

**WOMEN AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FROM SOKOTO
CALIPHATE**

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Abstract

Women in Governance in the world and Nigeria in particular have had inadequate opportunities in political, social and political participation especially their political rights i.e. rights to vote though they still represent a smaller group in government with bigger challenges. Women participation in governance have along decade of struggle and activism. Sokoto caliphate that is ruled by sharia injunctions but before the Islamic revolution women in Sokoto caliphate lived in ignorance by Usman Dan fodio imparted the Islamic knowledge on the people especially the women folk. The political participation in Sokoto caliphate is based in an Islamic manner to ensure justice and equity. The study seeks to address the genesis of women participation in governance regarding Sokoto caliphate and the obstacles and hurdles the encounter in their struggle for better involvement in governance by using the structural functional theory.

Introduction

The process of emergence of the caliphate involved a Jihadist reform movement led by Shaikh Uthman Muhammad Fodio (1754-1817 AD). It commenced in 1774 up to 1804, culminated in the unification of over two - dozen sovereign polities, by reconstituting them into a single entity with Shaikh Uthman bin Fodio being its first and founding caliph (Usman, 1975: 55; Hiskett 1973). The Sokoto Caliphate which survived for a hundred years as a political entity from 1804 to 1903 had during this period produced eleven successive caliphs, hundreds of emirs, chiefs and their scholars. These leaders did not only developed highly impressive centralized administrative machinery, a strong and balanced economy, but also a sophisticated corpus of intellectual and political thought and ideology through which the entire Muslim communities were governed (last:1967).

Sokoto Caliphate

ShehuUsmanDanfodiyo was the brain behind the new revolutionary movement known in Islam as Jihad in the Hausaland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In other words, ShehuDanfodiyo was the engineer who planned and executed the overthrow of the Hausa ruling class and the establishment of an Islamic system of administration in Hausaland. This latter became known as the Sokoto Caliphate (Malami, 1998: 11). The establishment of the Sokoto caliphate is clearly the most important consequence of the Sokoto Jihad. The overall objective of the Jihad was to set up a state in which the Sharia would be the guiding principle of administration and regulate the activities of the state and the lives of all members of the society. (Ubah, 2006). The canon of political thought was produced in the Sokoto Caliphate which came into being in 1804 covering an area of about 250,000 square miles thus composing the substantial area of the existing Northern Nigeria, Niger and Cameroun Republics in West Africa. It was the largest Islamic polity not only in West Africa but in Africa of the 19th Century (Bako (1998).

The establishment of a new state or Caliphate and its socio-political system was based on the Islamic system of administration. When this caliphate started in 1810, it gave rise to a totally new and dynamic system of administration from the past. This shows that a new role for Shehu emerged. Apart from calling people to Islam, Shehu and his immediate then had to administer the state for the general welfare of the society in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. The caliphate was surely a complex social entity, as a result of bringing together different groups, and at times with conflicting interest under one Islamic government. This necessitated a new intellectual basis of establishing philosophical, legal as well as political processes within the framework of the Islamic law in order to deal with the new complexities of the state. The new administration had a federal structure of government with the caliph (later called Sultan) as the head (and commander - in - chief). There were also the Governor/Emirs appointed to each Province. Shehu being the leader divided these responsibilities (offices) among his companions and other prominent Muslims. The caliph was in general the overall head of the government. There were also other important institutions which supported the office of the caliph and those of the Emirs of each province. These included the office of the Prime Minister (Deputy Caliph), the judiciary, the army, the office of the muhtasib (Censor of Morals), and the bureaucracy (Malami, 1998: 14-15).

The Status of Women in Sokoto Caliphate Before the Jihad

The beginning of the 19th century marked a dramatic change in the nature of government for much of Hausa land, leading up to this period. Islamic scholars in the area had begun to voice disapproval of the bori spirit possession cult, women's dress and public interaction between the sexes (Callaway and Creevey 1994:12) Out of this context scholar Shehu Usman dan Fodio emerged and led a Jihad from 1804 to 1812 throughout much of Hausa land and established the Sokoto caliphate. When Shehu came to power his policies brought even more significant changes for women For instance, it was deemed inappropriate for women to hold public office and they were increasingly secluded in their homes. Free Muslims states became associated with seclusion and veiling (Cooper 1998:24). After the Jihad, women began disappearing from agricultural work, as this type of work was associated with slave states (Callaway and Creevey) 1994:191).Shehu did however endorse education for women, exemplified by the education of his own daughter Nana Asmau. Furthermore Callaway and Creevey suggest that through the widespread establishment of sharia law, common women, who may have had no rights in the past, did begin to have more protections (Bergstrom 2002: 11-12).

