

PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS OF SOKOTO STATE

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DOI: **10.29816/sjss.9.1.14**

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the perspective on the human and physical potentials of Sokoto State, northwest Nigeria. The state is a balkanized entity of what used to be part of the Sokoto Caliphate founded in 1804 by the great Islamic reformist and scholar Uthman Danfodio. The state has a population of 3.7 million in census with a growth rate of 3.0% per annum distributed in 23 local government areas of the state. Materials for this paper were basically generated from various secondary sources and other unpublished documents. Findings revealed that the state is dominated by a lowland topography with an average height of about 300 metres above sea level. Similarly, Sokoto State has a population of 5.2 million people with a very youthful age structure of under the age of 30 constituting nearly 75% of its population. The state has potentials in agriculture, agro-industries, minerals, tourism and human resources for development.

Keywords: Population, development potentials, agricultural resources, tourist centers, Sokoto state

Introduction

Sokoto State is a balkanized entity of what used to be part of the Sokoto Caliphate founded in 1804 by the great Islamic reformist and scholar, Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo. The Caliphate flourished until the British colonialists conquered and divided it into provinces in 1903. Sokoto Province comprised of Sokoto, Gwandu, Argungu and Yauri Emirates. In 1967, with the creation of States, Sokoto and Niger provinces were merged to form the then Northwest State. In 1976, the State was bifurcated into Sokoto and Niger States. Sokoto State, as at 1976, comprised of the present Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States. Following further state creation exercises, first Kebbi in 1991 and later Zamfara in 1996, Sokoto emerged as a State in its present form. All

through these historical developments, Sokoto town has remained the capital of the Caliphate, the province and the State. This paper intends to present physical and human perspective of geography of the state in 12 parts. After this brief introduction, the other parts are the location of the state, relief and drainage, climate, hydrology, vegetation and soils, population and settlements, agricultural resources, viable agro-allied industries, mineral resources, tourist attraction and finally a conclusion.

Historical Development and Growth of Sokoto City

The Sokoto city historically has an excellent regional situation combined with a strategic defensive position. This strategic location explains why Muhammad Bello used Sokoto as a war camp in 1804 in preparation for battles of Tsuntsuwa and Alkalawa. The rise of Sokoto as a caliphate capital city in the 19th century and the increase in population was to a large extent determined by such factors as the availability of, and access to fertile land, water and large good defensive site (Shamaki, 2005). One of the immediate task, which face Bello as the Jihad drew to an end was the need to build a wall not only to defend but also defined the Birni or Walled city.

However, Abubakar, (1979) emphasized that Sokoto's development did not begin until 1808. He added that, in the autumn of that year, following on the fall of Alkalawa, Muhammad Bello, with a view to the security of Shehu as well as to the task of pacification, had the walls of Sokoto built. Being it Bello's main base and not far away from Shehu, Sokoto town continued to attract immigrants. The rapid growth in its size, and development as the leading centre of the Jama'a and a symbol and expression of its triumph began with the Shehu's moving there permanently in 1815 (Abubakar, 1997). A whole suburb suddenly came into being outside the original walls (Abubakar, 1997).

Thus, in 1809, the first wall was built to enclose the initial settlement, now known as Tsohon Birni or Old City. The arrival of Shehu and the massive immigration of his followers to Sokoto at about 1815 meant that the available space within Tsohon Birni was filled up and therefore became inadequate. Hence, a new settlement grew outside it. With the establishment of both Tsohon Birni and Sabon Birni, the next formative phase in the expansion of the city is related to the evolution of wards or quarters. Historical evidence reveals that evolution of wards was related either to the

settlement people associated with or names of famous people, or the occupational structure of the occupant, or such which were named after the local topography. And finally, there were wards which developed as a result of the emigration of cattle rearers, and as well as the settlement of slaves in slave plantations such as in Minanata and Runjin Sambo respectively (Mamman 1999).

