

TRADITIONAL RULERS IN MODERN GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYTICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract.

There are divergent views by Nigerians on the relevance or otherwise of the traditional rulership institution to modern public administration, nation building, national development and possibility of its integration to local administration in Nigeria. This paper focused on the relevance of traditional rulership institution in public administration from the pre colonial era to the present administration as legitimized by the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. The conclusion reached by this study revealed that the systemic erosion of the powers and authorities of the traditional institution in public administration started during the colonial era and has dwindled more, even in post colonial Nigeria, both under the military and civilian governments. The study argued that in spite of attempts to fizzle out the traditional rulership institution by successive administrations, their impact is very visible in the local administration of their various domains. Traditional rulers have also played noticeable roles in nation building and assisted in propelling national development in Nigeria. Data for this study was sourced extensively from content analysis. The study recommends an integration of the traditional rulership institution in modern local administration in Nigeria. It is also recommended that constitutional roles be assigned to traditional rulers in local administration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Traditional rulers, governance, Analytical discourse, Nigeria

Introduction

The traditional institution has become the object of debate in recent times in relation to its importance and relevance to nation-building, national development and the possibility or otherwise of its integration into the modern political system in Nigeria. Social institutions are dynamic, hence the expectation that political institutions both the orthodox and traditional do develop in line with the development stages of the society at each given point in time.

Before the advent of colonialism, traditional rulers were both the political, cultural, economic and social administrators and lords of their various domains. The status of traditional rulers changed slightly with the advent of colonialism as their sovereign authority was usurped by the colonialist who imposed their hegemony on the traditional rulers. Thus the traditional institutions became stooges of the colonialists. This development was meant to enable the colonialist perfect their exploitation and political domination of the colonial territory in this case, Nigeria. This systematic erosion of the powers and authorities of the traditional institutions in Nigeria which started during the colonial era has dwindled more even in post colonial Nigeria, both

under the military and civilian governments.

The concept traditional institution which this paper addresses denotes rulership or governance legitimized by claims to traditional privileges. As the active influence of urbanization and the rising influence of the state system began to shift allegiance from traditional values and privileges to embracing the inevitable pervasive influence of modernity, the allegiance to traditional institutions of governance gradually waned.

Modern governance, in contrast to traditional mode of governance, is the active institutionalization of a culture of citizenship participation, devoid of special privileges in taking collective decisions that can transform their political, socio-economic lives, as individuals in desirable ways. The bottom line is the freedom to actively participate in collective decisions unfettered by unproductive traditional loyalties and sanctions. This in essence is the legal rational authority. This participatory dimension to our contextualization has attracted the following comments:

Whatever role traditional rulers are called upon to play in this country should depend on the future of government Nigerians essentially adopt for themselves.... In a country like Nigeria where key government functionaries are supposed to serve at the pleasure of the people, there is hardly any room for persons who acquired their current social status by heredity rather than merit. (Ozor,1987:311)

Undoubtedly, since traditional institutional rulership derives its legitimacy from limited privileges, whereas 'modern' governance undermine such privileges to promote the self actualization potentials of individuals through active citizenship participation in state matter, and hence self determination, governance problem becomes increasingly manifest in the total governing process of the Nigerian state. The obvious problem is how the Nigerian people can constitute a popular government among themselves that is capable of enhancing human and societal welfare, devoid of multiple and conflictual mass mobilization of allegiance and loyalty to competing authorities; i.e traditional versus rational-legal authority levels. National ideals are, in the circumstance, sacrificed at the altar of interests into the mainstream of national development? This problematic of governance has, from the colonial era, been at the centre of the relationship between the government at the centre and the competing local loyalties in their efforts to mass mobilize the citizenry for national development.

Every citizen of a state has a local loyalty as well as a national one. The central government cannot possibly attend to every details of local administration, giving full weight to local preferences and prejudices in every issue; if it tends to, it would probably cause a great deal of resentment and unpopularity. It therefore attempts to make use of the citizens' local loyalties by delegating local functions to administrative bodies, which may be of various types, such as: a locally elected representative body, a local representative, with clearly

defined powers by the central government.(Price,1977:19)

Looking at traditional institution and modern governance in perspectives, governance problem has historical foundation that deserves meaningful probing. This is demonstrated in the transformational process of the hitherto existing distinct political groupings into the Nigerian nation state by the colonial regime. It is written that:

The first attempt to build a nation by “British colonial masters started in 1906 when the colony and protectorate of Lagos and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The second attempt was made in 1914 when the two administrations of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated and named the colony and protectorates of Nigeria. The third attempt was in 1951 when the Federal constitution was introduced.... From 1951 to 1960, Nigerian leaders negotiated soberly for a federal constitution based on parliamentary system of government.(Ojiako,1981:1-2).

