

## **Abdullahi Fodio's Administrative Thesis on Corruption in the Sokoto Caliphate: Lesson for Nigerian Public Service**

By

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria since independence has been at crossroads as it comes out of one economic, political or security crisis and enters into another. Several approaches such as the adoption of the Westminster model, the adoption of the American Presidential System after the failure of the Westminster model, the convening of national conferences and establishment of various anti-corruption policies have over the years been taken to find out solution, but till date, the solution has not been found. This study, therefore, examines from an indigenous legacy, exceptional thought of Abdullahi ibn Fodio on leadership which gave guidance to the success of the Sokoto caliphate especially in the area of public service delivery. The hallmark of this study is to use the Abdullahi's model because it is closely related to Nigeria's national heterogeneous culture and to examine whether it can help in any way to save Nigeria from this state of impasse, since the imported systems have failed. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. The primary source include interview which was conducted using judgmental sampling to complement the secondary data. Certain key issues about leadership were evaluated: distribution of justice in relation to equality before the law, meritorious appointments and revenue management. The study concludes that the antidote to the current predicament is to embrace such lofty ideals emanating from outstanding Islamic scholarship. Based on the findings, the study recommends introduction of moral education in schools, removal of immunity from all the executive positions, uniform salary scale for the federal political (elective) and administrative (civil servants) positions.

**Keywords:** Abdullahi Fodio, Corruption, Sokoto Caliphate and Public service.

## **Introduction**

Corruption is efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit. Corruption, like cockroaches, has co-existed with human society for a long time and remains one of the problems in many of the world's developing economies with devastating consequences. Corruption as a phenomenon, is a global problem, and exists in varying degrees in different countries (Sunusi, 2011). Corruption is not only found in democratic and dictatorial politics, but also in feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures are equally bedevilled by corruption.

However, in Nigeria, public administration has had a chequered history resulting into scandals including fraud, abuse of power, governance failure and evasion of accountability among others. This has resulted into public sector reforms, as part of a broader initiative to improve service delivery, decision making, planning, accountability and monitoring which has also received substantial attention, interest and criticism in the past (Jega, 2005; Ekumankama, 2012).

In the name of turning Nigeria into a corruption-free society, the nation has experimented with many strategies, programs and policies. It has tried the judicial commissions of enquiry, the Code of Conduct Bureau. It had wrestled with the Public Complaints Commission to no avail. Also, it fiddled with the Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), and the National Open Apprenticeship (NOA), War Against Indiscipline (WAI), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in 1989, money laundering Act of 1995 re-enacted 2004, fee fraud (419) and fraud related offences Act of 1995. It's also advance prosecution and conviction of high ranking administration officials, tracing, seizing and confiscation of all proceeds of crime, privatization of failing public institutions, creation of an enabling environment for effective private-public partnerships, failed banks Act of 1996, banks and other financial institutions Act of 1991, foreign exchange Act of 1995 etc. But corruption instead blossomed (Imohe, 2005; Amadi, 2004). Obasanjo in year 2000 also instituted an anti-corruption commission (ICPC) under the Independent Corrupt Practices Related Offences Act of 2000, established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2003 through external pressure from the G8 Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Other institutional approaches include, the establishment of the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU) otherwise known as "Due Process", monthly publication of distributable revenue from the federation account to the different tiers of government (Ekumankama, 2012; Enweremadu, 2010).

According to Enweremadu (2010) and Ekumankama (2012), all measures against corruption have not been fruitful in Nigeria because they have operated at a level of mere symbolism. Those waging the corruption-wars are themselves corrupt. Some of the corrupt leaders still find it difficult to change the moral tone of the country. Government domination of the economic sphere significantly enhances opportunities and ability to seek rents. Civil society also still accepts or tolerates corruption. Other reasons why attempt at curbing corruption still failed in Nigeria hinges on the fact of the entrenched and institutionalized phenomenon of the country, the failure of law enforcement agencies/workforce, constitutional constraints (i.e. some provisions of our constitution seem to give immunity to some set of people), and attitude of defense lawyers using delay tactics to stall or forestall trials, thus resulting in congestion and slow pace of our court proceedings (Ekumankama, 2012).

Its altruism that an individual's political thinking is conditioned in part by his environment and in part by his psychological make-up. This is no less true of Abdullahi who saw in 19th century an unusual political situation in Hausaland. There were very serious socio-economic issues or contradictions in Hausa land between 1750 – 1800 begging for radical transformations or reorganization of the society around a new social core (Bunza, 2012).

The triumvirate founders of the Sokoto Caliphate (Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio, his younger brother, Sheikh Abdullahi Ibn Fodio, and his son, Sultan Muhammad Bello) was said to have complained bitterly of the general societal degeneration which includes among other things; oppression, corruption, self-indulgence and frivolity, arbitrary exercise of power without natural and religious respect to the rule of law (Zahradeen, 1976). They saw ignorant Malams who did not care to seek knowledge from competent scholars engaging themselves in arbitrary interpretation of the laws to suit their desires. Moreover, Islam was mixed-up with superstitions, sacrifices to objects and spirit worship. In the pre-Jihad Hausa society, true teaching of Islam could neither be seen in the palaces nor in the judicial settings. Societal administration was based upon whims and caprices of a ruler while shari'ah was highly neglected. Thus, the level of dishonesty in the palaces and judicial homes was high and there was illegitimate seizure of people's belongings, over taxation, indiscriminate imprisonment without trial and misappropriation of public funds among others (Bunza, 2012). However, where there are political problems which calls for political solutions, thought which proceeds action is employed (Ajom, 2008).

