

Biography of Some Grain Traders and their Roles in the Trade in Borno State, Nigeria 1979–2019

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Abstract

The paper discusses the biography of some selected grain traders across Borno grains markets. The article examined the biography of ten grain traders and explored the various roles played by the traders in the distribution and marketing of staple foods in Borno state, Nigeria. The general purpose of the article is to highlight the significance of the upbringing of the traders and how that influenced their business acumen; and also the roles they played in the internal distributive system. The study found out that, for most of the traders the business of grains is a family one as all the family members are involved either as producers in the farm, distributors or marketers (wholesalers and retailers). The trade in grains also served as a source of livelihood to them. Borno has long been known for the production of grains which is mostly done in rural areas to cater for the demand of the teeming population of the urban center. This made the trade in grains to boom in Maiduguri. A mixed research method using both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in writing the article. The growth of Maiduguri due to population increase necessitated the establishment of more markets among which were grain markets which encouraged the emergence of grain traders. These traders came play significant roles in the food value supply chain and helping food to reach tables of the teeming populace. It is found out that many of these traders though they depend on the trade for their livelihood, their capital base is very small. It is recommended that the government provide soft loans to them to raise their capital base. With the growth in population and the influx of people into Maiduguri, there is the need to establish more markets in the city.

Keywords: biography, grain traders, traders, roles, brokers

Introduction

Borno state is one of the areas where grains such as maize, millet and wheat are produced in large quantity. It is, therefore, a very substantial net exporter of grains. Grains flow from Borno is mainly produced for the urban centres within the state and smaller quantity transported outside the state. Maiduguri has over the years emerged as a major centre where the grains are both purchased and sold.

The sale of grains and grain products provides a means of livelihood to different categories of people and a source of income to both producers and distributors alike. The production, distribution and marketing of grains served as a source of income to the people.

This article examines the biography and role of some selected grain traders

across Borno markets. It is also going to examine the geographical setting, land and people and the economic activities of the people of the study area.

Geographical Setting of Borno State

Borno State lies in the extreme north-east corner of Nigeria between latitude $10^{\circ} 30'$ and $13^{\circ} 50'$ north and longitude 11.00° and $13^{\circ} 45'$ east. It occupies an area of 69,435 square km sharing border with three states, Adamawa to the south, Gombe to the south west and Yobe to the west as well as three countries, namely, Republic of Niger, Chad and Cameroon to the north, north-east and east respectively.

Borno state, has a dynamic physical setting which arises from an amalgam of factors relating to location, geology, climate as well as the intensity of resources exploitation in the area. It lies almost entirely within the Lake Chad Basin topographic formation which is an area that was formed as a result of down warping during the Pleistocene period. The Chad Basin is a shallow depression of about 2.5 million square Kilometers encircling the Lake Chad in the heart of the Central Sudan. The Basin had about 17 million people occupying it mostly farmers, pastoralists and fishermen. Borno state accounts for more than 75% of the Basin area.¹

Borno State has two basic relief formations consisting of the highlands of the Biu plateau and Mandara mountains to the southern part rising to about 650m above sea level and the vast Lake Chad plains covering northern part of the state with an average height of 300m above sea level. The Biu plateau is an area of intense volcanic origin such as conical hills, craters and escarpments. The mean altitude of the plateau ranges between 650 meters above sea level in the north eastern part down to 300 meters high on the gentle slopes of the escarpment overlooking the Hawul valley in the Southern margins. The Mandara mountains has been dissected by numerous rivers with deep channels. The Gwoza hills known as inselbergs above the basement in several places.

A vast open flat undulating plain is the characteristic feature of central and northern Borno. The plain covering over three quarters of the state is divided into two sub regions based on the nature of the surface. The southern part is a hard plain made up of the pediments of the foothills of the Biu Plateau and the Mandara mountain which are broken by small boulders and rock out crops merging into the lowest of the plateau as in Kwaya plains and in the Askira plains and the Chibok area. Northern Borno is a vast loose sandy plain without any hill or rivers. The Bama Ridge, which is believed to be the shoreline of the ancient mega Chad prominently stretched from Maiduguri through Magumeri towards Geidam. In terms of natural drainage, there are two groups of seasonal rivers. River Hawul drains the Biu plateau south wards into the river Gongola which is part of the river Benue sys-

1 M. Waziri (edit) Issues in the Geography of Borno State, Kano, Adamu Joji Publishers (Nig).

tem. The River Ngadda and some short course rivers drain the northern part of the plateau and flow northeast towards the Lake Chad. The two systems converge at Maiduguri and flow out northward but dissipate into the Jere Bowl in the outskirts of the capital city.