It is noteworthy that the privileged Nigerian leaders that negotiated federalism and parliamentarism for the country took for granted the tensions inherent in such combination in an emergent nation with entrenched conflictual loyalties derived from a traditional political institutional order, to formally constituted authorities. Thus this paper is an attempt at assessing the relevance of traditional rulership in modern governance. The paper made some conceptual and theoretical clarifications, attempted a historical and comparative review of the changing role of the traditional institution in the Nigeria, while the final section, summaries, concludes and made some recommendations.

Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications.

Identifying the Traditional Institution

Egwrube (1988:154-157) sees traditional institution in the following words:

Traditional rulers can be described as individuals who occupy communal political leadership positions sanctioned by immorality, and are through the consent of community members granted authority and legitimacy to direct the affairs of particular ethno-cultural or linguistic groups in an ordered manner. The basis for such authority is traditional rather than charismatic or legal rationale.

The Dasuki Committee Report(1987) shares the essence of this definition when it regards a traditional ruler as “the person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the custom and tradition of the area”. Specifically, traditional institutions have been summed up as: “....the agencies and custodians of traditional practices.... the customary regulatory bodies that moderate the ordinary business of life in an ethnic

community. They include, among others:

- (a) Traditional rulers and chiefs;
- (b) The lineage;
- (c) The Extended Family System;
- (d) The Nuclear Family (marriage relations);
- (e) The age Grade;
- (f) Professional of Justice; and
- (g) Official Court Historians, Griots and Praise Singers". (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1992:64).

The focus of this paper is on the first category: the traditional rulers and chiefs.

Modern governance on the other hand is seen, essentially, from the perspective of the basic elements that are germane to its essence. First, it is an energetic system where there exists a reciprocal relationship of participation and distribution between the structures of administration and the citizens. The purpose being to enhance collective welfare. Secondly, modern governance is operationally open and visible, thus accommodating the principles of accessibility, accountability, public criticisms and responsive meaningful change in the direction of the populist welfare path. Thirdly, and as a corollary, the formal separation of Governmental powers and the concomitant institutionalization of checks and balances assume lack of arbitrariness of governance which the traditional institutions seems to undermine in a rapidly transitory society.

In defining democratic governance in Nigeria, the essence of Governance as "a systematic process of change in the political institution and processes based on the values of democracy". (Ibid) Thus, modern governance is a democratic phenomenon since the bottom line is the rapid upliftment of the living standards of the people, particularly in regard to the freedom of the people to actively participate in taking crucial decisions in matters that affect their daily living. Hence it is argued that "Democracy mustimprove our system of governance as a means of fostering the upliftment of the living standards of the people..... Nigeria must be erected on the ideals of social justice, democracy, fundamental human rights and respect for the rule of law".(Ibid).

Consequently, there has been a culture in Nigeria of a conflictual relationship between traditional institutional order of governance and modern governance. This noticeable conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity' had before now been more pronounced at the local government level. (Adamolekun, 1988). It is further reasoned that the conflict has always emanated from the interference of traditional rulers in the

operations of the modern local government, with particular reference to “the extent to which traditional rulers are prepared to allow virile and efficient institutions of local government, outside their control and patronage, to exist and assume dynamics of their own.”(Ibid).

Commenting on the above, scholars that were members of the Nigerian National Working Group that produced *Path to Nigerian Development*, Nnoli (1981:36) informs that “...the activities of the group are.....motivated solely by service to the upliftment of the vast majority of the Nigerian people.....opposed to the maintenance of inherited privileges....” To Nnoli (Ibid) therefore, governance is developmental when it is seen as a “phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological, and interhuman environment transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process.....implies increasing skill and capacity to do things, greater freedom, self-confidence, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being”.

A study on traditional institution and modern governance obviously suggests a kind of comparison between tradition and modernity, a sort of quality, movement from traditionality to modernity. Thus, theories of, or orientations on, modernization and political development of the state are germane.