Abdullahi's project was therefore nothing but an open confrontation with corrupt members of three powerful institutions namely, the tyrannical aristocracy, '*Sarauta*' the rapacious

'*Ulama*' and the business community. From the forgoing, it becomes a challenge to the triumprate Sokoto scholars to put forward philosophical ideas that will positively change the face of their society. Philosophies that will guide policies and practice that will guide the moral behavior of individuals as well as influence public life against exploitation, domination and subjugation (Abdullahi, 1980). Against the backdrop of this leadership crises every conscientious person in Nigeria feels obliged to make contribution even if little, or most importantly, to join the struggle for the establishment of a responsible leadership that would usher in and guarantee the institutionalization and sustenance of good governance. One of the major milestones and legacies of the new Caliphate was political transformation. A complete shift from oppressive administrative machinery based on whims and caprices of those in power, to a sanitized system with all checks and balances. The issue of good governance and ensuring equity and justice regardless of one's economic, social, religious, or political status was top-most in the blueprint of the Sokoto Caliphate.

Hence this study focus on an assessment of Abdullahi Ibn Fodio's political idea on corruption in the administration of the Sokoto Caliphate from the Islamic perspective as the main reference point for expounding the Islamic system of social justice, leadership responsibility and good governance in Nigeria. This attempt is novel. Its novelty makes it possible to bridge the gap in literature. For its afford both scholars and policy-makers the opportunity of clearly identifying important factors that are necessary but are not adequately addressed in the debates so far on leadership crises in Nigeria. While those involve in policy-making will be able to use the findings and recommendation to come up with new ideas to fast track implementation. Attempt at achieving this objective has led to the segmentation of the paper into three main sections. The first section talks about the introduction and conceptual clarification of corruption and public service, section two deals with biography and import of Abdullahi Ibn Fodio's ideas on the causes, extent and challenges of corruption in Sokoto Caliphate and section three is the conclusion and recommendations.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Corruption**

Corruption as used in this study, refer not only to the abuse of state offices for some kind of private gain but also to a whole range of social behavior in which various forms of morally questionable deception enable the achievement of wealth, power or prestige as well as much more mundane ambitions. Its entails every behavior that deviates from

accepted norm especially in the public space, such behavior usually confers undue and/or unmerited advantages on the perpetrators. Such behavior also expresses the notion of a betrayal of trust especially in a democracy where public office is held in trust for the people. According to Saliu (2012), Cockcroft (2014), political corruption involves the use of public office by politicians to amass wealth for themselves and of course using their political position to actualize a sit-tight syndrome without allowing others to participate. Corruption is also referred to as the abuse of conferred political monopoly. This may involve bribetaking, the inflation of contracts, the diversion of resources, fraud, offering or receiving kick-backs, the falsification of certificates, tax evasion, rigging election, etc. Corruption is seen as a “daunting obstacle to sustainable development”, a constraint on education, health care and poverty alleviation.

For the purpose of clarity and focus, this paper concord with (Sunusi, 2011, p.12) that corruption undermines moral values, weakens the rule of law and undermines equality between citizens, which leads to social instability and poor and inadequate institutions. It also has an impact on the political life, in general and democratic practices, in particular corruption engender unquantifiable devastation and undermined the rule of law. Its widespread in Nigeria made it a mere culture of identity that cut across gender and involves every existing ethnic group that made up of the country. It obstructed our collective quest for democracy and the performance of many institutions of both private and public sectors, making them dull, sluggish, inefficient and ineffective, if not completely incapacitated. Thus, it gives a lot of concern in performing their primary responsibilities and functions.

The effects of corruption in Africa can be analyzed from three main perspectives. The political, economic and socio-cultural. From the political view point, corruption has the capacity of engendering political instability, breakdown of law and order, brain drain, inefficiency of the public service among others. Viewed from the economic perspective, corruption is no doubt an enemy of economic development in the international scene, as it gives the continent a poor image in the international scene and it gives the continent poor image in interpersonal and business relationships. Mores, a nation that condones corruption is often besieged with a lot of economic and social vices. Economic and social infrastructural facilities are vandalized to create room for unnecessary replacement and purchases or conversion to personal use. Trade and commerce cannot thrive, as investors will be unwilling to invest much trade or business in this part of the world, the overall resulting effects of all these malpractices will be increase in the rate of inflation, unemployment and decline in output, foreign reserves and deterioration in the standard of living of the people. In the socio-cultural context, corruption apart from engendering

poverty has the capacity of changing the social values of a good and progressive society dramatically to nothing else than the crazy pursuit of wealth affluences, power and society recognition. People no longer appreciate the virtues of good morale, conduct and practices. Without doubt corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the African people and the African society and it continues with the people almost permanently. Africa presents a typical case whose development and the desired change have been undermined and retarded by the menace of corrupt practices.