"The points to stress about these wards are two. One is that their increasing number has led to the expansion of settlement outside the walled city. Secondly, the evolving settlement pattern, both within the Birni and outside it appears to reflect, and accord to, a basic structural organized in two broad zones of settlement. Subsequently, there was urban relocation policy effected by Muhammad Bello. This explain why the marina, between Kofar Atiku and Kofar Taramniya were the earliest peri-urban areas of Sokoto city, to be followed in later years by those of Runjin Sambo, Minanata, Mabera, and Gwiwa. Clearly, therefore, the above represent the main Morphological elements of our study area during the 19th century where there was the pre-eminence of the centre over the periphery" (Mamman, 1999:52).

Finally, the advent of colonial rule culminated in the conquest of the city in 1903 and subsequently led to the imposition of Britain colonial administration in the early part of 20th century. And, in the post-colonial period, the growth of Sokoto City since 1960 has not only occurred around nuclei such as the Birni, Sabon, Tudunwada and the Government Reservation Area (GRA), but also around newer nuclei which developed during the first half of 20th century (Mamman 1999:57-58). In order to undertake a thorough study on the incidence of urban poverty in the present Sokoto Metropolis, it is essential to use the following map as historical basis.

Location and Size

Sokoto State is located to the extreme northwest of Nigeria approximately between latitudes 12°N and 13°58'N and longitude 4°8'E and 6°54'E. It shares boundaries with the Republic of Niger to the north, Kebbi State to the southwest and Zamfara State to the northeast, covering an area

of approximately 32,000km². Following the 2006 National Population Census, Sokoto State has a population of 3,702,679 (NPC, 2009). At a growth rate of 3.0% per annum distributed in 23 Local Government Areas, the state as at mid-June 2016 has a population of about 4.5 million.

