

Aspects of Archaeology of the 19th Century Jihad: Some Evidence from Tirwun Site near Bauchi, Nigeria

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Abstract

Historical sources have, for so long, been reinterpreting the socio-political relationships of Sahelian people during the medieval period. The early 19th century Jihad of Uthman Ibn Fodio greatly modified the social arrangement and the accompanying political structures tenable in the region. The transformation that came with the revival has far reaching implications in the growth and development of settlements as symbols of complex social readjustments. The emergence of Bauchi city from an incipient Tirwun is a direct effect of the Jihad. This paper attempts to explore a landscape archaeological exploration of the birth place of the trusted commander of Ibn Fodio movement around Kasar Bauchi and to give direction for future interdisciplinary researches, capable of improving our understanding of societies that lived around the last 300 years and the subsequent impact of islamisation process on material nature of settlements and lifestyles in northern Nigeria.

Introduction

Tirwun is a settlement in Bauchi Local Government area of Bauchi State. It is located between latitude 10°35'N and longitude 9°52'E. The site is encroached by expansion of Bauchi city which is situated about 10kms North-East of Bauchi city, along Bauchi-Maiduguri Federal Highway. The settlement is one of the four most important settlements of the Gerawa people of Bauchi in Bauchi State. It is exceptional, being the birth place of Yakubun Bauchi who was later to become one of the most reliable non-Fulani commander and trusted leader around Uthman Ibn Fodio, the leader of the late 19th century Sokoto Jihad. The settlement is claimed to be older than Bauchi city itself, dated to more than 500 years (Abdullahi 1989). From the oral narrative system collected, the settlement is generally referred to as the 'Cradle of Gerawa civilization' being the center from where the first ruler of Bauchi city emerged. The historical place of Tirwun is associated with the emergence of a centralised political system that was later to integrate with a regional system in the Savanna brought by the Fodio to take over the whole of the sub-continent. The acknowledgement of the importance of Bauchi region to the socio-economic as well as political development of societies and peoples of the Nigerian region is severally documented by scholars.