Modernization

Modernization is “a process based upon the rational utilization of resources aimed at the establishment of a 'modern' society”. (Welch,1976) And a 'modern society' has been defined as a society characterized by the application of technology, by extensive social inter-dependence, by urbanization, literacy, social mobility, and a number of other such factors....” (Varma,1980:303). It “involves a breakdown of the traditional society, and the rise, of a society based on advanced technology and the spirit of science, on a rational view of life, a secular approach to social relations, a feeling for justice in public affairs; above all else, on the acceptance in the political realm of the belief that the prime unit of the polity should be the nation state”. (Sanai,1964:18-19).

Modernization is a multi-faceted process involving change in all areas of human thought and activity. (Huntington,1965:380-393).At the psychological level, modernization involves a fundamental shift in values, attitudes and expectations – the modern man or woman believes that change in nature and society is not only possible and desirable but can be brought about by him or her, that man or woman adjusts himself or herself to changes in his or her environment by the broadening of loyalties and identifications from concrete and immediate groups such as family, clan and village to larger and more important groupings as class and nation states. At the intellectual level, it involves a tremendous expansion of man's knowledge about his environment and the diffusion of this knowledge throughout society through increased

literacy, mass communication and education. Demographically, modernization implies a change in the pattern of life, a marked increase in health and life expectancy, greater occupational and geographical mobility and a shift of population from rural based to urban based areas. At the social level, it has a tendency to replace the focus of individual's loyalty to family and other primary groups to voluntarily organized secondary associations. In the sphere of economics, subsistence agriculture is replaced with market agriculture and other non-agricultural activities.

Modernization, politically situated, thus implies a complete dichotomy between tradition and modernity. It is only after the breakdown of the traditional, social and economic institutions and a basic change in the values and expectations of the people that the way is opened for the beginning of modernization. (Varma, Opcit).

Political Development

To Pye (1963:19) the evidence of political development could be traced to three different levels namely: with respect to the population as a whole; with respect to level of the governmental and general systemic performance; and with respect to the organization of the polity. The basic change in the character of the population is that the citizen behaves, no longer like a subject passively receiving orders from the higher authorities and carrying them out, but as an active participant who contributes to the shaping and sharing of political decisions; leading to a greater sensitivity on the part of the people to the principles of equality and a wider acceptance by them of universalistic laws. Secondly, with political development there develops a greater capacity in the political system to manage public affairs, control controversy, or cope with popular demands; thus enhancing the creative and participatory support of the masses in the governing process. Finally, with regard to the organization of the political system, a developing political system implies greater structural differentiation, functional specificity and integration of the participating institutions.

Historical and Comparative Review

An historical and comparative perspective would certainly involve a pre-colonial-colonial and post-colonial review of the role of the governance variable in shaping and directing the traditional institution in Nigeria.

Traditional Institution during the pre-Colonial and Colonial Era in Nigeria

Pre-colonially, an examination of the dominant political organization of the Yoruba, the Igbos and the Hausa/Fulani and Kanuri reveal a political order in which the traditional institution symbolized sovereignty and personification of the political system:

.....among the Yorubas, the political structure recognized lineage heads, chiefs and paramount ruler (the Oba).....an Oba.....could be removed from office through an acceptable modality. Vacant leadership positions were filled

through an established procedural mechanism over which the chiefs preside. The Igbo community was essentially an egalitarian society and everyone had equal right to participate in the political process through the various associations and groups of families. Among the Hausa/Fulani and the Kanembu of the Bornu empire, there was a more centralized political system. This allows some degree of political representation, some separation of powers and a reasonably independent judiciary.(Obasanjo and Mabogunje,Op cit:3).

Colonially speaking, traditional institution lost its pride of place in the various communities as it became an object of appropriation and oppression in the hands of the colonial regime. Thus, it has been written that: "The intervention of colonialism robbed this institution of the original role as the personification of the pre-colonial state and substantially changed the relationship of traditional rulers and their people." (Ibid).

Thus, colonialism radically changed the status of the traditional institution in two main ways. First, contrary to the traditional institutional order that was less opened to civil corruption; governance, under colonialism became extractive. Secondly, the traditional institution became an object of the extractive tendency of the colonial regime. Put succinctly, it is documented that:

.....where groups of people with different orientations had previously existed, the colonial powers brought them all under one dominant ruler ship. This action had dire consequences for the future political direction and development of the Nigerian nation.....the current unjust system in which those who governed is a direct result of colonial rule. Another unfortunate aspect of the colonial past is that the people are seen as the objects rather than the subjects of governance.(Ibid).

