

The Establishment of the Nigerian Sokoto Caliphate: An inquest into the Background History of the 1804 Jihad in Hausa Land, 210 years After

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January first 2014, Nigeria became one hundred years after the popular 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard. The centenary commemoration of the Nigerian State generated very serious scholarly attention than any other issues in the annals of Nigerian history. While scholars channels energy in writing on the 1914 episode or epoch, very little attention have been given to the 1804 Jihad of Sheikh Shehu Usman Danfodiyo which brought the Sokoto Caliphate in to existence, and which was at the same time the headquarters of the Northern Nigerian region whose historical union with the southern protectorate occurred in 1914. Though some scholars uses the Jihad as a background to the discussion on amalgamation, the phenomenon is not given sufficient attention pointing its historical relevance to the emergence of Nigerian State in the centenary commemoration programme. The attempt to bridge this emerging lacuna in contemporary Nigerian historiography serves as the basis and the foremost objective of this paper. The paper discovers that the Jihad of Shehu Usman Danfodiyo in 1804, in Hausa land created the caliphate system that the British came to formalized, and the system, which still condition the state of affairs in modern Nigeria. Arising from this background, the essay upholds that the background history of the caliphate demands serious attention and critical reflection in 2014 given the historical relevance of the caliphate in the foundation of modern Nigerian state.

Introduction

The Sokoto Jihad of 1804 that culminated into the historic establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate remained a defining and reference point in West African history and Nigeria in particular as it created among other things the biggest Islamic empire in the sub-region in the 19th century. Though one may not said the revolution in Hausa land was a holistic success, but its legacies or imprints has remained indelible in the historic edifice of Nigerian State 210, years after.

Arising from the significance of the 1804, famous revolution in scheme of things and, the historic relevance of 2014, because of the epic 1914 amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates that brought Nigerian state into existence, we

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consider it very necessary to revisit and interrogates the forces that informed and formed the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate. The Sokoto Caliphate as it was later became pivotal as it served as the headquarters of the entire Northern protectorate during the period of the British colonialism. For format purpose, the paper is structured into the followings: the introduction, which is ongoing already, conceptual/theoretical issues, the background history of the Sokoto Jihad/the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, Danfodiyo's works in Gobir, his Hijra and the organization and course of the Jihad, the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate/Sokoto State Nigeria, the significance/legacies of the Sokoto Jihad/the Caliphate and finally, the conclusion.

Conceptual/Theoretical Issues

The issues that beg for clarification and theoretical exploration in this paper are Caliphate and the Jihad respectively. This is because they are the main concepts that underlined the discourse.

Caliphate

The term Caliphate is derived from the word *Caliph* or *Khalifa* – the later meaning, successor of Mohammed (SAW) the prophet and the head of the Muslim theocratic state¹. Deducing from this conceptualization therefore, caliphate simply mean a theocratic state i.e. a state governed by the practices, stipulations and conduct of Qur'an. It may be equally view as a territorial jurisdiction of a Caliph. Consequent upon the conquest of the entire Hausa land by 1810 or so, Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo, the leader of the 1804 Sokoto Jihad institutionalized the Caliphate system in Northern Nigeria with Sokoto being the administrative headquarters of the western part and Gwandu Kebbi, being the headquarters of the eastern section. Their various head are known as Sultan. From 1804, to date, Sokoto Caliphate has had twenty successive Sultans. This we shall see subsequently in the analysis that we shall do in the paper.

Jihad

The concept of Jihad is equally derived from the Arabic word, *Jahada* or *Al-harb*² – meaning to exert or struggle in attempt to live up to the standard and expectations of the Almighty Allah, so that one could be a good Muslim. It is also refers to as Holy War. There are two kinds of Jihad; the major and the minor or what may be called internal and external Jihad respectively³. the major or

internal Jihad connotes struggling against evil or sin, while the external or minor Jihad mean employing all kinds of methods such as; economic, political, legal, diplomatic and arm conflagration at the final analysis to protect Islamic faith and establish the will of Allah. It is when all peaceful means of reconciling issues has failed that Islam encouraged force. However, this does not mean Islam is all about violent, but peace with God⁴. In a situation where force is to be apply when other peaceful means has failed, there are strict rules that have to be obeyed or followed. The innocents such as; women, children, or invalids must never be harmed; any peaceful attempt at negotiation from the purported enemy must be accepted. The military action as the only means of Jihad is very rare. It is documented that, Prophet Mohammed (SAW) told his followers on returning from military expedition that, “this day we have returned from the minor Jihad to the major Jihad”⁵. This connotes returning from physical arm battle to the life of self-control, which is one of the essential elements of the major Jihad. The difference between the two Jihads is like questions posed before a student; in which one of the questions attracts 1 or 2 marks (minor), and the other attracts 20 marks (major). If the student spent all of his time in attempting the question that carried only 1 or 2 marks instead of directing his effort at the one that would have earned him 20 marks, the student will be regarded as an unwise student. If the difference in the reward of the Jihads are like this why concentrating on the minor?

