

AUTHORITY CONFLICTS AND THE DECLINING INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL RULERS IN NORTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

From their Olympian heights, the traditional institution in Nigeria is gradually being consigned to the fringes of mainstream governance and decision making in the society, where once, they held sway as lords. In the Northwest of Nigeria, the Fulani hegemony, aided by Islam, has thrived having successfully supplanted the traditional Hausa feudal system. Its main protagonist, Uthman Dan Fodio, reformed the traditional Hausa feudal system to reflect Sharia tenets consolidating his tight grip on power by divine injunction. Whether by design or fortune, this reform opened the doors for others to follow. For on the heels of Islamic civilisation, which itself followed Arabic civilisation, came Western civilisation through British colonialism. While the previous two served to strengthen the grip on power of the traditional rulers, British colonialism clashed with it. This was not the first but the most formidable. Thus, followed the onslaught – from colonialism, democracy and military rule – on the traditional institution, not just in North West but in fact all over Nigeria. This by no means is limited to Nigeria for in many societies all over the world, traditional rulers are increasingly becoming mere ceremonial and decorative historical symbols under the relentless, demanding and pervasive march of civilisation. So intense has been the onslaught, that many monarchies such as in India, Japan, and Spain have simply dissolved. Besides democracy, which have resolved the power dynamic in favour of the people, other agents of change such as technology have simply demystified, and rendered needless, the role of traditional rulers in the modern social structure.

Introduction

Traditional rulers represent and play unique roles in the governance structures of modern societies even if these roles might have changed or metamorphosed or become less relevant. Regardless of how these roles are perceived today, it is in stark contrast to the Olympian heights that traditional rulers once occupy where they were adored as gods and goddesses. Their roles having changed, so also have their relevance. Civilisation as we know it is change-driven, relentlessly demanding and pervasive. In the last half of the millennia, the rise and impact of western civilisation on established traditional institutions has been intense. So intense has been the onslaught, many monarchies such as in India, Japan, and Spain have simply dissolved. Besides democracy, which have resolved the power dynamic in favour of the people, other agents of change such as technology have simply demystified, and rendered needless, the role of traditional rulers in the modern social structure.

In Africa, while colonialism radically changed the status of traditional rulers, their relevance through the indirect rule system (Cheka:2008, p.69) was still enormous. For example, they were allowed to collect tax (Ibid), keep prisons and enforce laws. This is because the colonial imperialists lacked legitimacy and sought to acquire same by proxy. Democracy however brought expected and unexpected outcomes. This because on the one hand, democracy was introduced due to the perception that traditional institutions harboured obnoxious elements that were detrimental to individual rights; on the other hand, democracy,

as at then, lacked the foundation it needed to thrive. It thus corroborated with the traditional institutional system to obviate its weaknesses. This marriage of convenience births the contraption called “House of Chiefs” as a part of the legislature (Ibid). Nevertheless, reforms were to follow because there can be no two “absolutes” in a democracy. Thus, the advent of constitutional democracy subjected traditional rulers to legislation outside their domain. For example, elected leaders had the power to remove a traditional ruler, which was unheard of, previously.

Thus, followed the onslaught – from colonialism, democracy and military rule – on the traditional institution, not just in Nigeria but in fact all over world. The fact is traditional rulers are increasingly becoming mere ceremonial and decorative historical artefacts under the relentless, demanding and pervasive march of civilisation. So intense has been the onslaught, that many monarchies such as in India, Japan, and Spain have simply dissolved.

Traditional Institutional Development in Northern Nigeria

By the fifteenth century, the processes of state formation were almost completed in the western portion of Northern Nigeria, with the emergence of Kano, Katsina, Zazzau. Daura, Gobir, Rano, Biram (otherwise called Garun Gabas or the Eastern cities), generally regarded as *Hausa Bakwai* (Legitimate Hausa) in the region. There were other Hausa states known as the *Banza Bakwai* (Illegitimate Hausa), such as Kebbi and Zamfara (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966, 149), which were budding and assuming prominence. Many factors accounted for the growth and development of these states, among which was the advent of Islam at that time into most of the states.

