

Changes and dynamics: History and evolution of political institutions in Hausaland till 1900

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ABSTRACT

The political structure of pre-colonial states in Nigeria has been a subject of scholarly debate. While some scholars have categorized specific societies such as Hausaland as stateless, others have argued that the precolonial societies were evolutionary and had evolved their political institutions. Prominent among these debates was the type of political institution that emerged in each ethnic nationality, particularly in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria. This paper examines the evolution of political institution and administrative structure in Hausaland up to 1900. It interrogates the factors that facilitated the changes and dynamics in the political institutions. Furthermore, it aimed to calibrate the stages of evolution in the Hausa political institution. The study adopts a historical approach and uses secondary sources such as journals articles, books and unpublished works.

Keywords: Hausaland, Political institutions, Pre-colonial Nigeria, Emirate system, Power

1. INTRODUCTION

In studies on pre-colonial Nigeria, several scholars have attributed migration and settlement narratives to a foreign hero with his magic sword and mandate from the god of the sky and possessed supernatural power. The hero imposes himself and his progeny on a previously unorganized people, creating new allegiances among them and mustering them into new communities in the form of states [1]. This narrative is popular among scholarly works, and it depicted the nature of state formation in pre-colonial Nigeria. There were

trajectories of state formation and a wide variety of state structure in pre-colonial Nigeria. Also, there have been diverse arguments interrogating how pre-colonial states evolved their political institutions and or characterised with statelessness. According to Horton, the four attributes of a stateless society involved the following: First, the limited concentration of authority, as it was difficult to point to any individual or group of men as the rulers of the society. Second, authority roles that existed only affected a limited sector of the lives of those subjected to them. Third, the wielding of authority as a specialized full-time occupation is

virtually unknown. Lastly, the unit within which people feel an obligation to settle their disputes according to agreed rules and without resort to force is relatively small [2]. Nigerian historian, Toyin Falola, argued that government could have a small jurisdiction, no more than a village or clan and that there are no people that would live without a recognized authority that protected land, performed rituals, negotiated peace and resolve conflicts [3]. Thus, the concept of statelessness in pre-colonial Nigeria must have been exaggerated as Obayemi referred to the politically organized body of people as not stateless societies but can be called mini-states. Furthermore, he defined mini-states as "settlements or groups of settlements without power, royal dynasties or highly centralized governments, lacking urban capitals, and much smaller both in territory and population [4]. These mini-states were similar to a clan, village group, segmentary town or land. It is pertinent to note that the economic and political forces that facilitated the emergence of political institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria cannot be downplayed.

State formation and political evolution in pre-colonial Nigeria involved a wide range of diverse power structure, authority, organizational and social-cultural structures [5]. Iweriebor argues that the political institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria took the form of centralized states and stateless society, while the former have one ruler as the focus of power and source of authority, the latter is without central authoritative structure [6]. Also Atanda posits that the three crucial factors that must be considered while examining political institutions and the state formation process in

pre-colonial Nigeria include time, space and the environment as they influenced religion, supernatural forces, economic factor, external forces, leadership and ideology of the society [7]. In addition, he gave another historical insight into the evolution of state formation that the family unit metamorphosed into an extended one that leads to a lineage, and this process foreground settlement. The implication of such a settlement was the emergence of a lineage leader. Hence, migration became an integral part of the lineage as it facilitates the evolution of the village and village head made up of several family units. The village settlement enhanced the emergence of a cosmopolitan or complex society called the clan. The political institution at this stage evolved around leaderships based on language and blood ties, as the leader exercised economic and military power. Military conquest is another means of political evolution and state formation in pre-colonial Nigeria [8]. Thus, the evolution of political institutions in pre-colonial Hausaland developed from the family units level to a village or clan system and later centralized states. The dynamics in Hausaland can be linked to the position of Iweriebor that the pre-colonial epoch was not a static era [9].

