodating an increasing number of Gobirawa migrants. One interesting aspect regarding migrants from Gangara, in contrast to those from other towns, is their fast switch-over from land cultivation to trading.

⁸ In the source region under discussion, the 1984/85 famine was named after the then Nigerian’s Military Head of State, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari.

⁹ Based on estimate, since not all male respondents agreed to disclose the number of their dependents such as wives and children

Farming Activities of Gobirawa Migrants in Niger State

As land remains a crucial factor in explaining the migration of Gobirawa from Sokoto State to the rural areas of Niger, it is no surprise that most of them remain as farmers at the destination region. They cultivate food and cash crops. However, as new comers, they have to adapt to challenges of land cultivation in a new environment. For instance, they have to learn to cultivate on more than one field; hence a considerable number cultivate three or four different fields. This is because in that part of the country, individual land tenure has largely replaced the traditional communal land tenure system. Earlier studies on land tenure system in some parts of Nigeria establish similar trend, and the implication remains that ‘the migrants farmer may not be able to obtain a large enough area of farmland from one landlord and is therefore obliged to rent land from two or more indigenes of the territory where he settles to farm’.¹⁷

Another reason behind renting different pieces of land lied in the settlement pattern of the migrant group. As the migrants mostly live amidst the indigenous populace, this restricted them from obtaining one large holding. To this must be added the farming practices of the migrant; making it necessary for him to farm more than one field in a year. For instance, in those areas of Niger state where Gobirawa migrant groups are found, yam is cultivated on newly cleared fallow while cassava and maize are cultivated on land which in the previous year was planted with yams. Also, as some respondents have indicated, the practice of cultivating many fields of different crops aims at making them play safe in case of crop failures or poor yields resulting from weather conditions or poor soil.

The size of farms cultivated by Gobirawa migrants in Niger State is relatively smaller compared to what obtains in their place of origin. For, in the source region, the relative ease of preparing land for farming and the small cost of seed grains are important factors making for larger farms in the upper north. One of the constraints for cultivating large farmlands in this semi-Savannah region is the cost of land clearing, which most migrants could not afford, at least in the initial stage. Related to this is shortage of labour; hence many respondents indicated that they would like to cultivate more land if they had the money to employ more labour. Also important in this regard is the cost of cultivation. For instance, a relatively small piece of land for maize cultivation may require large amount of fertiliser without which it may not yield much.

The source of labour among the migrant group remains, mainly, the family labour. This is provided by the migrant himself, together with his children and other dependent like younger brothers or new arrivals who are

¹⁷ R. K. Udo, *The Migrant Tenant Farmers of Nigeria*, AUP, Ibadan, 1975, p.87.

yet to establish independent living. The new arrivals live in the households of the established migrants and help not only in farm work but also in domestic work such ‘apprentices’. They are usually relations of the migrant or teenagers originating from the same village as the migrant farmer. No wages are paid to this group of workers but their masters feed and clothe them and normally give them some basic capital in cash and implements whenever they decide to establish as independent farmers.

However, considering the size of farmlands they cultivate and the sources of labour available, wage labour system is sometimes practised in some migrant settlements. The need to employ wage labour becomes greater when we consider the non-participation of housewives in cultivation. Unlike their hosts, whose wives provide an important source of labour on farms, Gobirawa migrant wives are sanctioned from land clearing, weeding and even harvesting of crops cultivated. They are limited to such an informal sector activity as highlighted in the next section. Another factor limiting the labour force on cultivation is the rise of the number of migrant children attending primary and secondary schools. The labour of these children is only utilised on farms when they are on holidays or during weekends.

The cost of family labour is difficult to assess; the migrant farmers among the Gobirawa settlers do not cost the labour used on their farms except where they employ wage labour. The method and amount of payments for wage labour vary. The most common nowadays is that payment is made on completion of a specific job such as weeding a field for which the price has been settled in advance. Another system is by paying an agreed amount of varying from ₦500 and ₦800 per day. In all cases, the workers are fed during the period of engagement and in some cases accommodation is also provided.