According to Abdullahi Smith, the states emerged through incorporating immediate nucleated settlements, towns and cities into a mega structure. To this development, must be added the important factor of migrations, which brought in not only people, but also several ideas, which were proved useful in developing the state. For example, in Kano, there was the migration from the Senegambia region to the west of Wangara traders and Islamic scholars, closely followed by the Fulani scholars. From the 14th century onwards, the *Bornoans* who were also Muslims and traders started coming from the East (Barkindo 1990)ⁱ. This amalgam stream of migrants contained not only scholars, but also builders, tailors, craftsmen and many others. The ideas brought by these immigrants, the majority of whom were Muslims, contributed immensely to the early spread of Islam and Islamic culture, growth, expansion, development and prosperity in the region under study.

The impact and contribution of migrants and their ideas including but especially trade, scholarship, and crafts to the evolution, growth and development of Kano started to manifest during the rule, in the second half of the fifteenth century, of Muhammadu Rumfa, who is regarded as the most celebrated ruler of Kano. His rule is credited with important political, economic and religious reforms, which contributed greatly to the emergence of Birnin Kano to the prominence, which it later enjoyed. Rumfa was able to cut down the syncretistic tendencies in the state to establish a proper Islamic government. For one, Islam, introduced in Kano during the reign of *Yaji dan Tsamiya*, struggled to establish and flourish against the entrenched Barbushe cult – a pre-Islamic belief system. (Philips 1992, 40). Kano kings swung between beliefs in the cult and Islam and might explain why the first Kano mosque was built on the site of the old (pagan) cult temple. Under Rumfa however, Kano became what Johnston describes as one of “the great seats of Islamic learning.” (Philip 1992, 40). One of his most important reforms, which survived with some modifications to this date, was the formation of a council of state, composed of the leading nobility called *tara taKano*, i.e. the Nine leading nobles of Kano to advise the Sarki on important if difficult matters of state. He introduced symbols of

monarchy, which are still more or less followed by the rulers of Kano: trumpets, ostrich feather fans, sandals and a huge harem kept in seclusion under the supervision of eunuchs.

In the economy, Rumfa established the Kurmi Market, which is still today the main market in Kano. In the market, a proper administration was established with the appointment of a chief of the market who regulated transactions and apprehended thieves and cheats. In his military reforms, Rumfa strengthened the defence of the city, by extending the walls with several gates manned by gatekeepers. In the religious affairs, he introduced so many reforms to conform to what is expected of a Muslim state. Finally, Rumfa commissioned Sheikh Al-Maghili, who came from Tuet with Muslim emissaries (Hogben and Kiri-Greene. 1966, 157) to write for him a political Arabic treatise, popularly known as the "*Obligation of Princes*" (Barkindo 1989, 154-157). The treatise, which was a guide on how to become an ideal Muslim ruler, soon became popular in not only Kano, but also in Katsina and all the Hausa states. Abdullahi Augi (Barkindo 1989, 180) has shown that the developments in Kano, especially the successes of the reforms of Sarkin Kano Rumfa under the influence of al-Maghili were soon transmitted to western Hausaland, including Zamfara, Gobir, Kebbi, Kwonni, Adar and others through the galloping spread of Islam, Islamic scholarship, and trade.

Muhammadu Korau a contemporary of Rumfa had emerged in Katsina after wresting power from Sanau (Usman 1981, 12). Korau also transformed his state along Islamic lines, as Rumfa, through the active support of the Islamic scholar al-Maghili. The success of the reforms undertaken by these kings cemented their hold on power and brought with it other dividends. This include control of the lucrative trans-Saharan and other trade routes with immediate neighbours, and more importantly the taxation of same, which enabled them to amass considerable wealth. With such wealth, the *sarakuna* were able to finance state affairs, among which were the execution of wars of conquest and expansion. Katsina, for example, expanded southwards to Yauri in the fifteenth century. Kano also opened trade routes to Gwanja and Bomo. Though similar attempts were made by Gobir, Kebbi and Zamfara situated on the extreme part of the zone, they neither enjoyed the advantages nor the privileges Kano and Katsina had.