### **Public Service**

Two concepts, public sector and public service will be clarified here. The word “Public Sector” according to (Fapohunda, 2002) is a term used to embrace all organizations that are owned, controlled and managed by the state or government. The state owned organizations are of two categories which include the Government Ministries and Extra Ministerial Departments like Judiciary and the Government parastatals include institutions like Universities. On the other hand, the term “public service” loosely describes the collectivity of specialized government institutions or agencies established by law, financed by Public money and staffed by professionals and career bureaucrats for the purpose of executing public policies (Chapman, 2000). Public service as used in this study is associated with government and it is offered by administrative bodies to people living within its region and considered essential to modern life. The term is linked with a social agreement (usually expressed through democratic elections) that numerous services should be offered to all, irrespective of income. Even where public services are neither publicly provided nor publicly financed, for social and political reasons they are usually subject to directive going beyond that applying to most economic sectors.

The public sector, represent the realm where the government operates for the benefits of the citizenry. In Nigeria, the Country's government bureaucracy is the public service. This is because government at whatever level enunciates and implements its policies, programs and projects through the instrumentally of the public service. Most public services are service-oriented (Kramer,1999). The meaning of Public service is contained in section 277(91) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1979 now section 169 of the 1999 Constitution as encompassing the civil service (ministerial departments), statutory corporations or parastatals, judiciary, legislature, educational institutions, financially wholly or principally owned by government at the State, Local and Federal levels, Nigeria Police or Armed Forces and other organizations in which the Federal or state governments owned controlling share or interest.

The public service (Ministers, Department and Agencies) has always been the tool available to the Nigerian government for the implementation of development goals and objective. It is seen as the pivot for growth of African economies. It is responsible for the creation of an appropriate conducive environment in which all sectors of the economy can operate maximally. According to (Ayodele, 2014). The functions of public service include:

- i. Implementing and enforcing economies, political and social policies of the current government and
- ii. Designing and implementing public service
- iii. Raising revenue for the government
- iv. Ensuring managerial, political and financial accountability
- v. Serving the people
- vi. Monitoring and evaluating the performance of organizations (Public, private or non-governmental) that are rendering service on behalf of government
- vii. Driving all development initiatives
- viii. Delivering quality public service (such as education, electricity, water and transportation).

Public service is the vehicle for public service delivery and governance. The quality of the public service largely determines the pace of development of any nation. This is because of the crucial role public servants play in the formulation and implementation of programs of governments. The public officers who are meant to propel the engine of societal growth through the bureaucracy must as matter of principle set good examples to other members of the society by acting above board. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) has therefore provided the template for the kind of behavior expected of public service in terms of probity.

### **Historical Background of Abdullah's Life and Career: A Short Review**

Abu Muhammad was the sobriquet of Abdullahi Muhammad Fodio was the name of his father. He was a sound scholar as his nickname Fodio indicates. Fudiyu in the Fulfulde language means a Jurist or a learned man. Abdullah was born approximately twelve years after the birth of his brother and teacher Shaikh Uthman Dan Fodio in Maganimr Degel (Abdullahi, 1980). Sheikh Abdullahi received his primary education from his father (Shehu, 2015). Other teachers of Abdullahi came from his maternal and paternal relations. He is often seen as the intellectual fountain head of the Sokoto Jihad (Hassan, 2020).

Sheikh Abdullahi bin Fodio was exposed to the works of the great and universally

recognized Muslim political thinkers, erudite Muslim jurists such as Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafii, Imam Ibn Hanbali, Abu Hamid, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Farhun, Ibn Khaldun, Ahmad Baba and others who devoted their lives not only to scholarship and spread of Islam but also more importantly to the struggle for the materialization of the absolute social justice which Islam is teaching. These intellectual giants had exerted tremendous influence on the character of Sheikh Abdullahi Ibn Fodio. The life of each of the listed scholars was characterized by pure Islamic favor which made them popular with the weak and hated by powerful institutions that found it extremely difficult to handle them. That was exactly how Shaikh Abdullahi Ibn Fodio was in the eyes of his contemporaries (Abdullahi, 1980; Ayagere, 1971; Hassan, 2020).

Some of his writings are; *Dhiya al – Sultaan* (1978) *Diya' al-Siyasat* (1978), *Diya'al-Hukkam* (1956) etc.

### **The Administrative Thesis of Abdullahi Ibn Fodio**

#### **Abdullahi's Political Ideas on Justice**

In his '*Dhiya'a al – Siyasaat*' Shehu al – Mujaddid Dan Fodiyo says that rendering and dispensing justice is the essence of politics in Islam, and that if one were not going to observe justice he then should never partake in politics. In order to illustrate this point (Abdullahi, 1973, p.2) cited Ibn Farhun saying:

Take note (O you reader)! That *Siyasah* (politics) is of two kinds: *Zaalimah* (unjust and illegitimate), prohibited by the *Shari'ah*, and '*Aadilah* (just and legitimate), that procures (people's) right from the unjust and wicked, and also sanctions/reprimands the perpetrators of corruption and evil. It (i.e. *Shari'ah*) obliges taking part in the latter (type of politics) because avoiding it results in neglect of (people's) rights, abandoning of (*Shari'ah*) laws and limits and emboldening of the corrupt miscreants, and (conversely), promoting and boosting the former (type of politics i.e. the *Zaalimah*) leads to opening the door of wrong doing and injustice, bloodshed, and acquisition of wealth unlawfully (looting).