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories seeking to explain the origins of the Sokoto Jihad. One of such is the religion-ethnic theory advanced by European historiographers and writers with Eurocentric background like Lord Lugard, Henrich Bath, M.G. Smith, Murray Last, J.E. Arnett, H.A.S Johnston⁶, etc. These writers contends that religion at the outbreak of the Sokoto Jihad was used to canvass for support, but when this strategy could not receive the desired results, the leaders changed approach and it became a Fulani-Hausa business. This theory seems to offer easy target explanations by excusing itself from the pains to a marshal out realities on ground in Hausa land before the eruption of the 1804 Jihad. In short, it is an attempt to imposed stereotyped European explanations of African history.

Rather than pitches tents with the racist or religio-ethnic theory, the paper uses R.A Adeleye's⁷ perspectives which sees the Jihad as a holistic and profound revolution unprecedented in scope and intensity in West African history as it touches every facets of life. Other events of monumental significance in African history similar to the Sokoto Jihad was the Mfecane in Southern Africa and the demised and emergence of polities in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. In brief, the Jihad of Usman Danfodiyo fall within the purview of the overall macro changes African States underwent in the 19th century. The perspective of this paper will be significantly appreciated when one knows and agrees that changes in any society at any time are necessitated by inherent contradictions on ground. The contradictions connote clashes between the old and the new forces and ideas, forces of progression and retrogression are basic ingredients that triggered revolution. The Sokoto Jihad must necessarily be seen as an intensification of the inherent contradictions in Hausa land before and during 1804 as we shall see subsequently in the essay.

The Background History of the Sokoto Jihad/the Establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate

There were very serious socio-economic issues or contradictions in Hausa land in between 1750 – 1800 begging for radical transformations or reorganization of the society around a new social core. In his book *Kitabal-Farq* and many other works, the Sheik was held to have complained bitterly of the general societal degeneration⁸ 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. The Jihad was therefore, a reaction to the hypertensive materialistic individualism prevalent in Hausa land in the 18th century⁹.

Besides the socio-economic conditions in Hausa Land, it is important to note that Islam as a religion was not practiced in its purest sense within the period under review. Islam as conceived and confessed was not only an individual relationship with his creator but also, a system of living. It is therefore not difficult to see how the leadership of the Jihad scheme revolution against the backdrop of the Islamic philosophy which was not religiously observed in Hausa Land. Islamic knowledge at the time under discourse was well advanced. As a result, Islam was transformed

from a mere belief to a faith based on awareness of the stipulations of the Qur'an and other sources that regulates its conducts and practices¹⁰. Arising from this, a search light was turned on the society in Hausa Land with all its polytheism and other social vices. Revolution amidst this kind of condition is highly predictable and inevitable.

More so, there was large number of *Jamaa* alongside *Ulama* who were found almost everywhere in Hausa Land and elsewhere in Sudan by the second half of the 18th century. The presence of the *Ulama* and *Jamaa* was very crucial in the eruption of the Jihad. Abba¹¹, was of the opinion that the ideological unity of the scholars and preachers on issues made *Ulamas* both the messenger and the message concurrently. As a result, they inspired and led the revolution. Aside conscientising the people, the social roles they played in the lives of the people in towns and villages was overwhelming and thus, constituted a vehicle that galvanised religious and political support.

Finally, the tradition of prophecies for the coming of *Mahdi* provided the necessary platform for the Sheik's support. Within the period under consideration there were prophecies concerning the coming of *Mahdi* who was believed to appear from the East amidst social chaos. At the time of the outburst of the Jihad, the leadership further strengthened these prophecies proclaimed by Sheik. Mohammed Bello was held to uphold that the Jihad would not be over until the appearance of *Mahdi* and truly as *Mahdism* started or began, scholars continued to move towards the Eastern emirates in expectation of the *Mahdi*¹². These among others were the state of affairs in Hausa Land in between 1750 to 1800 thus, fertilising the ground for the outbreak of the Jihad and guaranteeing its successes.