In the North West geo-political zone, and indeed the entire *Hausaland*, the kingmakers, in accordance with an established tradition, usually choose the sarki (pi. *sarakuna*) from the eligible princes of the ruling dynasty. Once chosen, the sarki's rule is absolute in most matters. However, he had to consult his *Majalisa* (council) of *MasuSarauta* (office holders) in selected important matters of the state such as war, banishment, taxes, etc (Yakubu 2006, 13). He also delegated powers to his subordinates who are appointed to rule the vast territories of the kingdom. A sarki was also subject to people power despite being an absolute. For instance, he could be dethroned if his rule was found to be contrary to the norms of the society such imposition of taxes not sanctioned by Islam. In more serious instances, such as imposition of additional tax as that imposed by sarkin Kano Kumbari dan Sharif (1731-43), the people could express dissatisfaction by emigration, which no sarki would love to see.

The *sarakuna* (kings) during this period were the executive, legislative and judicial authorities and had the power to appoint their subjects to any position they wished. They ensured the maintenance of law and order, and the security of lives and properties of their people, through several hierarchical officers. These officers include the *Waziri/Galadima*, *Wakili*, *Dogari*, *Magajin Gari*, *hakimai*, etc.

From the sixteenth century, almost all the Hausa states were engaged in internecine wars, where each of the states tried to exert its influence and expand at the expense of the others (Mahdi 1978, 14). For example, on several occasions, Kano went to war with Katsina (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966, 192). Zamfara and Kebbi (Ajayi and Crowder 1985) in the quest to control trade as well as expand the kingdom. The situation became more intense in the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when each state desired to dominate and control trade of the period. During these periods, the *sarakuna*, in their bid to enrich their treasuries, finance wars and to pay for their consumption of exotic items, imposed taxes that were considered uncanonical in the Islamic religion they professed. This brought about increased hardship for the already burdened masses and became a source of worry.

Over taxation and other social misdeeds such as corruption, injustice, slavery, abuse and oppression, perpetrated by the *sarakuna* combined to instigate the masses from all walks of life to expressed their grievances by resenting the authority of the *sarakuna*. This culminated in and contributed to the success of the jihad led by Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio. (Philips 1992) What came to be known as the Sokoto caliphate was a polity that emanated from a series of conquests by followers of Uthman Dan Fodio, Islamic scholar and politician, between 1804 and 1808. Descendants of the first *Sarkin Muslumi* or *Amir ALMumini* (commander of the faithful), reveal that he was the first sultan of Sokoto after the attack of the king of Gobir in 1804. His series of conquests after declaring a Jihad (Holy War) in 1804, led to the establishment of a caliphate, which encompasses most of modern-day northern Nigeria and parts of Oyo state.

By the half of the nineteenth century, all the Hausa states had been conquered by the jihadists and incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate. Thus, for the first time in history of the area, one central authority was created, instead of several autonomous states (Yakubu 2006. 14). Following this development, the leaders of the jihad emerged as emirs after defeating their former Hausa overlords. In Kano for example, the Jobawa Fulani leader Malam Bakatsine was appointed as Makaman Kano after the overthrow of sarkin Kano Alwali (1781-1807) who fled Kano to Rano. (Philips 1992). At the head of the caliphate was the *Amirul-Muminun* or the *Khalifa* who was both the political and the religious head. The hitherto independent *sarakuna* came to be subordinate to the political and religious head, the *Amirul-Muminun*. This is what Y.B. Usman's study calls the overthrow of the *sarauta* system and the emergence of the emirate system in Katsina and indeed, the entire Hausaland, which transformed the political systems of the area. The *sarauta* system was governed more by tradition with a sprinkle of Islamic tenets as against the emirate system, which relied entirely on the provisions of the Islamic *sharia* with a sprinkle of tradition as long as these (traditions) did not contradict Islam. The emir was thus a representative and defender of Islam and drew his authority directly from Islamic injunctions rather than from tradition or force. The emirate thus existed for the cardinal objective of the defence and promotion of Islam and all social, economic and diplomatic goals were in support of this singular objective. This is against the *sarauta* system that put the preservation of the state and thus the sarki (and *sarakuna*) as its sole goal. As the emirs took over the affairs of their emirates, elements of the past order survived, especially, in the aspect of selecting a new emir to the throne via hereditary and familial considerations rather than purely on Islamic principles. They continued to be elected by their own kingmakers, which in most cases were endorsed by the caliph at Sokoto. Certainly, in some cases, especially, in Zazzau, the caliph in Sokoto influenced the selection or even the removal of an emir. Once selected the emirs were expected to pay a trip to Sokoto for allegiance and to be formally endorsed by the caliph. They were also expected to pay tributes to the Caliph, which was used for the administration of the caliphate.