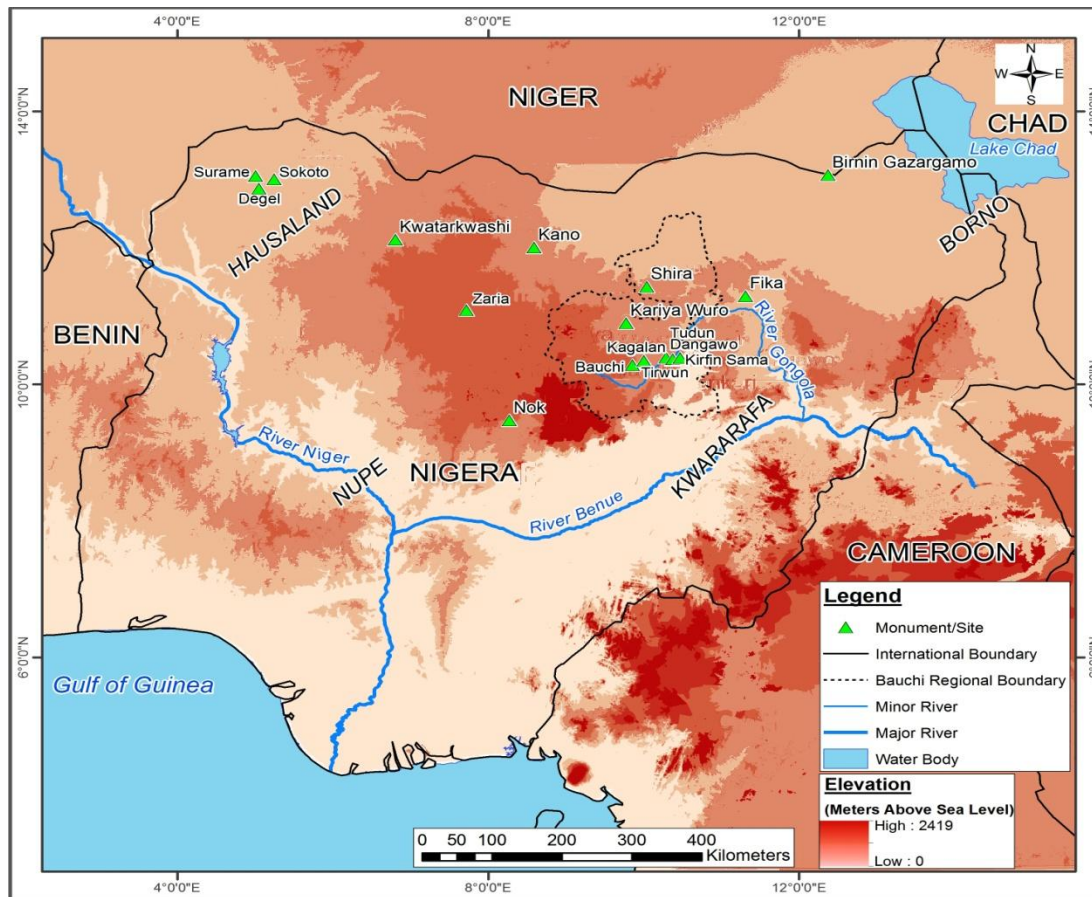


Figure 1: Showing sites and settlements mentioned in the text (Drawn by Wulga)

Tirwun has grown into a moderately populated settlement of about 15,000 people today (Bauchi L.G.A, 2016). The importance of this paper rests with the fact that the present people claim historical connection to the abandoned settlements under study. Gerawa generally are the predominant ethnic group which sees Tirwun today as its homeland. Some important archaeological sites associated with the history of the Gerewa according to oral history are Miri, Yali, Gubi, Gidan Waya, Inkil, Kwuitum, and Bauchi city itself. In Tirwun, there is the modern settlement at the Western part of the Tirwun inselberg and the other abandoned settlements to its South - West. Tirwun name was derived from an expression by its founder “*Antam Bunu Gunum Daushin ABunnu Anim Tirwuni*”, which means “Let us take a cover under the inselberg (Kangere 1997). Tirwun therefore connotes inselberg hence the name Tirwun. Gere is the language spoken by the original local inhabitants.

The need to study Tirwun emerged out of strong mention and reverence attached to Tirwun by oral traditions that constantly define the old settlement as that which has existed for well over two centuries (Abdullahi 1989). Oral tradition has it that Yakubun Bauchi I, was born in Tirwun before he proceeded to found the city of Bauchi which later grew to control the entire Bauchi emirate. It is an important site with respect to the general history of Bauchi area as it connects with the wider history of Sokoto.

The research deployed mainly archaeological survey procedure for the fieldwork and also employed key informant interviews for the collections of oral traditions. The Field work led to

the discovery of defensive walls, the inselberg, draft holes, dyeing pits and house foundations. The initial fieldwork was conducted over seven months in 1997 (Sule 1997) and one week in 2016. A reconnaissance approach created an avenue for the writer to visit associated settlements within 5km² radius, including the site of Kwutum, Gubi, Mangorori, Kofar Tirwun and Kofar Ran area in Bauchi city. Other important archaeological sites excavated and examined in Bauchi region includes Kirfin Sama, Kagalan, Tudun Dangawo and Kariya Wuro. The dates mostly fall within the last millennium. Kagalan present dates of 316±27BP and 667±28BP, Kirfin Sama Hill (174±25BP and 1205±30BP) and Tudun Dangawo (364±25BP) with implication of date range for the settlement occupation from 600-1200AD (Sule and Haour 2014).

The area is located in a Savannah with a generally undulating altitude of about 616m above sea level, except the hilly portions and the extension of which brought the sudden discontinuity to the featureless plain of the lake Chad and the Jos Plateau formations. The topography generally is influenced by the outcrop of sand stones and granite rugged hills and scattered domes almost surrounding the settlements. River Gongola is the largest water body.

Traditions of Origin

The origins of the Gerawa people of Tirwun have been traced through oral accounts. A commonly agreed version is carefully examined and the few written records. This version is widely supported for instance by the narratives of two Bauchi emirate chieftains (Tafawa-Balewa 1997, Tahir 1997). The earliest history of Tirwun is dated back to before 1500AD (Abdullahi 1989) and probably to pre-Islamic times as suggested by oral traditions. A second popular version suggests that a Wazargam and later Gere prince called Maidugu - The great-great grandfather of the founder of Tirwun migrated from Mandara-south of Lake Chad. Two reasons for such migration are attributed to succession dispute while trying to ascend the throne left vacant by the death of his father, but lost to his uncle; and or as a result of drought which brought shortage of animal feeds they had to move South-West in search of abundant pastures.

