

AN APPRAISAL ON ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOKOTO CALIPHATE

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Abstract

Sokoto caliphate is known for its strong hold on Islamic principles and ideology. The caliphate has been ruled for decades based on sharia law which has promoted and sustained the caliphate political, economic and social values to reflect the Islamic conduct and norms. These Islamic principles cover all aspects of economic activities which foster and promote economic development in the caliphate and its environs. Trade, Market Structures, Agriculture, land, and Textile are the nerve center of economic development in Sokoto caliphate which paved way for the successful urbanization of Sokoto metropolis today and how it witnessed its rapid development. The Economic philosophy of Sokoto caliphate which led to the major development of the caliphate was driven by Muhammad Bello who made sure he keeps the flames of his father's hardwork burning and therefore keeps the legacy strong and striving. The study made use of the secondary source of data to collate data through available document and the major findings of this research is that the economic principles brought by the triumvirate still governed the caliphate.

Keywords: *Islamic Principles, Economic Development, Sokoto Caliphate.*

Introduction

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 areas of the existing Northern Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon republics in West Africa, it was the largest Islamic polity not only in West Africa but the whole of Africa in the 19th century (Bako, 1998). The process of emergence of the caliphate involved Jihadist reform movement led by Shaikh Uthman Bin Fodiyo (1754 – 1817 AD) that commenced in 1774 up to 1804, which culminated in the unification of over two-dozen sovereign polities by reconstituting

them into a single political entity with Shaikh Uthman B. Fodiyo being its first and founding leader (Usman, 1979:55; Hiskett, 1973).

Methodology

Secondary source of data was used to collate data through available document, books, articles, websites and data collected from previous researches.

Sokoto Caliphate

The Sokoto caliphate which survived for a hundred years as a political entity from 1804 – 1903 had during this period produced eleven successive caliphs, hundreds of emirs, chiefs and prominent scholars. These



leaders did not only develop a 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 and likewise related to the non-Muslims amicably (Last, 1967). It should be noted that the canon which began to flourish from this area since the beginning of the Jihad in 1774 was produced specifically in Hausa land, which was the main entry of the Jihad and precisely in Degel of Gobir State, which emerged as the most powerful state in Hausa land towards the end of 18th century being the most developed politically. It also became the Jihadists main Centre of intellectual and reform activities. Gobir was the Athens of the Hausa land at that material period in time (Bako, 1998). Thus, right from the introduction of Islam in Hausa land in the first part of the 14th century, the Centre of intellectual and literary activities has kept on shifting, reflecting the changes in the social, economic and political transformation until it reached its pinnacle in Gobir State towards the end of the 18th century and in the Sokoto caliphate in the early 19th century (Kani, 1978, Hunwick 1996).

Economic Principles of Sokoto Caliphate

Sokoto caliphate was a revolutionary state, determined to establish the shariah as the supreme law of the land, install upright and just rules and to establish justice in the society. The long process through which the revolution was effected made it possible for the people to see the socio-economic and political

differences between an Islamic government which the Sokoto caliphate represented and the unIslamic government. Among other things, its economic philosophy and principles were strictly based on Shariah. Social justice and welfare, freedom and human dignity were the cornerstones of principles and philosophies of the caliphate in all spheres of activities. These principles were clearly stated in the writings and rulings of the jihad leaders and rulers of the caliphate. Shaikh Abdullahi and Sultan Muhammad Bello state that if a ruler finds himself incapable of establishing social justice in society, he should resign voluntarily, otherwise the people reserve the right in the shariah to force him out of office. This implies that any unjust government is an illegitimate government. This principle, in fact, lies at the very root of the Sokoto revolution to overthrow the unjust and oppressive Habe rulers which made lawful the blood and property of the Muslims including scholars, jurists and priests, women and infants and others. The oppressive government seized property, enslaved (free) women and sold free men and imposed unjust and un-Islamic taxes on the people. The caliphate followed the principles of minimum taxes on the people apart from the obligatory zakat by sharia. Taxes provide unlimited excuses for the confiscation and plundering of the property of poor people and the violation of their privacy and their honour. In fact, only un-Islamic and despotic government extract heavy taxes on its people who could least afford them. The caliphate therefore abolished most taxes not laid down by the Shariah (Suleman, 2002).