Even when there were attempts by the colonial regime to democratize the system with the introduction of the elective principle in 1922, it merely resulted in a situation whereby regional House of Chiefs that were created in response to democratic change, became objects of manipulation in the hands of the emerging political elites. It was obvious therefore that the status of the traditional institution was shaped by both the British colonialists as well as the indigenous political elites in the direction that it would not constitute a rival or threat level of authority. The paradox of the situation has been addressed thus:

But the existence of a House of Chiefs in a region (there was none at the Federal level) did not in any way increase the powers of traditional rulers....to underscore the new relationship, traditional rulers were expected to chart the course designed for them by the leading politicians of the day. Erring ones were made to pay a heavy penalty, Oba Adeniran Adeyemi II, the Alafin of Oyo, who allied himself with the opposition National Council of Nigeria Citizens,

NCNC, was deposed by the Action Group government in 1954. The Emir of Kano, Mohammadu Sanusi, who was acting Governor of Northern Region at Independence, was deposed shortly after he clashed with the Northern Peoples Congress, (NPC) governing the region. (Ibid). Even more recent was the dethronement of the Emir of Kano, Emir Alhaji Sanusi Lamido Sanusi for his vociferous comments on national issues by the APC governor, Ganduje, Abdullahi Umar, in March, 2020.

The Traditional Institution in the Post Colonial Nigeria 1960-1985

The post-colonial era was a mere enactment of the colonial experiences of the traditional institution. Thus, while the 1963 Federal Constitution was silent on the role of the traditional institution, the Regional Constitutions of the Northern, Eastern and Western Regions made provisions for Houses of Chiefs, and consequently, involved traditional institutions in partisan politics in regional governance. In this regard, we would want to produce, in greater details, the constitutional relationship between traditional institution and the immediate post-colonial regional governance; most especially that by the time of the 1966 military coup, the traditional rulers, had not only become completely subjugated to the authority of the governing politicians, but also perceived as competitors for power or as instrument of achieving and sustaining the politicians' own power.

Northern Nigeria:.... The House of Chiefs.....consisted of all first-class chiefs, who were ex-officio members of the House, ninety-five other chiefs selected in a manner prescribed by the legislature, and an adviser on Muslim law, who was appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Premier.

Eastern Nigeria: The House of Chiefs consisted of all traditional rulers, who were ex-officio members of the House. First-class chiefs appointed to represent provinces in the Region; fifty-five chiefs having such qualifications and selected in such a manner as might be prescribed by the Regional legislature and up to five special members selected by the governor on the advice of the Premier.

Western Nigeria: "The House of Chiefs had the following membership: the holders of such chieftaincies as might be prescribed by the Governor, who were to be ex-officio members of the house; eighty-seven chiefs qualified and selected in such a way as, might be prescribed by the Regional legislature; not more than four special members, who were to be chiefs selected by the governor or the Premier, and.....the President of the House of Chiefs. (Price:1977:159-161).

In view of the embarrassment suffered by the traditional institution in the hands of past politicians, the 1976 nation-wide local government reform naturally responded by insulating traditional rulers from partisan politics. According to Ola (1984:92-93):

The document puts traditional rulers above politics. It stipulates that if chiefs are interested in political office they have to resign their traditional position... Such chieftaincies are not hereditary.....it is....highly revered and respected chieftaincy that the document was concerned with.

In a nutshell, the reforms have tried to ensure that the traditional ruler performs their legislative, executive and judicial functions in an independent, non-partisan manner to remove the kind of embarrassment they had before. This seems a way of sustaining the spirit "before 1985, precisely until the 1976 local government reforms, the traditional rulers served as the ceremonial President of their local government, they still had influences on the policy decision of the local government which they belong as its President" (Imam, 1987:323). Consequent upon which, the 1979 Constitution gave the functions of traditional institution in the first Republic to democratic local government councils while in the Second Republic under the close supervision of state governments thus: "The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every state shall ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils...." (1979 Constitution of Nigeria) This practice, however, embarrassed some state governments of the Second Republic in an attempt to make the traditional institution accountable to the people's elected state governments in the governing process. For instance, the Kano State Government, under the Gubernatorial leadership of Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, was greeted with orchestrated mass civil disturbances when it queried the Emir of Kano for moving out of his domain without authority to do so from the State Government.

