

## Political Crisis in Nupe Kingdom of Nigeria, 1800 – 1857: The Rise and Fall of *Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe* – The *Etsu* Nupe That Never Was

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### Abstract

*One of the fundamental outcomes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad in Nigeria, led by Usman Ibn Fodio, was the establishment of a Caliphate, Emirates and Emirate system of government in Northern Nigeria. Not less than thirteen of such Emirates were established in the area on the basis of “Islamic” principles. Each Emirate so established was led by an Emir, supported by a Council of Elders and Advisers, as well as, Traditional Title Holders. The appointment of the Emirs must be approved and endorsed by the Head of the Caliphate – the Sultan with his Headquarters at Sokoto before the division of the Caliphate into Eastern and Western parts. While Sokoto, after the division remained the Headquarters of the Eastern part, Gwandu became the capital of the Western part of the caliphate. Among the Emirates constituting the Eastern part were Rano, Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Hadejia and Bauchi, while those of the Western portion were Nupe, Kontagora, and Ilorin. This paper attempts to discuss the Emirates in Nupeland, their establishment, problems associated with their consolidation, arising from internal and intra – leadership conflicts among the Jihadists, on one hand, and between them and Indigenous Nupe rulers under Tsoede, the founder of Nupe kingdom and dynasty, on the other. It also examines the circumstances leading to the emergence of a brave and popular war commander, Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe to “usurp” or to assume the position of Etsu in the Emirate of Raba following the attendant crisis and political instability.*

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**Keywords:** Nupeland; Etsu; Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe; Emirate; Jihadists; Fulani (plural), Fulbe (single).

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## Introduction

Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihadists' intervention into Nupeland, the area formed one of the greatest kingdoms in Nigeria. It lies between the Northern and Southern parts of what became 'Nigeria' as a political and geographical entity and expression, respectively. Climatically, Nupeland shares both the characteristics of the Northern Sahara and those of the Southern forest. Nupeland now lies in the present North – Central Political Zone of Nigeria. The area occupies a strategic portion<sup>1</sup> economically, politically and socially. The unity and transformation of the hitherto small independent communities or city – states into a formidable united kingdom was achieved by no other personality than Tsoede or Tsoede, or Shorgede or Edegi.<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this work, the most popular name – Tsoede, has been adopted.

The kingdom founded by Tsoede is said to have lasted for several centuries<sup>3</sup> before its eclipse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the intervention of the Fulbe. As will be discussed later, a number of factors were responsible for the fall of Nupe kingdom to the Fulani Jihadists. These include political instability arising from leadership crisis among leaders of the Tsoede dynasty, size of the kingdom and its factionalisation, as well as, the Jihadists' manipulation of the chaotic situation.

The overthrow of the Nupe indigenous Tsoede dynasty in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century became a turning point in the history of Nupeland. The new rulers under the Jihadist leader, Mallam Dendo/Manko and his descendants were initially faced with the problem of consolidation, unity, greed and insatiable political ambition, among others.

While the above scenario almost led to the disintegration of the then nascent established Fulani rule, following the "emergence" of a non-Fulani leader – *Mayaki Umaru Bahausha*, the same scenario later turned out to become a catalyst for the unity, cooperation and consolidation of Fulani dynasty in Bida in particular, and in other Nupe towns, such as Agaie, Lapai, Lafiagi and Tsonga, in general. Factors responsible for the unity and combined military forces to defeat the declared "usurper" *Mayaki Umaru Bahausha's* movement of the Emirate Capital from Raba to Bida in 1857 and establishment of the present three Fulbe Ruling Houses in Bida have been discussed in this paper.

## Nupeland Prior to the Jihadists' Intervention

Sidi,<sup>4</sup> identifies five historical epochs of the Nupe thus;

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<sup>1</sup> Ajayi, J.F.A., and Alogoa, E.J. (1980). "Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of Economic Development and Inter-Group Relations", in Obaro, I., (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, p.22.

<sup>2</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2001). "Some Reflections on the Early History of the Peoples of the Middle Niger and Upper Ogun River Areas before 1500", in *ZAHIR*, Zaria: Historical Research Journal of the Development of History, vol. 1, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2017). "A History of the Nupe C 1068 – 1810 AD", A PhD Thesis – Department of History, Faculty of Arts, ABU, Zaria, p.204.

<sup>4</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2017). "A History of the...", p.3.

- i. Pre – Tsoede era to 1500
- ii. The Tsoede period and his descendants 1531 – 1810
- iii. Fulani or Emirate period 1833 – 1899
- iv. The Colonial period 1900 – 1960
- v. Post-Colonial period 1960 – date.