Maidugu and his followers first settled at a place called Daya before proceeding to Hurawuna and subsequently Fikain Potiskumareain the present Yobe state. At Fika, he died and Maidugu's eldest son, Sa'adu assumed the leadership of the community. Sa'adu was warned by his dying father to migrate anywhere, but never Mandara again. They stayed there, Sa'adu married and had a child named Bayero. Later on, Bayero led the migrants on to Gere-Gaba (the former Bornu and Bauchi provincial boundary); they stayed for about five years. According to oral tradition (Kangere 1997), Bayero had several children, among whom was Yangiri, the father of Abdullah through whom he later got a child named Dadi.

Soon after the death of Abdullahi, Dadi and his people moved to Gilliri in the present Ganjuwa in Bauchi state, being a cattle herder. They moved from place to place daily, in search of feeds for their animals i.e. cattle. He was attracted to the valleys of Yuli-an area few miles away from Gilliri, and later he decided to move for permanent settlement, but was refused permission by the chief of Yuli. Finally, he and his few followers were accepted to settle at Tirwun, on the intervention of the chief nearby Miri settlement.

The Gerewa, however, were said to have met some people probably the Bulawa, Zulawa, and Jarawa already occupying the hilly areas. The history of this group is not yet known, but were probably 'pagans' whom, as a result of friendly relationship and intermarriages, assimilated the Gerawa cultures. Furthermore, Dadi was made the Galadima of Tirwun (one of the king makers)

after the death of the former one. After just a few months, the chief of Tirwun was dethroned (after a bitterdisagreement with his king makers) and Dadi was chosen as the new Sarki. The migrants established themselves and became the dominant ruling class of the town.

The wife of Dadi later delivered a baby boy who was named Yakubu. He lived at Tirwun until the age of eight before he was sent to Mallam Ishaku in Jetar for Quranic education. Upon graduation he was again sent for further education to Degel at the school of the Islamic scholar Uthman Ibn Fodio. Few years to the declaration of the Sokoto Jihad, Ibn Fodio continued to bless Yakubu, and even predicted that he would be a great hero in life. Yakubu was later given a flag and Ibn Fodio authorised him to go back home to preach, and prepare for the Jihad in the Bauchi province– “return to your birth place and tell your people to come salute me, tell the Gerawa to come and pay homage to Bauchi”. Yakubu was confirmed as one of his commandants. He learnt of his father's death (Dadi) and was advised to inherit nothing out of the wealth, other than the legendary "Zabgai and Kare Dangi” It is a bow and seven lethal arrows, which are said to have been used by Yakubun Bauchi during his famous battles and are regarded iconic symbols of his bravery and destruction of enemies.

When Yakubu returned home, his nephew - Dosa, who was the chief of Tirwun instructed him to move to a nearby area called Inkil; there, he stayed for six years. He later, based on the advice of Ibn Fodio to move to Warinje hills (Wambai gate of Bauchi). He soon became intimate with an old hunter already occupying a small hut under a Kurna tree, named Baushe. Yakubu decided to name the place after the hunter (Thus the origin of the Bauchi). After some years, the existing people such as the Bulawa, Jahunawa, Fulani, Bornawa, Zullawa gathered around him and assured him of their loyalty. They continued to pay homage and tributes to him, but not all accepted Islam. From the initial fourgates, he built additional gates to nine due to considerable settlement expansion and population increase (Adeleye 1971).

YakubunBauchi is believed to have fought several lengthy wars among many others, against the ‘pagan’ people of Dass, Ningi, Misau, Yergam, Montol and Duguri, in whichhe was successful on most occasions. Yakubu had apparently waged a war against the non-Muslims in the Benue region. He conquered the whole of the country between Bauchi and Benue (Isichei 1983). Tiv and Jukun authorities naturally acknowledged the supremacy of the Bauchi as shown by the tribute, but refused to accept Islam (Usman 1979). The five grandsons of Dadi (Chief of Tirwun) are until date the dominant ruling class of Bauchi (Abdullahi 1989).