Malami (1996) discusses the economic development in Sokoto caliphate as follows: The economic principles of the Sokoto caliphate by the jihad leaders are purely based on the Glorious book of Islam (Al-Qur'an) and Ahadith (traditions of the Noble prophet Muhammad S.A.W), which served as the major guide for the jihad leaders. One could find all these principles in their writings. However, there isn't a single book or collection that deals with all these principles as they were written in different works of the jihadists. Most of the economic principles of Shehu Usman Danfodiyo could be found in kitab al-farq bain wilayat Ahl-al-Islam wabain Wilayat Ahl-al-Kufr, Nur al ALbad, Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah ala al-Ibad, Bayan al-Bid'al Shaitaniyyah Allati Ahdathahunnas Fi abwab-Millah Muhammadiyah, Siraj al Ikhwan, etc. Those of Shehu Abdullahi could mostly be found in Diya al-Hukkam, Diya al-Imamah, Diya al-Wilayah, Diya al-Tawil etc., Those of Shaikh Muhammad Bello could be found in Tanbih al-sahib ala ahkam al makasib, Al-nasiah al-wadi etc.

In 1804, Shaikh Muhammad Bello built a wall of almost twenty-seven feet high to define and defend the city that was to be the capital of the new caliphate. Sakkwato was therefore founded in 1804 by Muhammad Bello. The city became his main base and it continued to attract more and more immigrants. The town however, did not have the position of being a capital until after the conquest of Kano, Katsina, Zazzau and Alkalawa, the major capitals in the Hausa states between 1805 and 1808.

Subsequently, the city became the caliphate's capital in 1810. The metropolis later, had a rapid growth in its size and development when Shehu left Sifawa and moved to the Sokoto metropolis permanently in 1815. This subsequently led to the emergence and development of a new suburb outside the original wall which consequently led to the extension and construction of a new city wall. Perhaps, it was the challenge of the day that ultimately led Sultan Muhammad Bello to launch policies which had profound significance for the history of the urban phenomenon in this area, a history whose making Sokoto (Sakkwato) super intended with its justification deeply grounded in the Shariah. This was so because the establishment, expansion and development of the city was carefully planned in order to meet the economic demand of the metropolis.

Sultan Muhammad Bello reasoned that a low density population seriously limited and affected the possibilities of economic diversification and massive specialization in the production process. Therefore, the expansion was done in order to lay the basis for the commercial activities in the sakkwato commercial metropolis and subsequent development of several smaller specialized markets around the city. The site of the Sakkwato metropolis itself was the first policy done towards the economic development of the city. The needs of the metropolis increased as a result of its high population, the increased population necessitated the need for a large scale cultivation of grains to meet the local demands of the populace. The foreign demand for



grains on the other hand necessitated the encouragement for a further substantial production towards enhancing foreign exchange, thus, agriculture was given top priority in the policy package.

Agriculture, according to Sultan Muhammad Bello, is a means of building, energizing and clothing human body and that it is a viable and reliable source of income. That was why perhaps, he used to locate new towns and settlements along the rivers of fertile valleys so as to give a sound basis for agriculture. In spite of the importance of agriculture, Sultan Muhammad Bello placed it second in order of priority, next to trade. He placed it as the first policy tool for economic development apart from migration. This was most probably due to its importance for building and energizing the human body. It therefore became the basis upon which one could engage in trade on the other hand, since most of the potential industries in the metropolis would either be agro-allied or processing-based industries, agriculture ought to be developed first before any other sector. Muhammad Bello in one way or the other adopted various strategies for the development of agricultural sector in the metropolis. He was very much interested in bringing improved farming techniques and methods. It was said that he introduced sugarcane for the production of granulated brown sugar. He established a sugar refinery at Gidan maikara. In addition, he introduced cassava, the herb, economic trees and pomegranates in Sakkwato. The method of irrigation using Fulcrum and bucket shaduf, was

also introduced by him. He also established a garden for the growing of medicinal herbs at Girin maidaji. Sultan Muhammed Bello also adopted strategies which included the establishment of agricultural settlement such as the slave farms at Runjin sambo. The existence of agro-allied and processing industries in the metropolis led to the emergence of various manufacturing industries, the availability and abundance of wild palms (dum-palms) laid the basis for an important domestic industry which produced hats or malfuna fans or mafertetai and mats. Sakkwato metropolis was noted for its manufacture of multi coloured highly priced fans.

There developed a rural based textile industry as a result of massive production of cotton. While cotton of very high quality was supplied to Sakkwato with strips of cloth which were tailored in the city for consumption both within and outside the city, the textile industry led to the emergence and development of an industry in the metropolis for the completion of the manufacturing process of a full textile industry. Another important factory at that time was the leather works industry. The industry tanned hides and skin as its major work. There was thus the existence of tanning industry which contributed very significantly to the industrial development of the metropolis. The quality and superiority of the industry's products led the leather works to become one of the most attractive branches of manufacturing sector in the metropolitan city of Sakkwato. The Sakkwato yellow goat skin was