As for farming operations, the migrants have to adopt those of the indigenous populations of the area where they settle. In all the settlements visited in the course of this research, farming season begins in February with bush clearing, followed by the planting of yams and cassava in April, in anticipation of the first rains. Maize is planted when rain falls proper. Crops are planted on ridges. Though crop mixture is common on migrant farms, there is considerable specialisation in the production of yams which is in great demand in urban centres. This is followed by cassava and then maize. While the average yam cultivation period is six months, that of cassava is fourteen months. And unlike in the traditional farming system practised by the indigenous community, migrant farmers often plant cassava or maize as a first crop.

Also the traditional division of crops in indigenous communities according to the sexes (for instance yam is considered to be the crop of the man and cassava is owned by the wives) does not exist in migrant

communities. As for the indigenous population, all members of the family join in bush clearing, and preparing the land for cultivation. Family labour is also mobilised in planting yams, which is owned by the man, after which the man lays out his fields into plots to be allocated to his wives who may then interplant crops like okro and maize. As for migrant families, on the other hand, the wives do not partake in cultivation.

Harvests is a very busy period for those migrants who cultivate yams on a large scale since the mature crop must be cultivated almost at once otherwise it deteriorates. Migrants who concentrate on cassava production, on the other hand, can phase out their harvesting programme over a long period of time.

As regards the choice of crops, it is pertinent to state that since migrants farmers produce primarily for the market, their choice is determined largely by the demand for such crops in the neighbouring urban centres that provide market. In Sarkin Fawa, Zazaga and Lambata migrant farmers cultivate yam as their cash crop while cassava and maize, which are meant for home consumption, are grown on a small scale. It is quite common for migrant farmers in these settlements to cultivate up to four fields of yam, each measuring at least an acre in area while the fifth field, which is cropped with cassava and maize for home consumption, is rarely more than half an acre in extent. In Anwala and Dan Mangoro, however, farmers prefer cassava as their main cash crop, followed by maize and guinea corn as food crops. Their choice of cassava is based on two main reasons.

The first is that cassava is more tolerant of the clay soils of their areas. Secondly, since the crop can be left in the soil even after maturing, unlike yams, cassava farmers are in better position to space out their supply to the market and thereby maintain a relatively steady price. The yam farmers receive very low prices for their crops during the harvest season. When there is a surplus of yams. Indeed many migrants conserve their cassava crop till the hungry season' month of march to July when the price of *garri* may go up by as much as a hundred per cent.

To this end, it needs to be stated that abundant supply of good farmland is certainly an important factor which permits some migrant communities to specialise in yam cultivation since the crop yields much on newly cleared fallow. Hence, yam cultivation is, among other things, associated with such virgin areas where fallow lands are relatively available.

Non-Farming Activities, Income and Capital Formation

As is the case with other Northern Nigerian areas, farm work in Niger State is highly seasonal. In the traditional village community, the slack

period in the farming calendar is a time of relaxation, festivities and cultural shows. The slack period is also a hunting season.

Hence in most Gobirawa communities of Niger State, some men have made hunting as their specialisation during the slack period. Using locally manufactured guns and traps wild animals are caught and the meat is meant for both domestic use and sale

However, compared with local peasants, migrants farmers put in more hours of work on their farms as well as in subsidiary occupations taken up during the slack period. Thus one on-farm activity the migrants engage during the period is trading in agricultural products and in manufactured consumer goods. In Sarkin Fawa and Lambata, for instance, some migrants use the period to buy yams and cassava from other producers and take them to such urban centres as Abuja and Kaduna for sale. From such urban centres also they purchase manufactures goods for sell in the migrant settlements.

