Commoditization of Water in Gombe Town: Genesis and Development since Pre-Colonial Period

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Abstract

Water is essential to life, not only to biological life, but also to social and economic life of any human society and his physical environment. In fact, everything subsists on water, it is central to the evolution and prosperity of human civilizations around the world. Its scarcity constitutes a fundamental challenge and threat to Gombe town. While other societies were enjoying the free supply of water, people that live in Gombe area were buying water for their daily use. Historically, there has been scarcity of water supply in Gombe town. However, there exist few scholarly works exist in this area, hence the existence of gap in the current knowledge in this field. The study seek to remedy this gap through the use of oral interviews, archival record, journal articles, news paper, published and unpublished works among others to examine the genesis, nature, and the development of commoditization of water in Gombe town as well as its impact on the development of the area understudy. The paper found that both the colonial and post colonial administration did little to address the problem of water supply in Gombe town which led to the persistent of the problem in the area. Therefore, as a result, commoditization of water continues to thrive in Gombe town up to 1980 due to the failure of the government to find a lasting solution to the problem. The paper concludes that the backbone of water scarcity in Gombe town had to do with the

nature of the natural environment of the area, coupled with the fact that successive government did not pay adequate attention to the issue.

Keywords: Commoditization, Water, Environment, Gombe, Development

Introduction

Water as we all know, is one of the basic essentials of life on earth (animal, plants and human). Life itself is completely dependent on water. The importance of this basic essentials substance is paramount as it determines the sustainability of both living and non-living organisms on earth. As the popular saying goes "water is life" without which life is impossible on earth, its central to human existence and all living things are in continuous and regular use of this highly essential resources. Water covers 71 % of the earth surface, it's vital for all forms of life. On earth, 96.5% of the planet's water is found in the seas and oceans, 1.7% in groundwater, 1.7% in the glaciers and the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland, a small fraction in other large water bodies, and 0.001% in the air as vapor, clouds and precipitation.[1] The evolution of human settlement all over the world is largely if not entirely, depend on the availability of water of any given area. The density of any given population holds much to the accessibility of water. Although, there are other determinant of population expansion, like economy, religion etc, but water remained the corner stone of the survival of any society around the world. Places that are inhabited by people are water potential. The distribution of human settlements around the world owes much to the availability of water. Today, the Arid and semi-Arid regions, deserts and other drier areas have been the most sparsely populated or in some cases isolated due to lack of water supply. The deserts remain uninhabitable to human beings except in the patches of oasis where water can be found. Life became difficult without water. Scientist concluded that due to the nature of distribution of water presently on earth, they have predicted that the next world war will be on water.

The relationship between human settlement and water has always been of great importance. People tend to move from one place to another in search of water to a more favourable area where there is adequate supply of water. The more water is

[1] Abba S. [etal]. *Gombe State: A History of the Land and the People*. ABU press, Zaria, 2000. P 1

available in any given area/region, the larger the population of that area/region. Places where there is shortage of water supply are scarcely populated; this is because no life will survive without water, plants, animals or human beings.

Water is a free resources, easy to get in some areas and societies while hard to access in some, but for the various groups living in Gombe area in the pre-colonial time was one of the most precious resources as much precious as honey because of its scarcity, so much so that it became a commodity of trade. As early as pre-colonial times, the people living in Gombe area were engaged in water selling enterprise. The only exceptional period has been the rainy season due to rainfall, after which the business was conducted in a full scale.

Conceptual Clarification

Commoditisation: the concept of commoditization has been defined as the process of turning an object from being simply useful to one having economic value that can be used to create profit. In another word, commoditization is an action of converting a product, including financial products, into an interchangeable and marketable item, such that it strips a good or service of differentiating characteristics. Therefore, going by the above given definitions of commoditization, the concept has been describe as the process of transforming inalienable, free, or gifted things such as objects, services, personal information, people or animals into commodities or objects for sale. This leads to heightened price competition and can impact profit margins.

