



Patterns of Migration and Population Mobility in Sudanic West Africa: Evidence from Ancient Kano, c. 800–1800 AD

Akachi Odoemene*

Abstract

In the last three decades historians of migration in Europe and the Americas have increasingly criticised the idea of a ‘mobility transition’, which assumed that pre-modern societies were geographically fairly immobile, and that people only started to move in unprecedented ways from the nineteenth century onwards. This paper takes this perspective as a point of departure, and further presents evidence of remarkable population mobility from ancient Kano, taking a *longue durée* viewpoint. It reconstructs the nature and transformative roles of constant and consistent migration and population mobility in Kano, which ensured enormous social interactions within and between culturally distinct communities and led to socio-cultural changes. This earned Kano a reputation as an important, formidable and large medieval urban metropolis in Western Sudan. Thus, ancient Kano, like elsewhere in Sudanic Africa, had a rich history of massive and systematic migration and population mobility since the ninth century AD.

Résumé

Au cours des trois dernières décennies, les historiens de la migration en Europe et dans les Amériques ont de plus en plus critiqué l’idée d’une « transition de la mobilité », qui supposait que les sociétés prémodernes étaient géographiquement assez immobiles et que les populations n’ont commencé à se déplacer de manière inédite qu’à partir du dix-neuvième siècle. Partant de ce point de vue, le présent article présente des éléments attestant de la remarquable mobilité démographique dans l’ancienne Kano, sous une perspective de longue durée. Il reconstruit la nature et les rôles transformateurs de la migration constante et de la mobilité de la population à Kano, qui a permis d’énormes interactions sociales au sein des communautés culturelles distinctes et entre celles-ci et conduit à des changements socioculturels. Cela a valu à Kano sa réputation de grande métropole urbaine médiévale importante et remarquable dans l’ouest du Soudan. Ainsi, l’ancien Kano, comme ailleurs dans l’Afrique soudanaise, a connu une riche histoire de migration massive et systématique et de mobilité de la population depuis le neuvième siècle après Jésus-Christ.

* Department of History and International Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Nigeria. Email: akaigolo@yahoo.com

Introduction

Zelinsky's (1971) 'mobility transition' model claimed that the type of migration that occurred within a society depended on how developed or what type of society it was. He drew a connection from migration to the stages of the development transition model (DTM). In the first phase, the 'pre-modern traditional society', that is, before the nineteenth century and the onset of urbanisation, Zelinsky assumed that there was very little migration among groups while natural increase rates were about zero. Thus, based on this model, scholars akin to Zelinsky have argued that most, if not all, pre-modern societies of the developing world were geographically fairly immobile, and that people only started to move in unprecedented ways from the nineteenth century onwards (Zelinsky 1971). Following from the foregoing arguments, two distinct errors of judgement could be established. The first is the assumption that 'pre-modern traditional societies', particularly in the global south, were essentially lacking 'urban' statuses. As research has shown, many pre-colonial, 'pre-modern' and 'traditional' African societies were very urban in nature. Kano, the focus here is, indeed, a case in point. The second is the idea and assumption of 'mobility transition' itself; the challenge of these notions would be the point of departure for and forms the fulcrum of the discourse.

In the last three decades, migration historians in Europe and the Americas increasingly criticised the 'mobility transition' idea, showing evidence from their specific locales for their positions. Likewise, the present study essentially seeks to present evidence from the Western Sudan. Historically, a great deal of demographic mobility took place in the distant past; African societies were not exceptions to this phenomenon. Indeed, pre-colonial Western Sudan has a long history of population mobility, both regionally and internationally, and many of its communities often contained alien residents. A remarkable example of such societies was ancient Kano, whose magnificent history started around the seventh century. From then onwards, Kano's history was underlined by consistent and massive population movements, within and between it and other geopolitical regions, for more than one thousand years.

This paper reconstructs the nature and transformative roles of migrations and population mobility in ancient Kano over a one thousand years' time frame. It identifies and interrogates four evidences of basic mobility forms: (a) existence of segregated neighbourhoods, (b) inward migration by 'foreigners', (c) outward emigration by indigenes/locals, and (d) seasonal cross-community migrations (by both ; foreigners' and indigenes/locals). While all these forms have often included both voluntary and forced migratory or settlement processes, they have, equally, been permanent or semi-permanent patterns, as well as short-term engagements. The paper has four sections and proceeds in the following order: after this section (general

introduction), the second discusses foundations of Kano from its ancient origins, highlighting some of its eventual notable characteristics. In the third section, the nature and trends of the four forms of mobility trends are articulated and interrogated. The fourth section attempts a synthesis of the main arguments, thus concluding the paper.