The socio-economic and political roles of women have passed through changes in three different historical epochs. The first was the role of women in the pre-Islamic or Jahiliyah period. The pre-Islamic era refers to early Hausa History up to 1500A.D (Paden 1973:45). The second concerns women during the early years of Islamization and the third after the reformist jihad. In the pre-Islamic era female seclusion was totally absent. The Jahiliyah was characterized by a strong permissiveness, granting the free mixing of both sexes in the society. During the early years of Islamization, relaxed forms of seclusion practices were introduced in the local communities. Seclusion or "kulle" during this period was weak and largely confined to a few Muslim clerics or Mallams and the ruling classes. Male or spouse supervision of female compliance to seclusion rules was weak and in some cases absent. Part of the motivation for the Islamic Jihad in Hausa land was to eradicate syncretic practices including the free mixing of the sexes in the social milieu. Strict enforcement of seclusion rules by Muslim females came during the eighteenth - century Jihad of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio. The jihad marked profound changes in the social, political and cultural conditions of Hausa Muslim women. A number of scholars including Barth (1965); Hiskett (1973, 1984); Smith (1983); Boyd & Murray (1985), have in their various studies described the economic activities of women in the open market which were challenged by Sokoto Jihad (Zakari, 2001: 109).

The Status of Women After the Jihad in Sokoto Caliphate

The dignity of women in the Sokoto Caliphate according to Shaikh Uthman dan Fodio could be maintained if they were given adequate and sufficient knowledge. He went on in *Nur al-Albab* to say that we should teach our women the knowledge of individual obligations (Fard *Ain*) as well as the knowledge of business transactions. Shehu draws the attention of Muslim brothers further in *Wasiqat al-Ikhwan* "that we should strive to teach women, children and slave, the knowledge of the Unity of Allah.This should then be followed by other religious knowledge that deals with other worldly activities - business dealings (Malami, 2006:19).As far as Muhammad Bello is concerned it is essential for every individual to have an occupation of his own, so that he will be self-reliant and avoid depending on others through begging. Being in this situation will enable every person to lead a life of decency and self-respect. In this case, any kind of legal occupation is acceptable except begging which has the meanest reward. One can clearly see the individual's obligations to have work in order to earn lawful income for his livelihood (Malami, 2006: 32-33).

Theoretical Framework

John Stuart mill (influence by his partner Harriet Taylor) wrote the subjection of women in 1869. In it, he argues that women should enjoy equal rights with men-including the right to vote. Women, he contended, were still slaves in many respects, and to argue that they are inferior by nature is to presume knowledge of nature: Until equality has been established, how do we know what woman's nature is? It cannot be said that women are housewives and mothers by nature, although. Mill does say and this position is controversial among feminists today-that they are most suitable for this role and he feels that female suffrage can only assist women in supervising domestic expenditure (coole, 1988:144; Bryson, 1992:53-63). Mill, it is suggested, contributed to liberal feminism by extending his liberal principles to the position of women (Shanley and Patemate, 1991:6) and like Wollstonecraft, he argued that the family must become a school for learning the values of freedom and independence (Hoffman and Graham, 319:2006). Throughout the nineteenth century liberal feminist had developed often as an extension of other emancipating movements. In the United States, figures like Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and her lifelong friend, Susan Anthony (1820-1906) raised the issue of women's freedom and Equality as a result of experience in anti-slavery movements (Hoffman and Graham: 2006).