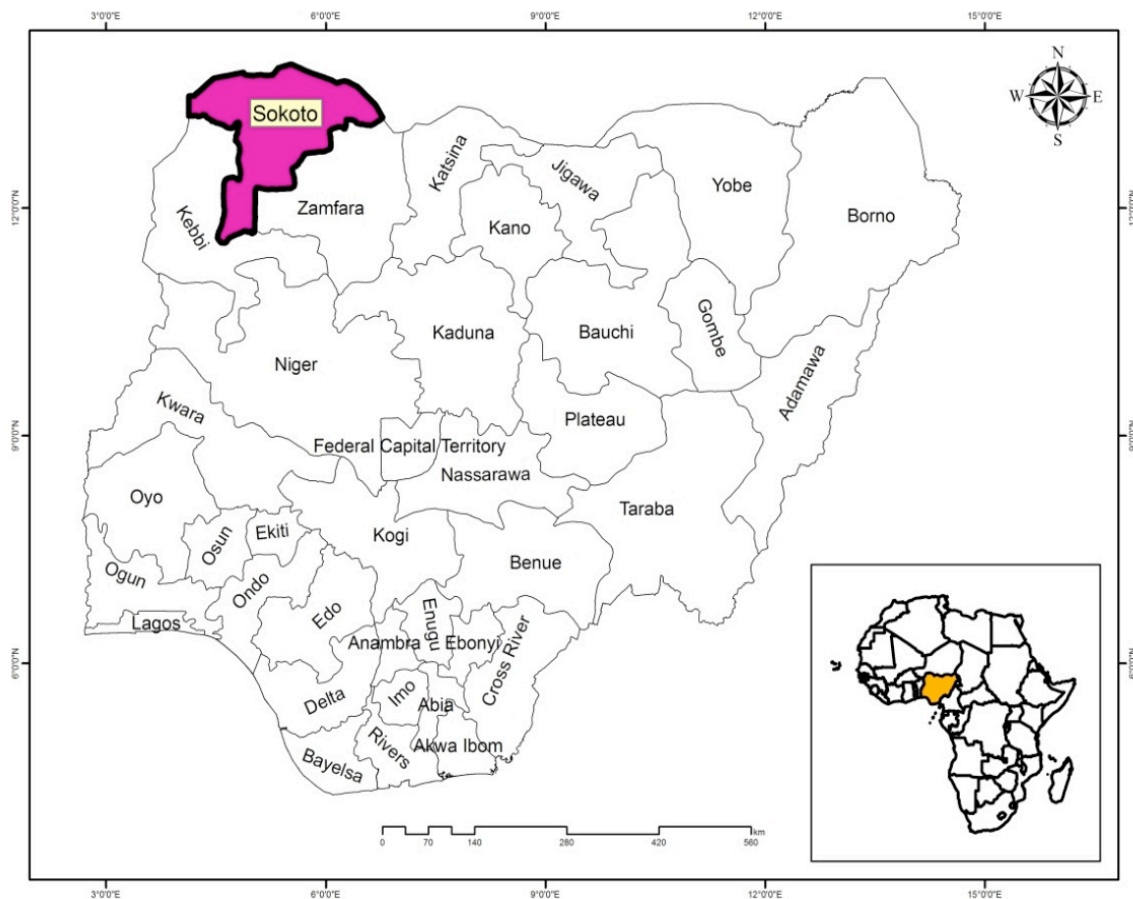


Figure 1: Location of Sokoto State in relation to other States of Nigeria

Source: Shamaki, 2015

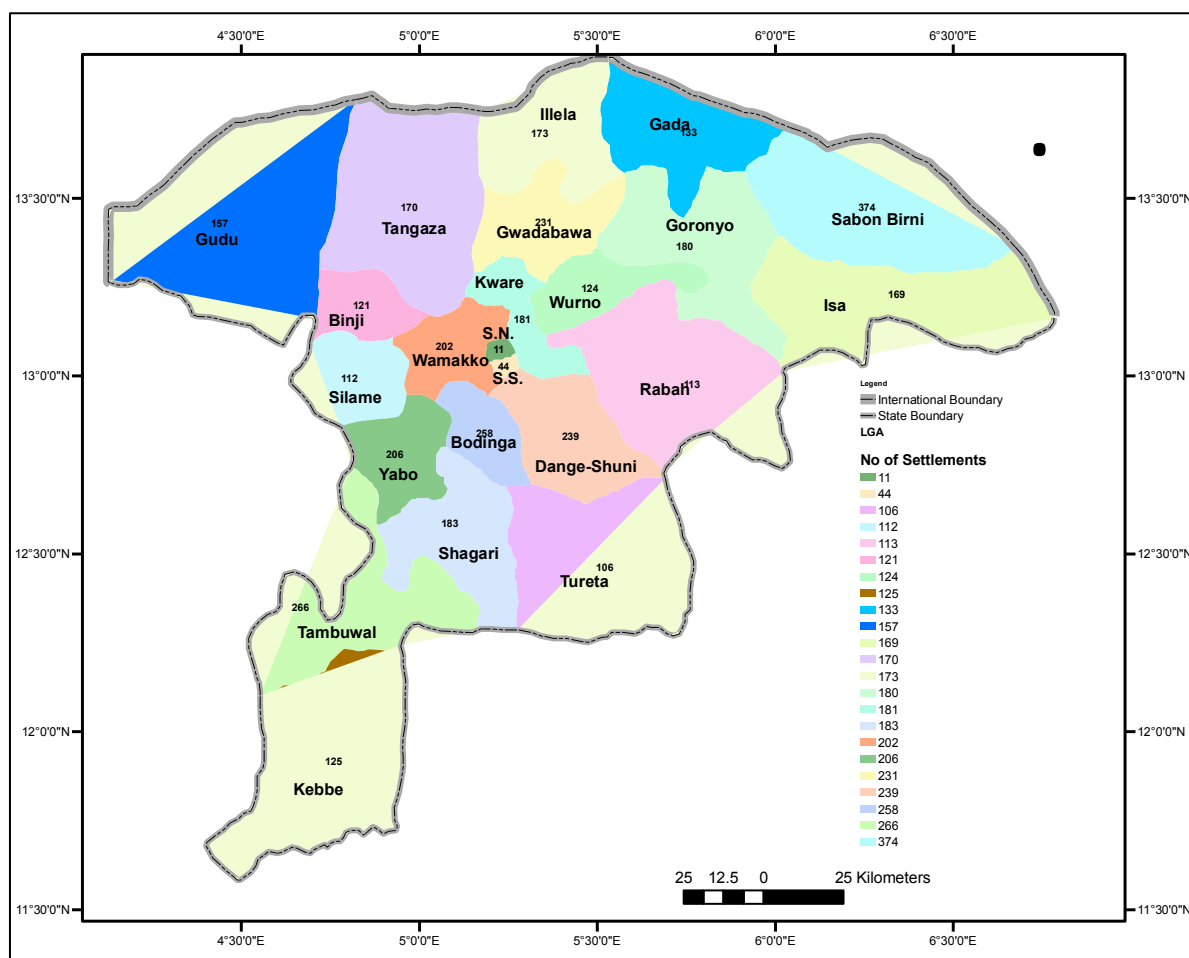


Figure 3: Location of Sokoto State

Source: SSG, 2013

Relief and Drainage

The State is dominated by the Sokoto Plain, a lowland topography with an average height of about 300 metres above sea level. In a few places, the lowland is interrupted by isolated hills and escarpments such as around Dange and Kalambaina. There are two major rivers, the Rima and Sokoto and their tributaries. The valleys of these rivers are wide and constitute one of the most fertile dry season farmlands (Fadama) in Nigeria (David, 1982). It has been variously estimated that some 15.0 to 20.0 percent of available land in Sokoto State is fadama (Iliya and Fada, 2013).

The drainage system in Sokoto State can be described as radial and dominated by the Rima River and its tributaries such as the Sokoto, Gangare and Bunsuru rivers. Most of the rivers take their source from the south-eastern part of the State and from inside Zamfara and Kaduna States. The volume of water in these rivers is understandably low during the dry season and their tributaries are in most cases dry during this period. Important drainage features include the Goronyo, Wurno, Shagari dams, as well as the drying lakes of Kalmalo and Kware. Around these areas, all year round crop cultivation and animal rearing are practiced (Swindell, 1982).

Sokoto State is drained by the Rima River and its tributaries, most of which rise in the south-eastern part of the state and in the neighbouring Kaduna State. While the Bunsuru and Gangere Rivers flow in a northerly direction through Isa Local government, joining the Rima near SabonBirni, the Sokoto, Zamfara and Ka tributaries, on the other hand, flow westwards to join the Rima. In their upper reaches, all the tributaries flow over basement complex rocks. Their valleys are rather narrow and restricted until the rivers enter the area of young sedimentary rocks, where they flow through broad valleys.

Climate: Rainfall and Temperature