Generally, respondents were reluctant to reveal their true income, partly because they do not know their exact annual cash income since they do not keep any record of sales of farm produce. The case is the same with regard to their expenditure, including remittance, sent home to support immediate families and other relations. However, based on the estimates they gave¹⁸, it is clear that the annual savings of many migrants appear rather high. For, their cash expenditure on food is very small, as most of them cultivate enough food to consume. This, coupled with relative ease at which accommodation is secured in these rural areas, marks yet another area of difference between this group of migrants and those who remain in urban centres where the cost of accommodation and feeding constitute a major dilemma.

Thus, as could be deduced from the foregoing analysis, the primary source of cash income of the migrants is their main occupation- farming. Almost every migrant farmer derives an additional income from one or more subsidiary occupations including petty trading, hunting and sales of agricultural products.

Other sources of income with regard to women include tailoring, cottage industrial enterprising, production of local drinks such as pap (*kunu*) and forage (*fura*), frying bean cakes, yams, potatoes and selling of kolanut and jewelries.

On capital formation, it is argued that the strong desire to accumulate cash savings is recognised as one of the distinguishing economic traits of

¹⁸ On the average, their expenditure, including remittance back home, stands at around 80,000 Naira per house head per year.

rural-rural migrants.¹⁹ With regard to Gobirawa migrants in Niger State, respondents say that they save up cash to use as trading capital, to invest in housing and other sectors in their villages of origin in anticipation of retiring there, to help members left behind at home and to invest in educating their children. How is this cash savings done?

The most popular traditional method of savings in rural Northern Nigeria is through the ‘contribution’ (*adashe*) system. The system, though practised even in the urban centres, is widespread in rural areas where banking facilities do not either exist or are inadequate. Under the *adashe* system, amounts of contributions and pay-outs are agreed upon by all members and made regularly, usually weekly or fortnightly in the country side but on a monthly basis by city wage earners. Though in reality what a member takes is what he contributes, the fact that it is now large amount, enables it to be used in purchasing or renting more farmlands, farm implements, automobiles, and for other projects including building a house in the village of origin.

Of recent, the emerging big farmers and traders among the migrants have started relating with the banks nearest to them. A few of the respondents in this category stated that the rural banks do extend agricultural credit facilities to them, and these enabled them to expand their agricultural production. Others yet claim that they save by way of buying up agricultural products during the harvest period when prices are low to hoard and sell during critical period of scarcity, before new harvest, when prices might have gone up.

In all, out of this arrangement emerged a class of relatively rich migrant class, who not only produce large amount of agricultural products to sell off, but also own shops and other petty trading outlets. Among such a class, the title of *Alhaji*, possession of automobiles and modern houses are common. Also, the frequency of their home visits and the level of their cash remittance back home are high. Hence in the source region, the impact of such remittance is apparent. To many households, the purchase of bulls and plough, additional farmlands, payment of pilgrimage fare to relatives and so on are connected to the remittance from their members living in Niger State.

Migration Networks and Remittance System

In analysing migration, the notion ‘migration networks plays a central role. By migration networks is meant sets of inter-personal relations that link migrants or returned migrants with relatives, friends or fellow countrymen at home. They convey information, provide financial assistance, facilitate

¹⁹ R.K. Udo, Op Cit., p. 108.

employment and accommodation, and give support in various forms. In so doing, they reduce the costs and uncertainty of migration and therefore facilitate it. Networks can also induce migration through demonstration effects.²⁰

In the light of this, migration networks are considered to be a form of social capital, in so far as they are social relations that permit access to other goods of economic significance, such as employment or land. This being the case, the importance of social networks for migration can hardly be over-emphasised. In the first place, such networks are among the most important explanatory factors for migration. In this case study, it has been established that many migrants move because others with whom they are connected migrated before. Thus it is based on the information on the availability and productive capacity of land, its acquisition procedures and accommodation as supplied by the migrants that more people flow suit. Hence migration networks have a multiplier effect as is expressed using an alternative notion 'chain migration.'

Secondly, networks constitute a mechanism that makes migration a self-perpetuating phenomenon. It is often asserted that networks are cumulative in nature.²¹ These networks tend to grow ever larger and denser after every movement. Further moves, in turn widen the networks and the probability of their further expansion. In fact, social networks may often be the foremost predictors of future flows because they facilitate resource accumulation for those at home and away.