The historical background of Hausaland explored by several scholars has positioned its formation at the end of the first millennium (A.D) or even later, and by a mixture of aboriginal Negro with Berber immigrants from northern regions [10]. Also, other scholars like H.A.S Johnston further asserted that there is no doubt about the relationship between the Berbers and Negros, which occurs due to intermarriages. He further posited that the

Hausa language came between A.D. 1050 and 1100 due to the union (Berbers and Negros), and likewise, the city-states began to emerge as separate powers [11]. However, the Hausa language belonged to the Chadic group of languages, emerging from the proto-language with Shirawa, Auyokawa, Affade, Tera, Bachama, and Kerekere. These languages belonged to the Afro-Asiatic family. According to Johnston, Hausaland emerged at the beginning of the first millennium, bounded by a line that runs from Azben southwards to the north-eastern corner of the Jos highlands, westwards to the great bend of Kaduna River, north-west to the valley of the Gulbin-kebbi, and north-eastwards to Azben.

The most prominent historical origin of the Hausa states is the legendary Bayejida descent account that recorded the trip of the prince of Baghdad to Daura after settling in Bornu, and he got married to a princess in Daura. The implication of the marriage between the prince and the princess of Daura led to the birth of the seven children that founded the first seven Hausa states. Another version of this narration acknowledged the prince to be a slave. The emergence of the seven Hausa states was dated to the first 4th centuries of the millennium. The Hausa states have a common origin and tie to the Bayejida, the sons of Bayejida included Biram, the founder of Garun-Gabas dynasty, Bawo, founder of Gazaura in Daura, Kumaiyu in Katsina, Bagauda in Kano, Zamagari in Rano, Gunguma in Zazzau, and Duma in Gobir[12].

It is pertinent to note that this paper is concerned with the evolution of political institution in Hausaland and not the historical reconstruction of Hausaland. Thus, this next

section would critically examine and investigate the historical dynamics in the emergence of political institutions in Hausaland up to 1900.

2. FIRST PHASE: EARLIEST TIMES TO 14TH CENTURY

2.1. First Phase: Earliest times to 14th century

The political organization of Hausaland stemmed from the development of small agricultural communities known as Kauyuka (Villages) or Unguwoyi. These were nucleated hamlets organized for crop production and consisted of family groups with farmlands, contiguous and separated from each other. As rudimentary as it was, there was the presence of two forms of authority. First, the leader (Sarkin) was an authority concerned with specific purposes like interfering where communal discipline related to the economic field transcended the family group. The second form was the king of farming, also referred to as Sarkin Noma, with functions such as the organization of the hamlets for agricultural activities, and to perform a religious ritual in the seasons accordingly. Although there are minor issues that required the authoritarian intervention of individual family head, the Kauye (Village) was a collection of a patrilineal family group called Gidaje (Houses), and the absolute authority resides with the Maigida (Family head). Another office was that of the chief hunter, Uban Farauta (Father of Hunting), in charge of selecting men of the hamlets for hunting [13].

The political institution in Hausaland at this period revolved around family ties, blood relations and language. Political authority depended on kinship relations, and the Sarkin

Noma (king of farming) exercised authority over several Gidaje as the families within the Kauye group were related.

2.2. Second Phase: 15th to 18th century

The centralized states in Hausaland emanated due to the rise of Birane (cities) with military, economic, religious features, and fortifications called Ganuwai (city walls). The setup of the Birni (city) comprised many groups of diverse origins lacking kinship relations. Also, the economic factor cannot be denigrated while examining the emergence of such a cosmopolitan settlement [14]. The Birnin-Kano, located in the middle of the most fertile land, attracted immigrants due to its resources such as ironstone and cotton. The Birane erected walls to protect their communities from external aggression, and the invariably fortified locations played a significant role in the security of the state. Hausa states evolved around the Birni, and the government revolved around the Sarki (king). However, the Sarakuna (kings) were not the sole administrator of the Kasa (land), neither were they autocratic. The Sarakuna were assisted in governance by a class of officials called the Masu-sarauta (office holders), whose composition varied from one Hausa state (Birni) to another. In all states, the functions of the Masu-sarauta were military and civil [15].

In a bid to ensure a critical assessment of the Hausa states political institution at this period. Power was vested in a hierarchy of specialised officials with titles such as Magajin-gari (heir of the town, a general administrator), Sarkin-Kasuwa (king of the market), Sarkin-Kofa (gate-keeper), Mai-unfuwa (war-head) and the

presidents of immigrants communities such as Sarkin-turawa (chief of the Arab trading group in Kano). The Madawaki was the SarkiYaki (Commander of the army), the Masu-sarauta comprised the Yan sarki (princes), in some Hausa states, the prince held the role of Chiroma or Galadima. The Sarkin (king) was the overall authority and had his seat in the city, and often referred to as Sarkin-kasa (king of the land), meaning the king over many Garuruwa (cities) and Kauyuka (Villages), which accepts his political power.

