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The Disposition of Sokoto *Jihad* Leaders towards Misappropriation of Resources: Lessons for Nigerian Muslim Leaders

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Abstract
This paper was designed to address the challenges of misappropriation of resources confronting Nigeria in the light of the guidance and approaches of the scholars of Sokoto Caliphate. The paper examines the relevance of their approaches in solving the contemporary evil practices of misappropriation of resources confronting Nigerian Muslims especially those in leadership. Thus, the paper delineated some leadership issues and development of Sokoto Caliphate to serve as a guide in addressing the challenges of misappropriation of resources in Nigeria. This research uses a conceptual descriptive approach in which documented sources are consulted and analyzed. The paper establishes the following findings: there was high degree of misappropriation which was attributed to the failure of leaders in governance. Lack of functional and effective judicial system as well as inordinate authority to leaders was responsible for unchecked misappropriation of state resources. In the light of these findings, the paper recommends that a leader must be firm in faith and must also be upright in his dealings when he orders or forbids a certain action; should not neglect it but should follow it up until the desired objectives are achieved. Therefore, he must not let his action fall short of his words. A leader should device means of monitoring the activities of his subjects and keep himself informed about the affairs of his people as well examine their situations through honest individuals. There should be functional and effective judicial system to control and check the misappropriation of state resources by some leaders.

Key Words: Disposition, *Jihad*- Leaders, Misappropriation, Resources,

Introduction

The founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, *Shaykh* Uthman bn Foduye (Shehu Usman Dan Fodio) and his core lieutenants *Shaykh* Abdullahi bn Fodio and Sultan Muhammad Bello were Islamic

Scholars who examined the situation of Islam and Muslims in the light of distortion and corruption in the religious and economic life of the Muslims. Among the major challenges they considered was the over burden of high taxes paid by the masses and Mismanagement/ misappropriation of state resources by some traditional rulers in Hausaland, which was supported by the activities of some venal Islamic Scholars (*Ulama'as-Su*). This ungodly and political aggrandizement suppressed the practice of Islamic values and promoted a high level of corruption and misappropriation of resources. Furthermore, this led to denying Muslims their legitimate rights to practice their religion as enshrined in the doctrines of Islam.

Hausa states before the *Jihad* period believed in the 'survival of the fittest'. It made the weak states remain perpetually under the constant fear of the strong. Acts of forced labour, confiscation of properties, assault, theft, murder etc. were the order of the day. These ungodly attitudes and behaviours are gradually resurfacing in the region that was once a politically progressive and a religiously stable state (NorthernNigeria). The deviation from the principles of *Shari'ah*, especially in leadership, in relation to acts of corruption, Misappropriation of resources and other evil practices has led to chaos and disharmony in the lives of Muslims in Nigeria. It is unfortunate that some leaders have cultivated the culture of materialism at the expense of dignity and religious values which is completely against Islamic principles and teachings. The success of the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate by *Shaykh* Usman and his lieutenants may be attributed to their commitment to justice, ensured by Islamic law, economic, and social development and their insistence on universal values and standard. The efforts of *Shaykh* Usman bn Fodio and his lieutenants in establishing the Caliphate and its leadership style succeeded in restoring the Islamic values, the foremost of which is in instilling the consciousness of Allah (*SubhanahuWa-ta'ala*) in all private and public affairs, dissipation of immoral activities such as corruption and misappropriation of public funds. In the light of the above, this paper carefully made a reflection on the approach of the Sokoto *Jihad* Scholars in addressing the misappropriation of public funds and how it can be used to discourage some Muslim leaders in Nigeria from this menace.

Leadership in Islam

The word leadership simply means to have control of the affairs of a community, a state, or a nation. Ideally, Islamic leadership is a protection of the general welfare of mankind, regardless of their race, geographical location, language and religious inclination. It also involves warding off moral and material corruption and the exposure of all acts of injustice in all its ramifications. In Islamic leadership, there is no difference of status in relation to the *Shari'ah*. This means that the ruled and the ruler are the same before Allah's (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) law. Trust is a fundamental

pillar in leadership, there is no nation that can stand without keeping trust, and there is also no success without a leadership.