Ancient Kano: Origins, Growth and Development

Kano lies in Hausaland (Kasar Hausawa) in present-day Northern Nigeria. The Bayajidda myth of origin noted Kano, alongside Daura, Biram, Katsina, Zaria, Rano and Gobir, as one of the seven 'legitimate' Hausa states ('Hausa *Bakwai*') (Hodgkin 1975; Barkindo 1989; Falola and Heaton 2008:28). These, together with another group – the 'Hausa *Banza*'¹ – form the bulk of today's Northern Nigeria (Odoemene 2008:232). The *Kano Chronicle* (n.d.), (hereafter *KC*) noted Gaya, a small village, about 60 kilometers from Kano, as playing an important role in the founding of Kano. In the first instance, Gaya was an important terminus of a migratory corridor through which there were influxes of immigrating peoples especially from Eastern Sudan, the Maghreb and Middle East. Secondly, Willet suggests that Gaya provided a name to the settlement founded in the seventh century by certain blacksmiths led by a man named Kano from Gaya ethnic group (Willet 1971:368). The blacksmiths came in search of iron ore (*tama*) used for manufacturing farming and hunting implements. They reached Dala (Dalla) Hill where they found iron ore, and met the area's earliest settlers (Smith 1983:31; Albert 1996:24–9).² The Gaya group eventually settled permanently at Dala Hill, leading to settlement patterns, which formed the core of the eventual new town (Odoemene 2008).

Interestingly, Angela Fagg's archaeological discovery confirmed the remote presence of such skilled groups of blacksmiths, miners and smelters at Dala hill (Willet 1971:368). Thus, it would be safe to argue from the foregoing that Kano developed from a local society enriched by migratory trends. This led to an eventual mixture of groups through integration and assimilation into an emergent identity – the Kano Hausa. For instance, the indigenous natives of Kano, the *Kanawa*, alongside the *Abagagyawa*, claim descent from Kano's original inhabitants (Njeru n.d.). These natives' skirmishes and relations with the Kwararafa led to the assimilation of Kwararafa slaves into the *Kanawa* society (Abubakar 1989). Furthermore, intermarriage between Sudanic migrants and the earlier settlers in the area brought about the establishment of the first political community in Kano, which contained eleven occupational tribes (*Kano Chronicle* n.d.). As Adamu (n.d.) opined:

From this humble beginning, a smallish cottage industry seemed to have been established ... Since all the migrants came along with their own skills in other areas of craftsmanship, this resulted in new industries such as weaving,

Kano became particularly famous as a unique trans-Saharan and Sahelian commercial/trades terminal from the thirteenth century (Paden 1970; Osaghae 1994; Albert 1996; Odoemene 2008; Ehrhardt 2008:2). Falola and Heaton (2008:28) argued that Hausa states owed their rise ‘to the instability created by the collapse of the first Kanuri Empire to the east and the fall of the Western Sudanic kingdoms of Mali (in the fifteenth century) and Songhay (in the sixteenth century)’. Indeed, these coincided with the period of Kano’s ‘coming of age’, which ‘took advantage of the shift of important trans-Saharan trade routes from Mali and Songhay (empires) towards the central savanna’ (Falola and Heaton 2008:28). Kano became even more notable as an Islamic learning centre, owing to the introduction of Islam in the fourteenth century and its emergence as state religion by the fifteenth century (Paden 1973:42). Indeed, Islam is noted as ‘the greatest influence in the socio-political organization of Kano’ (Osaghae 1994:26). These ensured enormous social interactions within and between culturally distinct communities and quickly earned Kano a reputation as a formidable medieval urban metropolis – the largest of such in Sudanic West Africa (Odoemene 2008:232). By the turn of the nineteenth century, Kano became the most important commercial, religious and educational centre in the area (Odoemene 2008).

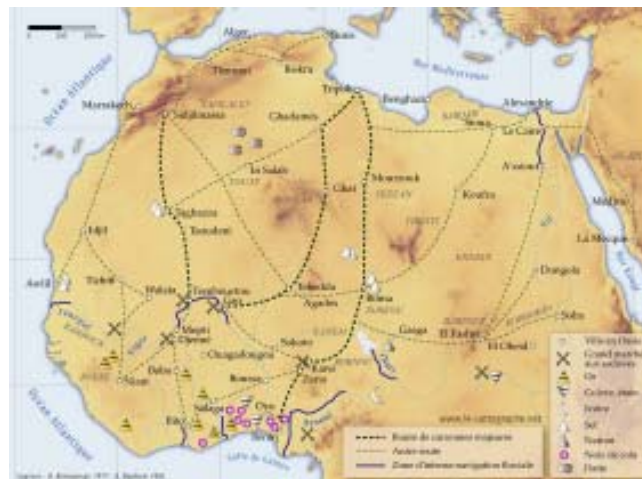


Figure 1: Sudanic Africa showing Kano in the trans-Saharan Trade

Ancient Kano fought many battles and, over time, grew both in magnitude and might, mainly by ‘dominating and incorporating several old chiefdoms, equal in age and status ...’ (Smith 1997:68). However, its war with the Fulani *Jihadists* at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in which it was worsted in 1807, was the most significant, Kano thus became an *Emirate* under Sokoto Caliphate, and from then, was radically transformed in various aspects, becoming ‘the strongest state in Hausaland, possessing an organised army and a well-fortified town’ (Olaniyi 2005:13) by the turn of the twentieth century. Due to its military magnificence, it was noted that Kano ‘represented the principal military power of the northern states, and it was well understood that Kano was the power with which the British strength would be first seriously measured’ (Shaw 1905:439). Kano fell to the British colonisers’ military expedition in 1903, though fiercely resisted by its emir, Aliyu, and his subjects (Albert 1996:29). Consequently, Kano was effectively incorporated into the British ‘Nigerian project’.