Our major focus in this paper centres on period three, even though brief mention of one and two will be made. Nupe connotes a language, an ethnic group and a territory. As a language, it is one of the most important languages spoken in Nigeria. The people whose mother language is Nupe occupy the North – Central part of Nigeria. They are majorly found in Bida, Agaie, Lapai and Kontagora Emirates in present-day Niger State and Patigi, Lafiagi, Tsonga and Tsaragi Emirates in present-day Kwara State in Nigeria. A good number of Nupe-speaking people are also found in Lokoja, Ajaokuta, Shintaku, Kotonkarfe, Abaji, Eggan and Budam, among others in present-day Kogi State. In such places like Umaisha, Toto, Shamenge, Gadabuke, among others in present-day Nasarawa State can be found Nupe-speaking peoples, as well as, in Gwagwalada and Zuba in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.<sup>5</sup>

As a territory, the land occupied by the Nupe-speaking people is called *Kin Nupe* (Nupeland). It is a geographical expression referring the area(s) predominantly inhabited by the Nupe. This suggests that Nupe evolved from being a language – *Ezhimi Nupe* to being a nation – *Kin Nupe*. Obayemi<sup>6</sup> shows how ancient Nupe or pre – 1800 Nupe, both as language and ‘nation’ extended its influence to immediate and far away communities, with attendant influence on the socio – economic and political activities of such areas.

In his foreword to Nadel’s *Black Byzantium*, the former Governor – General of Nigeria, Lord Lugard, describes Nupe as one of the most important communities in Nigeria, while, Nadel himself, gives his high impression on the Nupe political, social and economic formations, comparable to those of ancient civilisations.<sup>7</sup> This impression, undoubtedly informed him to title his popular and famous book on Nupe: *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*.

### **Pre – Tsoede Nupe**

We do not relatively know much of the early history of Nupe, as we do on the Tsoede and subsequent periods of Nupe. Jimada and other scholars on Nupe express difficulty involved in an attempt to reconstruct, in any detail, the political institutions of the early history of Nupe. What we do know, however, was that there existed, before the emergence of Tsoede as the founder of a united Nupe kingdom, various independent Nupe sub-groups practicing their socio – economic systems and political organisations. The most prominent among such sub-groups were the *Bini*, *Kyadya* and *Kusopa*. The first two had more elaborate political and socio – economic organisations than the other(s). The *Bini*, in particular, formed a confederacy of not less than 12 independent city-states – *ezhikozhi*.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Oral evidence – Ameer Abubakar, 55 years, FCT Abuja, on 23/01/13.

<sup>6</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2017). “A History of the...”, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2017). “A History of the...”, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, p.42.

Prominent numbers of the confederacy include Nku, Bida *Banin*, Tafyan, Doko, Danko, Tuwa, Essan, Sommajiko, Gaba, Nupeko, Mambe, Pandzuru, Ewu and Egbe.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that, though independent, unit members of the confederacy recognised one of them – Tuwa, later, Tafyan<sup>10</sup> as the leader of the confederacy to which annual tribute was paid by other members. Each city-state or settlement was headed by a king called *Etsu*. In terms of wars or threats to the confederacy, members would contribute army to defend the confederacy after which the army would retire to their respective bases.

Other Nupe sub-groups, such as *Kyadya*, Kusopa, Batachi, *Chekpan*, *Gbede* and *Ebangi*, almost had similar independent predisposition as the *Bini*, in terms of political organisations. The *Kyadyas* (Riverain people) lived on the shores of Niger and Kaduna Rivers. They lived essentially on fishing, canoe ferrying/river transportation, and to some extent, on rice production. Politically, they were led by a leader called *Kuta* assisted by a Council of Title holders and Elders, each assigned specific role in the polity. The *Kyedes* controlled the rivers and tributaries.

### **Tsoede and Foundation of Nupe Kingdom**

The important figure associated with the establishment of a central unified polity, called Nupe Kingdom, was Tsoede or Edegi. In the same vain, the emergence of several Kingdoms, Empires, States or Chiefdoms in the Nigeria area has been attributed to one legendary figure or another. For instance, the establishment of Hausa State; Oyo Empire; Kanem and Borno Empires; Benin Kingdom, among others has been traced to Bayajida; Oduduwa; Saif bn Dhi Yazan and Oranmiyan, respectively.<sup>11</sup>

In pre – kingdom period, there existed in antiquity, various independent or semi-independent polities as stated previously. Tsoede, according to Nupe and Idah traditions, is said to have come to Nupeland from Idah – the capital of Igalaland. Same traditions also aver that Tsoede was born to an Igala prince with his Nupe wife at a Nupe settlement called Nku near the confluence of Rivers Niger and Kaduna after the prince (Tsoede’s father had gone back to Idah to become the king of Idah). Tsoede is said to have travelled to Idah to meet his father after the latter had become the king (Attah). Envy, jealousy and hatred grew between Tsoede and his half-brothers following the ‘observed’ special favours granted to the former by their father. Tsoede is said to have been advised by his father to leave Idah for Nupeland – his maternal land to establish a ruling dynasty there.

On arrival to Nupeland, Tsoede is reported to have engaged his maternal uncle, the then king (*Etsu*) of Nku, his mother’s birth place in a struggle. This was aimed at taking over the mantle of leadership from his uncle. The ‘defeat’ of his uncle or his “mysterious disappearance” marked the beginning of Tsoede’s political ambition to conquer and unify the entire Nupeland for the purpose of assuming the leadership of same.

<sup>9</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the Emirate...*, p.42; Nadel, S.F. (1942). *A Black Byzantium, A Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press, p.25, Saidu, I. (1992). *The Nupe and their Neighbgours*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, p.1 and Sidi, T.S., “A History of the...”, p.179, among other sources.

<sup>10</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2017). “A History of the...”, pp.179 – 180.