Landscape Survey of the Sites and Findings

The purpose of the reconnaissance of Tirwun was to investigate and identify any trace of human activities and occupation in the area. The survey of the site covered abandoned settlements such as Bezhawa labeled as LE. I, Buri (LE 2), Gwarji (LE 3), Bayan Dutsi (LE 4) and Anguwar Sarki (LE 5) that is still under occupation as illustrated by the figure below. All the settlements split around the Tirwun inselberg from all directions. The entire site is bounded by three walling system (Ganuwa).

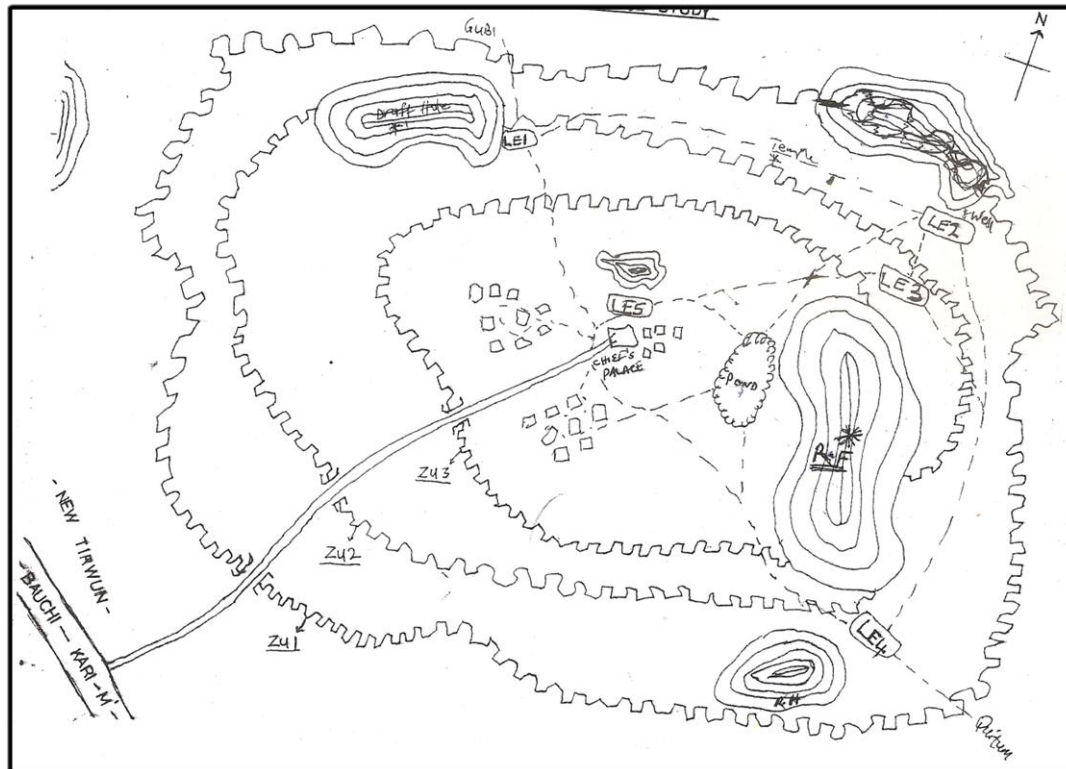


Figure 2: Site sketch of Tirwun (Drawn by the author)

The site was divided into the above designation during the reconnaissance; this method made the entire feature identification and observation of features and finds easier with respect to effective location approach. Features and finds of archeological significance have also been classified into movable artifacts and movable findings.

The major finds were potsherds, while others include cowrie shells and grinding stones. Potsherds were scattered all over the site, with the highest concentration around the abandoned portion. A total of 70 potsherds were collected as representative samples from the four abandoned settlements and few from the habitation portion. A total of 12 cowries were discovered from LE 5. They were said to have been used as money in the distant past and as means of decoration in the recent past in some places as such were used in making floor pavements, wall decoration and for medical purposes.