Ibn Taymiyyah in Ibrahim (2011) explains leadership as a great pillar and a compulsory act in religion and religion cannot stand without it. Leadership in Islam is aimed at the general welfare of the entire members of the society not for a particular section of the state. Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) opined that leadership comprises all the laws that are related to safeguarding the trust of a state and its treasury, establishing justice and abiding by the rules and regulations of Allah (*SubhanahuWa-Ta'ala*) on the rights of human beings. Al- Baghdadi (n.d) postulated that leadership in Islam is an organized rule and regulation aimed at controlling the socio-economic and political life of Muslims generally. It is a process and a tool that brings peace, harmony, and happiness in the society. A ruler should always consider the welfare of the ruled at the expense of himself; this will make him more conscious of the burden of leadership. A leadership position is so important to the extent that the Prophet (*Sallallahu'Alaihi Wasallam*) enjoins the appointment of one person out of three as their leader when they embark on a journey.

The main objective of Islamic leadership is the restoration of the rights of the weak and the oppressed from the aggressors and oppressors. This kind of leadership should always be relied upon as neglecting it would open the door of injustice and encourage the practice of corruption. Islam warns leaders against any injustice and oppression of the weak members of society, and a just and trusted leader is among the seven categories of people to enjoy the available shade on the Day of Judgment.

> **سبعة يظلهم الله في ظله يوم لا ظل إلا ظله، الإمام العادل ... رواه البخاري**
>
> Seven people Allah will shade them under His shade, a just leader … (Bukhari Vol.2, No.660).

The above *Hadith* explains the position of leadership in Islam as important to the lives of Muslims, because it is a way of removing all forms of evils, indecencies and corruption as well as settling conflicts in the community. Man is created with so many weaknesses of which he sometimes acts without seeing the repercussions of what he is doing. From the foregoing, it reveals the importance of leadership in Islam among people. However, leaders must stand to fulfill all the task of leadership for it to get the blessings and acceptance of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*). The noble Prophet (*Sallallahu'Alaihi Wasallam*) says:

> **وَإِنَّهَا أَمَانَةٌ وَإِنَّهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ خِزْىٌ وَنَدَامَةٌ إِلاَّ مَنْ أَخَذَهَا بِحَقِّهَا وَأَدَّى الَّذِى عَلَيْهِ فِيهَا**

> Itis a trust and on the Day of Judgement it is a cause of humiliation and repentance except for one who fulfils its obligations and (properly) discharges the duties attendant thereon. (Muslim, *Hadith* no: **4823**).

Biography of Sokoto *Jihad* Leaders

The founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, *Shaykh* Uthman bn Foduye (Shehu Usman Dan Fodio) and his core lieutenants *Shaykh* Abdullahi bn Foduye and Sultan Muhammad Bello were Islamic Scholars, preachers, and visionary leaders. According to Junaidu (1978) *Shaykh* Uthman was born in Marata, in the land of Gobir, presently in Sokoto State in 1754 C.E. He was a child born into a family respected for their piety, religiosity, and total submission to the will of Allah. His father, Muhammadu Fodiyo (Fodiyo is used among the Fulanis to refer to a highly respected knowledgeable scholar) and his mother were his first teachers.

According to Bugaji and Jumare (2011) by the time he reached the age of twenty, *Shaykh* Uthman bn Fodio was refered to as Shehu among the Hausas, a man who had virtually studied, in addition to learning the Qur‟an by heart at a tender age, almost every book on Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic Sciences, Islamic History etc. At the age of twenty, he wrote his first book In Praise of the Prophet (S.A.W.). He wrote over one hundred and fifteen books on almost every subject or issue that had relevance, importance and meaning in the life of the Islamic community. Bugaji and Jumare (2011) further state that throughout his life, *Shaykh* Uthman was motivated by the desire and ambition to create an Islamic *Ummah* (Community) based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (saw) as explained by several Islamic scholars before him.

Usman (1979) states that *Shaykh* Abdullahi bn Muhammad bin Uthman bn Musa Jakolo, popularly called Abdullahi Fodiyo and Abdullahi Gwandu or Mai Gwandu was born in the year 1181 A.H. *Shaykh* Abdullahi under the guidance of his scholar-parents, committed the Glorious Qur'an to heart very early in life. He learnt other branches of knowledge and jurisprudence from his elder brother, *Shaykh* Uthman bn Fodiyo. On attaining the age of maturity, he listened to the study of the Hadith along with his brother under the counsel of his uncle, *Shaykh* Muhammad Raji in the year 1201 A.H. He acquired the science of Fiqh (Usul) from *Shaykh's* uncle, Mustapha. Tukur (1999) said *Shaykh* Abdullahi enriched himself with Arabic grammar, and wrote several books in the field. A man with extra-ordinary memory, as it is often related that he committed the whole of the Arabic dictionary to memory. He became an embodiment of religious knowledge, especially in the science of Hadith and Qur'anic exegeses. Consequently, he was at all times during the *Jihad* period on the right side of his brother, *Shaykh* Uthman bn Fodiyo. He was an ascetic (who renounced this world).