The above discourse adequately fits into our analysis of Gobirawa migratory movements from Gatawa District of Sokoto State to some rural areas Niger State. Beginning with a group of three men in around 1973, the number of migrants from the district to Niger State is annually rising. The pioneer migrants developed the social networks through which information on the economic prospects at the destination region was/is provided to those that are left behind. This has the multiplier effect of providing an unbroken chain of the migratory process.

Also, as the standard of living in the source region is fast falling, coupled with evidence of remittance by the migrants in form of cash, assets, grains and so on, the destination region is increasingly receiving new arrivals. Besides this, and as against the initial 'push' forces, the migratory

²⁰Joaquin Arango, 'Explaining Migration: A Critical View,' *International Social Science Journal*, Vol.LII, No. 165, Sept.2000, p.291

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.292

trend is now an established tradition, weather or not there is drought, famine or any other natural calamity.²²

A more stimulating social network occurs when the migrants visit home. It is expected of migrants to frequent homes when they achieve economic betterment in their new destinations. Majority visits home annually, after harvest, coming with their wives and children to spend an average of two weeks. Some prefer to come during *Babbar Sallah* celebration. Yet others visit home on invitation to attend wedding ceremony of their relatives. Also, migrants do come for condolence on the death of their relations or to sympathise with the home community when a calamity befalls it.

During such visits, interactive sessions are organised, individually or in groups, between the migrants and intending migrants. It is through this that the economic viability of the destination region in terms of agricultural production, route map leading to migrants settlements, estimates of transport fares and other requirements are narrated.

As for remittance system, one can argue that migration among the Gobirawa of Gatawa District is a 'family matter', and that even non-migrant members of the family are intimately involved in and affected by the migration process. The situation resembles those of other Nigerian communities in that

a family following the survival strategy would endeavour to sponsor one or more of its members to engage in... the labour migration system. The expectation is that the migrant will maintain close touch with family members left behind, through visits and especially remittances. The migrant member feels compelled to remit a substantial proportion of the earned income regularly to support members of the family left behind. For many families, the remittance is the lifeline for subsistence and other expenses.²³

Already, the political economy of the peasantry that instigate the migration process is such that families are increasingly interlocked in the web of struggle for mere survival to provide for material needs and a future hope for its members.²⁴ Also, as SAP bites harder, the burden on the

²² For further details, see G.J. Van, Apeldoorn, *Perspectives on Drought and Famine in Nigeria*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981

²³ Aderanti Adepoju, 'Emigration Dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa,' *Internal Migration (Special Issue)*, Vol.33, Nos. 3 & 4, 1995, p.42

²⁴ For impact Structural Adjustment Policies on migration in developing countries, see E Dike, 'Investment and Labour Flows in Nigerian Agriculture Under Structural Adjustment', Tshibaka, T.B.(ed.), *Structural Adjustment and Agriculture In West Africa*, CODESRIA, Dakar, 1998.

migrants to support other less privilege family members is very compelling indeed. In line with this, therefore, sponsored and selective migrations are meant to mitigate the dramatic impact of SAP and other hash economic policies of the government on the family.

As stated earlier, the most recent migratory movements of individuals from the district to Niger State are approved by their families. The belief still remains that those who could secure a base in the destination region have gates opened to their economic betterment. Thus it is a common experience to see members of given family contributing money to give to its members leaving for Niger State. Prayers for safe journey and for good luck are offered for the success of departing members. For once it is confirmed that the migrations have reached their destination and secured land for cultivation, the expectation is that remittance is underway.

The remittance takes different forms. Initially, family members left behind need more food to support themselves. Hence, beginning with first harvest, migrants are compelled to send home part of their surplus produce- yams, maize and guinea corn. In transporting these products back home, migrants either charter vehicles to directly convey them or send them through Shinkafi²⁵ on market days (Wednesday and Thursday). One migrant usually accompanies the goods back home, with each load levelled with the names of the sender and the family member to give.