<sup>11</sup> Kolo, R.N. (1973). “The *Bini* in Nupe History with Special Reference to Zhima (Jima) Doko”. B.A. Dissertation, ABU, Zaria, p.25.

After the ‘defeat’ of his uncle, Tsoede first established his capital at Nupeko town and later to Gbara. The change of capital from the former to the latter was based on the size of the two towns. Nupeko was relatively smaller in size than Gbara. For an ambitious personality like Tsoede, he needed a larger capital settlement, hence, the choice of Gbara. Here, the process of founding a supra state began, by making efforts to bring together the hitherto independent or semi-independent *Bini* city-states and other Nupe sub-groups. Having achieved this through wars of conquest, persuasions and diplomacy, Tsoede declared himself as the overall *Etsu* (king) over the entire Nupeland, or kingdom, or as a source describes the unification as “a mega state”<sup>12</sup>, created by Tsoede.

The evolution of central authority over Nupeland is said to have occurred between late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The dynasty Tsoede established lasted for more than four hundred years<sup>13</sup> before the intervention of Fulani Jihadists in the nineteenth century. By the time Tsoede died at the age of “129 years”, in about 1581 or 1591<sup>14</sup>, he is reported to have bequeathed, not only a united and powerful kingdom, but a prosperous one to his successors, whose influence was felt not only by the Hausa States, but also the Yoruba and other close and far away neighbours<sup>15</sup>.

### **Jihadists’ Intervention and the Eclipse of Nupe Kingdom**

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the kingdom of Nupe founded by Tsoede had grown beyond the boundaries of Nupeland. However, at the eve of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad, schism broke out among the indigenous rulers under Tsoede dynasty. Such dynastic feud led to the balkanisation of Nupe kingdom into three and later into sections – the Eastern and Western parts<sup>16</sup>, under the *Etsu* Jimada and *Etsu* Majiya respectively. *Etsu* Yikanko controlled Mokwa and its environs. This situation created an unprecedented political turmoil, which provided a golden opportunity for the Jihadists. By this time, a good number of the Fulani had already settled in many parts of Nupe kingdom. In order to undo or liquidate each other, alliance and diplomacy was adopted to by the major contenders – Majiya and Jimada.

The factionalisation of Nupe kingdom into three sections (after the defeat of *Etsu* Mohammadu Kolo in about 1809) ruled by different personalities Jimada, Majiya and Yikanko at the same time, was a serious political miscalculation on the part of Nupe nobility, while the situation, on the other hand, provided a golden advantage to the Jihadists. While the first two contenders considered themselves on the basis of legality and legitimacy, being descendants of Tsoede, either on patrilineal or matrilineal side, the third one – Abdullahi Yikanko was neither of the two.

<sup>12</sup> Sa’ad, A. (1985). “Political Evolution or Revolution? The Case of Kin Nupe before the advent of Colonial Rule”, in J.F.A., Ajayi and Ikara, B. (eds) *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University Press Limited, pp. 68 – 69.

<sup>13</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2016). *The Historical Background to the Establishment of Patigi Emirate: C 1018 – 1898*. Zaria: ABU Press Limited, p.135 and Saidu, I. (1992). *The Nupe and their...* p.3, Idrees, A.A. (1998). *Political Change and Continuity in Nupeland: Decline and Regeneration of Edegi Ruling Dynasty*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig) Ltd., p.10.

<sup>14</sup> Imam, I.N. (1973). “A History of Islam in Nupe”, B.A. Dissertation, submitted to Islamic Studies Department, Bayero University, Kano, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2017). “A History of the...”, p.221.

<sup>16</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of Emirate System of Government in Nupeland: The Emirate of Bida As a Case Study*. Kaduna: Fembo Books and Graphics, pp. 35 – 36.

Sule and Mason describe him as a usurper<sup>17</sup> like *Mayaki Umaru Bahausha* to be discussed later, Yikanko was a war general under *Etsu* Mohamadu Kolo, after whose death the former took over the leadership of the kingdom as *Etsu*. This was challenged by Jimada and Majiya who arrogated to themselves the right to rule rather than Yikanko. No wonder, Yikanko's reign at Mokwa was said to have been so short that his name did not appear on most Nupe king lists.<sup>18</sup>

Not being comfortable with Yikanko's claims, Jimada and Majiya in 'alliance' with the Jihadists, attacked and assassinated the former in Mokwa in about 1810.<sup>19</sup> The death of Yikanko did not only reduce the power struggle, between Jimada and Majiya, it also signified the emergence of a new era in which the *Ulama* (Jihadists) were to play a major role, which eventually led to the collapse of Tsoede dynasty. Both Majiya and Jimada at one time or the other sought for and got alliance with the Jihadists to undo and liquidate each other to maintain an indivisible kingdom. Claims and counter-claims were put forward by Jimada and Majiya. Though, the latter was older, more experienced and exposed to the palace affairs, he was from the matrilineal lineage – his mother being sister to late Jimada's father – *Etsu* Mohamadu Kolo. Jimada's claims were based on the fact that he was direct paternal descendant, whose father and grandfather were *Etsus* at one time or the other. For Majiya to become the *Etsu* would have broken the established rule of succession. Despite all odds, Majiya became the *Etsu*, making Raba his capital to the displeasure, disagreement and anger of Jimada. Together with his supporters, the former fled Raba – the capital Gbara and later to Ragada towns, the latter being a small place near Patigi at the Western bank of River Niger. Both Majiya and Jimada were claiming to be the *Etsu* in their respective areas of the kingdom.

