

Traditional Administrative System and Modern-Day Governance in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract: *Assertions that say there were no organized political administrative systems in the pre-colonial traditional societies of Africa should be utterly discarded. This is because there were established formal laws of engagement in the pre-independence Nigerian societies. However, the coming of colonialists brought a pose to these traditional systems of administration, with its antecedent consequences as problems of corruption, elite rulers, insecurity, economic meltdown, decline in moral manners, power tussle, and ethnic jingoism, among others. Because the traditional administrative system in Nigeria prior to the coming of colonial masters was free of this menace to some extent, it was the present system that was fashioned or modelled by the white men that brought in these problems. This paper examined the tenets of the three major traditional societies in Nigeria in comparison with the current governance system in order to deduce. It was discovered that all the problems showcasing in present Nigeria are due to the eroding and non-inclusion of traditional rulers roles into the modern-day government practically and constitutionally. The paper sourced its materials through secondary sources. It was recommended that the pre-independence features of these traditional societies should be inculcated, and they should also be given constitutional rights because they are the custodians of their societies and are by law divine in nature.*

Keywords: *Traditional; Institution; Governance; Constitution; Colonial.*

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Introduction

Prior to the contact between Nigeria and her colonial masters, Nigeria already had well-established structures for carrying out its political, legal, economic, and social activities, as well as an organized pattern of relationships among its different traditional societies. However, there were erroneous assertions by some scholars that Nigerian societies were unorganized and unstructured before their conquest by the whites. Notwithstanding, this belief has not only been falsified but also discarded as available documents have proved that pre-colonial African societies in which Nigeria is not excluded had a formal and organized system of administration before the advent of colonialism (Fatile & Adejuwon, 2009; Audu, 2014). Olusola & Aisha (2013) posited that traditional pre-colonial Nigerian societies have norms and legal values that constitute the framework upon which traditional institutions exercised power, their mandate, and discharged their functions or responsibilities within their territory.

Traditional administrative systems vary from one society to another, but their aims and objectives are still the same. However, the three (3) major ethnic groups in Nigeria will be focused on and will also serve as the blueprint of others; they are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo systems in comparison with the modern government. Even though some scholars have lamented that there was lopsided documentation and intellectual conspiracy over other 300 ethnic groups that have been referred to as minorities, the fact still remains that they are the majority from their population to territorial sizes, etc. (Audu, 2014).

The western parts of Nigeria were dominated by the Yoruba-speaking

people. At the helm of kingdom affairs was an Oba, accompanied by other office holders like the Bale, Oyomessi, Ogboni secret cult, Are ona kakanfo (war lord), and other title holders. For the northern part was a centralized system in which every decision lies in the Emir; however, his law must be according to their faith (Sharia law). There, Emir is also assisted by other officials, which include the Alaklis, Sarkin Fada, Sarkin Ruwa, Sarkin Pawa, and the Maggaji Gari. The Igbo traditional system was decentralized and referred to as acephalous societies; they occupy the eastern part of Nigeria. The Ohanaze served as the highest decision-making body and was made up of firstborns from each family, followed by the Ozo title holders and the age grade system. This logical arrangement of administrative orders among these societies has no doubt impacted their political, economic, and social development from all indications and their stages of development as they were before their colonization. This structure also depicts a sherd of evidence that Nigeria had a system of governance within which law and order were made, enacted, and maintained (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2009). The coming of these colonial masters into this society changes or modifies their traditional administrative system by imposing a new system that does not suit their cultural, religious, economic, social, and behavioral lifestyle. But only to tally with their colonial aims, which are exploitation. Umeh (1990:1) asserted that bureaucracies do not function in emptiness but are operations of some ecological factors in which they are found, and also attention was only paid to production of cash crops, communication, and transportation in the areas in which they can locate mineral resources