A distinctive feature of Kano from ancient times was the imposing defensive wall surrounding the old city-state. Its foundation was laid by *Sarkin* Gijimasu (Gigi) (1095–1134) and was completed during the reign of *Sarkin* Osumanu Zamnagawa (1342–1349). As Njeru (n.d., p. 28) noted, the wall was further extended by 54 per cent (to its current position) in the reign of *Sarkin* Muhammadu Runfa (1463–1499). Oddly described as ‘stupendous’ by Lugard (1904:20), this massive mud-wall stood at ‘30 to 50 feet high and 40 feet thick at the base, with a double ditch in front. Their [sic] perimeter was 11 miles, with thirteen gates set each in a massive entrance tower’ (Lugard 1904:20). Instructively, the gates were used to control people’s movement in and out of the city (Ancient Kano City Wall, n.d.). The nucleus of the ancient Kano city-state lies between latitude 13°N in the north and 11°N in the south, and longitude 8°E in the west and 10°E in the east (Olaniyi 2005:12).

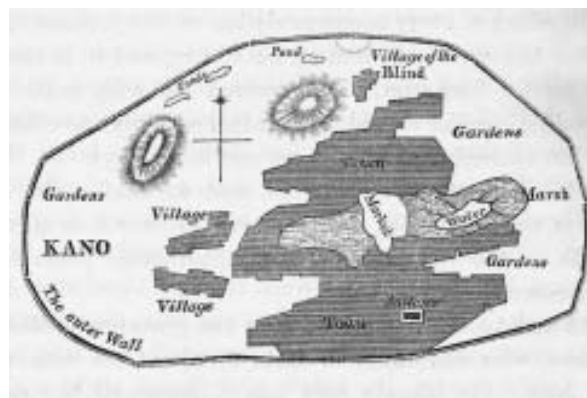


Figure 2: Outlay of Kano (sketched 1826) showing the famous defensive wall.

Evidence of Population Movements: Forms and Implications

There is sufficient evidence of cumulative population movements within and around the ancient Kano region between the ninth and nineteenth centuries AD to suggest that such an attractive country as Kano received substantial immigration from north and east (Smith 1983:41), and emigration out of the city. This section would attempt an exposition of the different forms of evidence of continuous and consistent population mobility in ancient Kano, contrary to the opinions of some scholars of absence of the same. In articulating these evidences, the section is delineated into four distinct sub-sections for better understanding.

Segregated Residential Neighbourhoods

In discussing the evidence of pre-colonial population mobility and concentration in Kano, a strikingly remarkable point of departure should be some discourse on its segregated residential neighbourhoods, which divides, both socially and otherwise, the 'natives' and 'foreigners' of the city. The colonial Land and Native Rights Ordinance of 1910 in Nigeria's Northern Protectorates discouraged free immigration of southerners to the north (Odoemene 2008:234). It was manipulated to limit such migrations,³ and was eventually reinforced by the 1912 Sabon Gari Policy, which established structured residential segregation in Northern Nigeria (Osaghae 1994; Olaniyi 2003; Nnoli 1978).⁴ This forced southerners who migrated to the north to live separately away from their northern hosts (Nnoli 2003; Odoemene 2008:234). These colonial developments – the 1910 ordinance and 1912 policy – were, however, not the origin of 'residential segregation' in Kano, historically. Rather, this is traceable to a pre-colonial development in the city-state.

The present Kano's segregational system has roots in the pre-colonial traditional setting of the *Birni* and *Waje* introduced in the fourteenth century. These were different in operational mode from the later colonial developments. The *Birni* (walled, traditional city), on the one hand, is almost exclusively reserved for the *Kanawa* and other Hausa. No stranger is unduly welcomed in this exclusive settlement, except in occasional cases when Muslim immigrants were quartered therein (Nwaka 2008:5). The other was the *Waje* (the outside city) where 'foreigners' lived (Albert 1993a). Indeed, the traditional society-sanctioned importance of this system was clear and understood.