The above intra-dynastic feud led to the balkanisation of the hitherto expanse Nupe kingdom into two halves, as stated previously. Jimada controlled the Eastern part with headquarters at Ragada, while Majiya did same in the Western half, with his capital at Raba.<sup>20</sup> The implication arising from the above scenario was that each faction became identified or stigmatised with a name *Yissazhi* and *Gwabgazhi* for Jimada and Majiya, respectively. The former was regarded as the legitimate faction, having descended from *Etsu* Mu'azu Yissa, Jimada's grandfather.<sup>21</sup> The latter faction, *Gwabgazhi* – meaning feeble or weak in the hands, was identified with *Etsu* Majiya and his supporters. Idris asserts that the "claim to the position of *Etsu* by the *Gwabgazhi* was relatively a weak one in comparison with Jimada's faction the *Yissazhi*."<sup>22</sup>

The precarious political situation arising from succession disputes reduced the strength and cohesion hitherto enjoyed by the kingdom. The Jihadists capitalised and manipulated the situation to get what they wanted. For instance, *Etsu* Majiya sought for and got military and spiritual assistance from the latter against his arch rival Jimada. With the combined forces of

<sup>17</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *Establishment of the...* pp. 83 – 84, Mason, M. (1981). *The Foundation of Bida Kingdom*. Zaria: ABU Press Limited, p.25.

<sup>18</sup> Jimada, I.S. (1991). "The Establishment of Patigi Emirate: The Historical Background, 1810 – 1898". M.A Thesis, History Dept., ABU, Zaria, p.208.

<sup>19</sup> Mason, M. (1970). "The Kingdom of Nupe in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", PhD Thesis, Birmingham University, pp. 57 – 58 and Sule, M. *History of the Emirate...*, pp. 83 – 84.

<sup>20</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of the...*, p.36.

<sup>21</sup> NAK SNP 17/25355 "Notes on Nupe" by P.G. Harries and Jimada, I.S. (1991) "Establishment of Patigi..." pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>22</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). "Establishment of the...", p.36.

Majiya and Dendo, Jimada was killed and his party utterly defected at Ragada in about 1810.<sup>23</sup> Later, Majiya – Dendo relationship became sour, following the suspicion of the growing fame and popularity of the latter by the former. Based on elders’ and other stakeholders’ advice, Majiya had a plan to drive Dendo away from Nupe. Such a plan seemed to have leaked to the latter, who fled Raba to Ilorin to join other Jihadists there. At Ilorin Dendo is said to have sought for the cooperation and military assistance of Jimada’s son – Idrisu Gana, who survived the Ragada massacre, together with his late father’s war commander – Makolo.

The political situation in Nupe kingdom from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was that of chaos, claims and counter claims, trust, mistrust, diplomacy, alliance and counter alliance, factionalisation and attempt to regain united and indivisible kingdom became noticeable features which characterised the kingdom of Nupe. By the 1830’s the dynasty and kingdom established by Tsoede had fallen and replaced by the Fulbe dynasty.

As Sidi observes:

The period between 1800 and 1833 was characterised by complex pattern of growth, decline and even a prelude to the birth of a foreign dynasty in the volatile Nupe heartland. The instability reflected in intensive political competitions arising from disagreements over succession rights. While this situation made it difficult for the Nupe Etsuzhi to evolve unity, the chaotic situation offered the Fulani the opportunity to effect a permanent political control over Nupeland.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Fulbe Dynasty in Nupeland**

The death of Mallam Dendo in 1833 at Raba marked the official appointment of Usman Zaki, the second oldest son of Dendo as the first Fulani *Etsu* (*Etsu Goyi*) in 1833.<sup>25</sup> As Dendo founded Fulbe dynasty at Raba – later Bida, other Fulbe Jihadists founded similar dynasties in other parts of Nupeland – Daudu Maza; Mallam Babba; Manzuma/Maliki and Aliyu, in Lapai, Agaie, Lafiagi and Tsonga, respectively.

### **Problems of Consolidation**

No sooner than the emergence of Usman Zaki as the first Fulbe *Etsu* at Raba, than the problem of consolidation arose within the Dendo family. As was witnessed among the Tsoede members of the royal class at the eve of Fulbe Jihad campaigns which led to the eclipse of the Nupe kingdom, the same scenario played out in the newly founded Fulbe dynasty in Raba.

The first major obstacle that militated against the smooth consolidation of the Fulbe dynasty came from Mohammad Saba, popularly known as Masaba, the youngest son of Dendo. This followed the appointment of Mohammad Gborigi as *Shaaba* – the heir apparent. Masaba felt that

<sup>23</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). “Establishment of the...”, pp. 41 – 42.

<sup>24</sup> *Etsu* Nupe under Tsoede dynasty should not be confused with Fulani *Etsu* under Dendo dynasty.