Amongst most of the important functions of the emirs during this period, was to institute, preserve and defend Islamic government and conduct jihad in their respective territories in order to revive Islam. It was also their duty to ensure that their subjects performed their religious duties (Abba 1985, 120). In the day-to-day running of their state affairs, the

emirs were assisted by some officials in hierarchical order—the Waziri, a senior official who often serves as a deputy; Madawaki, a commander who was also in charge of the royal stable; Galadima, who administered the capital; while the Alkali, administered justice based on Islamic principle. The emirs appointed people to collect the common tax (*haraji*) for the upkeep of their governments, and the *zakkal* (alms) for taking care of the poor and the needy. They were also expected to protect their subjects from harm and all forms of molestations.

The Emirate type government survived and the emirs remained in control of their respective territories until the British incursion and colonial rule at the turn of the twentieth century. This event as we shall see marked yet another transformation of the positions of the emirs in the administration of their respective Emirates.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

British conquest of Nigeria began late in the nineteenth century, reaching its heights in 1903, when most of the emirates of the North West zone were conquered and brought under British colonial rule, as did the other areas that were to later become Nigeria. Sokoto, the capital of the caliphate, Katsina, Kano and Gwandu all in the North West were the last to be conquered by British colonizers. Kano's defiance and its subsequent conquest and surrender to the British forces marked the actual collapse of the Sokoto Caliphate. This was because Kano was the military and economic nerve of the Sokoto Caliphate (Barkindo 1989, 195).

Following the defeat of the entire Hausaland, the emirs of the North West geopolitical zone lost their complete sovereignty and became subordinate to the British colonial administrators. Thus, both the Caliph now re-designated Sultan, and the emirs, all became appointees of the British colonial government, by the promulgation of the Chiefs' law appointments, control and deposition. (Aborishade, 1985).

British Indirect Rule in colonial Nigeria actually commenced in the North West, where the full development of the theory and practice of the policy proved workable to Lugard, who was the Governor General. This led to the extension of the system into Yorubaland in 1914 and other parts of Nigeria. The policy of indirect rule in northern Nigeria accorded the British the opportunity to rule through the Emirs, who had long established sound and effective administrative machinery.

British colonial rule absorbed the powers of the emirs, but allowed them to exercise authority in all areas under their jurisdictions. This was the period when the emirs were given orders and mandated to execute them or face the wrath of the British officials, through deposition and other harsh treatments such as banishments. Thus, outwardly, the emirs appeared to perform their functions as in the pre-colonial period, such as levying taxes, running their own law courts and prisons as well as controlling the police. However, in actual fact, the directives for these functions came from British officials and were carried out under their strict supervision.

The British colonialists consolidated their administration by rearranging the emirates into provinces, headed by residents and their array of officials who were answerable to the governor of the region. Thus, in the North West geo-political zone, the former emirates were joined with others to form provinces. In order for the British to establish and run effective local administration, Native Authorities (NAs) were introduced and the emirs were initially made sole authorities in their respective domain (Yakubu 2006, 34) though this was to change later. Tibenderana (1976, 176) defines the Native Authority as “A chief had been recognized by a letter of approval of high Commissioner or those who had appointments as Chiefs and District Heads and to whose positions the resident had not notified his dissent.” The Emirs now administered their various local administrations with their councillors with powers to veto, especially, under the NA Ordinance of 1933 (Yakubu 2006). In this dispensation, the emirs

wielded considerable powers, having been allowed to establish firm grip over the local administrative system including the power to employ and discipline their staff. However, the emirs were not allowed to enjoy this privileged position forever. Their powers to veto was abrogated with the abolition of their status as sole Native Authorities in favour of their new status as Chiefs-in-Council, which was introduced under the Native Authority (Definition of Functions) Law of 1952 (Whitaker 1970, 271). The emirs now were obliged to consult their councils and have joint signatures with some designated councillors.