(Obikeze and Obi, 2004). The imposed system has no doubt eroded and declined the roles of these traditional institutions, which makes it possible for their exclusion in the drafting of the 1999 Nigerian constitution. That is why Fatile (2010) advocated that traditional rulers, as fathers of all, should be given well-spelled-out roles in the Constitution. The modern system of governance has brought more calamities than good. It is clear to everyone that the modern democratic system of government was adopted, or, to say, was imposed on Nigerians by its colonial master, and the system does not suit their cultural, economic, and political lives. So this has caused serious issues, and it is important to say that corruption, segregation, decline in manner, and underdevelopment were all evident in the process of administering pre-independence Nigeria by the colonialists. This pattern has now been continued till now causing problems such as mismanagement of public fund since funds was also mismanaged and tacking back to their foreign countries during their rule and corruption is very ramped, unemployment has also been evident has most of the white men's occupies all the positions in government living the indigenes in poverty as similar to the apartheid in south African, the increase in ethnic and religious crisis was also constituted by the colonialist as the have shown preferential treatment in the allocation of positions and relationship with one tribe than other tribes, decline in behavioral manner among children and elders as the white men culture were imposed on them , stagnant growth and development because colonial master also sees interest in developing only were the can get money or were exploration of natural resources can take place , suspiciousness and warning signals of

disintegration due to inequality in distributions of positions and allocations of resources. It is on this background that a comparative analysis will be conducted between the traditional administrative societies of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo and the modern-day government due to the fact that our pre-traditional colonial system was free of these problems and we need a way back home.

Method

In carrying out this research, the paper is situated within the qualitative method of social research by utilization of textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, and internet materials. As a non-experimental research, there is an employment of the use of qualitative data analysis to improve the reliability and validity of the paper. Multiple secondary sources were used to analyze written reports, journals, articles, and other relevant sources of data about the subject matter.

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of tradition is derived from the Latin word "traditio," which signifies a set of beliefs and customs peculiar to some people and transferred from one generation to another by the means of teaching and documentation (Anthony, 2003). In essence, every society has its own beliefs and customs that differ from others, despite sharing the same geographical locations. To Ola & Tonwe (2009), traditional institutions are made up of conglomerations of ethnic groups or clans, which by existence hold the highest primary executive authority in an indigenous polity and whose title is recognized by its customs and by the government of the state. In the words of Bello-Imam (1996: 135), "A traditional ruler is a 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 customs and traditions of that particular tribe or ethnic group prior to the conquest of those people by their colonial masters." In a broader view, he also asserted that "the traditional head of an ethnic unit or clan and whose title is recognized as a traditional ruler's title by the government of the state" (Bellor Imam, 1996: 136).

Traditional institutions can also be seen as an organizational management system responsible for the day-to-day affairs of families and the entire governmental system (Fadia and Fadia, 2008). The concept of traditional administrative systems can be defined as those social, economic, or political organizations/bodies that derive their power, legitimacy, influence, and authority from the traditions of a particular people (Ellias, 1967). The role of pre-colonial traditional leaders in the country cannot be segregated from the movement toward development and achieving its aims, as they are closer and more respected institutions by their peoples. It is this that made some scholars believe that these traditional institutions are the custodians of history and culture and that the pre-colonial governance system has had a significant impact on the development and restructuring of African. (Osakade&Ijimakinwa, 2015). The modern-day government is usually hiding under the banner of these traditional institutions to gain power and popular support from each ethnicity. According to Dore (2011), different political classes have been protecting and achieving their aims by seeking refuge behind traditional structures, themes, and symbols that are summoned to validate local aspirations. Lastly, according to Egwurube (1988),

traditional institutions are termed as bodies or groups of individuals who, by tradition, occupy political leadership positions, gaining legitimacy through the consent of community members and her offered authority and power to run the affairs of their affiliated ethno-cultural or linguistic groups in an organized manner.

The word governance to Ansah (2007:8) is viewed "as encompassing a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making process and implementation capacity, and the relationship between government officials and the public." Governance is the capacity of a regime in place to put in measures, strategies, and workable solutions for the implementation of objectives that are development-oriented and directed toward the better, standard, and good living conditions of the people. According to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, governance is the process where government-owned establishments or bodies stabilize the affairs of the nation, ensure judicious use of public goods, and also uphold the fundamental human right. To Ndehfru (2007), governance is the roadmap that directs and communicates the strategies for the cooperative realization of dreams and aspirations of the masses, which is guided by ambitious and strategic measures for the attainment of set objectives. Generally, governance, according to the World Bank Report (1989), is the exercise of political power in the management of a nation's affairs. However, governance has been categorized into two categories: good and bad governance. The absence or presence of some essential ingredient in governance determines the prefix to qualify the term governance; these features include accountability, rule of law, transparency, participation, etc. To Etounge Manguella,

as cited in Muhammed Ali (2014), "Good governance connotes the upholding of the rule of law, the presence of respect for fundamental human rights, a working system of government, fear representation, a just government, and openness of the system." While (UNESCAP) portrays that bad governance refers to governments that are characterized by mismanagement, irregularities, unproductive, unaccountable, unresponsive, unquestioned, unjust, elite-based only, lack popular support, do not follow the rule of law, and lack policies that are consensus-driven, cited in (Owoye & Bissessar, 2009:1).