The climate of Borno State is characterized by dry and wet seasons. The natives of the region traditionally identified four seasons, viz: Binam (cool dry season) harmatan season from December to February. Bey (hot dry season) from March to late May: Nangali, raining season from June to September and Bila, humid dry transitional period between September and November. The daily average temperature is high throughout the year ranging between 25°C to 44°C, where lower temperature is recorded in January and the highest in April. It is also important to note that, rainfall is dropping in the state both in quantity and number of rainy days since the 1970s. The mean annual rainfall ranges between a little over 800mm on the Biu plateau and less than 500mm in the extreme northern part of the state while rainy days reduces from south to north between 80 to less than 40 days. For instance, in 2004, there were 60 rainy days in Biu and 20 days in Ngala and a total amount of 951 and 499 millimeter of rain respectively.²

Drought, famine and pest occurs so often, rivers are often dry, ground water is getting deep and desertification is spreading. The vegetation characteristic consists of Sudan Savannah in the Southern part of the state and Sahel Savannah in the Northern part. The vegetation used to consist of scrubs interspersed with occasional trees, parches of woodland are fast disappearing and desert characteristic is settling in from north to south successively due to excessive cultivation, wood exploitation and over grazing.

People of Borno

People have been living in the Borno region since time immemorial. Archeological finding put the age of a settlement called Dakma on the shore of the Lake Chad to about 1700 years. Bearing in mind the long history of the Kanem Borno Empire, several settlements are influenced by historical, social and environmental factors.³ Growth and changes in population as well as the functions of the settlement are also important variables in the nature of settlements in the Borno region. Generally, settlements are dispersed on the vast plains of the Chad Basin and tend to be nucleated in the hilly environments of the Biu plateau in Southern Borno.

Basically two types of forms of settlements are distinct in the state, that is, rural and urban settlements. In the rural settlement population is low, basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, health and educational facility are few or lacking.

2 Statistical Year Book (2006). Borno State Statistical Year Book 2005/2006, Maiduguri Directorate of statistics, Department of Budget and Planning Governor Office.

3 Mahdi, A (1985) Cities of Borno in the Cities of the Savanah, Nigeria Magazine.

Presently, the traditional set up of Borno state is made up of seven emirates namely: Borno, Dikwa, Bama, Biu, Shani, Askira, Uba and Gwoza emirates. These emirates are domains of different ethnic groups. Borno, Bama and Dikwa emirates are the domains of the Kanuri, Shuwa, Gamargu, Fulani, Kwayam, Buduma, Kotoko, Marghi, Wula etc; the Babur-Bura are dominant in Biu, the Kanakuru in Shani, Marghi in Askira and Uba as well as a group of ethnic groups usually referred to as “Gwoza” in Gwoza emirate respectively. In the local government administrative setup, the state comprises of twenty-seven local government areas, each of which is divided into a number of culturally based districts and village units. It is important to note that the emirates, districts and village units are still effectively administered by traditional rulers who advice the local government councils and the state government on different matters, such as taxation, land/farm matters, security, etc.

All local government headquarters in the state are classified as urban. But the urban settlement differs in size, economy and inflector. Maiduguri the state capital contain more than a quarter of the state's population.⁴

According to the 2006 population census, Borno state has a population of 4,151,103 people with a growth rate of 2.8% per-annum; this number will likely double in the next 20-30 years. In most national statistics, Borno is classified as sparsely populated with an average of 59 persons per square kilometers. But within the state areas of different population density abound. For instance, Maiduguri metropolitan, Jere, Ngala, and Gwoza local government have above the average. Similarly, the shores of the Lake Chad, areas along the courses of Rivers Yobe and Yedsararn and foothills of the Biu plateau have higher density. Several areas, especially in the northern parts, are far below average.⁵

Economic Activity

The economy of the state is anchored on natural resources. Primarily production processes such as agricultural production, animal grazing, mineral excavation and fishing are the main stay of the economy. Majority of the population of the people are peasant farmers, herdsman and fishermen. The state has about 6.9 million hectares of arable land out of which 1.4 million hectares of land under crops cultivation in the state. Livestock populations in the state consist of about 3.9 million cattle, 4.8 million sheep and 5.9 million goats. The Shuwa Arabs, Fulani, Bodai, Koyam and Buduma are pastoral ethnic groups found in the state. Borno state is also en-

4 M (2007) Trends in population dynamics and implications for contemporary Socio- economic Development in the Chad Basin, paper presented at the Kanem Borno millennium conference, Maiduguri.