Development: the concept of development is a multi dimensional in nature, development in its broadest sense refers to the process of growth, progress, and positive change in various aspects of life, encompassing economic, social, environmental and individual well-being. It's not just about quantitative growth, but also qualitative improvements and expansion of opportunities for individuals and societies. Thus, development is a multifaceted concept that includes transforming societies from undesirable current states to more desirable future conditions, improving individual well-being, and achieving structural societal

changes.[2] Therefore, development involves improving living standards, dignity, and freedom of choice through economic and social change. It aims to raise incomes, promote self-esteem, and expand choice. Views of development include modernization, distributive justice, and Marxist perspectives emphasizing modes of production. Sustainable development meets needs without degrading the environment. Social development theories explain qualitative societal changes. Economic development transforms economies and improves well-being through growth and distribution. Development progresses societies through stages from nomadic to post-industrial, favouring innovation, organization and uplifting socioeconomic status.[3]

Geographical Description of Gombe Town

Gombe town is located in Gombe State, Northeastern Nigeria. The town of Gombe is located within latitude 10^0 17'N and 11^0 3' E and longitude $10^0$8' and $10^0$12.'[4] The area comprises total land mass of 600 square kilometers.[5] The area is bounded in the north by Kwami local government, Yamaltu/Deba to the East, Akko local government to the southeast, Dukku to the Northwest.[6] The area is on depression that sloped gently eastward, highest part of the built up areas lies at the western boundary with a height of about 315.0 meters above sea level. The lowest is at the extreme eastern part of the town with a height of 43.0 meters above sea level.[7] Gombe is an important agricultural and trading center in northeastern Nigeria. It's favourably situated on the Bauchi-Yola trunk road, 177 miles east of the present rail head at Jos, and is also on the east of the Kuru-Bauchi-Maiduguri rail. The population consists mainly of Fulani, Hausa, Tera, Tangale, Waja, Cham, Dadiya, Bolewa, Tula and other indigenous tribes, with the former being the majority, though considerable expansion in trade over the past few years has resulted in an

[2] Abdullahi N and Oghenemarho C. " Thomas Hobbes Contributions to Development TTheory and Political Philosophy". In *European Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1 No 6. 64-72

[3] Naman K. *Concept of Development, Social and Economic Development*. In www.scribd.com. Retrieved on 27/6/2025.

[4] Abba S. [etal]. *Gombe State: A History of the Land and the People*…….

[5] Abba S. [etal]. *Gombe State: A History of the Land and the People*……

[6] Abba S. [etal], *Gombe State: A History of the Land and the People*…… p 2

[7] Abdullahi A. M. "Impact of British Colonial Policies on Cotton Production in Gombe Metropolis, 1939-1970," B.A project, Gombe State University, 2011. Pp 3

influx of other tribal groups into the area such as Yoruba, Igbo, Idoma, Igala, Ibibio etc..[8]

The geology of Gombe area in General is a very complex one, in the Town of Gombe, the area is underlain by Basement Complex structure in the south and sedimentary Chad formation in the north and north-eastern parts of the area. The Basement complex structure is of pre-Cambrian origin consisting of metamorphic and igneous type. In Gombe town, the outcropping formations from bottom to top are classified as: the Bima sandstone; the Yolde formation; the Pindiga shales; the Gombe sandstone and finally the Keri-Keri formation.[9]they are as follows:

The Bima SandStone: They are the oldest known cretaceous formation in north-eastern Nigeria. Near Gombe, it is poorly exposed but the typical lithology is well known for other areas. Essentially it comprises a continental apiaceous facies. The dominant rock-type is a light brown, rughtly felspathic, medium to coarse-grained sandstone, but all gradations from laminated siltstones and clays to coarse sandy grits are found throughout the whole extent and thickness of the formation. Towards the base the sandstones and grits become more arkosic and occasional conglomerates occur. Individual members may be ferruginous. The structure is generally massive, with frequent current bedding and other shallow water features. The thickness cannot be accurately determined at Gombe but the width of the outcrop and the inferred dip indicate that over 1,000 feet of these rocks are present. At the type locality, Bima Hill, the thickness of the formation is of the formation is of the order of 3,000 feet. The Bima sandstone contains no dateable fossils but they are considered to be mainly of Cenomanian age.[10]

The Yolde Formation: it is transitional in facies between the continental Bima sandstones and the marine Pindiga shales. A typical succession of these beds illustrates the characteristic of rapid alternation of sandy siltstones with silty clay

[8] Thompson J.H . "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province", in The geological Survey of Nigeria. 1958. pp 48

[9]Ahmad A.U. *An Analysis of Rainfall Variability and its Implication for some Crops in Gombe State*. M.A thesis, BUK, 2012. Pp 12

[10] Thompson J.H. *Geological Survey of Nigeria……..* Pp 49

shales and fine-grained sandstones. The more extreme grades, clay-shales and medium to coarse-grained sandstones, are less common. The rocks are invariably bedded, with a shaly or flaggy structure. It is estimated that the total thickness is at least 700 feet.