Historically speaking, traditional institutions are seen as naturally situated within local administration or local government sphere of influence. Their prominence or otherwise in modern governance has been centrally dictated by the organizing role of the national government in terms of how it perceived the utility or hindrance of the traditional institution to the total governance process. The challenges of modern governance in the movement from traditional society to modernity has tended to divest traditional institutions of their erstwhile executive, legislative and judicial roles in the governance of local subjects. Ehizuelen and Aidelokhai (1995:146) paint the picture thus:

Consequently, the historical experiences of local government in Nigeria have been very revealing in terms of the restructuring role of the central government. The colonial era witnessed a local administration that was a tool in promoting enlightened colonial interest..... The first republic was more responsive to demands for democratic local government due to the inevitability of ultimate electoral accountability to the masses.... The Gowon military regime saw local government as instrument for pursuing the post-war goals of rehabilitation,

reconstruction and reconciliation..... The Murtala/Obasanjo military era witnessed a first serious attempt at democratizing local government..... The Babangida military regime is replete with.....attempts to mobilize the local peoples for political and economic democratization with substantial autonomy granted to local authorities...(Guardian Newspaper,1992:15).

Governance and Traditional Institution in Nigeria 1966 and beyond.

Put pertinently, the governance problem arising from the historical interplay of the traditional institution and modern governance in Nigeria has been on how to mobilize the entire citizenry, with very limited but controllable interference from privileged traditional institutions endowed with the cultural capacity to elicit emotive sympathy and support from their very limited number of subjects, to brace-up to the challenges of national development. Given this seemingly conflict of loyalty in the governing process, the Babangida regime declared that "Hence our continued priority to integrated rural development.....and governance" (Thus, "Attention was "drawn to the fact that in order to make the political system work, it was necessary that the entire social system was to be mobilized, without which the necessary political participation of the people at various levels was not possible....change was also to be reflected in the attitudes and personality characteristics of the citizens, which implies the transformation "in slow stages of the political culture". (Packenham,1964:108-120).

The initial response was to the defect of the 1976 local government reforms. It has been noted that the 1976 reforms, and the subsequent 1979 Constitution, radically altered the locus standi of traditional institution, within the local government system. This alteration vividly demonstrated in the concrete manner in which traditional rulers have been extricated from the centre of local government operations and turned into informed observers of local government affairs. This insulation from politics was to be partly reviewed by the Babangida regime.

According to the Report of the Political Bureau of (1987) set up by the Babangida regime to midwife the transition to civil rule, the term traditional institution is regarded as a misnomer. That government should provide a legal definition for it and keep a register of traditional rulers throughout the country. That the role of the traditional institution should be confined to the local government in which it is situated; adding that traditional rulers should not be granted legislative executive and judicial functions. The Report stresses that any attempt to accommodate the traditional institutions beyond the local level will not only undermine democracy, it will also create the impression of a deliberate attempt to impose feudalism on the country and thereby deepen the stratification of our country. The report recommended traditional institutions to be officially designed in accordance with their advisory a-political role, adding that the official designation must not accord them a rival status with the principal offices of the Nigerian nation-state. Consequently, paramount rulers were appointed by government to represent the interest of paramount rulers in the

Constituent Assembly, namely: Umar Sanda Ndayako, Etsu of Nupe; Atuwase II, Olu of Warri; Gbong Gwon of Jos; Dr. Fom Bot and Kadiri Momoh, Olukare of Ikare.

Based on the report of the politico-Bureau, all matters relating to local government and traditional institutions (chieftaincy) affairs were moved to a new department under the chief executive's office headed by a Director-General following the promulgation of Decree 43 of the 1988 Civil Service Reforms(Ibid). The implication of this development was that the position of the traditional institution has been given legal backing and hence minimized the unconventional control and manipulation hitherto experienced by the institution.

Anchored on the principle of the learning process, a justification for subsequent adjustment measures were made on the Constitution: for example the 1989 Constitution, after formally retaining the institution of a democratic third-tier local government, made provision for the institution or non-elected traditional council of traditional rulers in each state of the Federation. The Constitution limited the role of traditional rulers to the establishment of traditional councils in states and local government areas "subject to the establishment Areas", and "Each of such Council for a Local Government Area or a group of local ruler appointed in the manner prescribed by law".(1989 Constitution of Nigeria).