The key word of the Sokoto Caliphate was 'justice' in theory and practice. One finds the following as the opening statement in the books of the Sokoto jihad leaders: 'A kingdom (country) can endure with unbelief but not with injustice', 'victory is gained through justice and defeat comes through injustice', 'justice and mercy safeguard the kingdom (country).



The basis for the well-being of the world is justice'. That explained why the Caliphate prospered during its early days, and brought a vast area under its domains, but when the leaders turned against the principle of justice, they fell into decay and internal disorder, and were finally overwhelmed, and gave way to British subjugation (Abdullahi, 2016).

### **Abdullah's Political Ideas on Ease and Kindness**

It is imperative to state here, in spite of the fact that Sheikh Abdullahi Ibn Fodio Abdullahi was revolutionary and morally courageous; to him moral courage and revolutionary feelings are not synonymous with foolhardiness, nihilism or anarchy. Like any authority on the religion of Islam, he uses so much in his political works, the word 'mankind' instead of the word Muslims or faithful whenever he talks of issues pertaining to restoration or protection of human values, human rights and human dignity. This is chiefly to show the fact that in an Islamic state, life, honour and property of all those living within its borders shall regardless of their religious persuasions, be equally protected. Violence therefore shall as much as possible be avoided and all shall be shown mercy (Abdullahi, 1978). He states that animal should be treated in a tender manner; even when they are to be slaughtered. The knife which is to be used should be sharpened and they should prior to slaughtering, be properly fed. When animal owners beat up their animals wickedly, Islamic courts of Law should punish them in a way that their case can deter others from doing the same. Even in war, Abdullahi Ibn Fodio further warns animals, unless for human consumption, should not be killed and that trees and crops should not be destroyed in the prosecution of war unless when it is absolutely imperative.

### **Abdullahi's Political Idea on Abstinence, Moderation and Asceticism**

Abdullahi (1978) clearly insists that government should avoid purchases and expenses 'that cause damage-to the treasury'. There is much ground covered in these statements. In the same vein, Shaikh Abdullahi Ibn Fodio depicts the pursuit of the Islamic principle of persuading people to be of good conduct and dissuading them from committing evils as the principal axis around which all genuine developments of life be they spiritual or mundane revolve. Abdullahi Ibn Fodio (2013) has a final word per training to the restrictions which those in authority should impose on themselves. He declares that leaders should not use their offices and resort to acquiring wealth and fame instead of concentrating on their public duties. In the same manner, Abdullahi (1956) states that once this principle is neglected, corruption of all sorts will spread on earth and Islamic affairs will get entangled and the whole world will go into ruin.

### **Abdullah i's Political Idea on the Rights and obligations of Disadvantaged Groups**

Abdullahi (1978) in his book *Dhiya al – Sultaan* (1978) *Diya' al-Siyasat* (1978), *Diya'al-Hukkam* (1956) identify certain groups in the community and regarded them as disadvantaged and provided certain special rights and obligation for them. These disadvantaged groups included women, slaves and non-believers. Women are considered as the bedrock of the Islamic Revolution and accordingly were extended rights which were denied them before the jihad. These rights, included right to education, right to representation in government, right to association and right to human dignity, not to be treated as articles of decoration or sex. Slaves also participated actively in the jihad against Hausa rulers. In the process of the jihad, most of the slaves were set free and their rights to freedom, settlements and pursuit of decent life restored to them. In spite of the Islamization process of the Sokoto caliphate, a large section of the population resisted being converted to Islam and retains their pagan religion. Their main target in the jihad was the syncretic and despotic leadership of the Hausa rulers (oligarchies), not the subject under the Islamic philosophy of “Adhimma”, then non-Muslim groups and minorities were accorded the following rights: to practice their religion and right to security and protection of their lives and properties from external and internal attacks. On their parts, these minority and pagan population were expected to perform certain obligations especially recognition of this over eighty of the Islamic State, payment of “Jizya” a special levy to the State for maintenance of security and must not embark on any that could lead to the conversion of Muslims back to paganism.

### **Abdullah i's Political Ideas on Consultation, Advice and Consent.**

Consultation and advice are fundamental principles of the Islamic political process. The Shehu recalls that, the principle of Islamic government is to adhere to consultation. Allah said, ‘And takes counsel with them in the affairs’. Because the person who seeks advice, if he is less knowledgeable, he learns an opinion from the one consulted. The most remarkable feature of consultation and advice in Islamic political thought is that they are meant to be mutual; while the governed, either through the agency of the most influential members of the community or singly, are required to tender advice to their rulers, the latter are also under obligation not only to consult them and seek their advice but also to give them advice in their public and private affairs.