Other important features found include grinding stones, abandoned houses, walling system, pond, draft holes, wells, dye pit and rock hollows. Many lower grinding stones were found, some on top of hills, mound, while others in association to house foundations. Mostly, they were recovered in association with upper grinding stones and commonly distributed in the portions of the site. The lower grinding stones mostly measured about 40-50cm in length, 25 -35cm wide and of irregular rectangular shapes. The level of their depression was so intensive ranging from 8cm -11 cm compared to their 14 - 16cm thickness. Also, there are boundary margins measuring about 2cm to guard the grinding items.

The upper grinding stones are made from igneous rock, their width within the range of 20cm and 8cm long, which is very convenient to handle. The grinding surfaces are smooth and a little rough at the remaining sides. A considerable number of the upper grinding stones were found

broken. It is said that these grinding stones were used for grinding medicinal herbs, agricultural products and sharpening metal objects (Mahmood 1997). There are evidences of house foundation in the site and constituted one of the most commonly identified feature throughout. Houses are traced based on ruins of collapsed structures in the form of mud and granite stone arrangements. According to oral tradition, construction of houses follows certain stages. A chain of ditches are dug representing the shape of the building planned. Mud is spread inside, before stones of several shapes are laid on it. This formed the foundation of the structure. Based on observation, it is obvious that they built circular houses. These stones laid were coated with properly mixed mud, with alternative layers of about 50cm which were added and left to dry continuously until it reached the desired height.

However, at the recently abandoned LE 4, the use of stones in their buildings is rare and less pronounced. They are made of mud-moulds, whereby damped and well mixed mud are arranged randomly and without being turned into blocks. The walls are still built to considerable height standing. The soil of the area is poor in plasticity, hence they greatly enrich it with grasses and dried leaf temper.

Oral tradition (Kwuitum 1997) claims that these stone arrangements were foundation of rooms, storage, granaries (as shown by triple stone wedges) and kitchen. About four to seven houses surrounded by a wall make a compound and a cluster of such compounds make a settlement. The House walls thickness is about 50cm while the diameter for the rooms about 8-10m and roofed with thatch. Like many ancient cities in Hausaland, Tirwun is a walled settlement. The entire settlements were surrounded and enclosed by three successive walls. It is a defensive construction that formed a barrier to outside attack in the past (Mahmood 1997) and probably an indication of centralized authority and power (Abubakar 1974).

The first wall surrounds the whole settlements; it is designated ZU I and measured about 10 meters in thickness and more than 1-meter height at several locations. The distance from it, to the second wall (ZU 2) is about 205 meters it measures about 1.1-meter-thick and about 2 meters high and the distance to the main (3) wall is about 500 meters from the ZU2. ZU 3 is very elaborate with thickness of about 1.5 meters and 1 meter in height averagely at several points of the wall.

However, there is problem in ascertaining who the builders of these monuments were. Were they built by a generation of settlers or by different groups? An understanding has been reached that the Gerawa's under the leadership of Dadi (The father of the founder of Bauchi) built the wall and probably slaves constituted the major workforce (Mahmood 1997).

Moreover, the raw materials recognised in the construction of the walls are mud and lateritic/granite stones. At certain locations, mud was exclusively used, while at other places is a mixture of large stones and mud. Although there are portions where only a heap of arranged stones only survived, representing the wall, such resulted from the weathering away of mud mixtures, due to erosion and other effects of human activities. There are large ditches along the wall suggesting source of soil for building due to extensive accumulation.

Grasses, shrubs and trees now grow on the ruin. The present inhabitants dig their building soil from the wall mound foot paths also traverse from all angle these and many other human activities have effect on its survival. According to oral accounts (Kwuitum 1997, Mahmood 1997), the walls had four gates, one at each cardinal direction in the Northern side was Kofar Arewa, East (Kofar Gabar), to the South is Kofar Kudu and at the Western bearing was the

Kofar-Yamma which was and still is the main gate. These gates were traversed by paths which led to neighboring villages in the ancient times. Up till now, the exact position of the main road that passes to the Chiefs Palace represents the initial entrance through KofarYamma.

Draft holes were only found at LEI cut on an igneous rock, North West of the inselberg. The surrounding surface around the holes are about 2 meters from each direction of the draft are smooth, with some observed lines of cracks passing from the Southern to the Northern direction. Altogether, it has 30 holes and square in shape, maintaining 36cm length, and width respectively. The holes are split into five horizontally and six vertically oval cut in lines sequence. The space between each hole on the vertical sequence is less than a centimeter, with about 1 cm - 12 cm horizontally especially in-between the first, second, and third lines which were wider.