Besides this, on such occasions as fasting period, *Sallah* celebrations and the like, migrants are expected to and they do, remit cash, grains and clothes to members of their families. Also, family expenditure requiring special consideration such as wedding and naming ceremonies are supported by remittance from the migrants. What, however, requires far greater remittance relates to the upkeep of the households, intensification of agricultural production by way of acquiring more land, purchase of bulls and plough, renovation of existing family compound or acquiring additional ones to house the increasing members, and so on.

On agricultural expenditure, it is now a common practise among the migrant families left behind to use the money remitted by its members to acquire more additional land for cultivation. Specifically, migrants may earmark certain amount of money for their families to purchase farming implements and inputs (like plough, bulls, seeds and fertilisers) so as to raise the level of agricultural production of those left behind. It is, however, difficult to assess the level to which such investment in agriculture raises the standard of living of the intended beneficiaries. While most beneficiaries

²⁵ Shinkafi (in Zamfara State) is some 40km south of Gatawa and its weekly market is the most largest and popular in the border areas of Sokoto and Zamfara States. Economic transactions here, involving merchants from different parts of the country, have direct bearing on such border areas.

lauded such efforts and claim that they improve their productive capacity, a few are of the opinion that such investment could not yield positive results in a place where land is either alienated or rendered infertile as a result of over cultivation.

However, in contrast to what obtains in some Northern Nigerian areas, migrants from Gatawa District are yet to make meaningful impact in those aspects of community development such as education and construction of public utilities. However, their contribution both in cash and in kind towards the movement for the agitation for the creation of Gatawa Local Government Area out of the present Sabon Birni Council was highly appreciated.

Social and Cultural Integration at the Destination Region

It is often asserted that migrants farmers' attitude of over mining the soils has reinforced local resentment against them. This is so because most migrant farmers have only short-term interests in the land and cannot therefore afford to maintain soil conservation projects. Rather than practise a system of rotation (as initially practised by indigenous populace) which includes soil-conserving crops which are usually less profitable than cash crops, migrants farmers tend to concentrate on raising the crop that is most profitable. The result is soil impoverishment. In other words, the soil is impoverished by not allowing it to revert to fallow. By demanding more and more farmland to cultivate, the migrants have effectively reduced the local fallow period. The forest resources are also affected in what continued cropping with only short fallows do not make for forest regeneration. Besides this, the practise of leasing farmland to migrant farmers has a bad effect on agricultural production in future, since neither the migrant farmer nor the owner of the plot ever applies adequate fertilisers to the soil.

Also the leasing or tenancy period is another source of conflict between local landlords and migrant farmers. Rents are rising almost every year; hence local landlords insist on one-year leases so that they can readily increase the land rent whenever they desire to do so. Above all, such arrangement aims at safeguarding the ownership title to the land by the local populace which on many occasions had led to disagreement and conflicts between the two groups. Thus where tenancy period expires annually, hardly does a tenant claims ownership of the land leased to him. Indigenous farmers attribute the widespread friction between them and migrants in the tendency of the latter to claim title to land which they have cultivated for many years. Nowadays, in the high density areas of Sarkin Fawa and Dan Mangoro, both landlords and migrant farmers opt for written agreement over land tenure.

The reception given to migrant farmers by the host communities varies from one area to another in the state. It may, however, be corrected to say that migrants are more welcome in areas where they do not engage in farming practises that set them in competition with the host population. In Dan mangoro, where the local population attaches much importance to yam cultivation rather than maize, the presence of migrant maize farmers is well tolerated. In Sarkin Fawa, for instance, where both hosts and their guests engage in yam cultivation, relationship between the two is not all that cordial.