Part II of the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution provides that the functions of a Traditional Council shall consist of:

- (a) Giving general advice to the local government council concerned;
- (b) Advising the Local Government Council concerned on their proposed development plan;
- (c) Assisting in the allocation of taxes as may be required;
- (d) Advising on religious matters appropriate;
- (e) Promoting and advising on arts and culture;
- (f) Subject to the law of the State, dealing with and advising on chieftaincy matters and traditional titles and offices;
- (g) Deliberating and expressing opinions to any organization on any matter which it deems to be of importance to the area as a whole or which may be referred to it by the government or other organizations;
- (h) Assisting in the mobilization of human and materials resources towards self-reliance, community development and welfare within the area; and
- (l) Such other functions as the Local government Council may from time to time refer to it: it further cautioned that there is nothing in the said schedule which

shall be constructed as conferring any executive, legislative or judicial powers on a traditional council.

Concretizing these constitutional provisions further for a meaningful adjustable transition to civil rule programme, Decree 23 of 1991 (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provision Amendment No.3) introduced presidentialism into local Government. The Decree succeeded in totally relegating to the background, the influence of the traditional rulers. This the Decree did by making the local government Chairman the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the local government council encompassing an area hitherto dominated by the traditional institutions. This implies that the decree adopted the advisory role of the previous statutory provisions (Ibid).

The decree thus designated a place for the traditional institutions in the form of a Consultative Council of Chiefs in each local government area which is expected to meet bi-monthly and consult with the Chairman and the Supervisory Councilors of the respective local government. By putting traditional institutions partly above partisanship, their roles as effective arbiters in state matters as well as maintaining continuity in the political system, have become recognized. These roles they seemed to have assumed during the 1992 university crisis and the electoral stalemate that greeted the annulment of the 1993 June 12 presidential election. Thus, they remained in a positive capacity as the ceremonial president able to advise government on crucial state matters bordering on tradition, custom, chieftaincy affairs and so on (Ola, Opcit). It is not strange then that the Babangida's administration accepted the recommendation of the Dasuki Committee "that traditional rulers, through the traditional council of the local government should have the draft copies of the local government development plans, annual estimates, bye-laws etc. well in advance for advisory comments before they are approved" (Ozor, Opcit:311).

Accordingly, the Babangida regime accorded constitutional and legal recognition to the traditional institutions which allowed a Council of Chiefs to flourish in each state with the power to advise the Governor on customary, cultural and chieftaincy matters (Ibid). Thus, the a-political traditional institution became public office holders of the respective local government councils as their salaries, just like those of judges and diplomats/ambassadors, are paid from the consolidated funds (Guardian Newspaper, 1991).

In effect, during the Babangida regime, 1985 to 1993, the position of the traditional institutions seemed to have assumed the "fourth level of government" in that so much powers were wielded by them which resulted in a high degree of corruption and the inevitable call for public accountability in the governing process. The traditional institution continued to enjoy this official recognition and reverence until when, on the 18th of November 1993, the Abacha's administration was born.

The Abacha's administration had high regard like other military rulers for the

traditional institution as he solicits for their counsel on crucial national issues. The only area his administration fell out with the traditional institution is the removal of Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki as the Sultan of Sokoto. If truly, Dasuki committed the offence leveled against him, his removal was justified as no one is above the law. Yet this development has tended to keep other traditional institutions in check that those who were vocal and critical of government policies and programmes have suddenly been taken aback by this new development of the Abacha's administration designed to make the traditional institution more relevant to the challenges of modern governance. This the administration did by making the institution to play critical roles assigned to it by government in the process of routine governance. Thus, it is noticeable to find conformity with government policies through mass mobilization by the traditional institution in support of government action. For instance, the Benin Monarch is reported to have publicly supported the increase in school fees in Edo State public secondary schools from N200 to N1,000 per term initiated by the then military governor.(Nigerian Tribune,1996).