The Pindiga Shales: This formation consists mainly of dark grey or blurs black shales, with a number of thin, interbedded limestone bands. Pindiga shales are equivalent in age and the general lithology is like the older ones. The formation, which outcrops about 10 miles east of Gombe town overlies the Yolde and marks the western flank of the broad gentle valley indicating the centre of the geographical basin in which most of Gombe town is situated. This formation, like its older ones, dips in the same manner to the west.[11]

At the type locality, Pindiga, the limestones contain Salmurian ammonite fauna, but the upper part of the sequence is barren. Two well preserved ammonite fragments which were collected by the Author from a well in the upper shales, 4 miles west of Gombe, have been identified by Reyment as *Libycoceras ismaelis* (Zittel) of Maestrichtian age. On this evidence, a considerable time range must be postulated for the accumulation of a relatively thin marine succession. The limestones of the Kanawa formation similarly exhibit a Salmurian fauna and in this instance there are only a few feet of shales above the lower Tutonian limestone-shales sequences. The thinning of this upper shale member from Pindiga through Gombe to Kanawa indicates that the Gombe sandstones are overstepping the marine sequence towards the east and that the junction is an unconformity.[12]

Gombe SandStones: These include a variable succession of well-bedded, fine to medium-grained sandstones and sandy and silty micaceous shales with occasional mudstones. Coarse-grained arenaceous rocks are absent in this area though they do occur further north. In outcrop many of the sandstones and mudstones are extensively arraginized and the more indurated beds form low-grade ironstones. Selection erosion of less resistant silt and shale members aided by the western dip

[11] Thompson J.H. *Geological Survey of Nigeria……..* pp 49
[12] Thompson J.H. *Geological Survey of Nigeria……..* pp 50

of the formation, resulted in the development of characteristic cuesta-type topography. The boundary with the underlying Pindiga shells is rarely well-exposed and, though detailed mapping at Pindiga suggested that the junction is conformable, this may not be the case as has been postulated above. The sandstones, however, are unconformably overlain by the keri-keri formation. Apparently 700 ft of these beds are exposed in the pantami stream section south of the town.

The Kerri-Kerri Formation: is a continental deposit which consist mainly of poorly consolidated, medium to coarse grained, arkosic sands and grits, varying in colour from yellow-brown and white to dark grey and purple, with minor clay, silt and fine sand member. Rapid vertical and horizontal changes in texture and lithology are common. These beds underlie the widespread Akko plateau to the west of Gombe, with a relatively flat attitude. They rest unconformably on the western dipping Gombe sandstones and at the crest of the escarpment their thickness is of order of 600-700 feet. The keri-keri formation has been dated as Paleocene in age on the evidence of a few dateable plants found near Dukku, north of Gombe.[13]

The Nature of Water Resources in Gombe Town

For a comprehensive understanding of the development of underground water resources in Gombe Town which later led to the sinking of wells and boreholes within the town of Gombe during colonial era, it's therefore highly crucial to have a general overview of the nature of groundwater in Gombe area or the hydrological nature of all the geological formations. This will facilitate in understanding the overall development of groundwater resources in the town of Gombe during colonial period.