5 National population Waziri commission (NPC) population of the federal Republic of Nigeria, (NPC) ABU.(2007).

dowed with rich mineral base resources such as clay, salt, natron, limestone and Kaolin, iron ore and uranium. Petroleum is prospected on the shore of the Lake Chad. There are very few industries in the state. This include flour mills, shoe factory, ginnery, dairy products, corn milling and the like.

Commercial activities are very significant in the state. The Maiduguri Monday Market is a centre of whole and retail sales for over hundred years. Traders from within the country and from republic of Chad and Cameroon patronize markets in the state for the purchase of agricultural goods, livestock and other products. Movement of people and goods are facilitated by a network of roads, rail and air transports.⁶ Socially, although Borno state is classified as one of the educationally disadvantaged states in the country, there are appreciable number of schools and encouraging enrolments, However, enrolment distribution is lopsided with local governments in the northern part showing very much lower figures than the southern parts.

Borno state in the transport and communication sector, is connected to other parts of the federation by air, road and rail. Maiduguri, the state capital is the main hub about which roads radiate in all directions connecting the state to other parts of the country and to neighboring countries. The state has a total of 2,44g/km of all season roads and 755m of seasonal roads linking various parts of the state. However, most of the existing roads are in deplorable condition. Generally, road density is low and many parts of the state, including some local government headquarters like Abadam and Kala-Balge are remote and difficult to access. Though Borno state is connected with rail transport, its utility is very limited for many purposes. The Maiduguri International Airport provides daily flights from Maiduguri to Abuja and Lagos.

In the tourism sector, although tourism is not well developed, the state has several tourism resources side attraction such as the Jaffi falls, the Gwoza Hills, the Alau Dam, the Lake Chad, the Kyarimi Park as well as traditional places of interest such as the Rabeh's Fort, Shehu's Palace, the Shehus Tombs and Yamtarawala tomb. Also, there are several ceremonies and cultural shows among which is the durbar. Substantial numbers of hospitality industry are available in the state. Banking and financial institutions are found almost in every urban centre in the state.

The geographical location of Borno state is unique. Its physical landscape is diverse with mountains and plains while climatic conditions ranges from desert like to mountain with resultant vegetation characteristics. The state is composed of diverse cultures and historical experiences. It has abundant natural resources and significant infrastructure.⁷

6 M. Waziri, A. Kagu, A. K. Monguno (edited) *Issues in the Geography of Borno State*. pg.11.

7 *Ibid.* p.12.