It is noteworthy that a significant feature of the pre-colonial *Waje* quarter for aliens was the subsequent further division into many other wards (settlement patterns), essentially based on ethnicity and occupation (Albert 1993a). For instance, the *Tudun Nupawa* and *Yakassai* wards were created for Nupe weavers and traders, who also settled early Yoruba traders in Kano therein (Fika 1978:158; Olaniyi 2004:88). Similarly, by the seventeenth century

when Yoruba traders in the city had turned into a sizable colony, a separate ward, *Tudun Ayagi*, was allocated to them (Olaniyi 2004:88). Furthermore, as the *Birni* could host Muslim immigrants, Wangarawa migrants and those of Arab origin who came into Kano were quartered therein. The *Sharifai* and *Durimin Turawa* settlements, respectively, were set up for these groups (Albert 1994:50; Olaniyi 2006:389–390).



Figure 3: Residential Structures in Kano (late eighteenth Century)

Three important points need to be made about the existence of the segregated neighbourhoods/quarters in pre-colonial Kano. First, it should be noted that the original idea of these quarters was not to emphasise the differences of the diverse groups inhabiting Kano city at the time, but to prevent and safeguard, as much as possible, the undesirable pollution of Islam by *Kafirs* (*Kafurai* – unbelievers/infidels), while maintaining good relations with all men (Albert 1993a; Osaghae 1994; Olaniyi 2003; Odoemene 2008). Second, these neighbourhoods meant the existence of group commercial diaspora – trading groups of spatially dispersed but socially interdependent communities outside of their indigenous homelands (Cohen 1971). The essential point to note here is that the establishment of such commercial and/or trading diaspora networks in Kano was an indication of international trade. Third, and most importantly, their existence only emphasised the actuality of migrations and the presence of alien resident groups of sizable numbers in the city in ancient times on account of such migrations.

Immigration into the City-state

Right from the origins of Kano, its history has been marked by trends in immigration into the city. These immigrations were by diverse groups of blacksmiths, scholars, preachers, itinerants, merchants and invaders who came in large numbers and many of whom eventually made Kano their home. Historically, the bulk of these immigrations – apart from those of the foundation group, the Gaya animist blacksmiths, to the Dala Hill in the seventh century – began since the eleventh century, well before Kano evolved as a commercial centre on the trans-Saharan trade route (Lacey 1985:688). While many migrated over long distances, others only moved within a single geographical region.

A second wave of migration was by Bagauda-led Maguzawa immigrants in the eleventh century. They conquered the Dala settlement and established a formidable political entity in the region. These two streams remained the most significant primary immigrations into Kano area – but not the only – until in the fifteenth century. The Kwararafa and Bornu states had at several times invaded the settlement and had some of their subjects incorporated into Kano before the city-state's integration into the trans-Saharan trade and the eventual arrival of the Arabs (*Kano Chronicle*, n.d.; Fisher 1975:134–136). Other notable neighbours of Kano, like Kanuri, Gobir, Kebbi, Yauri, Zazzau, Asben, and Nupe, were not just early arrivals in Kano, but equally continuous immigrants into the area – a situation which defies any strict allotment of a period that could be linked to their movements (*Kano Chronicle*, n.d.). This is more so as most of these city-states in question were also Hausa-speaking like Kano, thus making their identification a bit difficult.

The Fulani began migrating from the Futa Jalon and Futa Toro mountains areas of Senegambia country and settling down in permanent quarters in the Hausa towns since the end of the thirteenth century (Whittlesey 1937:184). In Kano, the Fulani (and other more recent immigrants) commonly built their compounds south of the Jakara, and by the end of the eighteenth century they were numerous enough to have doubled the walled area of the town (Whittlesey 1937). Their influence in the region kept growing and by the turn of the nineteenth century they had become so powerful as to overthrow the incumbent Hausa leadership through the reformist *jihad* of 1804, aimed at arresting the growing degeneration of Muslims into syncretism (Naniya 2000:3). Reaching Kano in 1807, it supplanted its leadership with that of the Fulani-led *emirship*, which still exists.

Since Kano was essentially a commercial confluence from the tenth century, it was necessarily linked with several regions and markets through arteries of trade routes and caravan traders. Kano served as the terminus of

the two central caravan routes through Ghadames, Ghat, Tintellus, Agades and Katsina (Smith 1997:1). The second trade route, to the East, linked Murzuk through Kauwar and Bilma to Bornu (Olaniyi 2004:80). Similarly,

Kano was also one of the major centers of the trans-Sudanic commercial traffic through which Kukawa and Wadai were linked with Gwanja and Timbuktu on the Niger bend to Kumasi, Bida Katunga (Oyo ile), Zamfara, Kebbi, Zaria and Zinder. ... various trade routes connected Kano with the interior and coast of Yorubaland. From the coasts of Lagos, trade routes passed through Abeokuta, Ibadan, Oyo, Iseyin, Igboho, Igbeti, Ogbomoso and Ilorin to Kano. There were [also] several trade routes from Kano, which crossed the river Niger through Lafiagi, Ogudu and Jebba terminating at Ilorin (Olaniyi 2004:80).