Considerable groundwater resources are available at Gombe Towns and it can be shown that the occurrence and quality of the groundwater is dependent on the lithology and structure of the underlying sedimentary rocks. The rocks in Yolde formation vary considerably in lithology and texture and consequently in permeability, which is mainly gradational between that of an aquifer and that of

[13] Thompson J.H. *Geological Survey of Nigeria……..* pp 50

an aquiclude. The rocks are also saturated at shallow depth and, while the occurrence of a water table can be postulated theoretically and determined by means of percolation wells, it is more practical to consider the groundwater resources of the Yolde formation in the light of pressure water condition. The Kumbia-Kumbia shaft, with the depth of 47 ft. and diameter of 4 ft., showed that successful percolation wells could be sunk into the zone of saturation. Borehole No. 1, drilled near this site, proved shallow water at a depth of 12 ft., but the yield remained negligible until a pressure aquifer was encountered at a depth of 135 ft.[14]

Borehole sinking for production of groundwater water supply at Gombe Town was therefore mainly obtained from the more permeable beds within the Yolde formation. The formation outcrops on the gentle-sloping plain, immediately East of Gombe, which has a gentle slope towards Dutsen Gombe. The shallow water table reflects the surface topography and is thus, opposed to the inclination of the strata. Recharge of ground water to the water table is mostly by indirect infiltration and this is aided by the highly absorbent, cultivated, sandy soil over the greater part of the outcrop. There is little information on the part played by the drainage in the groundwater inventory but the spring flow recorded in one of the streams appeared to indicate that there is effluent seepage from the shallow water-table. The cretaceous rocks do not outcrop again west of Gombe. They are unconformably overlain by the Keri- Keri formation and abut against the central Basement rocks of Northern Nigeria without reaching the present surface. The Yolde formation, with its impermeable cover of the Pindiga shales, must therefore be considered as forming a partly closed artesian system. The most likely method of natural discharge, following the annual groundwater increment from precipitation, is by effluent seepage into streams draining the outcrop.[15]

The pressure aquifers of Yolde formation are regarded as groundwater conduits or "drains" within the zone of saturation. Movement of groundwater to the aquifers will be mainly vertical through material of varying degrees of permeability. The piezometric surface recorded in a borehole which taps a

[14]Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province", in *The Geological Survey of Nigeria*. 1958. Pp 52

[15] Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province……. pp 53

pressure aquifer will therefore be related both to the natural water table at that point and to the aquifer outcrop where natural discharge may take place. It is possible that the spring flow, mentioned above, marks the outcrop of one such aquifer. It is interesting to note that the hydraulic gradient within the Yolde formation reservoir is, in conditions of equilibrium, opposed to the regional dip of the sediments. Discharge of groundwater from wells and boreholes down-dip will modify the equation and development of the groundwater resources will not be complete until there is a reversal of seepage conditions at the outcrop and the drainage assumes an effluent character.[16]

In Pindiga Shales, the formation consists essentially of impermeable shales which yield negligible amount of water to wells or boreholes. Thin sand members, however, occur within the shale and form "perched" or pressure aquifers. The Pindiga shales contain soluble sulphate salts and the presence of these salts inn water from the intra-formational aquifers and the topmost beds of the Yolde formation, indicates that a certain amount of aquiclude leakage does take place. The presence of such aquifers as known mainly from the wells sunk from 1938-41, the general impression is that the sand members have limited lateral extent. One of the most important of these aquifers was encountered in the prison shaft where a pressure rise of 62 ft. these aquifer was not recorded in the market well only 700 yards distant along the strike.

Finally, in other geological formations, the local groundwater conditions within the Bima sandstones, Gombe sandstones and the Keri-Kerri formation have not been fully explored but only the Bima sandstones are considered to be a potential source of supply. This formation consist chiefly of pervious rocks and over large areas of outcrop in north-eastern Nigeria it forms considerable groundwater reservoirs in which water table mainly apply, although the occurrence of less permeable, siltstone and clay members is known to result in minor "perched" or pressure aquifers. At Gombe, the Bima sandstones retain the characteristics of a reservoir rock and recharge conditions over the outcrop are equivalent to those of the Yolde formation. The Basement core of Dutsen Gombe forms a groundwater barrier and the dip of the strata away from the anticlinal axis will result in an initial

[16]Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province……. pp 54

water table slope to the west. There is, thus every reason to believe that large groundwater reserves are available for exploitation within the Bima sandstones.[17] Minor groundwater supplies occur within the Gombe sandstones but the majority of the wells in this formation are sited near the edge of the outcrop and only small yields result. Larger supplies may be found down dip to the west or north-west. The lithology indicates that a number of water bearing horizons will be present.