The main focus of liberal feminism is on gender inequality. This group of feminists observe that men and

women are not treated equally and that the inequality that exists between them is neither biological nor of personality difference but it is rather socially organized. They, therefore, argue that women and men are fundamentally similar and that biological differences have no significant implication for ability (Lingerman and Nebrugge, 2003; Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Liberal feminists argue that although the profile of potentials and traits of individuals may vary, no significant pattern of natural variation distinguishes the sexes. Fundamentally, all human beings irrespective of sex category are characterized with a need for freedom to seek self-actualization (Lingerman and Nebrugge, 2003). The patriarchal ideology that defines women as subordinate and inferior to men further limits female's opportunity to actualize their potentials to the fullest. For example, many women may have the potential to be successful and skilled members of the work force to pursue a career in different fields including teaching engineering, medicine anthropology etc. but do not get the opportunity to develop their talent. More so, restrictions on women's employment opportunity have far reaching consequence on their ability. Thus, the combination of these factors collectively denies women freedom, self-actualization and equality with men (Ogunadiya and Amzat, 2012: 78-79).

Liberal feminism has been criticized on a number of grounds. Radical feminists protest that liberal feminism is too superficial in its approach. All feminists agree with the extension of liberal principles to women in terms of the vote and civil liberties, but radicals argue that the notion of equality is too abstract to be serviceable. The point about women is that they are different from men and to argue for equality implies that they inspire to be like men. But why? They went on that Men not only oppress women but they are responsible for war, violence, hierarchy and the exploitation of nature and their fellows. Is this the model to which women should aspire? Radicals argue that it is not equality which women should want but liberation and freedom for women. Freedom for women means being separated from men. It means celebrating their difference from men their own distinctive sexuality(Hoffman and Graham, 2006: 321).

Institutional practices and perceptions of gender roles have an impact on gender inequality. Accordingly, this perspective largely emphasizes on change as a tool for achieving gender equality in all spheres of life. Therefore, liberal feminism aims for a gradual change in the political, economic and social systems of life; they want democratic reform of the existing structures and this can be achieved through re-patterning of the very key institutions such as law, work, education, family, etc. that perpetrate gender inequality, so as to allow women to assume their rightful equal positions with men (Haralambos and Halborn, 2008). However, this is not to say that men and women are the same. Obviously, women are different from men, and to argue that equality implies women being like men is indecipherable. What women require is freedom as an expression of liberation from men. For instance, the instrument of the law can be used to correct gender inequalities and facilitate social justice based upon what people deserve to get and this can be achieved through ensuring adequate representation of women within the state. Unlike radical feminism, liberal feminism oppose revolutionary changes in society, rather they want reforms oriented towards individualism, choice, responsibility and equality of opportunity in all spheres of life (public and private) within the existing social structures with their emancipation ideology, liberals support relevant laws appealing to moral conscience with the hope that discrimination will be eliminated. They try to eradicate sexism and stereotypical views of men and women, especially in children's books, mass media, family, etc., (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008), (Ogundiya and Amzat, 2012: 79-80).

Liberal feminist idea is that changes in individual consciousness are the critical factors in eliminating women's oppression has been a strong element in the development of women's studies and has provided a useful, if limited focus on the very real legal and social barriers faced by women in our society. In women's studies, the elimination of sexism in the curriculum and balancing the curriculum has been an important (Gunew, 1994). No one benefits from gender inequality in society, because these social relations are equally harmful to men in the sense that they are denied some of the pleasures of having a close relationship with their children. However, as direct consequences, socialization in to gender roles is seen to have enormous implications for producing rigid, inflexible expectations of men and women (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008)

Research Method

The study adopts the qualitative methods by using books, newspaper and magazines, web contents and social media. The findings were analysed using content analysis to exploit the relevance of women in Sokoto caliphate.

Women and Governance in Nigeria

Aina (2012) avers that, there are sufficient evidences to prove that women are a veritable access in public offices (Aina and Olayode, 2010). In the military sphere, women play prominent leadership roles, not only in the military exploit of the Amazons of Greek legend, but also in those of the Amazons of South America

and Dahomey, in modern times. Similarly, the heroic exploits of Queen Amina in the military and political ascendancy of Zaria in the sixteenth century were paralleled by those of Joan of Arc who led her French country men to record notable victories against the invading English forces in 1429. Queen Amina conquered as far as Nupe and Kwararafa, collected tribute from far and wide and ruled for 34 years (Palmer, 1980).