Through these intricate and complex networks of commercial activities, Kano became a ‘melting pot’ of a sort for different groups from Arabia, North Africa and diverse Sudanic West African peoples, as trade tied many regions together in an interdependent network of production and exchange. More convincing is the fact that evidence points to the trade caravans involved in the various routes often consisted of traders numbering about 1,000 people and beyond (Olaniyi 2004; Lydon 2009; Baier 1977). In reality, it was this ‘melting pot’ phenomenon, by virtue of its strategic location at the trans-Saharan and Sahelian trade routes, and the correspondingly large numbers of population mobility involved, which set the stage for the immigration of diverse groups into Kano, some of which we shall now explore.

Around 1380 AD, the Wangarawa (Wangara), a group of Mende-speaking Muslim clerics, scholars and merchants from the ancient Mali Empire began to come into Kano (East 1933:5–6; Albert 1994:48). Led by *Sheikh* Abdurrahman Zaite (Abd al-Rahman Zagaiti), they came in very large numbers during the reign of *Sarkin* Yaji (1349–1385 AD). The Wangarawa were credited with the introduction of Islam to Kano (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., p. 70), apparently working hand-in-glove with another distinguished missionary, the *Sheikh* Muhammad bin Abd al-Karim al-Maghili of Tlemsen, and his group, who had arrived in Kano only three days before *Sheikh* Zaite and his large following (Al-Hajj 1968:10–11). This position is supported by the *KC* which noted that *Sheikh* al-Maghili ‘... had established the faith of Islam and the learned men had grown numerous in Kano, and all the country had accepted the faith ...’ (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., p. 77). In collaboration with Bagauda kings then in power in Kano, the Wangarawa facilitated Islam becoming the official state religion in the fifteenth century and subsequently hosting a number of Islamic scholars whose activities facilitated the overthrow of the pagan Hausa natives, otherwise known as the Maguzawa (Paden 1973:42). Following the gains made from the fifteenth century upwards,

Kano has remained a renowned centre of Islamic civilization and scholarship (Osaghae 1994:26), welcoming Islamic scholars from far away Middle East, North Africa and all around Africa (Odoemene 2008:233). During the eighteenth century there was also another recorded large migration of people from the city of Agades of Mali Empire to Kano (*Kano Chronicle* n.d.).

An indispensable group, probably the most notable, of major immigrants and settlers in Kano since pre-colonial times has been Arabs of diverse origins, but predominantly from Tripoli, Tunis, Egypt, Algiers and elsewhere in the Far East and Arabia (Paden 1970; Albert 1993b; Naniya 2000). Indeed, Arabs more than any other group, have had the greatest influence in the socio-cultural and economic development of Kano. Naniya (2000:1) noted that '[B]etween 1000 and 1500 A.D. not only was the influence of the Arabs felt in these areas, but quite a substantial number of them established settlements especially in the Central Sudan, particularly Kanem and Borno, Katsina and Kano'. As a result of extensive processes of interactions and incorporations, Arab settlers in ancient Kano rubbed-off on its socio-cultural and economic development over time. These have shown evidence in several ways: scholarship, administration, architecture, arts and crafts, food and language areas show great Arabic influences.

For instance, by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Kano had some indigenous scholars who pioneered literary scholarship in the region. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the tradition of this scholarship matured and gave birth to an indigenous form of writing, the *Ajami*, using Arabic letters, which was used for communication among the wider spectrum of the population who might not be privileged to speak and understand Arabic (Naniya 2000:9). Again, the authorship of *KC* is believed to lie with a small community of Ghadames Arab scholars who arrived and settled in Kano in the reign of *Sarkin* Yakubu (1452–1463 AD) (Smith 1983:34). Another intellectual influence was brought about through the proliferation of the culture of *Sufism* among Muslims of Central Sudan. Prominent among the Sufi orders introduced or strengthened in the region included *Qadiriyya* (from Baghdad), *Tijjaniyya* (from North Africa, but through Senegal) and the *Arusiyya* (from Tripoli). Many of these *Sufi* orders maintained (and still maintain) their links with their countries of origin in the Arab world (Naniya 2000:5). Again, many Arab scholars learned in the *Shari'a*, apart from being Islamic instructors/teachers, were also often appointed as *Alkalai* (in *Shari'a* courts) in Kano, especially in the sixteenth century (Naniya 2000:6).