Lastly, the Kerri-Kerri formation underlies the Akko plateau which is sparsely inhabited due to scarcity of water. The permanent water table lies at too great depth to be reached by open wells, though perched aquifer had been tapped by native wells at a few localities. The borehole at Shongo encountered a low-yielding perched aquifer at 230 ft. but production was lost on deepening the hole. At Dukku, 50 miles north-west of Gombe and 10 miles south of the Gongola River, the water table in the Kerri-Kerri formation was reached at a depth of 650 ft. and may be expected at an equivalent, or even greater depth on the Akko plateau west of Gombe.[18]

Gombe area generally is defectively drained; this is largely as a result of the nature of the geographical condition of the environment in the area and the nature of the soil, as well as the topography of the area. Throughout the town of Gombe, there is a complete absence of any running water like river or steam. The only water body that passes through Gombe state is the River Gongola through Dadin kowa, a town about 35 kilometers away from Gombe.[19] The River served in the 19th century as partial political boundary with Borno and Bauchi. River Gongola enters Gombe area from Bauchi on the west; it flows in a gentle arc north-easterly to a point just beyond Nafada, bends sharply southwards until it reaches Dadin kowa

[17]Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province……. pp 54
[18]Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province……. pp 57
[19] This can be observe within the area, in a report written by the provincial officer of Bauchi province in 1918 when he visited and tour around the area selected to be the new administrative headquarters of Gombe Division, he was so surprised to have never come across any running water like a River or stream in the area unlike in the other areas he had visited.

and then continues with a single detour in the same general direction to its confluence with the Benue in Adamawa.[20]

The streams are little more than a storm channels and retains surface flow for a short period after the cessation of the rains. The immaturity of the drainage and the general topography preclude surface conservation schemes of any appreciable magnitude. Shallow surface supplies are present in the alluvial drift underlying the town at depth of 12-20 feet and in streams.[21]

Sources of Water Supply in Pre-Colonial Gombe Metropolis Area

Water is one of the most important societal utilities, the most basic natural resources, whose provision is fundamental to socio-economic growth of any human community/society in the world. Adequate supply of clean water is one of the most basic human needs. According to various estimates, one-half to two-third of the world's population does not have access to adequate quantities of safe drinking water.[22] In the case of Gombe town, unlike other areas is regarded as a complex area where its geological and hydrological formation differs substantially from that of its neigbouring communities.[23] As a result of this complexity, during the pre-colonial era, the major source of water supply in the area is rain water. As early discussed in the previous chapter, Rain water has been the most reliable source of water to the people of this area.[24] As a result, the people living in this area were able to develop a technique of utilizing and storing rainwater all year through. This technique was more prevalent in the places of poor groundwater reserves especially in the areas underlain by Kerri Kerri formation. This process was known as rain harvest. In these areas, water tanks excavated in the ground

[20]Matthew E.O. Hydrogeology: Ground Water Study and Development in Nigeria. Afab Anich Nig Ltd, Jos. 19. Pp 13-14

[21]Matthew E.O. Hydrogeology: Ground Water Study and Development in Nigeria……p 51

[22] Matthew E.O. Hydrogeology: Ground Water Study and Development in Nigeria……p 51

[23] The geological and hydrological formation of the area is generally characterized as that which belongs to the Kerri-kerri formation where the groundwater reservoirs are very deep, while in some cases no underground water at all.

[24] Alaya A.A. *"The History of Pipe Borne Water And Electricity Supply System in Ilorin Metropolis 1925-1967"*. M.A Thesis, BUK, 2005. Pp 8

were constructed to catch storm-water running along shallow depressions and stored for use during the dry season. These tanks, which locally are referred to as *tabkis*, are found almost in every part of the area.[25]