Figure 3: The draft holes(Photographed by the author)

Out of number of upper grinding stones discovered in the field, mostly were between the ranges of 10cm-19cm in diameter from 3-4cm thickness of wall. Two types were identified one a small and two conventional big one: these are known and still used to certain extend in grinding herbs for medicinal purpose and are used in the oval shaped rock hollows and lower grinding stones; the conventional ones are used in association with the lower grinding to threshing grinding and a times pounding of grains and other farm produce.

According to oral information (Mahmood 1997, Kwaitum 1997) it is classified as a game played by two or more people during their leisure hours. The holes are shared among the players and were meant to keep the game dices separated from mixing with one another. The extant population still plays drag, but in a different form i.e. by digging the soil not on rock surface anymore. No stone counters (dices) used in the game has so far been recovered; this is due to the fact that any reasonable size of stones or woodlets used could be misplaced. The dices could be about 4cm in diameter (Mahmood 1997).

A peculiar form of dye pit was discovered at site LE 1 cut on igneous rock, measuring about 157 cm in diameter, maintaining 5 loosed angles vertically top to bottom and about 153cm deep. It was associated with a smooth surface to its eastern potion probably used as cloth beating

platform. Based on oral tradition, weaving, iron working and skin tanning were carried out by the people in the past. Cloths and leather were dyed in the pit and the smooth surface was the base where wooden object is beaten against the dyed material to aid quick colour. There are stains around the pit and a small channel where excess water is drained away. These are also broken boulders around that probably served as seats for the dyers.

Observation on the nature of the pit revealed the pit as originally natural, but with notes of scrapping and artificial cuts all over the surface and inside the pit indicating human activities. During the reconnaissance, a considerable number of rock holes mostly in groups (about 18) depressed on flat rocks surfaces were discovered on the northern portions of LEI and the western side of site LE4 simultaneously. Averagely, they were about 40-50cm wide and 19-26cm in breadth and shallow to about 5-12cm deep and mostly oval in shape.

The significance of these features is grouped in two versions, oral sources indicate they were achieved as a result of pounding and grinding (herbs) for medicinal purposes and light pounding of cereal crops upper grinding stones found in the vicinity of the hollows furthermore attest to that. A conflicting opinion views them as of natural occurrence, because they are found everywhere in the site and beyond, still conceding the fact that they might have been used by the past communities and such activities could have influenced the final shaping of the hollows.

Implication of the Archaeological Findings

In the context of Nigerian past, cowries were used as a medium of exchange i.e., money (currency) hand in hand with other African currencies such as the manila. They are evidence to suggest that the people of Tirwun participated in legal trading and commercial activities, and were part of the Africans who used an African indigenous currency to transact business.

An oral account (Mahmood 1997) clarifies that the abolition of cowries as a medium of exchange can hardly be more recent, than 60 years in the area. As time went on, the calculated cowries became nothing rather transformed objects of decoration which raises the aesthetic feelings of the people; and, until today, cowries are used for decorating floors, (pavement) and walls of rooms.

The colonial period witnessed the conscious debauchery of the pre-colonial cowry currency and the infiltration of advanced (modern) monetary system of Great Britain which terminated the relevance of cowrie shells. Reconnaissance of the area revealed the arrangements of the houses mostly in circular and rectangular patterns. They constitute shelter to the past communities. Based on oral tradition the draft holes found is believed to have been utilised for game by two players or more people at a time. The game is played during leisure times.

Tirwun walls probably were primarily defensive mechanisms and may show that at one time or the other, the people of the area likely the builder faced external threat (military). The achievement of such magnificent earthen structure suggests that there was probably a well organized labour force such as slaves or the combination of the community and slave's efforts. It also indicates a well organised (central) administration, probably where the overall ruler resides and oversees his administration with his minister, cabinet and other assistants.