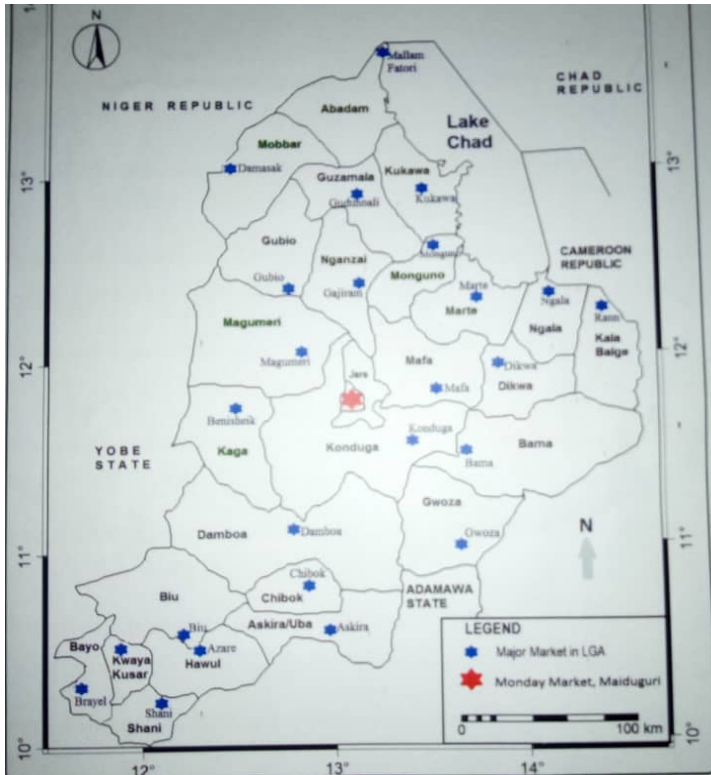


Fig. 1: Map of Borno State showing the twenty-seven LGAs and their markets

Biography of Some Selected Grain Traders in Borno

Bukar Bulama b.1939

Bukar Bulama was born in Konduga to Mallam Bulama who was a farmer and trader. He was brought up under the care of his father. He does his farming during the raining season and sell the produce after farming season to grain sellers in the urban centres who came and buy from him. He attended tsangaya school in Konduga, Bama and Maiduguri. Bukar Bulama was under the custody of his parents throughout his youthful age participating in the trading and farming business of his father.⁸

8 Interview with Bakura Shulama at Baga road in Maiduguri on 29-10-2018.

Bulama Ngubdo b.1961

Bulama Ngubdo was born and brought up in Maiduguri under the care of his parents. He lives at Kalemare area of the metropolis. At the age of seven, Bulama Ngubdo, together with his other siblings were taken to the Qur'anic Tsangaya school by his father under Saina Goni Ali and Bulama Algoni Goni Alhaji in Dikwa. He later moved to Maiduguri where he had his early primary education at Lamisula primary school in 1978 and Secondary education at Government College Geidam in 1982. He later joined Ramat Polytechnic but dropped out and ventured into full business of grains trade in 1983. The act of grain trading has been a family business in the life of Bulama Ngubdo and his other younger and elder brothers, as they all grew up to see their father Alhaji Ngubdo also known as Ba'a Kawosuwaye in the business.

Abubakar Mohammed b.1959

Abubakar Mohammed was born and brought up in Konduga local government area of Borno state. Abubakar Muhammad attended Tsangaya school in Maiduguri and Konduga. He was a farmer, and later ventured into the business of grain trade in 1982.⁹

Ahmed Modu Ngubdo b.1967

He was born to the family of Modu Ngubdo, a renowned grain dealer in Makera area of the metropolis. He attended Lamisula primary school and graduated in 1987 and proceeded to Teachers' College Ngamdu to further his education in 1979. Ahmed completed his Teachers' College education in 1986, and proceeded to College of Agriculture along Muna road in Maiduguri and had a Diploma Certificate in Animal Health and Husbandry in 1988. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Crop Protection from University of Maiduguri in 1997. Similarly, he also had his Islamic education, known as the Tsangaya Qur'anic education in Maiduguri and Dikwa local government under the mentorship of Sainna Goni Ali and Goni Alhaji respectively.

Ahmed Modu Ngubdo came from an extended family of three wives and seventeen children. He is the eighth child of his father and fourth of his mother. Eleven were boys while six were girls. He hails from Dikwa local government area of Borno, but permanently based at Makera ward of the metropolis.

Ba Usman Muktar b.1954

Ba Usman Muktar was born in Auno and had his early Islamic Tsangaya education in the town and grew up at Auno. He is well known in the business of grain trade

9 Interview with Abubakar Mohammed in Custom Grains Market on 23/3/2019.

and livestock as well as trader in the business of grains at Baga road market. He has been in the business for the past twenty-five years as a farmer and engaged in the act of buying and selling grain in wholesale quantity.

Yahaya Inuwa b.1968

Yahaya Inuwa hails from Gwoza LG, and had his early primary and secondary education in Gwoza. Yahaya Inuwa was introduced to the business of grains trade at the tender age of 11 years by his uncle, since then has been traveling to all the local government areas in southern area to buy grains and sell them at Muna grains market.

Alhaji Barma b.1949

Alhaji Barma was born in Limanti ward of Maiduguri metropolis. He was brought up in Magumeri under the care of his parents. Barma was, like his other siblings, enrolled in Qur'anic Tsangaya education at the residence of the then chief Imam of Borno, Imam Ibrahim Ahmed, at the tender age of 5 years and was able to memorize some chapters of the holy Qur'an before he was introduced to the business of farming and trading by his late father Mallam Goni in Magumeri.¹⁰

Babukar Mala b.1946

Babukar Mala was born and brought up at Magumeri and had his early Qur'anic education at the Tsangaya school of his father Alim, Malam Goni Modu Goni Abdu. Babukar Mala inherited the business of grain trade from his late father Malam Mala who is a major supply of grains in Magumeri Local Government Area of Borno State. He was taught how to go about the trade in grains as a family business by his father Malam Mala. Babukar is the first son of the family of eight and the only male son. Therefore, there was high hopes and expectation from him by his father.¹¹

Salam Mustapha b.1959

Salam Mustapha was born and brought up in Monguno under the care of his parents, and attended Quranic Tsangaya education in Monguno under Goni Bashir. He is fourth in a family of seven and was introduced to the business of grains at the early age of seventeen (17) years.