Remarkably, the draft Constitution presented to the Abacha administration by Justice Kari-Whyte "provides for the establishment of a Federal Council of Traditional rulers which will act as an advisory body to the Federal Government in various issues including development plans, religious matters, arts and culture as well as mobilization of human and material resources" (Newswatch Magazine,1995:16). At the Federal level, the Abacha's regime also put in place a Committee of Traditional rulers which met at Abuja with General Jerry Useni, the then Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, to advise the Head of State on crucial national issues (Newswatch Magazine,1996:6). The Chairman of each state's Council of Chiefs was also made a member of the State's Executive/Security Council. This twist was to involve the traditional institution in giving support to government policies and programmes.

The 1979,1989 and 1999 constitutions did not assign constitutional roles to traditional rulers in modern governance. Going by the letter and spirit of those constitutions, they were mere appendages of the state governors and local government chairmen. The 1999 constitution of Nigeria, like the 1979 and 1989 constitutions confined traditional rulers activities to mere advisory capacity to state governors and local government chairmen. Going by the 1999 constitution, traditional rulers are to advice state governors on chieftancy matters, assist in maintenance of peace and security in within their domains and report breach of peace to state security agents. Traditional rulers, though not a constitutional responsibility, assist in national integration through promotion of inter state marriages and embarking on inter state visits all to enhance national integration and national stability. Also, some traditional rulers have received national and state appointments as chancellors of federal/state universities as their contributions to national development.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.

Flowing from our discussion on the above subject matter, we shall anchor our distinction between the traditional and modern government in the work of Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1972:125-127) thus:

“the traditional society is variously understood as being a predominance of ascriptive particularistic, diffused and affective pattern of action, an extended kinship structure with a multiplicity of functions, a preponderance of primary groups, a relatively simple occupational system, with little spatial and social mobility, low literacy rates, a differentiated stratification system, mostly primary economic activities, a tendency towards nurturing of social units, little outside contact, almost no change, an undifferentiated political structure with traditional elites and hierarchical source of authority....(Ibid)

In contrast, the Valenzuela's (Ibid) sum up the features of the modern society thus:

“a predominance of achievement, a universalistic specific and neutral orientations and pattern of actions, a nuclear family structure serving limited functions, a preponderance of secondary groups, and affiliations, a complex and highly differentiated occupational system, high rate of spatial and social mobility, universal literacy, a predominantly secondary economic activities and production for exchange, the institutionalization of change and self sustained growth, extensive communication network, highly differentiated political structures with rational-legal sources of authority...(Ibid).

A clear analysis of the distinctions between the traditional and modern form of government gives a clear insight into the transformation of the indigenous political system in Nigeria by the colonialists. The transformation took the shape of the total alignment of the traditional institution with the Orthodox colonial Structure of government via the indirect rule system. Thus, the sovereignty and autonomy which the traditional institution had hitherto enjoyed was lost to the colonialist. Consequently, towards the dawn of political independence and after the attainment of political independence, the post independent political leaders reduced the status of the traditional rulers by making them stooges who must take directives from the government in power to renew their legitimacy.

Even under military rule in Nigeria, the military rulers have no defined roles for the traditional institution other than to use them as a link to acquiring legitimacy for their government and also as link between the government and their respective people in their local areas of jurisdiction. Suffice to say that despite the dwindling roles of the traditional institution in modern government, Omo N' Oba Erediauwa, once summed up the functions of the traditional institution in modern times under five categories thus: “Kingly or presidential, religious, legislative, judicial and executive or administrative functions” (Erediauwa,1984:8-9). The degree to which these functions are being

performed is left to the traditional institution in question and the people in the area of jurisdiction in which they operate to assess.

Based on our analysis thus far, it is our recommendation that the traditional institution should be insulated from partisan politics so that they could maintain their dignity as father of all within their areas of jurisdiction especially during this transition years. We recommend other non-partisan roles for the traditional institution within the Nigeria state in such capacity where they could advice the government of the day on the overall development of the state and the maintenance of peace and security in their areas of jurisdiction.

It is recommended that a federal council of traditional rulers be set up at the federal level in Nigeria. If created, such body could advice the government on various national issues like religious issues, arts and culture and on developmental plans for the Nigerian states. This development will be welcomed because of the already existence of the Local and State Councils of Traditional rulers in States and Local Governments areas of Nigeria. The General Abacha government made such proposal where traditional rulers who were meeting periodically with the then minister of the Federal Capital Territory to discuss issues of national importance. All these developments are pointers to the crucial roles the traditional institution can play in the development of the Nigerian nation-state.

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