In finance, the emirs were asked to continue receiving the common tax (*haraji*) and cattle tax (*jangali*). They were also encouraged to levy the people in cash and kind for public works, such as the maintenance of roads, schools and hospitals, among others. It was from the taxes collected that the emirs, their subordinates and employees were paid their salaries and allowances. The emirs were directed to employ judges who dispensed justice under the Sharia law, however, some forms of Islamic justice such as the amputation of hands of a thief, was considered not acceptable under the British system. Some of the former guards (*dogarai*), were employed as Native Authority police with powers to arrest offenders and take them to the Sharia court.

The colonialists strengthened the administrative capacity of the traditional rulers by organizing for them and some of their principal officers, series of conferences of emirs and chiefs of the Northern Provinces. These developed into the annual Conference of Chiefs, which continued throughout the colonial period. The emirs were able to make their inputs in the colonial administration through the conferences. For example, the British authorities in 1940 established an informal advisory committee on legislation, where some emirs were brought to advise the governor on a proposed legislation, which was likely to affect the North (Kwanashie 2002, 42 -44). In fact, the British authorities intended to use the conferences for the emirs to have direct inputs on governance, rather than through the Residents as was the case before. However, this attempt failed due to opposition from some senior British officials in the Northern Provinces (Kwanashie 2002, 44).

Most of the Constitutions during the colonial period assigned some specific roles to the emirs of North West geo-political zone and other traditional rulers in the other zone. The Richards Constitution (1947-1951), established the regional Houses of Assembly and the House of Chiefs in the North, where the emirs converged to discuss matters affecting the region. The Northern House of Assembly had unofficial members selected by the Native Authorities from amongst themselves. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 provided the emirs and other chiefs, the opportunity to make their inputs in the selection of members of the Northern regional House of Assembly, thereby influencing the passage of legislations in their areas. The emirs therefore, played vital roles as members of the regional House of Chiefs where they were active participants in drawing up various laws to regulate the social, economic and political activities of their people. The two most prominent traditional rulers from the North West in the House of Chiefs were the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano (Kwanashie, 2002) due to their status.

The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, revised in 1957, however, curtailed the powers of the traditional rulers both at the federal and regional levels. For the first time since 1947 the House of Chiefs played no role in the selection process of members of the newly created federal legislature which was divided into two chambers: The Senate made up of twelve representatives appointed by the governors of the regions and the House of the Representatives was made up of 320 members directly appointed. In addition, members of the House of Chiefs were not allowed to be members of the Senate or members of the legislature in the regions. This was a blow to the emirs and the other traditional rulers

Despite the reduced influence of the traditional rulers under the Lyttleton Constitution, the British colonial officers continued to suppress any opposition that sought to undermine the position of the traditional rulers. Thus, it was considered that any challenge to the positions of Emirs and Chiefs, was a direct challenge to British rule. (Kwanashie 2002) Their efforts, however, failed to silence many members of the educated elite. As from the 1940s, the activities of these Western educated elements were beginning to be felt. In their writings and associations, they strongly challenged the powers of the Native authorities, which were dominated by the Sardauna. Among their numbers were the late Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (the future Prime Minister of the country) and Abubakar Imam who called for the democratization of the local Administration system which hitherto was the prerogative of the emir. For example, in 1950, Tafawa Balewa proposed the formation of an independent commission of enquiry to look into the operation of the NA system. The Emir of Katsina, Nagoggo and the Emir Gwandu, Yahaya vehemently rebuffed such calls. Abubakar Imam stated that the emirs only had become autocratic because of the support given to them by British officers. In his words:

In the olden days an emir was powerful only if he had the backing of the council of military leaders. Now, many forget their council when they have the backing of the resident, because they need the backing of nobody else (Kwanashie 2002, 68)