¹⁰ Interview with Alhaji Barma at various times in Limanti and Custom grain market on 18/09/2018, 23/1/2019 and 20/3/2019.

¹¹ Interviews with Babukar Mala in Maiduguri on 23/3/2019.

Bakaumi Mohammed b.1956

Bakaumi Mohammed was born in Zajiri and lost his parents at a very young age. He grew up under the care of his uncle Baliman. He attended his Qur'anic school in Maiduguri after he was brought there by his uncle. He grew up and saw his uncle buying and selling in smaller quantity.

Role of Grain Traders

Bukar, on arrival in Maiduguri, he started the business of selling grains in Maiduguri Monday Market briefly and moved to the present day Muna Garage market through one of his customers who used to visit Konduga and buy grains from them when his late father was alive. He later moved to Custom market for a while before finally settling at Baga road market where he said is more convenient for him as he has high level of patronage. A bag of grain i.e. maize and millet in the 1980's was sold at the rate of sixty (60) Naira per bag.¹²

Currently, Mallam Bukar is a wholesale trader at Customs Market and supplies grains ranging from maize, millet, and wheat to many wholesalers and retailers who could not travel to the rural areas to buy such grains.¹³ In the 70's and 80's, grain dealers went to the rural areas to buy the commodities by themselves. On arrival at the rural market, they were accommodated by the Fatoma (Landlord) who facilitated the business between the buyers and sellers in the village markets.

Bakura Bulama said he has been in the business of grains for the past 20 years. He got supplies from Monguno, Damasak and Gubio local government areas of Borno state and sells about twenty to thirty (20 - 30) bags of grains per day. He said he used to visit the rural markets by himself and buys the grain and transport it for supply to companies within and outside Maiduguri. For instance, he supplies to Borno state flour mill and another company in Adamawa in the early 1980's. He sells mostly, millet, maize and wheat.

Bulama Ngubdo started his own grain business in 1983 at Muna grain market along Gamboru Ngala road. During that period a bag of grain i.e. maize 50kg was N20, millet 50kg was N15, beans was N35. However, even during that period, wheat was not widely consumed like other grains and it is produced only in places like Marte, Abadam, Mongono etc. Prices of commodities as at 1983, when he started the business on his own was a bit reasonable. Farmers had overcome the shortage of supply of the late 1970's as a result of the drought. Bulama Ngubdo had supplied grains to National Supply Company and Nigeria Grains Board in 1985. He gets his supply of grain from Mongono, Marte, Gubio and sometimes Konduga. He used to visit these places and spend about four to five days with his Fatoma in the respec-

12 Interview with Mallam Bukar Bulama in Bakassi I.D.P. Camp in Maiduguri on 23/3/2019.

13 Ibid.

tive local governments and buy the grains, load them in Isuzu pick-up van for onward sales in Muna market in Maiduguri.¹⁴

Bulama Ngubdo who is the chairman of Muna Grain Sellers Association in Maiduguri said grains are also supplied from Biu in Borno, Saminaka in Kaduna and Anchewa in Gombe state. He said, he sells it to wholesalers and buys about four ty five trailers. He supplies to all the marketers in Baga road grain sellers. He deals with only two types of grains maize and millet, and maize is the commodity mostly purchased by people.

Abubakar Mohammed is a renowned grain trader in custom grain market, he has been in the market for about thirty-seven years now. He used to supply grains like wheat, maize, millet and other items like beans etc. He usually travels out of the state to purchase grains with the assistance of his agents like the Fatoma and delallma.

Abubakar Muhammed used the then transport system in the village to bring his grains to Maiduguri. Some of the vehicles used by Abubakar during the period under review are Bedford, Toyota Hilux and Isuzu pick-up vans.¹⁵ He is the chairman Custom grains market and lives at Zajeri Bolori II.