Abdullahi (2013), the theoretician and conscience of the revolution, was wedded to strict sharia policies and way of life. Its therefore left to Abdullahi, who also discusses the circumstances under which coercion and denial of civil liberties by state authorities were

justifiable, to state in the most unambiguous terms that ‘the house of a solid citizen should not be violated on weak evidence’ and further to stipulate that ‘the police should not search a house except on the basis of a strong suspicion based on reliable evidence’. For (Abdullahi, 1990) assertion ‘Allah forbids spying on people’ is the strongest ground for restriction both public agencies and intruding persons from actions which could undermine the legitimate liberties of individual members of the community. In effect, according to the concept of politics of Abdullahi (1978) all individual members of a nation are responsible in varying degrees, in bringing about stable politico-economic systems, moral decency and temperate life, but the greater responsibility devolves upon the shoulders of those in power.

### **Abdullahi’s Political Idea on the Role of Education and Rightful Ulama (Scholars).**

In the field of education (Abdullah, 1958) position is so clear. To him people should be educated at all cost, He posited, education is the most effective weapon for combating social and moral decay as well as economic coagulation. But to the utter surprise of the decent minded persons. Nigerians who are educated are those who are more involved in fraudulent practices abuse of office, armed robbery and amassing of ill-gotten wealth. This ugly situation created by a class of the said ‘educated’ elements can be explained by the fact that while the concept of Shaikh Abdullahi’s education is based on the basic ethical principles and protection of human values the concept of the secular education is based on pure indecent materialism (Abdullahi, 1980). For this Abdullahi breaks the ulama down into two spheres: (Ulama Al-Su) which I translate as rapacious scholars and (Ahl al-dhikr) which I translate as the upright scholars. The latter, he says are rare. He mentions the distinguishing features of each of the two classes of the Ulama. The rapacious Ulama align themselves with those in power whether or not they are in the right for fear of loss of material gain and desire to attain or retain favors as well as the desire of being in peace; peace not from Allah but from the corrupt powerful forces of disorder who are in power. This category of Ulama turns a blind eye to all socio-economic and politico-juridical ills of the society in which they live. To him the upright ulama are the last hope of any Islamic society especially when those in power deviate from the right path and tilt towards their personal whims. In the same book Abdullah quotes the Prophet as having said: “Al ulama are the heirs of the prophets) and the trustworthy of the messengers (of Allah) as long as they do not incline to the sensual comfort of the world by taking themselves into the corridors of power. Avoid them if they so behave.

## **Historical Background to Sokoto Caliphate**

It is a known fact that the Sokoto Caliphate was established as a result of the Jihad that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hausa land, and the state that emerged there from was theocratic, following the strict Islamic principles of polity, economy, judiciary and cultural practice. The Sokoto Caliphate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had emerged, as a power to be reckoned with in the Western Sudan; and it was unique for the peace and stability it provided in the whole domains inspite of its heterogeneity and multiplicity. The Caliphate was plural in all ramifications, ethically, culturally, linguistically and religiously. One finds that in spite of the fact that Islam was the state religion of the powerful Caliphate; non-Muslims co-existed with the Muslims under its control. The Caliphate simply adopted the scriptural injunction of 'there is no compulsion in religion' (Atagher, 2004).

The Sokoto Caliphate was purely an Islamic state. Kani and Gandi (1990) said that it was a direct product of the Sokoto Jihad Movement of 1804 which started in Hausaland in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Sheikh Uthman bin Fodio. The Jihad movement was an Islamic reform movement whose initial aim was the use of peaceful means to make the Muslims in the Hausaland practice Islam in the correct manner. Kani and Gandi (1990, p.3) further stated that Sheikh Uthman bin Fodio spent most of his time going from one place to another teaching and preaching. He started the preaching activity in 1774 AC at the age of twenty. This generated large follower for the Sheikh all over the Hausaland as a result of which tensions began to rise and war eventually broke between the forces of the king of Gobir and the people who rallied round the Sheikh at Tabkin Kwatto. This therefore, formed the starting point of the Sokoto Jihad Movement in the year 1804 which culminated into the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate.

The triumvirate of Sheikh Danfodio, Abdullahi and Muhammad Bello advocated for an Islamic State built on the principles and practice of Sharia. It sides as are to establish justice by the leadership. Islam, at least, in the case of the Sokoto caliphate proposes: a. A decentralized and federal system of government due to the problem of distance and poor communication system in those days (Last and Murray, 1994) b. Multiple structures of government i.e. the executive (the Caliph and his ministers (Waziri) etc. Judiciary (Qadis), Council of Ulama (Scholars) and establishment of "Shura" or consultation structure in the running of the affairs of the State. The Islamic ideals condemns feudal hereditary system of succession and advocates that it should be made open to all those who qualify to rule. The main purpose of Islamic according to the triumvirate are to establish Islam, convert unbelievers, discourage oppressors and every cause of corruption and to repair Mosques,

markets, look after the poor, aid the needy and order people to learn knowledge and teach it. The gap in this segment is that the contemporary so called “Shura” have deviated from the ideal, structure and the thought of the caliphate and Islam, just for material gain. What is significant to note is that by 1810 or so, Danfodiyo and his lieutenants had practically gained absolute control of the entire Hausa States. After his withdrawal from active conduct of the affairs of the newly gained empire, the Sheikh Balkanizes it into two; placing the Eastern part with Gwandu as its headquarters under his brother Abdullahi Fodiyo and the Western part with Sokoto as its headquarters under his son, Mohammed Bello. (Atagher, 2004). The dual administration of the empire continued under the descendants of these personalities until 1903, when the entire northern Nigeria and Nigerian region was declared the British protectorate consequent upon the death of Sultan Attahiru.