The political institution adopted by the Hausa states was feudal as it involved a king and fief holding officials. The fief officials' relationship with the king is not by royalty or kinship but by affluence. This system led to the breakaway from the kinship, age-grade and village system and metamorphosed into rule by affluence and wealth. The new political institution of feudalism enhanced the emergence of a new territorial grouping, class system and new state formation. The Masu-sarauta emerged as the fief holders, and the Talakawa (Ordinary people) composed of people holding no official position. Although the Talakawa can move up the ladder, it is dependent on the display of outstanding military prowess by such individual. Another important office that emerged was the palace court, referred to as the Fadawa (Court officials). These were the features of the states that emerged following the Bayajjida dynasty [16]. In Katsina, the political institution witnessed the rule of eight kings up to the end of the late 15th century. In Zazzau, seventeen kings reigned before the mid-15th century, but the king list of Kano cannot be established due to the

expansionist conquests coupled with dynastic rule till the 15th century [17].

It is significant to examine the structure of the Kano administrative system would give an in-depth view of the political institutions in Hausaland. The Sarkin shared his power with a class of Sarauta from the time of Sarkin-yasi, the office of the Galadima and Madawaki gained more prominence. In the first half of the 15th century, the Galadima overshadowed the Sarki, and the second half of the 15th century marked a significant change with the reign of three Sarki, they ruled for at least 25years, Muhammad Rabbo in Zazzau, Muhammad Rumfa in Kano and Muhammad Korau in Katsina. Each of these rulers left an indelible mark on the administrative institution in their various Kasa. In Katsina, Muhammad Korau instituted the Katsina-kaka (origin/dynasty) that ruled up to the 19th century. In Zazzau, Muhammad Rabbo's death led to institutional changes such as the emergence of a dynastic change leaving Bakwan Turunku as the leader of the 15th century and the exponential development of a suburb called Zaria named after the daughter of Bakwan Turunku. In Kano, Muhammad Rumfa had established a consultative council of nine members called Taran Kano, and he was the founder of the great city market, Kasuwa Kurmi.

The political institution of the Hausa states took a radical form from what was obtained before the 13th century. The development of states, the emergence of centralized authority, and the elimination of the kinship system gave a clear indication of the evolution of a new political institution in Hausaland. The continuity of the Sarkin in office and the exercise of full power depended on his ability to maintain political

power. Also, there was the need to satisfy his followers from the wealth he controls [18]. The succession pattern to the role of the Sarkin was not by kinship as the resolve lies with the choice of a special class of the Masu-sarauta, the kingmakers (Sarakunam karaga). The successor was determined by prominence and affluence. It is safe to posit that Hausaland political institution is similar to a college-representative system of government. Also, the political institution have a militaristic attribute due to the ability of a prince who could muster the support of the leading Bayin-sarki (palace slaves) and the Fadawa (courtiers) to usurp the Sarauta, and the prince could then use the wealth of the land in pacifying the Masu-sarauta to ordain his coup and enable him to have a line of successors, even though, the Masu-sarauta is dependent on the Sarki who had the power to depose any official and appoint any individual of his choice [19]. However, once a Sarki was selected, he automatically became the sovereign power in the Kasa. Consequently, to support the position of this paper, Iweriebor has argued that the Hausa people by the 18th century had already developed centralized state systems, and as discussed in this paper, the features of the Hausa states entails kings, councils, and palace bureaucracy that exercised state power [20].

3. HAUSALAND IN THE 16TH and 18TH CENTURY: WARFAREE, EXPANSION AND CONFLICT

Kano and Katsina maintained an outstanding political hegemony in Hausa land between the 14th and 15th century. The 16th century was marked by several campaigns for imperial expansion in Hausaland. For instance, the first

half of the 16th century saw the rise of Kebbi under KantaKontal whose administrative settling witnessed the expansionism into migrants' settlement in Hausaland. However, after the death of Kontal, the vassal states regain their freedom. Consequently, the 17th century witnessed Borno incessant attacks on Kano. The numerous attacks weakened Kano and led to the kwararafa successful raid on Kano [20]. Kwararafa was formerly under the hegemonic political rule of Kano but the military nature of states in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria during the 16th and 17th century as a result of the trans-Atlantic trade aided the successful raid of the Kwararafa kingdom against Kano, Katsina, and Borno. One of the implications was the fleeing of Kano's dwellers to Daura. It is pertinent to note that Kano was not sacked during the raids as several settlements remained after the war [22].