Ahmed Modu Ngubdo came from an extended family of three wives and seventeen children. He is the eighth child of his father and fourth of his mother. Eleven were boys while six were girls. He hails from Dikwa, but permanently based at Makera ward of the metropolis. According to the family of Ahmed Modu the business of grain production and trading is a hereditary one as his late father, Alhaji Ngubdo had been in the business of grains for eighty-three years before his demise in 2005. Modu Ngubdo also known as (Ba'a Kawusuaye) inherited the production and marketing of grains from his uncle in Dikwa before moving to Maiduguri.¹⁶ Ahmed started his own business of grains trade in 1979, when the Maiduguri grains market was between present day Monday market round about and Makera area. He ventured into full business of grain on his own in the year 1997 after his graduation from the University of Maiduguri in Crop Protection. However, before his graduation he had been part of the business but not fully as he was student then.

In the late 1970's in company of his late father he travelled to Bama, Dikwa, Kaga and Magumeri to buy grains and transport it down to Maiduguri with pick-up vans like the Isuzu, Bonsuye (Mercedes), Bedford etc, with the full guidance of the Fatoma and dellama. During this period under prices of grains like millet, wheat and maize were relatively very low as a bag of 50kg went between N12 to N16 and trans-

14 Interview with Bulama Ngubdo in Makera on the 23/3/2019.

15 Interview with Abubakar Mohammed in Custom Grains Market on 23/3/2019.

16 Interview with Alhaji Ahmed Ngubdo at Baga road market on 23/3/2019.

action was done on cash bases. Ahmed also traveled to as far as Biu, Askira and Uba towns in southern Borno markets in search of grains.

He has been in the business for the past twenty-five years as a farmer and engaged in the act of buying and selling grain in wholesale quantity. He highlighted that, he sells about five to ten (5 - 10) trailers of grains in a week. The grain was mostly from Monguno, Potiskum, Gubio and Kaga local government areas. The grains are millet and maize. The price of the grains is high during dry season and cheap immediately after farming season, and maize is said to be the grain that is patronized more than the others.¹⁷

The higher the price of grains, the longer the dry season, as the commodity is more expensive during the dry season, grains are mostly supplied from markets in the rural markets where it is cheaper as a result of direct purchase from the producers for onward supply to whole sellers in the urban market. He is one of the major suppliers of grains to Maiduguri flour mills in large quantities. He traced the history of grain during the period under review to the period when the sale of grains in Maiduguri was done in front of individual houses by displaying in the containers for sale. It is very common in the metropolis in places like Makera. It later gradually moved to the Maiduguri Monday Market.

Ba Usman Muktar ventured into trade in the selling of livestock and grains at the tender age of 15 years. In company of his father, Ba Usman bought livestock in the rural markets of Kayamla, Dalwa and Puika, after which he bought grains with the money and proceeded to the urban markets for sale. He is currently an internally displaced person from Konduga living in Zajeri ward in Maiduguri and carries out his grains business in Custom market.

Yahaya Inuwa a renowned grain dealer at Baga road market said he has been in the business of buying and selling of grains for the past thirty-two (32) years. Although he is not a farmer, he used to visit different rural markets especially on market days and buy grains for sale in Maiduguri. He visits Biu, Gwoza, Askira, Gubio and Marte local markets where he purchased grains in large quantities for onward sale in Maiduguri market and across the state at times.¹⁸ He purchased grains in trailers from different places and said, it is cheaper immediately after harvesting period. He sale only in wholesale quantity. "Also when the grains are in high supply he used to sell it to companies in Jos, plateau state".¹⁹

Alhaji Barma later ventured into the business of trading only after the demise of his father, and moved to settle at Limanti ward. He is married and blessed with male and female children. He got his grains from Askira and Uba, Gwoza and Biu

17 Interview with Ahmed Modu Bulama in Maiduguri on 29/10/2018.

18 Interview with Yahaya Inuwa in Muna Grains market on 23/3/2019.

19 Interview with Kabiru Laminu in Zajere ward of Maiduguri, on 26-10-2018.

because he sale only maize and millet and has been in the business for over thirty-five years now.

Barma changed the source of his grains supply to southern Borno after the 1985 drought when grains from northern and central Borno were not found in large quantity. In southern Borno, according to Barma, the effects of the drought was less.

He used to buy grains from Konduga, Auno, Gubio and Marte as far back as 1978. Babukar under the guidance of his Fatoma used to coordinate his market activities.