Result and Discussion

The Conglomeration of the Three Majority Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

The Hausa/Fulani traditional administrative system is being headed by the "Sultan of Sokoto," who is being referred to as the "Amirul Muminun" (leader of the faithful). Second to him is the Emir of "Gwandu," followed by other Emirs in respective cities, which will in turn serve as the intermediary between the people and the sultanate council. The Hausa system was an autocratic and centralized system in which powers were at the disposal of the emirs. Its body of laws is referred to as "Sharia" laws, which are Islamic doctrine, and a system of court called "Sharia court," headed by "Alkalis" (Fajonyomi, 1997; Erero, 2005). Next to the emir is the "Wazir," which is referred to as the custodian of the main city, which in turn helps the emir in running the daily affairs, and each village is under 'Galadima Gari' which helps the wazir collect tax. There are several tax systems, which include "Jangali," "Harji," and others. Other officials include "Sarkin Dogari" (police officers) who helps in maintaining

peace and order in the societies; "Sarkin Fada(head of place workers) responsible for monitoring official and routine activities in the place; "Sarkin Yari (head of warders) responsible for taking care of prison inmates; "Sarkin Pawa" (head of butchers); and "Sarkin Ruwa (head of fishermen's). They have an established standard market in Sokoto, Katsina, and Kano in which they trade in leather skin, cola nuts, and small cash crops, making it possible for their contact with the "Wagarawa traders of Timbuktu in Mali, Niger Republic, and Chad.

The Yoruba kingdom is believed to have a 'Semi Centralized' system of traditional administration. It consists of two heads: the 'political' head, the 'Alafin of Oyo', assisted by his son, the 'Aremo', and the 'spiritual' head, in the person of Oni of Ife. Each tow has its own 'Obas', and each village has its own 'Bales' that help in the collection of tax called Isakole from hamlets within the villages (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2010). The 'obas' are been checked by the 'Oyomessi' headed by the 'Bashorun', who are the king markers, and she is also in turn watched by the secret cult called the 'Ogboni' secret cult, and this feature depicts a system of checks and balances. Any 'Oba' who goes contrary to the laws of the land is offered an empty calabash and a parrot egg, which signifies he should commit suicide or go into exile (Fajonyomi, 1997). The system has an army general traditionally referred to as the 'Are Ona Kakanfo' responsible for internal and external defense of the kingdom and, by tradition, ordain to commit suicide whenever he loses a war. Their economic activities include trade in salt, gun powder, cocoa, cotton, and tobacco, which make it for the extension of the kingdom to some parts of Benin Republic, Togo, and Lomé.

The Igbo traditional administrative system was 'stateless' and 'Republican' in nature (Abdulai, 2012). The highest body of authority is the 'Ohanaze,' which is the combination of every firstborn in each family. Age is a very important determinant for participation in important issues affecting the societies in the traditional Igbo system. 'Ozo' title holders are given to rich and influential figures in the societies. The maintainers of law and order, community service, security, and punishment of law barkers are at the disposal of the youth, called 'age grades'. Their economic activities are also agrarian in nature: the trade in leather work, snuffs, cola nuts, palm wine, etc. The Igbo system was also termed republican due to the high participation and participatory nature of the citizens in the governance of their affairs.

General features of the traditional administrative system in Nigeria:

- There is citizen's participation.
- There is an organized body of laws, and it is supreme.
- Collective participation in state affairs by indigenes.
- Alliance to one single head.
- Traditional religious faith

Shortcomings of The Traditional Administrative System

The following are some of the weaknesses of traditional administrative systems in Nigeria; this includes; The majority of the traditional title holders usually abuse power conferred on them by their traditional institution in various ways. For example, collecting of indigenous lands, demanding forced labor, and collecting wives and daughters of innocent people. Another problem is that of supremacy among each other, which has led to several inter-tribal conflicts. This

can also be evident from the classification of chiefs, some as first-class, others as second-class, and third-class. There are also claims that most of these traditional title holders are uneducated, which makes it complex to understand the changes and trends of new development. The introduction of new faith also denounces some of the citizens for practicing traditional activities that violate their faith. Lastly, their non-inclusion in the drafting of the 1999 Constitution has crippled and served as a major setback to these traditional institutions.