Dandofiyo's Works in Gobir, his Hijra and the Organisation and Course of the Jihad

By the late 1770, Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo had gotten considerable recognition and followers, and already by this time, there were enough symptoms of strain in his relationship with the rulers of Gobir. It was on record that in 1788 – 1789, the Sarkin Gobir, Bawa, called on all the Muslim scholars in his jurisdiction to perform the Eid prayers. The essence of this was to kill

Danfodiyo as it was alleged. He refused having obtained concessions from Bawa. The following were the concession;

- a) To allow Sheikh to call people to Allah in Gobir,
- b) Not to stop or hinder those who intend to respond to the call,
- c) To treat with absolute respect any man with turban,
- d) To free all political prisoners,
- e) And, not to burden the people with taxes and levies¹³.

That Bawa accepted the concessions demonstrates the extent to which he attempted to avert problem and the degree of the treat Fodiyo posed to Gobirawa authorities. By 1790s, the idea of Jihad has taken serious shape in the mind of Usman Danfodiyo and by 1795, he told his disciples to arm themselves. When Nafata succeeded Bawa in 1796, he repudiated all the clauses of the concessions given to the Sheikh, and Yunfa who took over from his father Naafata, created further restrictions to limit Sheikh's power¹⁴.

The above developments coupled with the clash with Abdal-Salam generated a crisis of relevance that triggered or occasioned the Sheikh and his family to move from Gobir to Gudu in February 1804. This historic movement also known as Hijra was like the experience of Prophet Mohammad (SAW) flight from Medina to Mecca in September 622AD¹⁵. At this point, the rubber band of their relationship was drawn to its elastic limit and only Jihad could follow.

In June 1804, the first epic clash between the Gobirawa forces and that of Sheikh took place at the battle of Takbin Kwotto. Notwithstanding the superiority of the Gobirawa army in terms of equipment and numerical strength, Fodiyo's forces won the day by the reason of their superior morale and determination. Consequently, in few years, Fodiyo's forces got practical control of the entire Hausa land and parts of the present day Republic of Niger and southward up to Ilorin and Nupe land, and part of Jukun land was brought under Sheikh's dominion¹⁶.

The Emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate/Sokoto State Nigeria

The forces that led to the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate and the modern Sokoto State are both tied together by the history and the forces of the Jihad of 1804 in Hausa land itself. In other words as stated earlier, unlike most states and towns in the Federal Republic of Nigeria today which owe their origins to activities of the

colonialists, Sokoto State was unique in a sense as it owe its origin to the forces that culminated into the establishment of the Caliphate itself before the advent of the British colonialism.

The history of the Sokoto Jihad that led to the historic foundation of the Caliphate will not be rehearsed here again. 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 balkanises 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 Bello¹⁷. 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. Till date as we have noted already, Sokoto Caliphate have had twenty successive Sultans and, these are demonstrated in the table below.

List of Sultans of Sokoto from 1804 – 2014

S/N	NAME	FROM	TO	LINEAGE
1	Usman Danfodiyo	1804	1815	-
2	Muhammed Bello	1817	1837	Son of Danfodiyo
3	Abubakar 1 Atiku	1837	1842	Son of Danfodiyo
4	Ali Babba bin Bello	1842	1859	Son of Muhammed Bello
5	Ahmadu Atiku	1859	1866	Son of Abubakar Atiku
6	Aliyu Karami	1866	1867	Son of Muhammed Bello
7	Ahmadu Rufai	1867	1873	Son of Danfodiyo
8	Abubakar II Atiku Mairaba	1873	1877	Son of Muhammed Bello
9	Muazu Dan Bello	1877	1881	Son of Muhammed Bello
10	Umaru bin Ali	1881	1891	Son of Ali Babba bin Bello
11	Abdulrahman Dan Atiku	1891	1902	Son of Abubakar Atiku
12	Muhammadu Attahiru I	1902	1903	Son of Ahmadu Atiku
13	Muhammadu Attahiru II	1903	1915	Son of Ali Babba bin Bello
14	Muhammadu Dan Ahmadu Maiturare	1915	1924	-
15	Muhammadu Dan Muhammadu Tambari	1924	1931	-
16	Hassan Dan Mu'azu Ahmadu	1931	1938	-
17	Sadiq Abubakar III	1938	1988	Grandson of Mu'azu

18	Alhaji (Dr) Ibrahim Dasuki	1988	1996 Deposed	Great-great grandson of Danfodiyo
19	Alhaji (Dr) Muhammadu Maccido	1996	2006	Son of Sadiq Abubakar III
20	Alhaji (Dr) Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III	2006	Present (2014)	Son of Sadiq Abubakar III

Source:

Waziri Junaidu, History and Culture Bureau Archives, Sokoto, Sokoto State.