Salam Mustapha has been in business of grains for the past forty-three years. He first started supplying grains to urban people in Mongono in the late 1970's and also served as a Fatoma to urban people who visited Mongono and buy grains and transport it to Maiduguri. He later moved to Maiduguri and continued with the trade of grains at Muna grains market.

Salam Mustapha is a wholesaler at the Muna grains markets and has been supplying many people at the market, who cannot afford traveling to the village markets in search of grains. It is also important to note that Salam sells only two types of grains i.e. millet and wheat. Salam has his own truck with which he travelled with it, to village markets like Magumeri, Ngom, Bama, Gubio etc forthe purchase of grains.

He started his own business of buying and selling grains at the age of twenty-five (25) years when he got married under his uncle. He sold his uncle's grains at present day custom market. When he was given capital to start his own business around 1978, he travelled to Bama, Konduga and Marte and bought one hundred and twenty (120) bags of millet and maize at ten (10) naira per 100g and brought to Maiduguri.²⁰

Bakaumi Mohammed started going to the rural markets regularly in purchase of grains. In 1979, he travelled to Gubio, Magumeri, Ngom, Konduga and Marte. In each of the places he travelled he brought one pick-up van of grain i.e. Bonsuye, all of millet, and wheat. In the rural areas he was usually hosted by his Fatoma.

Fatoma

The Fatoma institution is an integral part of the operations and development of long distance trade in Borno and neighboring areas, especially Hausaland.²¹ Fatoma is a key player in the business of grains in Borno. Transaction in grains business is almost impossible without the Fatoma, as he is the one that host the grain deal-

²⁰ Interview with Bakaumi Mohammed in Muna grains market on 23/3/2019.

²¹ Mukhtar and Waziri A. Gazali (2000): "the Dynamics of Fish Trade in Northeast Nigeria: A case study of Doron Baga" Bericht des Sonder Forschungs berekhs 268 Band 14, Frankfurt GM. 2000 p.85.

er in his house before arranging his market transaction.²² Fatoma is a Kanuri word meaning the owner of the house. Therefore, Fatoma means a landlord or one who accommodates, looks after or takes care of visiting, non-resident long distance traders.²³

Considered in this commercial context, the Fatoma is a commissioned agent who buys and sells grains on behalf of his client. However, in the grains business the Fatomas are only agents and buyers and sellers of grains, and mostly do not engage in the act of full grains business as it entails travelling out of their domain. The Fatoma apart from accommodating the grain dealers, usually performs the following functions acting on behalf of his client, introduces the dealers to the market, safekeeping of his client's money and goods, providing financial assistance to his client when the need arises and initiates the transformation of client's goods to the urban markets.

At the end of each transaction, the Fatoma of grain is paid by the client his commissions, according to the number of bags of grains he bought and where the grains were kept awaiting transportation to the urban centres.²⁴ A commission of two naira is being paid for each bag of grains, which includes the process of buying, loading and off-loading of grains as well as the safe keep. Some of the Fatomas according to Bukar Limanti have their own houses built known as the *Kusotoram* in Kanuri, meaning guest house, while others rent the houses and use them.²⁵

He said, there existed a very good financial relationship between the Fatoma and his client. Therefore, as a result of the trust and understanding that existed between the two during the period of their transaction, there is hardly a situation whereby a Fatoma has cheated on his client or client cheating his Fatoma.²⁶ Trust is very crucial in the relationship between the Fatoma and clients. The Fatoma always tries to project transparency and honesty in dealings with his clients. It is generally by so doing that he would continue to enjoy the confidence of his clients.

Dilalma/Broker

Dilalma is a Kanuri word for broker. He is another major key player in the business of grains across Borno State. He arranges sales between prospective buyers and

22 Interview with Ba Gambo Muhammad at Muna grains market on 23/3/2019.

23 Interview with Bukar Mala in Muna market and Baga road grains market on 23/3/2019 and 28/12/2018.

24 Interview with Alhaji Bulama Ngubdo at Muna Grains Market, on 28/12/2019.

25 Interview with Bukar Limanti, in Custom Grains Market on 23/3/2019.

26 Interview with Alhaji, Ahmed Ngubdo in baga road grains market on 23/3/2019.

prospective sellers and takes his commission from either or both, depending on who contacted him first.²⁷