The leadership roles played by both Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-kuti and Mrs Margaret Ekpo in the Nigerian pre-independence political struggles of the 1950's are incontrovertible (Sklar, 1963). Mrs Kuti was a strong advocate and campaigner for women's rights across the country. Mrs Margaret Ekpo, on her part was the only female member of the seven-man committee set up in 1951 to organise a national political organization geared towards achieving self-government within five years. She became the vice-president of the eastern house of chiefs in 1959. Indeed, it may well be that the women who spearheaded the 1929 Aba women's riot in South-Eastern Nigeria were the precursors and role models of the two better known female political activists (Nduka, 2001).

Professor (Mrs) Grace Atele Williams not only distinguished herself in the field of mathematics education, but also rose to become the vice-chancellor of the university of Benin- the first female Nigerian academic to be so honoured (Nduka, 2001). Similarly, late Prof. Dora Nkem Akunyili (OFR) who was the former director of National Agency for food and drug administration and control reduced the incidence of fake drugs from about 90% to 68% of drugs in 2001. Dr (Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, successfully transformed the Nigerian Economic platform when she succeeded in negotiating a debt-relief package for Nigeria as the finance minister (July, 2003-June, 2006) under the Obasanjo regime and also spearheaded the unpopular fuel subsidy removal policy led to protest in January 2012 under the Goodluck Jonathan regime (Aina, 2012); McGraorty, 2012). In all developing countries, women leaders abound, not just in politics but also in academia and private and public sector/organisation (Okafor, Fagbemi and Hassan, 2011).

In many African countries, such as Nigeria, obnoxious social norms, political exclusion and economic lopsidedness dictate the presence and voice of women in public life. According to the 2006 Nigerian population census figure, women constituted 49% of the total population, yet, there has been a gross gender gap between man and women especially in political representation, economic management and leadership. Political Equality is still obscure in African countries. Although, some progress has been made. As men have control over assets and have relatively better education, they have a dominant position in terms of political power. For instance, men councillors may not necessarily be highly educated but such positions are not given to women who have the same low educational level with them (Okafor and Akokuwebe, 2015).

Even with the affirmative action of 35% representation of women in political and non-elective positions in Nigeria, the number of women in the legislative houses is not encouraging as a result of the patriarchal dominance of the men in Nigeria. In the elective positions in Nigeria since 1999, it is evident that women have not reached 10% representation from 1999 till date, no woman has been Vice President of Nigeria and not to talk about President. In 2011, only one woman contested for the post of the President in Nigeria under the platform of the people's Democratic Party and she did not survive the primary election. How could she survive the primaries when she got only one vote despite the large number of women that attended the primary election but refused to vote for her even on the sympathy bases? In 2015, 5 women out of the 14 persons contested the Vice Presidential position while 14 men contested the post of president (Aiyede, 2006) had noted that the number of women in political offices has improved over the years, and is still likely to increase in future, but that the fact remains that the degree of improvement remains marginal.

Fayemi Bisi Adeleye (2013) usefully observed that: the women's movement has been able to build consensus around key issues of importance to women such as rights to livelihood and economic empowerment, access to decision making reproductive rights and health non-discrimination and the critical importance of peace. In addition, scholars, activists, community leaders, writers, thinkers, professional, rural women and politicians who are part of a progressive women's movement have been able to create a body of knowledge, thought and activism on women's rights and gender equality. Oluwole (2004) continued that women involvement in public decision making processes in the evolving present fourth republic in Nigeria has been characterized by misfortune while women have recorded robust improvement participation in some areas, the story has been quite unpleasant in certain areas. However, there is a marked significant difference from what used to obtain in the past. It is impressive to observe that women public consciousness has improved significantly in the fourth republic. They have come to the realization that a closed mouth, is a closed destiny. Women have put themselves forward in virtually every position to be contested form in the current political dispensation unlike the poor showing at other eras. Women public consciousness was particularly fascinating and impressive in the 2011 general elections.

It is sympathetic to observe that only few women emerged winners in the various positions they contested for both at the party primaries and in the general elections. Despite improved political consciousness of women and the various objectives of the National Gender Policy, it is disappointing that women still

occupy less than eight percent of elective positions at all levels of governance in the country (Oke, 2013: 67). The domino theory of patriarchy and masculinity which predominantly characterize the Nigeria society is still a dominant force that explains the entire policy in Nigeria. Men still exclusively dominate gender discourse in Nigeria's political landscape and this reflect the gap in number of seats won in general elections from 1999 till date on the bases of gender. (Oluwole, 2014).