The ponds served as a reservoir to the people in the area which they used throughout the dry season for both domestic as well as for animal consumption.[26] It is important to note that the water is highly contaminated as a result of the expulsion from microbial, human and animal pollution. There is no any method of purification develop by the people in order to purify the water before consumption. The water was consumed directly the way it was and as a result, the societies suffered from various kinds of water borne diseases. It's important to note that due to lack of proper method of purification and the contamination of the water resulted in the outbreak of water borne diseases in the area which the people had suffered from for a very long time, the most prevalent ones area cholera, typhoid and guinea worm infections. The indigenous populations were not able to control these diseases until the coming of the Europeans who were able to do so with the use of scientific medicines as well as public awareness campaign on the important of water sanity. Perennial streams have also served as an important source of water supply during the rainy season to the people of Gombe town. During the rainy season, all the racecourses hold temporary streams which only lasted for the rainy season and eventually dry-up in the dry season. The people rely heavily on these streams for water supply.[27]

The second most important source of water supply to the people of Gombe town has been hand dug wells. Traditional hand dug wells has been one of the oldest means of getting water supply for both animal and human use in the history of human civilization. Societies around the world for a very long period of time have depended on these wells for their daily water supply to meet their demand, and hence different societies had developed unique skill of constructing, designing as

[25] Udo R.K Geographical Regions of Nigeria. Heinemann, London, 1970. Pp 148
[26] Tiffen M. The Enterprising Peasant: Economic Development in Gombe Emirate North Eastern State, Nigeria 1900-1968. Oversea Research Publication, London, 1976. Pp 11
[27] Oral interview with Mal. Haruna Muhammadu, and Alh. Umar Abubakar Jekadafari Gombe on 20/10/2015

well as maintaining them depending on the nature of their respective environment.

The people of Gombe town were not left behind, just like other parts of the world, they were able to develop their own unique mode of constructing hand dug well in the area. These wells have served to be one of the sources of water supply in the region for a very long period of time. Though, unlike other parts of Nigerian where the societies were endowed with substantial underground water resources, In Gombe town, the sinking of native hand dug wells, was effectively discourage at Gombe by the presence of the shallow water sources, despite these environmental limitation the area had suffered, it did not stop the people were able to developed a method of constructing shallow wells. As the saying goes, "necessity is the mother of invention".[28]

During the pre-colonial period, hand dug wells were not as common in Gombe town as they are in the neighbouring communities. An interview conducted during this research, revealed that during the pre-colonial period, hand dug wells are not common within the present Gombe metropolis, in fact, there was no single well situated within the town of Gombe premises[29], the wells found in the region are mostly shallow wells with their depth not exceeding 12-20 feet and they are largely concentrated in the racecourses areas.[30] These gullies hold streams that are little more than storm channels and retained surface flow for a short period after the cessation of the rains, these were the main source of water supply in the town during the rainy season.[31] With the commencement of the dry season, the shallow streams in the gullies that provided water for the town dry up completely. For people living in the area in order to have a persistent supply of water developed the method of digging shallow wells in the gullies mentioned above. The nature of these shallow wells differs absolutely from the ordinary hand dug well. These was because they are not permanently constructed, they are seasonal shallow wells temporarily constructed for a period of time. The commencement of the rainy season marked the termination of the wells until yet again another dry

[28] Oral interview with Engineer Abdulmumini, GSADP Gombe.
[29] Oral Interview with Malam Muhammad Haruna in Jekadafari on 27/06/15
[30] Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province…… 51-2
[31] Thompson J.H. "The Geology and Hydrology of Gombe, Bauchi Province…… p 51- 52

season when the gullies dried up again.[32] The water obtained from these wells is brownish in color due largely to the nature of the soil that diluted the water changing its color and the water is consumed directly without any form of purification. It's important to note here that lack of proper purification of these water is susceptible to health hazard, it resulted in the outbreak of water borne diseases in the area such as cholera, yellow fever, small pox, dracunculiasis, hepatitis, typhoid and other diseases that have greatly affected the health as well as the life of both human and animals in the pre-colonial Gombe Town.[33]

The Genesis and Development of Commoditization of Water in Gombe Town

The natural environmental challenges of the area made life difficult for the people living in the area. We are all aware that water is central to life and is on continues demand, lack of adequate water supply in the area made it difficult for the people even though the area is blessed with a fertile soil that attract farmers to settle in the area, but the problem of water supply retarded the development of the area during the pre colonial and colonial era. Water becomes the most precious substance in the area because of the difficulties involved in obtaining it. People had to travel for 10 kilometers or more; sometimes as far as Kanawa forest just to get water. The criticality of the situation was worst in the dry season. It was as a result of this development that let to what can best be describe as "commoditization of water" in the area. Due to the growing water demand in the area as well as the insufficient quantity produce by the available sources, water became a precious substance to the people, during this period; a person can spend one week or even more than that without taking bath. This is to show the severity of the situation.[34] The period witnessed the emergence of a class of people who engaged in water selling business as their major occupation. These people transform the social setting of the area and became an important part of the society. They travel as far as Kanawa forest area to get water and bring it to the town for