Another challenge to the NA system, which affected the position of the emirs was the spread of political organizations towards the end of the colonial period (Yakubu 2005, 234). This was most exemplified by the activities of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) whose clarion call was the transformation of the Native Authorities. Remarkably, the emirs of the North West were very active in protecting the status quo against criticisms from southern politicians. For example, at the Ibadan Constitutional Conference of 1950, the Emir of Katsina dismissed the notion held mostly by southerners that the North was backward compared to the south. His words:

The north is not backward. Allah has not kept us backward. It is this sort of injustice on the question of money and seats in council that keep us backward and gives other region the chance to suppress us and keep us still backward. (Malami 1978, 12)

From the foregoing therefore, it is not difficult to conclude that throughout the colonial period, the British recognized the emirs as partners in progress, at least for those emirs who gave the British the much-needed support and cooperation. They served as agents of British colonial rule. However, the British ruthlessly dealt with non-cooperative and recalcitrant emirs who were opposed to or caused opposition to their policies. Such Emirs were deposed, banished and/or exiled.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP SINCE INDEPENDENCE

From our preceding analysis of traditional rulers in the North West, it is glaring that even though the British colonial officers accorded the emirs substantial degree of autonomy in the day-to-day running of their respective emirates, the colonial period undoubtedly signalled the beginning of their gradual loss of authority.

The politics of the First Republic brought the emirs under the control of the emerging elites, some of whom had all along been agitating for the curtailment of their powers. The emirs thus became appendages of politicians and their enacted laws. It was worse for those opposed

to the ruling party. At the regional level, the emirs formed the second legislative chamber, which in practice merely rubber-stamped the proceedings of the lower house dominated by the politicians. Consequently, the power to appoint, remunerate, discipline and remove traditional rulers was transferred to the Northern regional government. Their continuous stay in office depended largely on the extent of their identification with the interests of the NPC-controlled Northern regional government. This placed the Emirs at a disadvantageous position in their respective NAs.

Far more alarming for the emirs was when the Northern regional government forced the abdication of some of the leading emirs, hitherto thought untouchable because of their connection to the very NPC government. Top on this list was Sir Muhammadu Sunusi, the Emir of Kano, who was allowed to abdicate, although in actual fact deposed, when he was found guilty of maladministration by the commission of inquiry in 1963. Other Emirs who were investigated and similarly found wanting were the Emirs of Zuru, Gwandu and Zazzau, who although not similarly deposed were seriously reprimanded (Yakubu 2006, 188). These humiliations of some of the leading *sarakuna* was warning enough for all the *sarakuna* not only in the North West but the whole Northern Nigeria to give unflinching support to the NPC government if they were to retain their throne. In fact, the *sarakuna* even facilitated the processes of winning elections for NPC candidates in their domains.

On taking over power in 1966, the military initially had to depend on the traditional leadership who at that time were the only group that could mobilize the populace and explain the government's intending programmes to them. Most of the emirs, if not all, gave their unflinching support, outwardly at least to the military government. These included Alhaji Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto and cousin of the late premier who was killed during the Jan 1966 coup Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi. Ironsi however lost his life during a counter coup in July 1966, when he went to Ibadan to meet traditional rulers in the country to explain the intent and details of Decree 34, which was to replace the country's federal system of government to a unitary type. So much was the military government conscious of seeking the Goodwill of the traditional ruler.

The most serious blow to the traditional leadership during the military dispensation, however, was the 1976 local government reform. In the reform, the NAs were re-designated local government, and some of their traditional functions like police, prisons, and courts were removed and transferred to the state governments. The reform went ahead to introduce a uniform system of local government throughout the country. With this reform, the emirate councils in which the emirs played leading roles ceased to be responsible for the management and control of local government (Yakubu et al. 2005, 234). The emirs were separated from the elected councillors which allowed them to play only advisory roles in customary law and such other matters as the government might refer to the emirate council. Thus, the introduction of the local government reform marked the final relegation of the emirs from political powers in the North West in particular and Nigeria in general.