According to Abdullahi (2014) *Sultan* Muhammdu Bello, regarded as second *Amir-ul-Muminin* of Sokoto Caliphate was born in 1195AH. He was not the first son of *Shaykh* Uthman bn Fodiyo, but was the most learned. He was born into preaching, scholarship and warfare and he grew-up in all. Muhammad Bello was gifted with intelligence and an excellent memory. He studied under his parents and several scholars of his time. He was a member of the triumvirate and participated in every battle from TabkinKwatto, the decisive battle between Muslims and unbelievers and in almost all the battles in Zamfara. Before assuming office as *Sultan*, Muhammad Bello served as a diplomat, teacher, commandant of the Army, the Secretary of both the Caliphate and to his father. He was a *Mujtahid* who was prepared for the office of the *Khalifa* before assuming the office. (Smith, 1979)

Gandi (1990) said *Sultan* Muhammadu Bello succeeded his father in the year 1817CE and was *Khalif* for over twenty years. He faced several challenges particularly revolts in Alkalawa and Zamfara, etc. *Sultan* Bello reconciled with his uncle, *Shaykh* Abdullahi bn Fodiyo who was in charge of the Western part of the Caliphate. He then moved tactically and united the *Ummah* and brought about peace and security never precedented before. It brought about an expansion in economic activities and industrialization. Gandi (1990) further said that in the field of education, he built schools and encouraged scholarship. An erudite scholar and prolific writer, *Sultan* Muhammadu Bello wrote over one hundred and twenty books on such fields as administration, law, warfare and most importantly politics.

Concept of *Jihad* in Islam

Jihad is an Arabic word that has different meanings, according to Ibn Munzir (2003) "the root of which is'*Jahada'*, which means to strive for a better way of life. The nouns are '*Juhd'*, '*Mujahid'*, '*Jihad'* and '*Ijtihad'*. The other meanings are endeavor, strain, exertion, effort, diligence, fighting to defend one's life, land, and religion. *Jihad* should not be confused with Holy War, the latter does not exist in Islam, nor will Islam allow its followers to be involved in a Holy War. The latter refers to the Holy War of the crusaders. *Jihad* is not a war to force the faith on others, as many people think of it. It should never be interpreted as a way of compulsion of belief on others, since there is an explicit verse in the Qur'an where Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) says: "there is no compulsion in religion" (Suratul Baqarah: 2:256).

Ibn Taymiyyah (1968) highlighted that the word *Jihad* literally means effort, fight, battle and struggle for any purpose. But in Islamic terminology *Jihad* is a religious duty geared toward enhancing the word of Allah and suppressing the acts of corruption.

According to Umar (1984), *Jihad* in Islam means struggling or striving against idolatry,

atheism and anything that goes contrary to the Islamic philosophy of life. *Jihad* is carried out with the sole aims and objectives of suppressing tyranny insure the right of a man and freedom within his nation prevent persecution in religion and guarantee the freedom of belief to all people. Not only in peace but also in war, Islam prohibits terrorism, kidnapping, and hijacking, when carried out against civilians. Whoever commits such violations is considered a murderer in Islam, and is to be punished by the Islamic state.

Misappropriation of Resources by Nigerian Leaders

Misappropriation of state resources is among the menace in leadership in contemporary Nigeria (1999 to date). Misappropriation of state resources is synonymous to embezzlement which simply means theft of public resources by public officials. It is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed. In Nigeria today, misappropriation of public funds is one of the most common ways of economic accumulation, perhaps, due to lack of strict regulatory systems (Agbiboa, 2012). According to Hornby (1988), misappropriation may be defined as unauthorized, improper, or unlawful use of funds or other property for purposes other than that for which they are intended. The synonyms of misappropriation are embezzlement, expropriation, stealing, theft and defalcation. In Nigeria, misappropriation has become commonplace to find, many leaders have been accused of misappropriating public funds making it lawful for themselves, their family and friends. Even Governors are involved in cases of embezzlement of state funds. For instance, in Nigeria, Dataphyte Research (2022) revealed that the past Governors from the northeast allegedly stole more state resources than their other colleagues with the northwest governors trailing at second place in the amount of state resources they were suspected to have pillaged. The estimated sums allegedly embezzled by the past Governors amounted to a total of ₦355.80 billion in the North-east, ₦316.36 billion in the Northwest, ₦161.160 billion in South-South, ₦ 62.67 billion in South-East, ₦56.16 billion in North-Central, and ₦23.30 billion in South-West (EFCC, Dataphyte Research-www.dataphyte.com on 2nd January 2022).