The level of social integration is also determined by the social organisation of both two groups. In some areas, the level of interaction between the two groups is high; and in others it is low, with a wide gap of difference and suspicion. In Sarkin Fawa and Zazzaga, the migrant farmers form the minority groups and settled amongst the indigenous population, building similar houses to their hosts and partaking in social and cultural activities of the community. Though they maintain certain aspects of their socio-religious life, the indigenous Gwari are tolerant of the migrants in this respect.

Politically, the existence of such Hausa traditional institutions such as Sarkin Hausawa, Mai Unguwa and Sarkin Zango comes into conflict with the indigenous political structure. In Sarkin Fawa, for instance, the influential Sarkin Hausawa challenges the lordship of the traditional leadership. The case of market siting in 1980s marked the beginning of this tussle. In other settlements such Dan mangoro and Zazzaga, the migrants have made a number of attempts at taking over the mantle of traditional leadership. Though this has not been yet accomplished, a state of suspicion and hostility is further created between the indigenous community and that of the migrants.

It is not surprising, therefore, that anti-migrant feelings are now been generated and propagated by concerned unions formed by the ‘sons of the soil’ who are based in and out of the area. They seek to protect their ancestral land from exploitation and eminent take-over by ‘foreigners’. The activities of such unions had led to conflicts between the migrants and their hosts in Sarkin Fawa (in early 1980s), Dan Mangoro (1998), and Zazzaga (2000).

Under these circumstances, it is difficult to have a high level of social integration, more so as it affects such vital aspect as intermarriage. Thus, in spite of the long period the Gobirawa migrants have spent in rural Niger State, there is no evidence to suggest ever giving out their daughters in marriage to their Gwari hosts. This might not be unconnected to wide gap existing between the level of social acceptance of the two groups. The migrants still consider themselves ‘superior’ to the indigenous settlers. In

retaliation, the Gwari see and called the Hausa settlers *jahi* which literally means ‘squatter/foreigner’. Nevertheless, there are two records of Gwari women married to Gobirawa migrants.²⁶

Where, however, a high degree of social integration is achieved is in the areas of language diffusion, dressing, eating habits and religion. For instance, the migrant language, Hausa, has become a lingua franca understood and spoken by even the indigenous settlers. The Gwari interviewed in the course of this research responded to questions raised in Hausa without the use of any interpreter. That, however, does not imply the non-use of Gwari language; the indigenous people communicate among themselves in their own language.

In terms of other social traits, one notices the adoption of Hausa culture of dress by the indigenous populace living among the migrant communities. The use of gown (*riga*) and cap (*hula*), for example, is fast adopted by the Gwari in those settlements. Religiously, the Gwari have for long been traditionalists. However, as a result of their interaction with the Gobirawa migrant farmers, a number of them professed Islam and bear Muslim names. In Sarkin Fawa, Gwari Muslim community is growing in number with Suleiman, Ahmad and Kabiru spearheading Islamic enlightenment campaigns among their kinsmen.

The above discussion highlighted the socio-economic consequences of Gobirawa migration to Niger State. At the source region the migrants have influenced the lives of those they have left behind through networks and remittance. At the destination region, the social impact of the migration is multi-dimensional. While in a few cases, both the migrants and settlers are socially closing gaps, the level of social integration is low, now characterized by isolation, ethnicity, fear, suspicion and so on.

Conclusion

The foregoing pinpointed to the emergence and development of Gobirawa migrant community in Niger State, Nigeria. Though the process began in 1973 at Rafin Sarkin Fawa, it has now produced a number such settlements in many rural areas of the state. Farming remains the major occupation of the migrants, though, a few of them do engage in other forms of economic activity. Economically, the migrants have achieved some level of economic betterment compared with the situation at the source region. In terms of inter-group relations and cultural integration, it was established that though there was rising consciousness of ethnic nationalism among those that considered themselves as indigenes of the area discussed, evidence

²⁶ The two migrants that are married to Gwari ladies are Isah Robb and Na’Ali (all from Gatawa).

abound indicating some level of progress in attempts by both host community and Gobirawa settler community in achieving cordial relationship.

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