Perhaps to demonstrate the subsidiary function that traditional rulers have now assumed, the military government deposed a reigning Sultan for unethical conduct in a one of the most dramatic of confrontations between the state and the traditional institutions during the administration of Gen Sani Abacha. On April 20th, 1996, the eight-year reign of the sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki, was brought to an end. (Sunday Champion: 1996) The reasons behind his deposition include the controversy surrounding Nigeria's diplomatic face-off with Saudi Arabia over admission of Nigerian pilgrims to Hajj'96. Colonel Mua'azu also said on Rima Radio (Sokoto State Station) that in Sultan Dasuki's near eight-year reign, the monarch had been found to have perpetrated several "unislamic activities", besides his being named among personalities for trial over failed banks. (The Mirror: 2013)

Having responded to an urgent invitation to see the State's military administrator, colonel Yakubu Mua'azu, he arrived chauffeur-driven to the Sokoto government house in a long convoy and with an entourage of palace officials. The military administrator however, did not come out to receive him as was the practice, and there was an unusually high number of armed military guards at the government house. In addition, Dasuki's palace officials were denied entry with him when admitted to the administrator's office. Since that was not the practice, the Sultan protested but he was curtly told that the administrator wanted to meet with him alone. At the administrator's office was the Commissioner of Police, Abubakar Tsav, and the State's Director of State Security Service, SSS, Alhaji A boki. (Ibid)

The administrator went ahead to tell him that he (the Sultan) had committed unpardonable offences against the people, Islam and the state. He added that after due consultation with the king makers, the Sultan had been deposed and banished from Sokoto. To the monarch, it was like a bad dream as he could not believe his ears he began to shiver, while the sack letter given to him by the administrator fell off his clasped hands. But Tsav, the Commissioner of Police, picked it up and tucked it into his hands. Dasuki at first was short of words as he quivered in disbelief. But at a stage, he found his voice and looked up straight at the administrator- "why would you disgrace the Uthman Dan Fodio family like this?" but Mua'azu, the military administrator, having performed his brief, simply walked out of his office.

Much as the powers of the emirs continue to wane, the institutions in which they are the custodians have continued to increase and assume a heterogeneous character. The clamour for the creation of additional states which went hand-in-hand with the creation of more local governments could best explain this. With this development, more areas that were hitherto districts became emirates, and district heads became emirs of different classes. For example, when Jigawa was carved out of Kano, Dutse a district of Kano was designated the state capital and the district head became an emir. Ringim and Rano, which were other district of Kano, also became emirates, with emirs of first-class hierarchy. The creation of Zamfara State also saw the creation of emirates in Gusau, the capital of the state, and in Anka.

Another phenomenon explaining the diversity of traditional rulers in the zone is the agitations by the southern Zaria communities to achieve autonomous status from Zazzau Emirate. The clamour began in the colonial period and has continued to present times. Ibrahim (2007, 13-17) contends that the exercise was carried out in three phases in 1911, 1995 and 2000-2001, corresponding to the colonial period, the military regime of Col. Ja'afaru Isa (rid), and the civilian administration of Alhaji Ahmad Makarfi, resulting in the creation of a number of autonomous chiefdoms from the Zaria Emirate. .

With regard to the positions of traditional rulers after independence, from all available evidence, apart from the 1963 Constitution, which created a legislative chamber in each region for the chiefs, where the emirs and the other traditional rulers had their representatives, the other constitutions i.e. 1978, 1989, 1995, as well as the 1999 constitutions did not accord the emirs my due recognition. For example, the 1979 constitution only provided for the membership of the emirs in the Council of State at the federal level, and the Council of Chief at the state level. They were sidelined altogether in the 1999 Constitution; the constitution did not assign any specific role to them in the affairs of the Nigerian state. This lack of proper recognition of the traditional rulers in the Nigerian Constitutions, no doubt, provides the basis for the call by a school of thought for the abolition of the traditional institutions. These include the call by Professor Awojobi and even the recommendation of the Political Bureau cited above.