As far as architecture is concerned, evidence shows that from the fifteenth century when contact with North Africa became very extensive, the structure and make of houses in Kano changed significantly. Saad (1989) also noted that the early walls of Kano were made of wooden stockade, but by the

fifteenth century the development of clay or mud houses with geometric decoration and *Azara* roofing became prominent. Remarkably, the layout design for the market established by *Sarkin* Rumfa in a town centre with a mosque erected within 'represented a plan standard at this time' in the Maghreb (Last 1985). In terms of language, Kano's native Hausa language has borrowed extensively from the Arabic vocabulary (Naniya 2000: 9). All these are evidence of strong Arabic influences in Kano, which occurred over time, due to the settling of Arab immigrants in the city. The Arabs were equally noted as 'gifted' in terms of arts and crafts. It was in recognition of all this specialised expertise of Arab settlers that Kano made conscious efforts to encourage more of them to settle permanently (Naniya 2000:8). Noting the strategic place Arabs occupied, it was argued that:

In Kano ... Arab settlers had occupied various quarters such as Alfindiki, Alkantara, Dandali, Dukurawa, Sanka and Sharifai, to mention the better known. Gradually the interaction culminated in intermarriages, a development that left a number of Kanawa and Kanuri with a tradition of tracing their origin to Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco or Egypt. Suffice it to say that some of these descendants obtained appointments in the service of their areas of residence. In Kano, for example, the title of *Ma'aji* (Treasurer) was reserved for them in the Kano Native Authority at the beginning of the colonial period in recognition of the tremendous contributions of their forefathers in the development of trade and in fiscal policy administration in the Emirate (Naniya 2000:10–11, 1990).

Again, it has been argued that the fifteenth century expansion of the city's walls was necessitated by the desire to accommodate immigrants from Bornu and North Africa (Frishman 1986). For instance, a case recorded by the *Bornu Chronicle* noted that Othman Kalama and his large group of supporters took refuge in Kano in 1432 AD (Palmer, 1908:60). Similarly, KC reported a similar situation where a great prince from South Bornu, Dagachi (meaning ruler/king) arrived and settled in Kano 'with many men and *mallams*' during the reign of *Sarkin* Dauda (1421–1438) (*Kano Chronicle*, n.d.; Palmer 1908:60).⁵

From the fifteenth century, commerce and Islamic religion formed an intractable web of linkages between Yorubaland and Hausaland (Adamu 1978:123; Olaniyi 2004:81). With its control of some principal ports along the Atlantic coast, the Yoruba became one of the major dispersers of such European goods and products as copper dishes, calico and cotton (from Manchester), French silk, red cloth (from Saxony), beads (from Venice and Trieste), eye glasses and needles (from Nuremberg), and cowry shells (from Portugal) (Barth 1966),⁶ through the northward extensive trade routes and

markets up to Kano. Eventually, many of such products from the Atlantic coast passed through the trans-Saharan trade to North Africa and Arabia. In the same vein, products from Arabia, North Africa and the Sahelian regions, some of which included sword blades, razors and Egyptian linen striped with gold (Naniya 2000:7), were equally re-distributed by the Yoruba among groups of the forest regions, south of Kano.

Through these networks, Yoruba settlers' colonies were eventually founded – for instance *Tudun Ayagi*, as was noted earlier – thus effectively establishing the Yoruba commercial diaspora in Kano (Olaniyi 2006:389–390). Similarly, as Smith noted, there was 'a colony of traders from the Oyo town of Ogbomoso in eighteenth century Kano' (Smith 1976:33–34; Abdulsalam 1980:15–18). Such commercial colonies or diaspora had immense benefits and provided diverse range of services in Kano, which included 'language interpretation, informal banking services, and more specifically, free provision of accommodation for creating an enlarged clientele network and patronage' (Olaniyi 2004:86). With these developments, the Yoruba became one of the notable and formidable pre-colonial immigrant settlers in ancient Kano.

In all, therefore, Kano's sojourners were drawn from the limits of Senegambia in the west, over the oases of the Sahara to the borders of Tunis, Tripoli, Egypt and Darfur in the north, and into the countries of Wadai, Bagirmi and Adamawa in the south-east and south-west frontiers. From the forest regions southwards, the Nupe and Yoruba were also drawn to the magnificent city-state. This influx of diverse groups had great effects on the culture, language and architecture of Kano over time.

Emigration out of Metropolitan Kano

Permanent or semi-permanent exit out of Kano occurred for diverse reasons. Undeniably, it has been noted that the *Kanawa* often engaged in long-distance trade, pilgrimages and warfare (Nwaka 2008:3). Though voluntary emigrations occurred, as has been noted, most of the city's native stocks were often dispersed *en masse* due to violent circumstances, which included internal dissensions, slave raids and trade, as well as wars, both civil and 'international'. For sure, many such cases of large dispersion of local natives are well documented.