The structure and nature of the rock cut dye pit and the evidences of dyes scattered around the pit point to the fact the people might have practised dyeing of cloths. Oral tradition shows that until recent years (after the abandonment of the site), people still went to dye cloths and tanned leathers, at the place. That suggests that the people must have been cloth makers, weavers, skin

tanners etc. and might have like colourful (fashion) appearance on one hand and undertaken rewarding occupations for economic growth and resource development. It is pertinent to observe that although there are claims about rock hollows, that they are naturally occurring, in Tirwun is not so. The inhabitants still grind resources from eye-lids, medicines and grains in a limited quantity where there is the need for more hollows if the old ones became too shallow they dig new ones within a week of intensive usage

Principal occupation is subsistence farming. A separate economic class also exists; they include artisans such as potters, dyers, skin tanners, black smiths among other. In the past, similar activities like the above might have taken place in Tirwun and probably with common subsistence base. It is said that farming, crop production not only in Tirwun, but in Africa is ancient and started several centuries ago and based on oral dates, is an old subsistence tradition among the Gerawa. Secondly, as noted earlier, the first migrants to the area (Kwuitum 1997) were cattle herders who moved from place to place in search of good pasture, as a result, they were according to Abdullahi ((1989) "attracted to the plains of Tirwun where good pasture is abundant". It is likely that the present traditions of subsistence crop production and stock-raising are economic legacies from the past.

The existence of archeological features like dye pit suggest also a distinct class of craftsmen such textile dyers who lived to provide some basic needs of the people possibly for financial reward if correlation can be done on the ethnographic explanation of the industry. The discovery of cowries shells which were used as medium of exchange in the past were possibly used to settle debts and payment for services rendered, whereas in the present economic setup, modern currency is the medium of exchange. Again, they suggest the existence of trade whereby goods could be bought and be disposed of for money as such trading took place. That does not however, rule out the possibility of trade by barter, a system which gained favour among the distant prehistoric people of W/Africa (Yaya 1974). The two situations resemble a common system of earning a living, commerce and trade i.e. diversified economic base of the two periods, hence there was a kind of social stratification due to the accesses to means of production by those who got money from practising the crafts, and architecture as could indirectly be deduced from the magnificence of some architectural systems against some common construction by the lower class.

It is however, clear that a place of archeological interest probably a shrine was discovered. A masquerade called "Dodon Gere" which is still existing (council) sits to discuss issues with his assistant related to the lives of "his" people. The place is under a "tsamiya" tree with boulders as seats are arranged, that of the "Dodo" is immediately near the tree and rests his back upon the tree facing his council members. People used to worship and make offerings to spirits. Oral data indicate that the "Dodo" is transformed from the spirit into the form so that he could be seen. Certain indirect evidences were studied, firstly, the present population also have a masquerade called "Dodon Gere". To some people it is a witch, while others perceive it as a spirit.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to note that the paper reports largely an archaeological exploration of the landscape relying largely on surface artefacts, monuments and oral traditions. It tries to appreciate the cultural landscape created with a view to understanding its function that derived from oral traditions. The paper recognises the drawback of time-depth and reconstructing social connections beyond, perhaps, the past 1000 years. For a reliable reconstruction of the culture-

history and way of life of the past people of Tirwun, there is the need to conduct a detailed archeological research that will involve excavation and radio dating. This will go a long way to prove the ages and ingenuity of the imprints left behind by ancient Tirwun societies. It is instructive to know that from the data assessed, the development of settlements around Tirwun witnessed the practice of belief systems that were prevalent before the coming of Islam termed 'pagan' and as such 'unislamic traditions' that thrived. Even with the acceptance of Islam, some elements of traditional religious practices continued to be observed on the landscape and later developed into syncretism, where the relics of performances sustained, through for example, the famous 'Dodon Gere' ritual performance that was observed as recent as the last decade as well as their allegiance to Islamic tenets. With the coming of Islam through contacts with Bornoempire and later Sokoto caliphate by the 19th century onwards marshaled new socio-cultural systems and expectations. The settlement under study begets Bauchi whose later leader became an influential personality in the struggles of SokotoJihad in the Bauchi region. Bauchi has since the conception of the Jihad being co-opted into the real structure of the Jihad and contributed to expansion of its outreach further south-east of Sokoto in the northeastern Nigeria. A lot more interest in functions of cultural landscape, settlement organizations as well as specific issues on religious systems and performance around Bauchi region needsto be studied in detail.

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