It should be pointed out, however, that even though the traditional rulers have not been given proper constitutional backing, their position remains indispensable in the affairs of the Nigerian state as currently constituted. This is because various governments, be it military or civilian, recognize the place of the traditional rulers, particularly during crisis period. Conceived in the image of father figures in their respective domains, traditional rulers command great deal of respect and attention. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the government reaches out to the peoples of this country quicker through the traditional rulers, even though their rightful place is yet to be established by successive governments since independence.

Moreover, since the commencement of the Fourth Republic various political leaders have theorised on the institution of traditional leaders. Such theories have centred on affirming, defining and clarifying the roles of the institution under democratic governance the latest being the former Senate President, Senator David Mark, who is reported to have said in the Guardian Newspaper of July 17 2007 that,

we will continue to assist our traditional rulers and leaders who are responsible for unity and peace in order to further strengthen their roles. We shall find specific roles for them in the constitution when we finally review the 1999 constitution.

This is a clear indication that traditional rulers still command a considerable degree of respect from the government, although whether such pledges by high government officials will be fulfilled remains to be seen.

Conclusion

A run through the course of modern history indicates that the traditional institution is battling for relevance. The former Regional Houses of Chiefs were scrapped and the traditional rulers were removed from local administration since the Native Authorities were changed. In fact, with the emergence of the political elites military or civilian and the challenges against the traditional rulers, one would have thought that the role of the traditional leaders in the governance of the country would have been drastically curtailed if not abolished all together. The traditional institution has continued to remain resilient, with souring prestige as if to compete with the modern systems. This makes it almost impossible for the governments to completely sideline them in the conduct of their affairs.

Traditional rulers throughout the history of the country from colonial period to date have been very adept in reading the changing political atmosphere and adapting to it. During the colonial period, they adapted to whims and caprices of the regime by forcing their subjects to grow cash crops to pay taxes even if that would have left them vulnerable in food security. In fact, the enthusiasm demonstrated by traditional rulers to force their subjects to pay common tax *haraji*, and cattle tax *jangali*, was what led the NEPU led by Mallam Aminu Kano to demand for a radical reform of the traditional institution during the colonial period and the First Republic. In fact Mallam Aminu Kano lived, to see the abolition of *haraji* and *jangali* by the PRP governments of Rimi and Bakarabe Musa in Kano and Kaduna state respectively 1979. This was soon implemented all other state government in the Northern Nigeria. This feat however, did not lead to decline of the respect and reverence which the *talakawa* had for the *sarakuna*. Indeed, *talakawa* revolted against the Abubakar Rimi PRP government in Kano for daring to issue a query to Emir Ado Bayero in July 1982.

With the introduction of Western education (makarantanboko) into the North Nigeria during the colonial period, the British forced the Emirs to enroll their children and sons of their

slaves into schools. This was to set the stage for the *talakawa* to follow their example by sending their wards too into those schools. Very soon, the Emirs and the other traditional rulers had their sons as well as those of the *talakawa* in all facets of local and state governments, the police and the army, reaping the benefits of Western education.

The early call by late Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and others for a radical reform in traditional leadership led to the likes of Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto- who was actually co-opted into the NPC soon came at the helm of power in the North as well as the country.

When the army first came to power after the first coup in 1966 the traditional rulers were the first to give them some form of legitimacy by mobilizing the *talakawa* especially in the North West which lost the *Sardumna*, the first premier of the North. In fact, it was Sultan Abubakar III, a cousin of the late Sardauna, who led the campaign to calm the people. A symbiotic relationship had ensued between the army and the *sarakuna*. Whenever the army came to power, it was the *sarakuna* that they looked to for helping to legitimize their rule. In actual fact, by the time of the first army coup in 1966 many sons of the *sarkuna* and other traditional rulers had become very senior officers in the army and the police, which showed the foresight of the *sarakuna* in sending their sons not only to school but to the army and the police.

Nigeria's chequered political history has not helped in properly institutionalising the traditional system in the country. This epileptic changes in leadership has left the *sarukuna* a quasi-governance institution but with diminishing influence except on religious matters. The *sarakuna* on its own have kept its relevance through time by bestowing "traditional" titles on the elite's class, who, in turn would not have the system entirely uprooted.

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