In the early decades of the 17th century, Katsina became the most powerful in Hausaland and expressed its expansionist ideology by raiding settlements and lesser cities. Although the total dominance of Katsina over Hausaland was contested and challenged by the other Hausa states that rose to prominence, it led to rivalry, tensions and invasion among Hausa states. For instance, Zamfara attacked Katsina and vice-versa. The political tension led to a warfare division in Hausaland, Kano and Katsina attacked each other, Kebbi and Zamfara had several standoffs. Zamfara's interest in expanding on all frontiers became achievable through its raid on Kano, Zerberna, Katsina and Adar.

Invasions and territorial expansion by the Hausa states continued into the 18th century. Kebbi

became a declining power through her incessant wars with Zamfara and attacks from Gobir, and it weakened her military strength. The incessant wars continued till the mid-18th century as Gobir raided Zamfara and other Hausa states. It marked Gobir's rise to power and political expansion after a successful raid on Zamfara in 1762 [23]. In addition, Katsina was consolidating on housing the influx of foreign immigrants (Tuaregs) that made their way into other places like Tessewa and Mardi.

Hausaland in the 16th and 18th century witnessed conflict and warfare solely based on expansion and domination. Some of the factors that facilitated the rivalry and wars among the Hausa states were the superior military and sophisticated political institutions. The implications were that Kano, Katsina, Gobir, Zamfara and Kebbi emerged to full potential in the Hausaland, while Daura, Rano, Zazzau and Biram emerged later in the centuries. Pertinent to note is the inability of the Hausa states to maintain total control over the others, no absolute victors or vanquished in the period of warfare in Hausaland. An indelible mark the warfare period had on Hausaland was the adjustment of boundaries and the rise of Zamfara and Gobir in the Eastern Hausa land, Kano and Kebbi in the Western part.

4. BACKGROUND TO HAUSALAND IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The late 18th century witnessed massive immigration of Fulani into various parts of the Hausaland, they brought with them scholars and Islamic clerics with students (Jama). Hence, the early 19th century saw the Fulani, who were alien to Hausaland settled in the region and

were given court official posts due to their scholarship and literacy level. The Muslim clerics travelled from one place to another with their sermon, and each learned cleric had his community of adherents. The learning and Islamic teachings gradually changed people's loyalty from the king to the Islamic clerics. Although the Hausa people had their traditional gods and goddess such as the Uwandowa (goddess of hunting), Uwargona (goddess of Agriculture), while others believe in water spirit (Sarkin Rafi) that they sometimes make a sacrifice of virgin girl. The Islamic leaders were against this, and their jama'a revolted against the old traditional order as the kings were charged with polytheism [24]. These precipitated the significant changes in Hausaland in the 19th century and facilitated the advent of the Jihad in 1804 (the revolt between the traditional military of the old order and the Jamaa's of the new order) that led to social and political change. A case of Gobir was the acknowledgement of ShehuUsman b. Muhammad Fudio as the Jama'a as amir-al-amin of the Muslims in Hausaland. It led to a revolt in 1808 between the Gobirawa against the new establishment of the Muslim community in Gobir [25]. The success of the revolt by the Muslim community marked the evolution of a new political institution in Hausaland in the 19th century.

5. THIRD PHASE: EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL INSTITUTION IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The Caliphate in Islam is a centralized polity under the political and religious leadership of an Imam (Caliph) appointed with the consent of the Jama'a (Islamic society and clerics). The leader

of any Muslim community is referred to as the Khalifa (Leader/Successor) since the time of Prophet Muhammad. The Khalifate was simple and centralized since the community was small and spatially limited [26]. However, the 19th-century concept of the Caliphate was associated with the spread of Islam, thus, meant the expansion of the Caliphate system, the Caliph delegated his authority to subordinates who governed dependent provinces.