The list of the affected Governors was equally cited in connection with the above financial scandals. However, the disheartening situation was that the affected persons were still shamelessly parading themselves as leaders. Perhaps, because the level of corruption or misconception of perception, leads to positioning them as masters over their people and hence they can exercise every authority. The foregoing submission explains the level of misappropriation in governance in Nigeria from 1999 to 2022. Perhaps this could be the reason of attribution of backwardness and exaggeration in crimes, insecurity, and violence in the Country. There are many responses and

measures taken by the Nigerian Government to combat this menace. One of the approaches is institutional strategy. The Code of Conduct Bureau was established since 1970s to ensure compliance, accountability and transparency of the public office holders. They are to declare their assets on assumption of office and when leaving. Another institution is the Public Complain Commission which is responsible for handling complains and petitions from the public on misconduct of public office holders. The PCC was established in 1980. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) was established on 29th September 2000 as the agency for fighting corruption and misappropriation of state resources. The Commission is to receive complaints, investigate and prosecute offenders. It is also to educate and enlighten the public about the practices that are considered as bribery and corruption. It failed to make serious prosecutions and curb corrupt practices as expected.

With the failure of the ICPC, the Nigerian government did not relent in its efforts to remedy the evil practices of corruption in public services in Nigeria. Another anti-corruption agency called the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in April 2003. The Commission is empowered to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize economic and financial crimes and is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of other laws and regulations relating to economic and financial crimes, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Establishment Act 2004, the Money Laundering Act 1995, the Money Laundering Prohibition Act 2004, the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Act 1995, the Failed Banks and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act 1994, the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act 1991 and Miscellaneous Act 1998 (Aiyede, 2008).

The Approaches of Sokoto *Jihad* Scholars in Fighting Misappropriation of State Resources

The success of the Sokoto *Jihad* scholars in the establishment of the Caliphate was a reflection of their focus on values and ideals that are related to the conduct of public affairs by those in position of authority and power, and ideals which govern the conduct of the political community and of the government such as justice, consultation, advice, consent, kindness, unity, humility, moderation, integrity, probity, honesty and service to community were the keys for their success in administration. This made the style of leadership of the Caliphate subject to thought and admiration even among its enemies. The secret behind such unparalleled success in the history of governance in African regions was no other thing than their sincere adherence and commitment to Islamic guidance.

Shaykh Abdullahi *bn* Foduye in *Diya' al-Hakkam (nd)* affirmed that no person is made a ruler over the people to become their master; he is to serve their religious and temporal interests.

The Governor must not think that he is the owner of the province over which he is made to rule, whereby the resources and the land become his personal property which he can give to whom he likes and deny whom he wishes. Furthermore, he declares that leaders should not abuse their offices and 'resort to acquiring wealth and fame, instead of concentrating on their public duties. In addition, *shaykh* Abdullahi further says that for the avoidance of insistence in the misappropriation of government fund, people should be governed by those who are being put to test through the administration of their affairs' and that whomsoever Allah gives fame and puts to test through entrusting the people and the running of their affairs to his care, it is appropriate for him to accept the decision of Allah and seek deliverance and assistance in the execution of the duty.

The above statement of *shaykh* Abdullah indicates that three essentials are required for appropriation in dealing with government funds and these are: consciousness of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) in handling what was entrusted to a person of the affairs of people, ability to accept and execute the decision of religion, and then seek the guidance and assistance of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) in the execution of duty. Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) in describing such qualities in a leader says:

پ پ د د ئا ئا ئه ئەئو ئو ئۇ ئۇ ئۆ چ الأنبياء: ٩٠

Verily, they used to hasten on to do good deeds, and they used to call on Us with hope and fear, and used to humble themselves before Us. (Surah al-Anbiya' : 90)

Furthermore, *Shaykh* Abdullahi *bn* Foduye insisted that leaders should avoid purchases and expenses that cause damage to the treasury. Caliph Muhammad Bello's (nd) stand is reflected in his Book *Majmu' ar-Rasa'il* where he advises Umarun Dallaji, that the *amir* should be moderate in his worldly life. Therefore, a leader should do good to others, love goodness and good people, abhor evil and evil doers. In his submission, Caliph Muhammad Bello in *Usul as-Siyasah* (nd) opined that the proper thing is for leadership 'to be given to a servant of Allah who will be responsible for it'. However, he warned: 'Truly, the servant (of Allah, the chief) is accountable for his speech, his actions and his circumstances. If he is an Emir, he will be responsible for both his subjects (*ra'iya*) and himself, just as he is for the administrators over his subjects ('*ummal ra'iyatihi)*.