<sup>25</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the Emirate...*, pp. 95 – 104.

he was more appropriate for the appointment. He argued that, unlike Gborigi, who was the grandson of Dendo, he (Masaba) was a direct son of Dendo. Additionally, he claimed that while Usman Zaki was of full Fulbe parentage, he (Masaba) was half Fulbe and half Nupe, since he was born of a Nupe woman in Nupeland.<sup>26</sup> Masaba is reported not to have been initially opposed to the appointment of Usman Zaki as the *Fulbe Etsu*, but against Gbaorigi's appointment as the heir-apparent to the *Etsu*.<sup>27</sup> Realising that he would hardly succeed in getting the title of *Shaaba*, he decided to challenge the position of *Etsu* given to Usman Zaki, hence Masaba revolt against both appointments – the *Etsu* and *Shaaba*.

From this time up to 1857, the history of Nupe kingdom became history of intrigues, wars, rebellion, alliance and counter alliance as stated previously. A number of varied factors were responsible for the unfortunate events. First, intra-dynastic rivalries among Dendo's sons on the rights and legitimacy of the leadership in the newly established Fulbe dynasty. Secondly, there were wars between Dendo's descendants' against other groups and factions of Nupe, and thirdly, against rebellions of the descendants of the old (Tsoede) dynasty – who were still nursing the hope of regaining their lost throne to the Fulbe, whom they considered foreigners.<sup>28</sup>

Masaba's stiff opposition to Usman Zaki's appointment and that of Gborigi's as *Etsu* and *Shaaba*, respectively led to a civil war among members of Dendo's family. Described as "politically astute and adept",<sup>29</sup> Masaba, like, Dendo – his father did, adopted tactics, diplomacy and 'divide and rule policy' in the ensuing events. To strengthen his military position, Masaba solicited and got the support of *Etsu* Tsado in Zugurma and that of *Etsu* Idrisu in Eggan, the two shadow *Etsuzhi* of Nupe under Tsoede dynasty.

Masaba led two revolts. The first one was at Raba – the Emirate initial capital, shortly after Usman Zaki assumed power. Masaba was defeated in this encounter. Either, he was forced out of Raba or he, own his own volition fled to Lade, in 1835<sup>30</sup> – a town near Patigi in the present-day Kwara State. It is claimed that Masaba's flight to Lade from Raba might not have been a sign of defeat, but rather to enable him prepare for fresh encounters against his brother – Usman Zaki.<sup>31</sup>

At Lade, Masaba conspired with the shadow *Etsuzhi*, Tsado and Idrisu as stated earlier. In addition, he organised expeditions against the Epira and Bunus ethnic groups in the North – Eastern part of Yorubaland to strengthen his military, political and economic position. Despite this however, for the second time Masaba and his allied forces were yet defeated by Usman Zaki forces at Takuma. The latter army was under the able leadership of one renowned and brave commander called Andi Boshi.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Nadel, S.F. (1942). *A Black Byzantium...*, p.80.

<sup>27</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the Emirate...*, p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of the...*, pp. 44 – 45.

<sup>29</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2016) *The Historical Background...* p.173 and Salahu, M.L. (2012). "The *Etsu* Masaba Diplomacy in Bida Emirate, 1859 – 1873: A History of Politics in Pre – Colonial African Potentate", in *Journal of African Politics and Society*, vol. 1 (2) December, p.181.

<sup>30</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2016). *The Historical Background...* p.173.

<sup>31</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of the...*, p.45.

<sup>32</sup> Oral evidence from Alh. Usman Isah – holding a Traditional Title of *Sarkin* Rafi Nupe (Bida), retired civil servant, 70 years, on 20/3/94.



The precarious political situation in Nupe attracted the attention of Gwandu under whose sovereignty Nupe was. The Intervention of Gwandu upheld the right of Usman Zaki to rule. Masaba was to return to Lade, while Tsado and Idrisu, the shadow Nupe *Etsuzhi* were to return to their respective catipitals – Zugurma and Gbara. However, this and other interventions of Gwandu were far from finding solutions to the political crisis in Nupeland.<sup>33</sup>

The implications of these turbulent situations were multi-dimensional. First, the expected unity and political stability in the newly established Fulbe dynasty was far from being achieved among the Dendo sons. Secondly, members of the old Nupe dynasty had continued to launch campaigns against the new Fulbe dynasty with the hope of regaining their lost political independence.<sup>34</sup> For instance, Majiya's son and successor is reported to have declared, "I wish to tear Nupeland from the Fulbe clutches and restore it to the children of Edegi."<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, the uprisings from other Nupe sup-groups, especially from the Kyadya and Kusopa also created a consolidation problem. Finally, the situation provided opportunity for certain ambitious people to take advantage of taking over the leadership position. One of such personalities was *Mayaki* (War Commander) Umaru *Bahaushe*.