The emergence of Shehu Usman b. Muhammad Fudio as the Jama'a amir-al-minin of the Hausa Muslims marked a significant birth of the caliphate system in Hausaland. In the early 19th century, the Sokoto caliphate that had Shehu as the Imam was limited to Gobir with a centralized administration. The Caliph selected two vices, his brother, Abdullahi, and son, Muhammed Bello. Other officials established include the commander of the army, Ali Jedo, the temporary treasurer, Umar al-kanmu, and the Liman Muhammad. The Caliphate completely seized Gobir by sacking Alkalawa (capital of Gobir) and its traditional government. Therefore, the Caliphate became officially organized in Hausaland, the governing of the West was given to the Shehu's brother Abdullahi with Gwandu as headquarter. While Bello, son of the Caliph, was given the East with Sokoto as his headquarters, and the Shehu became the central authority [27].

In the dry season of 1805 and 1806, a meeting was called by the Shehu at Birnin-Gada but he was represented by Bello, who charged the Muslim Jama'a that came from different Hausa states to take the Oath of allegiance that committed them to expand the caliphate hegemony to all Hausa states and beyond [28].

It marked the extension of the Caliphate from Gobir and Zamfara to Kano, Katsina and Daura as they became vassal, and the Shehu became their Caliph. The expansion of the Caliphate led to the establishment of new offices like the Muhtasib (censor of morals), Wali al-shurta (armed police), Gaoler (to implement punishments prescribed by the courts), and Sa'i (collector of zakat, jizya and jangali), they were subordinate to the Caliph and directed by the Sharia. The several jihads that occurred during this period were aimed at expanding the caliphate. However, each vassal states had a local commander that leads jihad through the reception of an acknowledgement flag from the Shehu. The local commanders later became Muwabs (Lieutenants) or Emirs (the men to whom the command was delegated), the territories occupied were called Emirates, and this was what led to the Emirate system in Hausaland [29].

The Emirate system subjected each vassal states and their local commanders or Emir to the Caliph. The responsibilities of the Emirs were highlighted by Caliph Muhammad Bello as follows; first, they were in charge of military expeditions and deployment in their Emirates. Second, the Emir is in control of the administration of justice in his locality. Third, the Emir must collect tax and Waqf (Endowment). Fourth, the Emir must protect women from insult and Islam from corruption. Fifth, the Emir must oversee punishment laid down by God laws in his locality. Lastly, the Emir must aid pilgrimages and lead prayers or appoint a deputy. The Caliph was against any form of old traditional Hausa system and thereby instructed the Emirs to organize their

administration differently from the Hausa traditional system. In the Emirates in Hausaland, the officials were divided into four, these include Imams (leaders of prayers), judges, commander of the army /police, and deputies. The official posts had office titles that were similar to the old Hausa tradition such as Waziri for deputy's head, Madawaki or SarkinYaki for the commander of Army, Alkali for Quada, and Ajiya for treasurer [30].

However, the Emirates expanded and conquered territories, which led to the usage of the old traditional Hausa titles like the Masu-sarauta which comprised of the Emirs family and friends. Also, the Emirate became hereditary as they were subjected to the Caliphate [31]. The Jihad and political institution that evolved in the 19th century Hausaland extended beyond the borders of the Hausa people as far as Nupe, Yoruba and Benue rivers. Hence, even though the Jihad evolved into a new political institution, the development of the Emirates and the Caliphate did not function without the incorporation of some old traditional Hausa political institutions.

6. CONCLUSION

Hausaland since the earliest time up to 1900 had evolved numerous political institutions, and the changes and dynamic could be analyzed as a development from one level to the other. The first political institution that emerged in Hausaland was a collection of patrilineal family groups (Kauyuka) with authority and leadership based on age and blood ties. Second, migrations and settlement in the 13th century led to the cosmopolitan structure of the Kauyuka and the emergence of Birane (cities) with new territorial

grouping, the class system and new state formation. At this stage, authority was based on affluence and wealth and not kinship relations or family head. Also, the emergence of the feudal system led to a new leadership position, the Sarkin (king), recognized as the overall authority in the Kasa (land). There are other officials like the Masu-sarauta that formed a centralized government. Third, Hausaland in the 19th century witnessed a new wave of political evolution as the Caliphate system and Emirate system emerged. Hence, the changes and dynamics of the political institutions in Hausaland were influenced by migration, political economy, conflict, war and religion.

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NA

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