Women and Governance in Nigeria: Lessons from Sokoto Caliphate

In the pre-colonial and colonial Nigerian women never enjoyed parity with men in issues of governance; the same is witnessed in the post-colonial era. The theory of political transformation in Nigeria is replete with issue of male dominant, and women to tokenism in participation in public affairs (Aina and Ukeje, 1998, Aina and Olayode, 2012). According to Shamim and Kumari (2002),

One of the significance goals set out by the fourth world conference on women, 1995, in Beijing was adequate representation of women in all decision making bodies (Beijing platform for action 1996). It was suggested that in any representative body, there should be a logical balance of men and women to voice the concerns of the society en masse. Good leadership and governance cannot be participatory, accountable, predictable and transparent which reasonably call for a gender balance in political decision-making. It is accepted that women's insights and values of governance can enhance and enrich the overall decision making process. It is also typically observed that women at the local level are more sensitive to community issues (Shamim and Kumara, 2002). On the whole governance in most African nations bear a masculine face, with women merely serving on stooges, and often manipulated by men, women would need concerted exposure and training to understand fully the rules of the game, and the undertones of governance. Integrating more women into public office as a potential anti-corruption remedy without addressing the collectivist culture and the inherent masculine manipulations existing in the public sphere, may prove futile, as women may succumb to the social ethics of their godfathers at the expense of public sector ethos (Aina, 2012).

The indispensable position of women in building a vibrant and productive society is indubitable. It was in recognition of this fundamental fact that as early as 1786 women were allowed to participate in teaching and enlightenment campaign embarked upon by the Shehu and his supporters. It was indeed the first challenge which the Shehu receive in the cause of his Da'wa. In order to attain the egalitarian reform which the Shehu and his companions envisaged for their people, the woman folk must be fully educated and mobilized to be responsible members of the society. Professor Ismail Balogun observes that, he (Shehu) condemn those who shut their women folk in without affording the opportunity to learn extensively (the affairs of their religion and the world). His own examples with the Education of his wives and daughters was very glaring. Shehulivelessly fourth for the economic and social emancipation of women through ensuring their right to ownership of property, inheriting of estates of deceased relatives and husbands and opening of educational opportunities (Bunza, 2013).

Through this oneness effort by the Sokoto jihadist, women in the caliphate were emancipated and appropriately placed as equal partners in progress in the realization of the ideals upon which the Sokoto caliphate was founded. One would be left in no doubt of this fact if one views the mobilization of women program chaired by Nana Asma'u in 1793-1864 (the daughter of the Shehu Usman Danfodiyo) under the yan-taru system. The study conducted by Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack on Nana Asma'u and the YanTaru confirmed that, the movement was a mass movement involving almost all women in the caliphate and not in any way restricted to few women in the aristocracy. The women network provided a platform for social service and addressing special problems related to women in the Caliphate (Bunza, 2013).

From the scholarly comments and contributions by Nana Asma'u and other women, the caliphate did not only create opportunities for women in juristic and spiritual spheres, but also on some administrative ethos such as military expeditions and other related issues in the governance of the society. The gender balance and equality achieved in this regard by the jihadist were some of the secrets of their long lasting success and the indelible impact of their ideology in the society, which had its roots from the family and then to the wider society. The annual general convention of the yantaru until today celebrated in the two major cities of the caliphate (Sokoto and Gwandu) attracting participants from all over west Africa. Women in their thousands converge to perform rituals conduct, Pilgrimage and undertake some educational sessions; similar to what was practiced during the days of Nana Asma'u, the founder of the movement some two hundred years ago (Bunza, 2013).

Conclusion

The leaders of Sokoto caliphate have played a significant and relevant role in political thoughts of Sokoto and West Africa as a whole and their ideologies and practices can still be felt in the present day Sokoto state. Women in Sokoto caliphate participation in the governance and affairs of the caliphate was not very obvious but contributed significantly in economic, social and political aspects there by making them relevant but with low participation especially in governance. The findings were related to the low participation of women in political arena not only in governance but also in political decision making which in essence have really caused a major setback in women's active involvement in governance and political participation. The study also recommend that there should be enough sensitisation and awareness

to the women assuring them of their confidence and safety in the political space so as to enable them run for offices and lend their voice in all aspects of governance.

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