The climate of Sokoto State is Tropical Continental dominated by two opposing air masses; the dry Tropical Continental blowing from the Sahara Desert and a moist Tropical Maritime air mass from the Atlantic Ocean. While the former blows from a north-easterly direction, the latter comes from a south-westerly direction. The interaction of the two major air masses results into two major seasons, the wet and dry seasons. While the rainy season commences from mid-April and lasts to the end of September, the dry season extends from early October to May. In between these two major categories, there are four other sub-types: *rani*, *bazara*, *kaka* and *hunturu* (hamattan). The harmattan is a dry, cold and dusty wind experienced in the State from November to February. During this period, the weather is usually cold at night and in the mornings with temperatures less than 20°C in some cases. Temperatures are highest from late March to May, ranging from 35°C to 45°C. Mean annual rainfall is about 600mm with most of it falling in July and August. Over the last fifty years, the rainy season has been characterized by late arrivals of rains, long spells of aridity of up to 21 days and early cessations. This is suggestive of Climate Change (Umar, 2013).

Hydrology

Most of the State lies in the lower valleys of the Sokoto and Rima rivers where loss of water to infiltration and seepage into the dominant sedimentary rock formation is significant. There is also high evaporation due to high temperature. On the plains, gradients are generally gentle and drainage is not so dense. Most rivers have wide and shallow valleys. Sokoto State has three principal sources of water supply: rainfall, surface and underground water. Rain water harvesting is however not common due to high evaporation among other reasons.

Vegetation and Soils

The vegetation of the State is mostly the Sudan type, characterized by mixed woodland and short grasses. Trees are short and have developed a series of drought adaptation mechanisms, such as long root systems, leaf shading during dry season, needle-like thin leaves and hard barks. The shrubs are mainly of the acacia species and are thorny. Along the river courses, plant density is however higher.