The dilalma or broker advises on the price which can be expected at a particular market. He is often regarded as a thief! The dilalma has been a long standing feature of Borno markets. Barth in 19th C. Kukawa notes:

All this sale of horses, camels etc. with the exception of the oxen, passes through the hands of the dilalma or broker, who according to the mode of announcement, takes his percentage from the buyer or the seller.²⁸

The presence of numerous brokers in the markets of Borno and a report on the Bama region in 1926, remarks on the importance of brokers in trade.²⁹ Dilalma/broker in most of the Borno area are said to have been the native of that particular village and tribe of the area. They also double as traders in the grains business especially across northern Borno. Most of the dilalma deal only in their home market but a few operate in a number of markets close to their villages. One of such dilalma regularly visited four markets, all within 45km of his home and returns home each night. He specialized in grains and reckoned his commission was 50 kobo or less per sack or bag of 100kg of grain.³⁰

The use of Dillama in the grains trade was not without its limitations. That is, to say, both the producer and the consumers were at the receiving end. While the producer was short-changed, the consumer was charged higher because of the commission(s) charged. This point was brought out by Imam Imoru, who stated that:

A broker does the following when he wants to cheat the owner he is selling for. When someone offers 7,000 for the item, the broker tells the owner that 6,000 has been offered. If the owner says 'it's enough, and the offer is increased to 7,000 Well if the owner agrees the broker goes to the buyer and says, the offer is agreeable, give me the money' when he receives the money, he sets aside 1,000 for himself. Then he calls the owner and gives him 6,000 and same person gives him his commission.³¹

However, most of the dilalma/brokers doubled as traders in domestic animals in their own village market, and also visit other markets and served as dilalma in the grains business.

²⁷ Interview with Abubakar Mohammed at Customs grains market on 23/3/2019.

²⁸ H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in the North and Central Africa*. 1857, 11, 93, 96. left Maiduguri is the village lying close to the present state capital which gave the latter name.

²⁹ Gina Porter (1939). *Periodic Rural markets in Borno, North-east Nigeria in Annals of Bomo* III, 119, p.119.

³⁰ Interview with Gambo Muhammed at muna grains market in Maiduguri on 23/3/2019.

³¹ Paul Staudinger in *The Heart of the Hausa* states p.180.

Conclusion

The paper focused on the biography of some grain traders in Borno. Borno is known for the production of grains and had urban center and big population. There is the need for distribution and marketing of the grains in order to feed the teeming population. It was in the distribution and marketing of the grains that traders emerged to sale the commodity either as whole or retail in the various markets in Borno. It appears that most of the grain traders inherited the business from their parents or uncles. In the process of grain trade two notable persons the Fatoma and Dilalma emerged as intermediaries and commissioned agents.

Name	Age	Occupation	Place of interview	Date
Mallam Bukar Bulama	80	farmer/ marketer	Konduga	23/03/2019
Bakura Bulama	47	farmer	Baga road market	29/10/2018
Abubakar Mohammed	60	marketer	Custom area grains market	23/03/2019
Bulama Ngubdo	50	marketer	Makera Market	23/03/2019
Ahmed Ngubdo	52	marketer	Baga road market Maiduguri	29/10/2018
Ahmed Emmah	42	marketer	Custom area market Maiduguri	24/09/2018
Bausman Muktah	65	farmer/ marketer	Konduga	23/03/2019
Yahaya Inuwa	54	farmer/ marketer	Gwoza I.P.D camp Maiduguri	23/03/2019
Kabiru Laminu	55	farmer/ marketer	Zajere Ward Maiduguri	26/10/2018
Alhaji Barma	70	marketer	Limanti ward Maiduguri	18/09/2018
Babukar Mala	60	farmer/ marketer	Custom area market Maiduguri	23/03/2019
Salam Mustapha	45	marketer	Bakasi I.D.P Camp Maiduguri	23/03/2019
Bakaumi Mohammed	63	maketer	Maiduguri	23/03/2019
Bagambo Muhammad	80	farmer/ maketer	Muna market Maiduguri	23/03/2019
Bakura Mala	55	maketer	Muna grains market Maiduguri	28/12/2018
Bukar Limanti	56	makerter	Custom grains market	28/12/2019

Name	Age	Occupation	Place of interview	Date
Bulama Ngubdo	54	marketer	Muna grains market	23/03/2019
Abubakar Muhammed	60	marketer	Custom area grains market	23/03/2019

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