[32] Oral interview with Hajiya Amina Abdulkarim at Jekadafari on 10/9/2015

[33]Sikiru A.Y (etal). "Review on Prevalence of Waterborne Diseases in Nigeria" in Journal of Advancement in Medical and Life Sciences. No. 1, Vol. 2, 2014. pp 2. Also oral Interview with Haj. Amina Opcit.

[34] Oral interview with Alh. Umar Abubakar Jekada fari, on 20/10/2015.

sale at a rate of 1 sule (1 shilling) per Gora;[35] they carry as many gora (jar) as possible, base on ones capacity. The water was sold to the people who can afford to, for those that cannot afford to buy, they had to go and fetch for themselves. The people that were known for this business are the Bachama who came from Adamawa area into Gombe as *Yan Cirani*[36], they introduced the business into Gombe area. Before the coming of the colonialist, water hawking had been integrated into the socio-economic activities of Gombe town. It became part of the society and an important economic activity.[37] With the construction of wells by the colonial administration, the business of water hawking expanded, more people were attracted into the business. Yet another class of water hawkers/sellers emerged as a result of this development popularly known as the *Yan Garuwa.* The introduction of metallic container by the colonialist known as *Garwa* (a kerosene or gasoline container which the colonialist used for their vehicles and other uses), replace the use of Gora which was hitherto used as a container for water hawking; this revolutionized the business of water hawking in the area. It made it easier to carry large quantity of water in a single container and sale for more money. The origin of name "*yan Garuwa*" was attached to the business, *yan Garuwa* means those that sell water, during this period, they carry the water on their shoulders in the containers with the support of a bamboo straw with one container hanging on each end of the straw and going from one lane to another shouting "*ga ruwa*" meaning "here is water". As a result, the name *yan Garuwa* was given to them by the inhabitants whenever they want to identify them. Therefore, "*yan Garuwa*" literally means "people that bring water". The group of yan Garuwa are made up of people from different parts of northern Nigerian societies and beyond, people especially from Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Zamfara and even as far as from Niger and Chad, and other neigbouring societies Yobe and Adamawa are the ones conducting this business. In the early stage, they came as *yan Cirani*, but as the

[35] Gora is a container which is obtains from a plant that produces it just like a calabash. It is cylindrical in shape and presently, the Fulani were best known for using it. Especially the cattle Fulani, it serves as a water container for their drinking water.

[36] Yan cirani are those people that move according to the seasons. They leave their home land to another area in the dry season to engage in different businesses, but return home during the rainy season to engage in agriculture. Some of them never return home once they find a convenient and conducive place.

[37] Ibid.

occupation gain prominence in the area, these people settled with their families and made it their main economic activity in the area. The development of this group of people had tremendously eased the suffering of the people in terms of getting water supply. People can easily buy water from them at an affordable price and at the same time bringing the water to the peoples' door thereby easing the burden of the long distance trek people had to endure to get water supply. Water hawking became a common feature of the society of Gombe town area. The problem of water continued to prevail in Gombe town until the arrival of the colonialist whom had tremendously improved the situation in the area by constructing deep wells in different areas of the town and later boreholes.[38] Therefore, the development of deep wells did not started in Gombe town until in 1930s, prior to this period, all that can be found was shallow tube wells in the stream alluvium areas across the town, throughout pre-colonial era, there was complete absence of a well within the settlements that made up of Gombe town today.[39]

It is significant to note here that the water problem did not last forever, for in everything there is change, and change is inevitable in human history. So also in the case of Gombe area, the situation changes with the coming of the British colonialist. Their arrival marked a turning point in the history of water resources development. The period marked as a transition in the commoditization of water in the region. The enterprise witnessed its expansion and transformation into a more lucrative trade, the emergence of more powerful water sellers was recorded with the coming of the British and this development continued right into the post-colonial era as the business continued to undergone series of transformations with different professional water sellers evolving. The business attracted migrants from all over the northern regions as well as the neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroun republic respectively.