The appointment of qualified and competent persons in public offices should be purely based on their credentials and competence. In view of this, Caliph Muhammad Bello in *al-Ghayth al-Shubub* (nd) offer guides in the following submission:

> Know also that most of the evil that befall the state come from the appointment of officers who are anxious to have the appointment, because none would be keen on such, but a thief in the garb of hermit and a fox in the guise of a pious worshipper. Someone who is keen in the collection of money, sacrificing for such his religion and integrity,

> all his endeavors are for the fruits of this world, not portraying zeal and honesty, and that is the sign of treachery…

Therefore, Caliph Muhammad Bello directed that to ensure justice and approachable administrative machinery in governance, the president or a governor or any leader of any sort must do his best possible in choosing competent and qualified officers for appointments. In all these and related appointments, Bello in *al-Ghayth al-Wabil* (nd) on his own as administrator ensured upholding the ethics and directed other leaders that:

> He should appoint for the acre of state affairs such persons who have seriousness, truth and honesty. The appointment should be based on piety not emotion. The basis of government and fundamental pre-requisite for any office is not to appoint a person who seeks or coverts an appointment….

Caliph Muhammad Bello in *Majmu' ar-Rasa'il* further demonstrates the quality of leadership that could appropriately manage government affairs and resources, he said when instructing his governors: 'You should not abuse, beat, detain, let alone kill anyone, without legal requisite *(mujib shari'ah*) or despise the weak and favour the strong. Be on your guard against bringing opportunists close to you, but strive to bring religious people near you and listen to their advice; you should not take a decision without consulting them. Give the next of kin, the poor and wayfarers their rights and avoid lavish spending. In short, I have appointed you to help me only to execute the commands of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) and to keep the trust (*amanah*). Take care not to fall into the same trap in which your predecessors fell and thereby be punished as they were. The authority and power (*saltana*) of a governor is not by mere title nor by noble descent, nor by inheritance. 'We, although our forebears were venerated, are not relying on noble descent. We build as our forebears did and do just as they did.

However, the Sokoto Caliphate leadership in their approach has the following submission in tackling the menace of misappropriation. The following extractions from what was presented serve as a guide:

i. A leader must not think that he is the owner of the province over which he is made to rule, whereby the land and resources of state become his personal property which he can dispose based on his personal wish, but rather he is to serve their religious and temporal interests.
ii. People should be governed by those who are put to test through the administration of their affairs

iii. The appointment of qualified and competent persons in public offices should be purely based on their credentials, piety and competence and not by emotion.

iv. The appointments to offices should not be to those who are anxious to have the appointment, because none would be keen on such, but a thief in the garb of hermit and a fox in the guise of a pious worshipper.

v. A leader should appoint for the acre of state affairs such persons who have seriousness, truth and honesty.

vi. A leader should be made accountable for his speech, his actions and his circumstances.

Conclusion

For effective control of misappropriation of public funds in Nigeria, the leaders must develop a culture of relative openness, in contrast to secrecy; a merit system should be adopted in employment and distribution of national resources. More importantly, the leadership must muster the political will to tackle this problem, regardless of where it occurs, what causes it or the form it takes, the simple fact remains that misappropriation of state resources is likely to have a more profound and different effects in less developed countries like Nigeria, than in the wealthy and developed one. Therefore, the submissions made by the leaders and scholars of the Sokoto Caliphate on various challenges and specifically on misappropriation in governance are quite relevant to the Muslims of the contemporary Nigeria and their political challenges. Notwithstanding, the contemporary system of governance appears to be disparaged with Islamic guidance. But the contemporary politicians may have attitudinal changes by employing the guidance of Islam into their life styles. This may lead them in sanitizing and promoting their political wellbeing, as well as the whole Country (Nigeria).

Recommendations

In view of the findings from this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. People especially in states where Muslims constitute the majority in number should ensure the election of people with religious values, people that are upright, sincere and have the consciousness of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*) into political offices.

ii. Leaders (the President, Governors and Chairmen of local governments, etc.) should base all their subsidiary appointments on people not only those who are loyal to them or on paper qualification, but also on competence and character.

iii. There should be a full independent and functional judiciary empowered by law to be managed by competent persons with upright, moral and Allah-consciousness.

iv. People found with any kind of misappropriation of state resources should be sanctioned according to the law, and there should not be any interference by past leaders on the judgments passed

v. There should be accountability before and after the tenureship of office; this should be exercised by a competent and morally sound court of justice.

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