J. A. Burdon, "Sokoto History: Tables of Dates and Genealogy" in Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol 6, N 24. n.d.

List of Sultan of Sokoto available at: *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/listofsultan.

The Significance/Legacies of the Sokoto Jihad/Sokoto Caliphate

The Jihad has left behind indelible imprints in the social, economic, political, religious and cultural strata of the western and central Sudan's societies. The following are its significance and legacies; firstly, the Jihad succeeded in creating a very large multi-ethnic state reminiscent of the later Zulu empire after the Mfecane in Southern Africa¹⁸.

Purdah system introduced for women and some un-Islamic practices were banned. The taking of concubines encouraged by the Sheikh culminated into population growth, which was considered a healthy development for growth and expansion of Jamma¹⁹.

The intellectual correspondence of the Islamic Scholars boosted scholarship during and after the wars. Thus, education was specifically encouraged in the caliphate. Both women and Children were encouraged to go to school. Primary education in some Fulani houses were left in the hands of elderly women²⁰.

Though the mode of surplus appropriation remained feudal, there were some fundamental changes in the economic confines of the society. There was the growth of market, free enterprise that was complemented by policy and laws fixing prices, weigh and measures²¹.

Urbanization in Hausa land got a very serious boost and new towns like Yola, Bauchi, Bida, Gombe, Kontagora, Keffi, Nasarawa, etc. emerged²².

In addition to the above significance and legacies of the Jihad, the social and political structures erected by Danfodiyo's Jihad formed

the basis of the British administration that is, the much eulogised Lord Lugard's indirect rule system of government. The same structure provided the needed institutional framework for modern local government administration in Nigeria, and this defined the centrality of Sokoto in contemporary Nigerian history. Modern northern Nigeria and Nigeria in part has continued to be conditioned by the consequences of the Jihad of 1804²³.

The Jihad under consideration created the structure in which the modern day Sokoto State derived its title, "Seat of the Caliphate". Given this background, one may not be erroneous to theorise that "no Caliphate, no northern Nigeria and Sokoto State". Sokoto State was created on February 3rd, 1976 during the regime of Late General Murtala Ramat Mohammed. Sokoto State occupies a geographical expanse of about 25,973 square kilometers, a total population of over four million people according to 2006 census and twenty three (23) local government area councils²⁴. The Sultan of Sokoto is a direct descendant of Danfodiyo and he is the spiritual head of all Muslims in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The history of the Sokoto Caliphate has come a very long way in the development of knowledge. Arising from the historical significance of the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria's developments and west-central Sudanese's history, we made serious attempt for its history to be remembered 210 years after the Jihad of 1804. It was never our intention in this paper to praise Sokoto State/the Caliphate or compared it with other Nigeria's city States, neither was it the intention of the paper to eulogized the state against the backdrop of its privilege history. Rather, the paper is concerned with historicizing issues that led to the establishment of the Caliphate. This becomes more compelling now that the country is celebrating her centenary as a result of the historic 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates, and more so, that Sokoto Caliphate happened to be located in the north and the headquarters of the entire region whose historical marriage with the south occurred in 1914.

In an attempt to achieve the aim and objectives of the paper, the theoretical construct that seek to explain the historical origin of the 1804 revolution in Hausa land has been reviewed. The background history of the Sokoto Jihad/the establishment of the Sokoto

Caliphate has been discussed, Danfodiyo's works in Gobir, his Hijra, the organization and course of the Jihad has been analyzed. The significance and legacies of the Jihad/Sokoto Caliphate in the sub-region and Nigeria has been assessed too, and the paper uphold that Sokoto Caliphate and Sokoto State in modern Nigeria happens to be among the States not only in Nigeria, but in the whole of Africa whose histories are seriously not limited to the history of European colonial adventurism.

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