### Who Was Umaru *Bahaushe*?

Sources differ as to the origin of *Mayaki* Umaru *Bahaushe*. While some say that he was from Borno, hence, *Barebari*, others describe him as a Hausa man, hence, *Bahaushe*<sup>36</sup> or Umaru *Kenchi*, which in Nupe means Hausa man. He is believed to have come to Raba as a fugitive after serving under the Borno army which set out unsuccessfully to overrun some of the Eastern emirates of the Sokoto caliphate.<sup>37</sup> Sule explains that *Mayaki* Umaru would seem to be more of Borno origin, but who "sojourned in the Hausaland sufficient enough to be nicknamed *Bahaushe* instead of *Bakanembe* or *Babarbare* or *Barebari* man".<sup>38</sup>

Be that as it may, Umaru *Bahaushe* joined the army of the first Fulbe *Etsu* Usman Zaki in Raba under the command of *Mayaki* Andi Boshi. He is said to have learnt a lot of military tactics from his master, Andi Boshi. After the death of the latter, Umaru became the *Mayaki* (war commander) under whom, the two surviving sons of his master, Muhammad Shafiyi and Muhammad Balko, served.<sup>39</sup> He led several successful expeditions under Usman Zaki and Masaba respectively.

Gradually, *Mayaki* Umaru became very powerful and popular due to his brevity, courage and tactics in warfronts. He, no doubt, attracted more and more followers to his side, which appeared to have made him self-dependent, such that he is reported to have started defying

<sup>33</sup> For more details on the situation, see Jimada, I.S. (2016). *The Historical Back...* pp. 172 – 188, Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...* pp. 113 – 138 and Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of the...*, pp. 44 – 52.

<sup>34</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of the...*, pp. 44 – 52.

<sup>35</sup> Frobenius, L., (1913). *The Voice of Africa*, vol. 2, being an account of the Travels of the German Explorer in the Inner Africa, 1910 – 12, (translated) Redult Blind, London, p.580.

<sup>36</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p. 128.

<sup>37</sup> Balogun, S.A. (1970). "Gwandu Emirate in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with Special Reference to Political Relations: 1817 – 1903" PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, p.189.

<sup>38</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p. 128.

<sup>39</sup> Oral interview with Alh. Usman Isah... 20/03/94.

orders/directives from *Etsu* Masaba – his master. For instance, the former’s directive to fight Mu’azu Isa and Maza – the descendants of Tsoede, causing serious threat to Masaba at Yeti was disobeyed.<sup>40</sup> Another instance of *Mayaki* Umaru’s disobedience to Masaba was the former’s request to send a beautiful woman captive to him as he directed – before *Mayaki*’s return to the base from the warfront.<sup>41</sup> Masaba did not take this highly.

Not unexpectedly though, a strained relationship developed between Masaba and the *Mayaki*. The former is said to have enjoyed the support of the Nupes and the Fulani alike, as they flocked to him in droves for protection against Masaba’s high-handedness.<sup>42</sup> Following this development, a civil war broke out between Masaba and *Mayaki*. The latter led his troops from his campaign camp to Lade – Masaba’s capital. In the ensuing battle, Masaba was defeated. Many of his supporters are reported to have left him, joining forces with the *Mayaki*’s. The defeat forced Masaba to flee to Ilorin to seek refuge with his co-Jihadists there.

The political atmosphere in Nupe became highly charged and confused. The leadership vacuum, or interregnum<sup>43</sup> was almost being created as Dendo’s sons now became scattered – Masaba at Ilorin, Usman Zaki at Gwandu and Umaru Majigi<sup>44</sup> at Birnin Kebbi. In a ‘face-saving’ or ‘divide and rule’ policy, as adopted by Dendo, *Mayaki* Umaru seemed to show his unwillingness, at least, initially, to assume the leadership position in Nupe. He appointed Yusuf Tsado Dzururu, one of the grandsons of Dendo. This appointment was resented to by the Nupes – Tsoede descendants, who appeared to have been wanting for opportunity to stage their come-back to power in Nupeland.

This led to series of campaigns by *Mayaki* Umaru against the Nupe *Etsuzhi*,<sup>45</sup> including those that initially joined forces with him to defeat Masaba at Lade. The *Mayaki* eventually became victorious over the Nupe *Etsuzhi* at Yeti encounter, in which one of the *Etsuzhi*, Maza was killed, while Mu’azu Isa, the other *Etsu* managed to escape.<sup>46</sup>

The situation now became ripe and appropriate for an ambitious *Mayaki* Umaru *Bahaushe* to proclaim himself an ‘undisputed leader’. Apparently disturbed, this development did not go down well, not only with the descendants of Tsoede, particularly, *Etsu* Mu’azu Isa, but also with the sons of Dendo who were then in exile.

### **Concerted Efforts Against *Mayaki* Umaru**

News of *Mayaki* Umaru’s proclamation as *Etsu* and apparent recognition of Emir Halilu of Gwandu went far and wide. The years between 1845 and 1857, witnessed alignment of forces

<sup>40</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p. 129.

<sup>41</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p. 129.

<sup>42</sup> Elphinstone, R.V. (1921). *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 35 – 36.

<sup>43</sup> Jide, I.(?) “The Ideals of the Sokoto Caliphate in the Outlying Districts: The O-Kun Factor in the British Conquest of Northern Nigeria – 1897 – 1906”, in, H. Bobboyi and A.M. Yakubu (eds), *The Sokoto Caliphate History and Legacies, 1804 – 2004*, Arewa House, ABU, Zaria.