Sandy soils and clayey materials predominate except along the flood plain of the river valleys (*fadama*) where alluvial soils are found. In the northern parts of the State especially along the Niger-Nigeria border, the plains are covered by aeolian deposits from the Sahara Desert and the Sahel – which give rise to light sandy soil (David, 1982). This by extension, has led to the problems of desert encroachment and land degradation that are environmental challenges in the State. The whole state falls within the Sudan Savannah. The vegetation is characterised by thorny species with a scatter of acacia species. The river courses are lined with dum palms, which are interspersed with a herbaceous cover of annual grasses.

Population and Settlement

The 5.2 million people in Sokoto State are unevenly distributed. Average population density is less than 150 persons per square kilometre.

While in the Sokoto closed-settled-zone, population density may exceed 300 persons, around Tureta and the Gundumi Forest reserves, the population is sparse with less than 100 persons per square kilometre (SSG, 2013)

The State is predominantly Muslims with Islamic traditions as the main culture and way of life. In 2014 the state's projected population figures of 4, 656,920 comprised up of males 2,343,690 (50.3 %) and females 2, 313,230 (49.7 %) (Fapohunda & Orobato, 2014). Although, the figures between males and females population differs slightly, the population is characterized by high percentage of children, the young and women between ages 12 to 18 years. With an estimated population of 5.2 million people, Sokoto State is the seventh most populous state

in Nigeria. The state has a very youthful age structure with nearly 75% of its population under the age of 30.

The population of Sokoto State is heterogeneous but dominated by the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups. Among the Hausa, there are also the Gobirawa, Kabawa, Adarawa, Arawa and other ethnic nationalities such as the Zabarmawa and Tuaregs from the Republic of Niger are also found in the state. Other Nigerians such as the Kanuri, Igbo, Yoruba, Nupe, Igbira, Idoma, Tiv among others are found and all live in peace with one another. Perhaps, due to high population concentrations and deteriorating basic facilities, the human development index of the state is poor. Infant and maternal mortality as well as under-5 mortality rates are very high. (Table 1.0).

Table 1.0: Human Development Indicators of Sokoto State at a Glance

S/No.	Indicator	Status in 2011
1	Infant mortality rate	102/1000
2	Under - five mortality rate	203/1000
3	Proportion of one-year old children immunized against measles.	69%
4	Maternal mortality	900/100,000
5	Proportion of births attended to by trained health personnel.	20%
6	HIV prevalence among 15-24 years old (women)	3.3%
7	Percentage population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive knowledge of HIV and AIDS prevention and methods,	45%
8	General hospitals	20
9	PHC's/clinics/dispensaries	708
10	Health facilities offering comprehensive emergency obstetric care	30
11	Health facilities providing basic obstetric care	102
10	Private health facilities	34
11	Tertiary health facilities	3
12	Number of Doctors	≥100
13	Nurses	525
14	Midwives	432
15	Total population	3.7 in 2006
11	Proportion of households with access to safe drinking water	39%
12	Proportion of households with access to basic sanitation	Urban 39% Rural 35%

Source: SSG, 2012

The long dry season experienced throughout the State makes access to perennial water supply of great importance for human and animal populations. Consequently, river valleys have been important areas of settlement throughout the State. The 1804 *jihad* led to subsequent peopling of what used to be empty areas through relocation of the population from within the north-west region of Nigeria.

During the 19th Century, the settlement pattern was radically altered through the policies and development programmes of Sultan Bello's *ribat*. This was a programme aimed at protecting the frontiers of Sokoto, the seat of the Caliphate. Colonization and state creation have been the driving forces behind further development of settlements within the State. Today, all Local Government Areas are large settlements due to migration and State Government programmes to provide infrastructures. The mid-1970s Sahelian drought further led to mass immigrations of people from across the border with the Republic of Nigér.

Agricultural Resources

Over 75% of the population of Sokoto State are farmers engaged in both upland (*tudu*) and lowland (*fadama*) farming. While upland farming during the rainy season accounts for most of the agriculture practiced, less than 15% of farmers are into fadama land cultivation. Upland farming generally is a function of rainfall which falls for four to five months at the most. Crops cultivated during the rainy season are mostly grains such as millet and sorghum, and legumes such as beans and groundnuts. On the fadama land, crops cultivated during the dry season include vegetables, fruits, sugar cane, rice and some root crops. During rainy season, it is common to find some parts of the fadama planted with rainy season crops.