The Sokoto Caliphate which survived for a hundred years as a political entity from 1804–1903 had during this period produced eleven successive caliphs, hundreds of emirs, chiefs and their scholars. These leaders did not only develop highly impressive administrative machinery, a strong and balanced economy but also sophisticated corpus of intellectual and political thought and ideology through which the entire Muslim communities were governed and likewise related to the non-Muslim communities and systems (Last, 1967). It is how ever important to note that before the Jihad could be declared, Sheikh Danfodio had already provided a class analysis of the society where he categorized the classes in Hausa society to be made up of three district classes namely the “Mustakin” who comprised of the elite and rulers of the society and were seen as exploiters– whom the Jihad sought to uphold and were eventually uprooted. The second category was the peasants; laborer’s and mass of the people who were exploited. He called them the “Munafin”. The last category was the intellectuals who provide disinspiration, leadership and mobilization of the exploited against the exploiters as a vanguard was required for the jihad.

### **Assessment of Abdullahi Administrative Thesis Vis-à-vis Contemporary Issues of Administrative Governance in Nigeria**

#### **Revisiting Tyrannical and Corrupt Leadership**

In Nigeria, Corruption is one of the many unresolved problems. It remains a long-term major political and economic challenge for Nigeria (Osudare, 2012). Corruption has become so blatant and widespread that it appears as if it has been legalized in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2013). As (Ekumankama, 2012) notes, the cancer of corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian state. Therefore, none of the successive governments since independence is immune from it. In fact, Nuhu Ribadu, the former Chair of the

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), revealed in 2004 that Nigeria had, by way of corruption and rent-seeking, squandered over \$400 billion since independence in 1960. Similarly, according to the Executive Director of the Centre for Ethics and Self Value Orientation, over N8 Trillion has been looted from 1999 to date (Weekly Trust, 2014, p.3).

Abdullahi gave a clear and unambiguous ruling on this in his 'Dhiya al – Sultaan wa Ghirihi min al – Ikhwaan' He says:

Of the kinds of wealth that are made unlawful by Allah to the Umaraa wa ghairihm (Rulers and others – their subordinates and employees) are all those obtained through zulm (injustice and oppressive exploitation). .... And (one) type of zulm is al – rishaa (bribes) given to the Sultan (president/governor/chairman), or the Qadi (judge) and the aamil (public worker/civil servant). That is to collect something from one of two disputants or from both of them before rendering judgement or even after it. Similarly, acceptance of (ordinary) gifts by the Sultan from the subjects/citizens is the gate to all evils. Once gifts find inroads to a ruler/leader justice and equity and righteousness instantly get stripped off from him (Abdullahi, 1978, p. 174).

In the same vein Abdullah posited on the surveillance of Public Officers:

The leader should be to his employees like a shepherd among wild lions; they look after his people for him and he looks after them. All corruption comes from evil employees. The leader should investigate the case of any person who is strongly suspected of moral corruption; such as a person in whose house wine and immoral people are testified, by competent witnesses, to have been present. He shall investigate the allegation; if it is true, he shall punish the accused and stamp out the; otherwise he shall warn and chide him (Diya'alHukkam cited in Yamusa, 1990, p.9).

Nigeria Civil Service which is supposed to be based on seniority and productivity is circumvented by political consideration and nepotism. Rules for promotion fail to differentiate between productive and non-productive workers. Dismissal is uncommon except due to the prevalence of corruption and administrative bottle necks. As regards personnel qualifications, workers entering the Civil Service through the use of political or family influence may lack the required technical skills for their positions. Besides, on- the-

job training programs are weak and ineffective (Nwaze, 2011). In theory, positions are supposed to be filled based on merit but in practice, political, family, ethnic and religious considerations are important factors in Civil Service appointment; Abdullah (1956), posit that the transformation of our institutions and our societies must necessarily begin with the full understanding and appreciation of the responsibilities of leadership, its attributes and foundation and those key qualities that make a successful leader. His discourses on the foundations of leadership; qualities required of a leader; leadership, public affairs and good governance; as well as the fight against corruption, offer fresh perspectives on transformational leadership and its role in societal change. In *Dhiya al –al – Hukkaam*, Abdullah states, it is an essential obligation upon him that he should be examining his:

Employees (Subordinates), by seeking to know about them, by counting their wealth before their appointment, and by looking from time to time into their works. He shall rebuke anyone who fails in his duty, dismiss those who transgress, and replace any person against who many complaints were made. Whoever is found to have wealth above what he earns from his work, the ruler shall confiscate and restore it to the treasury (*Diya’al Hukkam*, in Yamusa, 1990, p.9).