<sup>44</sup> Note: Umaru Majigi should not be confused with *Mayaki* Umaru *Bahaushe*. The former was a descendent of Dendo, who, unlike his siblings, never fought for a political position for himself, but rather for the unity of the Dendo Family.

<sup>45</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2016). *The Historical Background...* pp.176 – 177 and Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p. 131.

<sup>46</sup> Mason, M. (1981). *The Foundation of...*, p.40.

against Umaru to challenge his candidature. For instance, Umaru Majigi, Dendon's grandson, was dismayed at *Mayaki's* assumption of power as the Emir. In a desperate move, Majigi arrived from Birnin Kebbi/Gwandu where he had been in exile with Usman Zaki to declare war on the 'usurper'. Umaru Majigi settled on the Eastern part of Kaduna River, a stronghold of the *Bini* sub-group. At Bida, then, a war camp, Majigi sought for and got support of *Etsu Mu'azu Isa* (C 1849 – 1872)<sup>47</sup> to challenge Umaru *Bahaushe*.

In the first encounter, which took place at Ezhigi and Sakpe,<sup>48</sup> *Mayaki* inflicted defeats on the allied forces of Umaru Majigi. After this, Majigi adopted a strategy of whipping kinship sentiment against *Bahaushe*. The former told people that the latter was not of Fulbe stock, since he was not a descendant of Mallam Dendo, and therefore was not eligible to become Emir. Messages to this effect were sent to other Fulbe, both living within Nupeland and those in exile outside the kingdom. He called on them to return to Nupe for the purpose of eliminating the 'foreigner' and 'usurper' and restoring 'true' Fulbe aristocratic dynasty in Nupe.

Umaru Majigi is reported to plead to his fellow Fulbe group thus:

Come now victory will soon be ours. There is no king of Nupe...we will sink our differences. The Emirship of Nupe a matter which concerns every Fulbe (Fulani). Therefore thy brother Usman Zaki must now be made Emir. The victory will be won very soon. Come therefore.<sup>49</sup>

Following the above summon, Usman Zaki returned from Gwandu where he had been in exile to join with Umaru Majigi, who had earlier returned to Nupe. Zaki was accompanied by a large number of soldiers led by the Waziri of Gwandu, Dan Adama, representing the Emir of Gwandu. The army was to secure the re-establishment of the Fulbe hegemony under the descendants of Mallam Dendo at Raba.

The allied Fulbe forces engaged *Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe*, pursuing him until they got to a small *Bini* settlement called Bida, a walled city-state, serving as a war camp. In a series of encounters, lasting for several years, the rebel was eventually defeated in 1857. He was either killed in the battle front or drowned while trying to cross Gbako River near Badeggi, along Agaie – Lapai road. His body is reported to have been recovered by the pursuing party and his head being decapitated and exhibited for public viewing on the walls of Bida or Raba as some sources say.<sup>50</sup> Wherever the exhibition took place, the fact remains that the *Mayaki* was killed.

With this defeat, the descendants of Dendo, in alliance with the Nupe *Bini* settlements and the shadow Nupe *Etsu*, Mu'azu Isa<sup>51</sup> around Bida, had destroyed their most dangerous enemy in Nupe – *Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe*, 'The *Etsu* Nupe that never was'.

<sup>47</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2016). *The Historical Background...*, p.177.

<sup>48</sup> Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p. 133.

<sup>49</sup> Frobenius, L. (2013). *The Voice of Africa...*, p.595 and Sidi, T.S. (2000). *Establishment of...*, p.55.

<sup>50</sup> Dupigny, E.G.M. (1921). "The Gazetteer of Nupe Province", in the *Gazetteer of Northern Provinces of Nigeria*: London: says at Bida walls, while, Sule, M. (2011). *History of the...*, p.133, says at the ship landing place at Raba.

<sup>51</sup> Jimada, I.S. (2016). *The Historical Background...*, pp.178.

## The Consequences of *Mayaki's* Defeat

The first consequence was reconciliation of the rival descendants of Dendo. The differences among the rival members were settled. Masaba was requested to return from Ilorin. Even though he never participated in the wars that finally defeated the *Mayaki*, his sons Mahmudu and Isa are reported to have done so. In the reconciliation that ensued, Usman Zaki was re-instated as the Fulbe *Etsu*. Muhammad Masaba became the *Shaaba*, the heir apparent, the post he was initially denied and given to Gborigi – Dendo's grandson by Usman Zaki, when the latter became the *Etsu* at Raba in 1833, the situation which culminated into Masaba's revolts against his brother – Usman Zaki.

After the above agreed formula of power sharing, supervised the Waziri of Gwandu, attempt was made to return to Raba – the Emirate capital. This, however, could not materialise, as the *Binis* in and around Bida pleaded with Usman Zaki and his party to settle among them at Bida for protection against apparent resurgence of the remnants of Umaru *Bahaushe's* fighters.<sup>52</sup> It was finally settled to remain in Bida.

From 1857, Raba seized to be the Emirate capital of both the old Nupe dynasty under Tsoede and that founded by the Fulbe under Muhammad Fate Bangana – alias Dendo/Manko. Bida, instead has assumed a new status of the administrative headquarters of the Emirate founded by the Fulbe.