Throughout the early decades of the Nigerians independence, little effort was made by the then Nigerian government to improve the condition of water supply

[38] Muhammad K.A. " A History of Water Resources Development in Gombe Town 1919-1960". M.A dissertation, GSU, 2018.
[39] Thompson J.H …… Pp 56

in Gombe region. The establishment of the River Basin Development Authorities in the late 1970s in Nigeria had contributed immensely to the development of water resources in the country. The Authorities in their effort to meet their objectives embarked on dam construction on the major Rivers of the country, and Gombe state area is lucky to be part of this development. In a nutshell, the major development of water resources in Gombe state from 1980 to date has been the construction of three artificial dams in the state namely: Dadin kowa Dam, Balanga Dam and Cham Dam. These dams have impacted so much on the Socio-economic and political development of Gombe State. The establishment of these dams has further transform the commercialization of water in Gombe state region. The Dadin kowa dam to be precise is the major factor in this transformation. After the commissioning of the dam, a testing pipe has been stationed in Kwadon, a town about 5 km from Gombe metropolis. This development led to the emergence of yet another group of water sellers in Gombe state. The evolution of water tankers is another major development in the commoditization of water in the area understudy. Tankers fetched water from the testing pipe at Kwadon and distribute it to the communities within and even beyond Gombe town. The tanker business became a lucrative business in the area to the extent that people completely rely on them for daily supply so much so that an arrangement for designated days weekly was assigned for each locality for the tankers to bring water to that area. For each ward, there was a destination allocated for the people in that area to bring their water drums for the tankers to refill on their assigned date. Failure to bring one's container to the assigned location amounted to not getting water. Sometime the tankers bring water twice a week while sometimes only once a week. The tankers alongside the hand dug wells as well as the few sunken boreholes became the major source of water in Gombe state area.

Another major transformative development during the period under study in Gombe region, Nigeria and the world at large was the oil boom of 1970s and 1980s. This development revolutionized drilling technology which later facilitated and eases the exploration of ground water across the globe. Gombe region was not left behind as it witnessed a major breakthrough in the exploration of its ground water aquifers. The more the drilling technology became enhanced and affordable, the more the people especially in Gombe state explore it. As deep drilling became possible through the use of sophisticated machine, Gombe area witnessed an era

best tagged as the "borehole boom era". This period witnessed massive drilling of borehole across the state especially within the water available geological formations in the state due to the affordability of drilling cost by able individuals. As boreholes became rampant in the region, commercialisation of water took to a whole new level. Individual commercial borehole with an uninterrupted water supply replaces the hitherto wells supply in the area. Water tanker business became a full scale profession, fetching from the commercial boreholes and distribute to the people at affordable price. The "yan cuscus" business replaces the "yan garuwa" water hawkers. As a result of this development, people became less dependent and less concern with government supply as water became readily available to purchase. This led to the evolution of yet another powerful merchant group within Gombe state, hence water business. Furthermore, it led to the evolution of other water related lucrative businesses, example of which is the water packaging businesses locally know as "pure water" for drinking. Small scale industries that specializes in sachet water emerges all over the state, thereby fostering the economic growth of the state, providing employment opportunities to the people of the state as well as enhancing businesses in the state. The people can also buy water directly from these commercial boreholes in buckets and other containers for their daily use. This development, undisputedly has improve the condition of water supply and its availability in the state.

Conclusion

Water selling/hawking business started in Gombe area right from the pre-colonial time when other societies were having free water supply for their daily use, people in this region were buying it because of its scarcity. The severity of the situation during the period under study and even extending to the colonial era was so bad that it compelled people to (the rich and wealthy) subscribe to use vegetable oil (*mangyada* in hausa) while building their house. This is just to show how severe the situation was at that time. This business has under gone transformations pending on the development the area had witnessed. It started from selling in Gora, to Garwa, later to cuscus and finally to tankers; obtained earlier from kwari, then from hand dug wells, and finally from boreholes.

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