KC recorded that in the reign of *Sarkin* Usumanu Zamnagawa (1343–1349), the Maguzawa, whom Hunwick asserted have in modern times come to stand as relics of pre-Islamic Hausa culture (Hunwick 1994), flocked out of the city to Fongui (Fankui) (Smith 1983:37). A slightly different account claimed that Zamnagawa had killed many of the Maguzawa, thus causing many of the survivors among them to flee Kano (El-Arabi 1933; Shankar 2005:291). But, they were not the only Hausa group who fled Kano with the

ascendency of Islam. The persecution was also directed against the Santolo whose men were all murdered, while the lives of the women and children were spared, and Tsibiri members who were vanquished by *Sarkin* Yaji (1349–1385 AD) (Shankar 2005:291). Others affected included Chadic-speakers (Hausa, Bolawa) and groups of Niger-Congo speakers, who were perhaps the descendants of Mbau (including Mbutawa and Warjawa). The fleeing of peoples of these persecuted groups occurred in successive waves (Shankar 2005:291). The main reason for persecuting these groups was religious differences: these peoples were animists while Kano, at this period, had become an Islamic state (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., p. 37). Importantly, *KC* aptly noted that Yaji was praised in songs as ‘the scatterer of hosts and lord of the town’ (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., pp. 104–107).

Many neighbouring and equally strong empires engaged in warfare with ancient Kano at one time or the other. For instance, during the reign of *Sarkin* Kanajeji (1390–1410) Kano ‘suffered a great defeat at the hands of Zaria’ (Shankar 2005:292). Again, *Askia* Muhammad el-Hajj of Songhay (1493–1528) was reported to have ‘waged war against the king of Kano, whom after a long siege, he took and compelled him to marry one of his daughters, restoring him again to his kingdom’ (Leo 1896:830). Kano had equally been subject, at some time in the sixteenth century, to both Borno and Kebbi Empires (Smith 1983:47), while the Kwararafa (Jukun) state warriors to the city’s southeast boundary also engaged Kano in a prolonged war in the seventeenth century (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., pp. 107–8; 120–22; Shankar 2005:283). The war with the Jukun was somewhat decisive as ‘Kwararafa ate up the whole country and Kano became weak’ (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., p. 116).⁷

Similarly, the men of Katsina on Kano’s western boarder were reported to have kept ‘harrying Kano’ (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., pp. 116) in the time of *Sarkin* Abubakar Kado (1565–1573 AD). This usual enemy reportedly worsted Kano so badly that ‘the country was denuded of people’ (*Kano Chronicle* n.d., pp. 114; Shankar 2005:283). Furthermore, the Kebbawa invaded Kano in the first part of the sixteenth century (Lovejoy et al. 1993:49; Shankar 2005:294). The Fulani *jihadists* also ravaged and conquered Kano during the reign of *Sarkin* Mohammed Alwali (1781–1807), on account of which the ousted leader initially fled to Zaria (Smith 1983:47; *Kano Chronicle* n.d.) but was eventually assassinated by the *Jihadists* at Burum-Burum (*Kano Chronicle* n.d.). *KC* further recorded issues of dynastic conflicts, of civil war, rebellion, internal revolt and the likes, all in Kano (*Kano Chronicle* n.d.; Smith 1983). Necessarily, such civil strife within Kano or between it and its neighbours must have produced ‘prisoners of war’ or ‘human booties’ which were disposed of in the equally inglorious, though less notorious trans-Saharan

slave trade.⁸ As ancient Kano served as a redistribution centre and emporium where North African and Arab traders exchanged goods and services for products from the forest regions south of Kano and crafts produced in the northern region (Lacey 1985, p. 688), slaves were, arguably, a prominent article of trade in such markets at the time. Thus, the slave trade also served as a major process of dispersal of people in ancient Kano.

Reacting to what was noted as ‘a thrilling description of the great Slave-market at Kano [having] ...usually about 500 Slaves on sale’, as reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 29 October 1895, Allen opined that

...considerable numbers of slaves passed through Eastern Tripoli, and were shipped in small batches to various ports in Turkey; and this bears upon the statement of ‘Pioneer’ that one of the markets for slaves sold in Kano and other towns is the far distant province of Tripoli (Allen 1895:255).

Other important contributors to migrations out of ancient Kano were natural disasters, a few of which were documented. For instance, during the reign of Alwali, the city-state experienced widespread and long-lasting famine. Again, Kano was host to a deadly plague (*waba*) that ravaged the metropolis for about four years, causing the death of many people, including those of *Sarkin* Kisoke (Kisoki) (1509–1565 AD) and two of his successors, Yakubu (Yakufu) (1565 AD) and Dauda Abasama (1565 AD), both of whom died in less than a year (*Kano Chronicle* n.d.). Naturally, such natural disasters were strong enough triggers of population mobility, as people were bound to ‘move’ in search of a safer abode and a quest for survival. This was, apparently, the case of Kano at these times.

The central argument and critical point being made in this subsection is that the different factors that have been discussed, both individually and sometimes collectively, were destabilising to socio-political order. Thus, they were necessarily responsible for and engineered a massive exodus of Kano’s population, ensuing in refugees emigrating for safety reasons. The emigration was often either on a permanent basis or, in some notable cases, on a semi-permanent basis. For instance, the Maguzawa were said to have come back again and again, despite the persecutions they faced.