Each of the three leading surviving descendants of Dendo – Usman Zaki, Muhammad Masaba and Umaru Majigi, established on a separate piece of land within the walls of Bida. This marks the emergence of the present three Fulani Royal Houses – Usman Zaki, Masaba and Umaru Majigi, from which *Etsuship* (kingship) had alternated peacefully until 1962, when the rotation system was disturbed. Going by the system, after the death of *Etsu* Muhammad Ndayako – the 9<sup>th</sup> under Dendo dynasty, the successor ought to have come from Usman Zaki House, and not from Masaba Royal House, which produced one instead. The consequences that followed are outside the scope of this paper.

It was also resolved at the reconciliation that *Etsu* Mu'azu Isa would be allowed to establish his own compound, holding on to the title of *Etsu*, though without any portfolio.<sup>53</sup> However, the Kyadya – the riverain people, had continue to pay their loyalty homage and solidarity openly to Mu'azu Isa's successor, Idris Gana, instead of the Fulani *Etsuzhi*. It was their belief that only Tsoede and not the descendants of Dendo that they regarded as the autochthonous and legitimate rulers of Nupe to which they owed their loyalty. The situation remained like this until 1897 when the Royal Niger Company conquered and subjugated Bida.

## Implications of *Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe's* Uprising in Nupe

The defeat of *Mayaki Umaru Bahaushe* and his party had several implications on the political history of Nupeland generally, and the Emirate of Bida in particular. Firstly, the unity and peace needed for a smooth consolidation of the Fulbe dynasty eluded them between 1833 and 1857, due to intra – and inter – dynastic disputes and rivalries among members of the Dendo family

<sup>52</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). Establishment of the..., p.56 and Sule, M. (2011). History of the..., p.137.

<sup>53</sup> Sidi, T.S. (2000). Establishment of the..., p.56.

and between them and the descendants of the old Nupe dynasty. Members of Dendo family must have now realised the havoc and futility, rivalries among themselves had caused them.

In the second place, an agreeable peaceful power sharing formula was adopted. Usman Zaki was unanimously restored as the Fulani *Estu*, while Muhammad Saba (Masaba) was appointed *Shaaba* – the heir apparent. This resolution was endorsed by the representative of Gwandu – *Waziri* Dan Adama, in the presence of the Emirs of Ilorin and Agaie, among others, in Bida in 1857.

Thirdly, Bida became the new capital of the Emirate. Three Fulbe Royal Ruling Houses – Usman Zaki, Masaba and Umaru Majigi were established by the leading surviving sons – Usman Zaki, Masaba and Umaru Majigi, respectively. Also, Mu'azu Isa was allowed to establish his own compound, and would continue to remain as the *Etsu*, though without any political power or portfolio.

Fourthly, Bida apparently emerged as the most popular and populous capital among the other Emirate capitals – Agaie, Lapai, Lafiagi, Tsonga and later Patigi<sup>54</sup> in Nupeland. In fact, Idrees (1989; 70) describes Bida as the “largest and the most prosperous of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Middle Niger Basin Emirates of Sokoto” (Caliphate)... The vastness of Bida’s areas of jurisdiction and strong revenue base produced other Nupe Emirates (then) to the position of “pocket emirates” in the scheme of things of the Caliphate system.<sup>55</sup> They had to send their tributes to Gwandu through the Emirs of Bida. Successive *Etsus*, (Emirs) of Bida have seemingly continued to maintain that leadership status. This can be observed from the nomenclature of the titles. While the *Etsu* in Bida is usually called the *Etsu* Nupe, and rarely *Estu* Bida, other *Etsus* in Nupeland are (more often than not) called by the capitals of their respective Emirates, hence, *Etsu* Agaie, *Etsu* Lapai, *Etsu* Lafiagi, *Etsu* Patigi and *Etsu* Tsonga.

Finally and in conclusion, if *Mayaki* Umaru *Bahaushe* had succeeded in mounting the throne as an undisputed *Etsu* Nupe and unanimously recognised/endorsed by Gwandu, before it dawned on the Fulbe Jihadists to flob the move by the so called ‘usurper’, the history of Nupeland after the eclipse of Nupe kingdom, might have been different today. Perhaps, Umaru *Bahaushe*’s name might have made the list on the Nupe king list(s) under Mallam Dendo’s ruling dynasty. The scenario that played out in pre – Jihad Nupe between *Etsus* Jimada and Majiya; between Shaykhs Muhammad Bello and Abdullahi bn Fodio after the death of Sheikh Usman bn Fodio in 1817 and between *Etsus* Usman Zaki and Masaba in Nupe after the death of Dendo/Manko and the attendant consequences, should be enough for us to learn lessons from in contemporary Nigeria, especially, as it affects the current seemingly intractable security situation in the country.

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<sup>54</sup> While Bida, Agaie, Lapai, Lafiagi and Tsonga were created by the Jihadists in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Patigi Emirate was a creation of the British in 1898, after the defeat of Bida in 1897 to ‘compensate’ the descendants of Dendo for their support against Bida.

<sup>55</sup> Idrees, A.A., (1989) “Collaboration and the British Conquest of Bida in 1897: The Role and Achievement of the Indigenous Interest Groups”, in, *African Study, Monograph*, 10 (2), pp. 70 – 71.