There are cases in the history of public service in Nigeria that indicated how extremely corrupt civil servants are and how official’s bribes are collected (Nwaze, 2011, p.40) explained that:

The public servants get money from contractors and other interested parties searching, tracing and follow-up of files and other documents which require the attention of the boss. Needless to say that the file could be deliberately hidden in anticipation of gratification. A file can also suddenly develop wings and get missing if the expectations have not been met. This indicated that, public service is not worthy recommendation and there is need to check its credibility for service to humanity; justice, rule of law and honesty is absent in all aspects.

### **Primacy of Public Interest and Public Appointment.**

In Nigeria, the role of public service has come under severe criticisms within the context of the gap that exists between its anticipated role and its actual output. The public service in Nigeria is today viewed as an avenue for sharing the “national cake” among the major ethnic groups. Hence, the unending demands for fragmentation of governmental structure

into units, ministries, and departments etc. (Onuoha, 2005). Painfully though, these fragmentations are carried out in spite of the obvious difficulties in sustaining the existing ones (Kaufmann & Kraay, 2002). The situation is further aggravated by the public perception that the public service is amoral, hence, it should be plundered to sustain individual, community and ethnic survival or other primordial group interest.

Abdullahi (1978), assert that one of the swiftest ways of destroying a state is to give preference to one particular tribe over another, or to show favor to one group of people rather than another, and draw near those who should be kept away and keep away those who should be drawn near. A ruler was asked, after he had lost his throne, "What brought your rule to an end?" He replied, "Being intransigent in my views and neglecting to seek advice." Other practices (destructive to sovereignty) are arrogance and conceit which take away virtues. Collaborating his assertion, Dr. Muhammad Saed in an interview declared that: Islam aims at striking a balance between the individual and the community, which will promote individual freedom and at the same time ensure that such freedom is positively conducive to the growth and tranquility of the community as a whole. Islam does not approve of a political or economic organization which aims at submerging the identity of the individual beneath that of the community, and depriving him of the freedom essential for the proper development of his personality and talent. The inevitable consequence of nationalizing a country's means of production is the annihilation of the individual by the community; in these circumstances the existence and development of his individuality becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible.

In a personal communication Prof. Ibrahim Haruna Hassan asserted that:

The most important condition for a governor is that he should appoint for the care of state affairs such persons who have seriousness, truth and honesty. Appointments to office on the basis of favoritism are unlawful. In order to bring sanity back to Nigerian public service, all the unprofessional tendencies such as ethnicity and nepotism in appointments and promotions, lack of security of tenure and appointment of non-career public servants into key positions in the public service should be stopped. This would discourage public servants who are tempted to abuse their public offices due to frustrations not to do so.



## **Leadership and Revenue Administration**

In Nigeria, the level of accountability among public officials in the management of public affairs has consistently declined since independence. The rate of annual economic growth of the country has generally declined over the period. At the same time, the efficient and effective delivery of public service to the ordinary citizen has continuously deteriorated. A combination of these two factors has resulted in widespread unemployment and poverty in the country. A recurring decimal in the exposition of Nigeria's development dilemma is the recognition of corruption as the most imposing albatross. Almost all facets of the Nigerian economy are haunted by the specter of corruption (Saliu, 2012).

With due reference to the above, Prof. Ibrahim Haruna Hassan asserted that:

In the then Sokoto caliphate and still in the current democratic dispensation, wealth is gathered through the tax collected in different categories while there is difference in the source of which the wealth is collected and that is what differentiate Islamic and un-Islamic source of wealth. The above statement emphasized on the lawful means of tax and spending it where it is ordained by Allah. Public office is not just mere appointment/employment rather a trust by Allah to discharge obligations. And discharging obligations is the belief and obedience to Allah as indicated above. In a personal communication. Sani Garba Dankama asserted that:

The Nigerian revenue administration today is that leaders are miserly on welfare, wages and necessary development projects and are extravagant in personal accumulation and distribution of public funds to family and cronies. Thus ethnic conflict can be located at the level of exchange i.e. 'who gets what when and how'. The reward circumstances' referring to the opinion of Al-Nafarawi by Abdullahi that, 'if we do not find trustworthy witnesses in a province we may appoint the most honest and the least immoral...thus procedure should be followed in appointing judges and other administrators...so that the interest of the people may not suffer'.

Unlike nowadays appointments, employment, nominations or delegation that are not on merit. Based on the Islamic teachings, Abdullah considered choosing public office holder based on merit; finding trustworthy standard to the level of honesty and least in immoral character. In today's public service, you find non in place and that is why there is too much scandals and immorality in public service.

### **Lesson from Abdullah Administrative Theses that help the Sokoto Caliphate**

One of the major milestones and legacies of the new Caliphate was political transformation. A complete shift from oppressive administrative machinery based on whims and caprices' of those on power, to a sanitized system with all checks and balances. The issue of good governance and ensuring equity and justice regardless of one's economic, social, religious, or political status was top-most in the blueprint of the Sokoto Caliphate. The postcolonial Nigeria is yet to actualize some of the legacies of the Caliphate in terms of federalism, rule of law, management of pluralism, accountability, peace and security, toleration of opposition and equality, which are some of the major components for survival and prosperity of any nation. These are indeed the secrets for the century survival of the Sokoto Caliphate and its sustained relevance in the Nigerian setting for generations to come.