Seasonal/Periodic Migrations

It has been amply established that commerce and religion were central in the life and development of Kano over the years. With these in mind, therefore, the main argument here would be rather deductive from these two remarkable trends, following some plausible threads of reasoning derived from the lived experiences of Kano inhabitants, rather than from conventional sources. Certainly, this in no way makes them any less plausible or acceptable.

Essentially, many, if not most ancient Kano residents became involved with trade and commerce of one kind or the other, as the opportunities for these were enormous and rewarding. While many of these commercial activities entailed transacting such businesses in Kano, some equally required the participant to embark on journeys or migrations of sorts. These could have taken such traders all the way to the Maghreb, North Africa, and/or the Arabian country (in the north), and to the frontiers of the Yoruba, Nupe and Bini kingdoms respectively, or even to the Igbo country and its environs (to the south). In other words, quite unlike a case where traders would be part of groups' commercial diaspora, as mentioned earlier, the situation here necessitated traders embarking on trade migrations on a short-term basis, and returning to Kano or their other settlements as soon as such economic/trade transactions had been completed.

On the second level is the religious dimension of the periodic/seasonal migrations engaged in by Kano residents. It is common knowledge that the great king of Mali Empire, Mansa Musa, made his flamboyant religious pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca in 1326 AD (Palmer 1908:59) and soon after, in the same century, Islam was introduced into Kano city and got established as state religion a century later. Since it is obligatory that at least once during their lifetime all Muslims made the *Hajj* to the holy city (Mecca) to participate in some special rites, ancient Kano Muslims were not left out in this spiritual obligation tradition. From the foregoing it would be plausible to argue that many Kano residents must have performed the religious pilgrimage to Mecca, especially from the fifteenth century when Kano evolved into an Islamic theocratic city-state. Indeed, a CIA 'country studies' report on Islam in modern Northern Nigeria which noted that '[T]he ancient custom of spending years walking across Africa to reach Mecca was still practiced' ('Islam' n.d.) corroborates this claim. Such pilgrimages were most often seasonal and short-term in nature.

Conclusion

One is at a loss as to why Zelinsky's 'mobility transition' thesis has been 'influential' among many migration scholars to date. Indeed, its flaws are numerous, but a single point has been focused on and dealt with in this paper: that pre-modern societies were geographically fairly immobile and that people only started to move in unprecedented ways from the nineteenth century onwards is clearly fallacious. This position has been amply demonstrated using the case of Kano, amongst many other evidences of interest all around Africa. The arguments in this paper were essentially directed towards four threads of evidence of vibrant population mobility in ancient

Kano. The paper ascertained the presence of ancient ethnic- and occupational-based segregated neighbourhoods, which only points to the presence of 'alien' groups in the area. Also, an interrogation of the ancient emigration, immigration and seasonal migratory trends of ancient Kano residents and visitors further affirms the position on mobility vibrancy in Kano within the 'pre-modern' era.

Kano has grown from a small settlement of a group of people to a large metropolitan city within a heavily populated region in its over one-thousand-year history (Frishman 1977:245). Undeniably, as has been amply demonstrated in this paper, the city's attainment of a reputation for boisterous commerce, political vibrancy, religiosity and liberal accommodation policy (Olaniyi 2005:12) has been engineered and foisted by consistent and continuous population mobility of diverse kinds in and out of the city. Thus, contrary to the claimed 'immobility' of peoples before the dawn of the nineteenth century, ancient Kano, like elsewhere in West Sudan, has a rich history of massive, constant and systematic migrations and population mobility since the seventh century.

Notes

1. The seven "Hausa *Banza*" ("illegitimate" or "Bastard" Hausa states) include Zamfara, Kororofa (Kwararafa), Kebbi, Nupe, Yoruba (Ilorin), Gwari, and Yauri.
2. Smith suggests in his work that the earliest settlers in the Dala Hill region must have been an autochthonous group.
3. The colonialist believed that the southerners were capable of undermining the alliance between them and the Fulani ruling class, which they deemed crucial for colonial enterprise in Nigeria.
4. This colonial arrangement was primarily employed so as to keep the northern elements from the 'corruptive' nationalist tendencies of the migrant southerners, among other reasons.
5. Palmer argued that very probably from these circumstances, Dagachi is Othman Kalama.
6. It is noteworthy that cowries imported by Portuguese traders became a leading currency system in Western Sudan from the 18th century. For more details, see: Marion Johnson, (1970) "The Cowrie Currencies of West Africa," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 11, 17-49.
7. It has been established that Kwararafa was able to collect tribute from Kano for some time in this period. For some discourses on this, see Paul Lovejoy, Abdullahi Mahadi and Mansur I. Mukhtar, (1993) "Notes on the History of Kano [1909]: A Lost Chronicle on Political Office," *Sudanic Africa*, Vol. 4.
8. This comparison is being made in the light of the reputation and legacies of the "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade" which was bigger in volume, more inhuman and deadly than its Trans-Saharan version.

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