The Modern Day Government (Democracy)

Conceptualizing democracy has been a great challenge due to its variance. However, the fact still remains that the idea behind democracy originated from the small Greek city of Athens in the 5th century. The concept of "democracy" originated from the Latin words "Demo and "Kratía," which were derived from the Greek words "Demos," meaning people, and "Krátos," meaning power or rule (Wikipedia, 2017). In the New (1995) Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary, democracy is seen as a governmental system of administration in which the ultimate will of the state lies within the people and is conducted by them either through representative or direct democracy. To Popper, as mentioned in Javie (2006), view democracy as the opposite of dictatorship or tyranny. In essence, any system that gives citizens the will to select their leader and do have a say in governance is associated with democracy. Democracy is generally classified into two: direct democracy and indirect democracy. In direct democracy, people participate generally in the decision-making process of their state

affairs, while the indirect system, also known as representative democracy, allows for delegation of powers from citizens to their delegate, either elected or selected to represent them in the decision-making process, but political sovereignty still resides with the people. It is cognizant to state here that the Athens model of democracy was not an all-inclusive type; it was only elite-based, and free people were allowed to partake in such a political system where slaves and women were not given political franchise.

There are some essential features that guarantee the continuity or success of this system, including,

- Popular participation
- Popular support
- Periodic election
- Electoral body
- Freedom
- Citizenship education

Issues

Nigeria got her independence in 1960 after a long British colonial overlordship; it became a republic in 1963, and by 1966, military troops in and truncated the republic. It experienced the Civil War in 1967–1970, and subsequently she witnessed a series of military interventions within the period dating from 1970–1998. Until 1999, when General Abdusalam Abubakar handed over power to a democratically elected government under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. For over twenty-two years now, the country has witnessed uninterrupted democratic governance. However, the problem the country is facing is more than what it has encountered prior to colonialization and during its colonialization. It is important at this juncture to discuss some of the factors militating against democratic processes in Nigeria. The problems are classified into

political, economic, and social. In the words of Isamah (2002), the outgrowing level of poverty, ethnic and civil conflicts, and reoccurring electoral and post-election crises are evidence of the failure and capability of the modern Nigerian systems.

The number one enemy of democracy in Nigeria today is corruption. Corruption in Nigeria has manifested in different spheres, from political, bureaucratic, legal, economic, to judicial corruption. The root of corruption in Nigeria is traced to colonial administration, as illegal money was extorted by the colonial officials from the indigenes, and an example of this is the Aba Woman riot, where Nigerian treasures and natural resources were taken abroad for the development of their countries. This can also be related to the manners in which money laundering is taking place in Nigeria.

Andrig & Fjelstad (2001:4) view corruption as a rigorous and multidimensional vice accompanied by several factors and consequences, as it has been used and seen in all facets. The efforts towards development plans, policies, and programs have been undermined by the menace of corruption. Ango (1986:9) stated that “no doubt corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria’s society so much that it is the greatest obstacle to national development.” Fayomi (2013) opines that since independence, Nigeria has been confronted by several issues of mismanagement of public funds, specifically in the aspect of public procurement; there have been open abuses of due process in the awarding and execution of public contracts in Nigeria. Corruption has been regarded as the number one setback serving as a deterrent to sustainable growth and development in Nigeria (Nagari, Umar, & Abdul, 2013).

Judicial corruption has also crippled the main feature of democracy, which is popular choice. Election results should reflect popular choice; however, judicial choices now reflect popular choice. In the words of Ogbu (2011), he posited that “the high courts, however, have been a stumbling block in the fight against corruption through the abuse of their power to grant injunctions.” Political corruption occurs through the process of vote-buying, election manipulation (rigging), and snatching of ballot boxes, among others. Electoral malpractices are one of the greatest challenges of democracy or change of power in Nigeria (Matthew, James & Samuel 2013). In the words of Lawal and Victor (2012), corruption is the ultimate problem and also the barrier to good governance in Nigeria, which has no doubt given birth to abject poverty and untold hardship.