#### **Justice, Prudence, and Accountability**

Problems associated with lack of prudence and accountability in public offices has been the major cog on the wheels of development of Nigeria as nation. The responsible agencies for checking the excesses of public servants should be strengthened for good governance and development. In the Sokoto Caliphate, Abdullahi Ibn Fodio (who was in charge of the western flank of the Caliphate) directed all governors and officers as contained in *Diya' al-Hukkam*, 'that all public officers must declare their assets and interests before they assume public responsibility and do the same when they leave office. Whoever is found to have wealth above what he earns from his work, the ruler (president) shall confiscate and restore it to the treasury'. Yamusa (1990). Further, Abdullahi stresses that; the leader does not have the right to revert to acquiring power and wealth from people. Nor is he, let alone his lieutenants, permitted to either receive gifts or use his office/position to acquire wealth in excess of his lawful entitlements. Yamusa (1990). The practical application of this rule and guiding principle in the Caliphate that resulted in the fact that the early caliphs up to recently the Premier of the Northern Region late Sardauna of Sokoto did not leave behind estates and wealth, unlike the crazy show and display of wealth seen today from political leaders.

#### **Management of Pluralism**

The establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century further consolidated and strengthened the bond of cooperation among the people of different geographical locations. Integration between regions and peoples of various ethnic and tribal groups in the Nigerian areas were further enhanced. As early as 1806, and specifically in the 1850s, a number of Yoruba merchants established strong commercial and trading relations with Kano and were well established right in the city of Kano and were credited for the

establishment of the Ayagi ward in Kano Sambo, (2004). So also Muslims of other tribal and ethnic entities, especially Hausa, Kanuri and Nupe settled and absorbed as single community in most parts of Yoruba land such as Badagry, Ikoyi, Ijaye, Igboho, Iseyin, Shaki, Abeoku-ta, Ede, Ibadan and host of others. This is an indicator of the existence of cordial relationship based on mutual benefit, away from acrimony and conflicts. Ghazali (2005).

The ideology of the Sokoto Caliphate was neither ethnic nor tribal or regional affiliates; but sound Islamic creed and professionalism, which cemented peoples together. Any ethnic, tribal or regional attachments were discouraged (Ashafa, 2003; Paden, 2003).

### **Appointment of Political Officers**

One of the main reasons for the state failure in contemporary Nigeria, and developing countries generally is the appointment of incompetent, unqualified officers to shoulder the responsibility of the state. Some of the appointments were mainly due to other considerations, without recourse to professionalism, skills, and competence. Some occupy an office because their parents or masters contributed to a political party to establish government, or were sons and daughters of influential persons in the society without the necessary qualification and capability to lead. It is in very rare circumstances that you find appointment in public office purely based on merit, qualification, and competence of the candidates. The guidance of the Sokoto Caliphate on this matter could be seen in theory and practice as legacy for contemporary polities in the country. Abdullah (1978) commands that any officer to be appointed must be learned, honest and pious. He warned against nepotism and appointment of unqualified people to any public office.

### **Religious Tolerance**

It is worthy of note that, Shehu and his other triumvirate were not in any way extremists in their religious attitudes and beliefs; the same way that they were not reactionary and traditionalists. They never, voluntarily, over-stepped beyond the limits of the Shari'a for any sentiments, in religious affairs and tenets (Kyari, 1978).

In order to ensure equity among the followers of other religions they promulgated laws to address such issues. The Caliphal leadership directed all governors to take a good care of properties of diseased travelers in their territories and the non-Muslims. Their properties must be identified and should be sent to his guardian no matter the distance. He further says: 'know that a deposit left with us by a non-Muslim person who has been granted an *amana* (guarantee of protection by the state) should be sent to him wherever he may be, even if he had fought against the Muslims (his property must be protected and sent to him) (Bunza,2012).

## **Conclusion**

The paper attempted to draw from the wealth of historical treasure that the Sokoto Caliphate left behind as a lesson for the Nigerian state, and other nations as well. Indeed, most of that may be required for good governance in Nigeria such as accountability and probity, transparency and equity, management of pluralism and resolution of conflicts, social security and welfare, and development oriented programs are abound in the history of the Sokoto Caliphate. Abdullah constantly made his fellow rulers to stand up firmly for justice, opposing any form of tyranny. Condemned monarchy or any austentetuous life style by those in city. He encouraged and ensured proper use of knowledge to ensure justice. Therefore, palpable to suggest that Islamic leadership thought as portrayed by Abdullahi is a reliable alternative in addressing Nigeria's plurality, and antagonistic inter and intra-ethnic and religion relations and system of economic management that would not only address the rising poverty profile, but transform the socio-economic riches of the country

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## Appendix

Professor Ibrahim Haruna Hassan interviewed for in-depth information to this paper at the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, on 18th February 2020.

Dr. Yunus Jibril, telephone interviewed for in-depth information to this research, conducted on 20th February 2020.

Dr. Sani Garba Dankama interviewed for in-depth information in this paper at the Department of Political Science, Al-Qalam University, Katsina, Nigeria on 25 February, 2020.

Dr. Muhammad Saed interviewed for in-depth information to this article at the Department of Islamic Studies, Al-Qalam University, Katsina State, Nigeria, on 7<sup>th</sup> March