Livestock rearing is another important aspect of the agricultural system. Animals kept include cattle, sheep, goats, camels and poultry. These animals are kept using indigenous practices and

rely considerably on the natural environment for survival. Yield in most cases is low and the animals are susceptible to pests and diseases. On the other hand, fishing is practiced along the major rivers, in dam reservoirs and some natural ponds. Catches are still low and little effort is being made to boost production, and to provide adequate preservation facilities. Fish demand is met by supply from mostly adjacent Kebbi State, local fish ponds and imported frozen fish.

Other agriculture-related activities include the development of woodlots to produce trees for fuel wood, craft work, building materials among others. These activities are mainly through indigenous practices with a number of consequences for the physical and social environment. A few agro-related industries existed in the past but have virtually disappeared in the last 30 years, as a result of decline in raw materials, dependence on imported materials, and incessant power supply especially from Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

Viable Agro-Allied Industries

With the vast resources in the agricultural sub-sector, investment opportunities in the state exist in tomatoes, peppers and onion processing, sugar extraction/refining, fertilizer production both organic and inorganic, groundnut oil processing, flour mills (millet, sorghum, maize, wheat) feed mills, rice milling, gum Arabic, dairy products (meat packaging, milk processing, cheese and butter), ceramic products (bones, hoofs, blood), leather materials, poultry industry and fish processing and packaging (SSG, 2013).

Mineral Resources

The series of geologic formations have endowed the State with a number of rich deposits of a variety of industrial minerals of high quality. Available in commercial quantities are such as kaolin, limestone, gypsum, silica-sand, lignite, clay, laterite, potash. Flakes, marble, granite, gold, salt phosphate and sand among others.

Moreover, there are also opportunities for mineral exploration for uranium, oil and gas.

Tourist Attractions

The state is endowed with a number of tourist attractions including historical, physical as well as local cousines. A major attraction and advantage of tourist sites in Sokoto State is that they are mostly located within the radius of 100km from the city of Sokoto. It makes it possible for a tourist to go places and return to the comfort of his or her hotel daily. Tourism in Sokoto state no doubt provides investment opportunities in hotel development and management and improvement of many of the sites to international standards (SSG, 2011). This could be achieved through a private public partnership. Some of the abundant tourist sites in the State are:

- i. Historical Sites: Surame, Alkalawa, Degel, Gudu, tafkinKwatto, Magabchi, Yabo, Sifawa, the city gates among others.
- ii. Festivals/Entertainments: Sharo, Dambe (local boxing), Kokawa (wrestling), RawarYaki (war dancers) etc.
- iii. Arts and Craft Works: Saka (cloth weaving), Rini (cloth weaving), Madunka Fata (leather works), GinarTukane (pottery), Hika/Heke (calabash carving and decorations) etc.
- iv. Natural Features: Sedimentary Rock Formation in Goronyo, Bulbul Warm Spring in Wamakko, Kware Lake, Sand Dunes GidanKaura, Gada

- v. Edifices: Goronyo Dam, Cement Company of Northern Nigeria (CCNN) and Sokoto Central Market
- vi. Local Cousines: TuwonMasara, TuwonDawa, TuwonShinkafa, Waina/Masa, KununTsamiya, KununZaki, DambunNama, DambunKaza, Kilishi etc.
- vii. Hotel Services: Five Star Giginya Hotel, Shukura Hotel, Sokoto Hotel, Dankani Hotel, Sokoto Guest Inn, Pinnacle Hotel etc.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion Sokoto State is strategically located in a vast plain of the North Western Nigeria. It is endowed with important geographical features as well as a variety of organic and inorganic natural resources. Despite, the availability of these resources and its rich cultural heritage, Sokoto State has enormous environmental problems that require urgent attention of the government. These challenges, if properly addressed would enhance food security for national development and utilisation of the available resources in the state. Some of the environmental problems that are very prominent are flooding, soil degradation, desert encroachment, deforestation and consequent climate change among others. Thus, overcoming these problems would greatly help to preserve the state's accumulative resources and better development of the agricultural, industrial and tourist centres for the economic growth of the State and region.

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