Insecurity is another major challenge that has been bedeviling democracy in Nigeria. Since independence, security challenges have been the topic of all day. Starting from religious crisis, ethnicity crisis, and electoral violence to more sophisticated security problems of boko haram, banditry, militants, and kidnapping that have claimed several lives, properties, and thousands of people displaced. To Ahamdu (2013), national security variably consists of both economic and social issues affecting the population and also measures taken against territorial invasion. From this definition, it is glaring that insecurity is very endemic in Nigeria because all the mentioned signs of insecurity listed are characterizing the Nigerian situation. Security is seen as a state of being saved from any source of external or internal harm or attack and also the ability for the preservation of values and lack of

intimidation in the process of acquiring such values. (George-Genyi, 2013). In point of fact, the structural imbalance in the ethnic, religious, and regional composition of Nigeria and the manipulation of such identities logically explains the various ethno-religious and even communal conflicts in the country, such as Zangon-Kataf in Kaduna, Ife-Modakeke, Jukun/Tiv, Jos Crisis, Boko Haram insurgency, Kano, Borno, among others. George Genyi, 2013). According to Adebayo (2011), security is a measure to ensure peaceful coexistence and development. However, he went further to say that in the presence of security, there is no treat, fear, anxiety, tension, and fear over loss of life, liberty, property, goals, and values. Banditry in Northwestern Nigeria is gaining another momentum as its environs become violence theater and peculiar to that of Boko Haram in the northeast (Muhammed, 2015).

Social problems have shown faces in different forms. Due to poverty, many young ladies have made prostitution a job of the day to the extent of going overseas for such jobs, and the increase in hotels and relaxing places across every town and city of Nigeria with its negative effect has HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and the case of an unwanted child. Democracy as recruited its own destruction association, known as area boys, responsible as the instrument for causing destruction and snatching of ballot boxes during elections and disturbance of peace. This was the result of a high rate of unemployment. The number of drug addicts has been growing tremendously due to the nature of society. Many youths are idle, so they go into drugs to suppress themselves from thinking or before going into hard labor jobs. Our cultural manners have been washed away

by manners adopted from the westerners and also desire to make easy money among youth and elders; there is no more public trust and respect for elders and constituted traditional authorities as it was practiced and observed. The ethnic crisis is now prevalent in every society as a result of the unfair distribution of public wealth, now making each ethnic group clamor for fair representation and call for disintegration or restructuring. Last rape cases have been rampant in every society; according to the inspector general of police, in an interview, he said that “717 issues of rape cases have been reported from January to May 2020” (NTA NEWS). All these issues have served as a major setback and bad name to our country, Nigeria, because all these events were not reported or documented prior to colonial rule, and immediate actions and measures need to be taken in order to put things in place.

The Futuristic Trends Reflecting Modern-Day Governance in Nigeria

The Nigerian state since independence does not in any way differ from what is still obtainable today. As the process or philosophy inherited from the colonial master still serves as their ideology, and also the same set of people have been shifting and controlling political powers among themselves. Despite the struggle and mechanisms created and adopted to enable or foster governance in Nigeria, both internal and external factors have been rendering these efforts wasteful. The Nigerian political process could be said to be volatile, with serious implications for attaining the objectives of governance (Agbu, 2016). Also in the words of Ibieta & Ajayi (2015), it is asserted that a lot still hinges on the system and the mechanisms that are put in place to bring into effect the desired

outcome within the polity, which is good governance. For these reasons, there is a need for serious efforts on the part of the government toward achieving governance if something good and tangible is to be made out of it in the near future. However, it is important to have it in mind that the futuristic trends in Nigeria modern governance from the way things are going while constitute gross corruption, insecurity, tribal, ethnic, and religious conflicts, bad leadership, and if possible, the second phase of military intervention if care is not taken because things are getting harder and more miserable day by day in Nigeria, which is evident to everyone living in any part of the world.

Conclusion

From the discussion of traditional institutions to that of modern governance, it is easy to depict the nature of the two and easy to deduce from both. The features of both the three major ethnic groups we provided and that of modern-day governance in order for us to have a choice and select the most convenient, economical, and that which can lead to political, economic, and social development of Nigeria. From all indications, it is now crystal clear that the modern governance system has turned Nigeria into a quagmire of a failed state due to several problems that have been confronting the nations and served as a cankerworm to its development and peaceful coexistence.

1. Traditional institutions and roles should be included in the constitution so as to allow for participation legally and autonomy.
2. Some features of the pre-colonial administration should be incorporated into modern-day governance.

3. Citizens are to be reoriented about their traditional institutions and not brainwashed by western ideas.
4. The numbers, titles, and title holders should be clearly spelled within a society to reduce power tussle among traditionalists.
5. Formulations of policies that marry with the economic, social, cultural, and religious of each group should be encouraged.

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