superior to all other skins dyed of the same goat skin. The tanners were called kerino tanners. The yellow colour skin in any part of Hausa land used to be exported to Kano and Katsina, subsequently, the products turned out to be very famous in the whole Africa more especially in North Africa where it was exported to morocco. Encouragement of immigration is one of the major policy achievements for the development of the Sakkwato metropolis as an industrial city. The contribution of this populace to the process of urbanization and socio-economic development of this newly industrial city was far above one's expectations. Most of these people were attracted by the abundance of superior iron ore and the intense demand for skilled hands in the metropolitan city of Sakkwato. Zoramawa and Zamfarawa were also noted for their metal works. It was noted that blacksmithing was their main occupation in the metropolis. The Zoramawa people also exercised some sorts of monopoly in the area of leather works, they formed the greater part of the population of the Sakkwato metropolis in 1853, and not all of them were engaged in leather works. Some of them were artisans, petty traders and brokers. The people of Zoramawa also had large investments in the metropolis and the regional commerce. However, the rise of leather work industry in Sakkwato was attributed to those immigrants, who boosted the industry. The people of Adarawa, like the zoramawa, also had their own share in the metropolitan industrial development. Most of the Adarawa business had to do with grains, besides their engagement in trade. They also

provided capital, storage and brokerage facilities to their kinsmen. They were also very good at exploiting a wide range of commercial and political contracts to their advantages as they were more involved with the external trade.

Arabs played a great role in commerce and administration of the Sakkwato metropolis for the economic development. The Arabs for one reason or the other, patronised Shehu Uthman and sultan Muhammad Bello. Their trade with Sakkwato however, was not very significant because it was their bureaucratic skills which were highly sought for rather than their goods. Labour policy also had its own unique contribution to the economic development of the Sakkwato metropolis. The major policy was concerned with the welfare provisions to improve the lots of common people. Thus, labour incentive was given top priority. The dignity of labour was uplifted by showing the importance of self-reliance and the disadvantages of idleness and dependence on others. Caliph Muhammad Bello discouraged begging because, to him, it was very disgraceful and the lowest means of livelihood. Caliph Muhammad Bello encouraged labour training and its assistance. He used to direct all the provincial governors and administrators of various quarters to allocate land to the needy settlers and also to establish some small-scale industries. Likewise, he used to direct and allocate trademen such as masassaka, (carpenters) and majema, (farmers) to every quarter in order to create and provide job opportunities. Apart from getting artisans around,



the inhabitants were trained in different occupations and skills by the craftsmen. This policy of labour training had its advantage. That is, it ultimately led to the economic progress of the metropolis. Market serves as the central point of all the economic activities. The origin and development of Sakkwato market known as Kasuwar Muhammad Bello was as a result of marketing of various trading activities in the metropolis and the long distance trade especially external exchange. By 1815, this market was outside the walls, on the Northern side of the town. Several mini-markets were also established in the city especially near the city gate. This was in order to cater for the immediate needs of the nearby communities. The whole markets were however under the supervision of the mahtasib inspector of morals who was responsible for the preservation of the Islamic social order through ensuring the economic stability, moral integrity of traders and the state, as well as the promotion of social justice in the society. The muhtasib was also responsible for safeguarding people's means of subsistence. He supervised the markets and ensured quality control and the elimination of *riba* in all transactions. He also had to prevent hoarding and middlemanship. He also ensured proper flow of goods and services to the consumers. A major contribution of the whole trade of goods was the existence of lodging places and houses, masaukai for agents and buyers which was similar to our modern hotels and hotel services for businessmen. Sultan Muhammad Bello also embarked on road development to facilitate trading

activities. It was the Sarkin Hurumi, minister of transport who was entrusted with standardization of roads. He used to move along with two measures, the shorter and the much wider. The first was for the city streets used by the pedestrians which should be wider enough for a man and a woman to pass. The other one was used for highways which were to ensure two-way traffic so that two laden donkeys could easily pass each other without any difficulty. New cattle drove roads were opened up by the Sarken Hurumi who also ensured free access to public wells for all.

Through this 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. 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 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 (Bunza, 2013).

Conclusion

Sokoto caliphate has always been a centre not only for economic activities but also political and social activities. The triumvirate scholars saw to it that the caliphate was built on economic principles and philosophy which are based solely on Islamic values and teachings. Sultan Muhammad Bello who established the Sakkwato metropolis made sure that various economic activities were carried out and sustained to bring about attraction to neighboring states. He initiated and sustained strong institutions to complement the economic activities in Sokoto caliphate. The triumvirate scholars not only carved Sokoto caliphate and Sokoto metropolis as it is today but also laid the foundation for their successors to follow in respect to Islamic laws in terms of political, economic and social aspects of life. Usman dan fodio made sure he left a strong legacy for generations to follow which is still instilled and followed till this day.

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