



Research Paper

## The Transformation of Local Administration in Fombina (Adamawa) Emirate, 1809-1976

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### ABSTRACT

The Adamawa Emirate was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> as part of the larger Sokoto Caliphate. This paper examines the local administration that came into being in the area from 1809 to 1976. With the success of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad, the Emirate type of administration was imposed in the area. However, unlike in Hausa land where the Jihadists used the preexisting political structure, in Fombina (Adamawa) the Fulbe found predominantly non-centralized and autonomous chiefdoms. The administration established in the area can therefore be regarded as a pyramidal political system. By 1903 the British conquered the Northern Region and subsequently institutionalized the Indirect Rule system which was to be run through local chiefs. In Adamawa, the Emir/Lamido became the Native Authority supported by a bureaucratic organization known as the Native Administration which was resident in Yola. Below this, with the creation of 'homologous' districts, there was the district administration headed by the District Head assisted by other officials. This type of administration continued to exist with some modifications up to 1976. However, by 1976 there was the Local Government Reform which introduced elected executives at the local level and removing the traditional chiefs from having any major role in administration at the local level. This paper, therefore, examines the transformation of local administration in Fombina (Adamawa) Emirate from 1809 to 1976.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century marked the creation of larger political systems in Africa the Sokoto Caliphate being one of such. The Caliphate came to be a large political entity comprising of peoples of diverse background. The administration of these people was a 'quasi'-federal structure with the Caliph at Sokoto as the overall leader and the Emirs at Emirate levels who were independent in their internal affairs while paying allegiance to the Caliph. In the large Emirate of Fombina, for example, the Emir was authorized to give out flags to other leaders (*Ardoen*) to undertake the Jihad in their areas which led to the creation of sub-emirates.

However, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Caliphate was overrun and conquered by the British. Lugard, the pioneer High Commissioner of the Northern Protectorate, decided to adopt what became the Indirect Rule system of administration. This was premised on among other factors the presence of an already existing political structure. Indirect rule was to function through traditional institutions that Lugard found on ground, and the Sokoto Caliphate, with its structured administration, fitted very well with Lugard's idea of Indirect Rule. Under the system local administration was through the Native Authority and this system with some modifications continued to subsist until 1976 when there was radical reform of local administration. This article examines the transformation local administration had undergone in Adamawa Emirate from 1809 to 1976.

### People and Historical Background

The Fombina<sup>1</sup> Emirate, out of which the Adamawa emirate was carved, was by the 19<sup>th</sup> century a large expanse of territory with people from diverse ethnic groups and varying political entities. The people in the area before the 19<sup>th</sup> century lived in different groups of varying political organizations and languages and customs. However, the two dominant language speaking groups were the Bata-Margi sub-group of the Afro-Asiatic

<sup>1</sup> The term Fombina itself is controversial, because it means south, while in true sense it is south east of Sokoto

language group and the Adamawa eastern dialect of the Niger-Congo. Some of these ethnic groups inhabiting the area were the Mbum, Tikar, Margi, Kilba, Gaanda Bata, Yungur, Verre, Chamba and the Fulbe. The Fulbe, it would appear, were the last immigrants into the area. The various groups had established their hegemonies in the region at different times with one supplanting the other. It appears that the Bata had replaced the Chamba and by the time the Fulbe entered the region they found the Bata “and not the Chamba in the dominant position.”<sup>2</sup>

The Mbum, a major group in the southern part of Emirate, had by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, inhabited the watershed separating the headwaters of the rivers Logone, Benue and Faro. They lived in chiefdoms, the most prominent ones being Ngawkor and Ganha each headed by a *Belaka* (chief). But the most powerful Mbum ruler was the *Belaka* of Ngawkor who was said to be divine and surrounded with taboos. Furthermore, he was also the ‘custodian of cults’ and so, was held to be the repository of life and prosperity of the whole people.<sup>3</sup> The Mbum had similar kingship institution with the Jukun and a tradition even had it that they were subject to the Jukun during their period of ascendancy.

A group said to be of the same stock with the Mbum are the Tikar who also lived in chieftaincies. Their three principal chieftaincies Ditam, Ngambe and Bamkim in the Mbum river basin were established by migrants who came from the Faro River region.<sup>4</sup> The Tikar rulers known as *Fon* exercised political and spiritual authority over their subjects. They had a well-structured political institution with a body of officials executing various functions. These officials included *Atanto* (palace aides) and *Afon* (governors of conquered districts), priests and a sort of a police force.

To the north of the Mbum and Tikar lived the Chamba whose initial base was the lower Faro valley and a group of the Chamba even claimed to have migrated from Deng, a chieftaincy to the east of Yola.<sup>5</sup> The Chamba were divided into a number of groups, with one claiming to have migrated from the Chad basin into the Benue valley and settled around Bagale area. Subsequently, they expanded along the Benue and lower Faro valleys where they founded Yelli as their stronghold.<sup>6</sup> From there as a result of intrusion by new immigrants, they dispersed southwards where they created a number of chieftaincies. Three chieftaincies: Yebbi, Sugu and Gurumpawo were created by the northern Chamba, while southern Chamba chieftaincies created were Dakka, Donga and Bali.

The people who appeared to have displaced the Chamba and forced them to migrate were the Bata. Before the nineteenth century, they constituted the largest language group in Fombina.<sup>7</sup> They moved into the area in two migratory waves: the first group comprised of the Bata speaking people of Zumo, Holma, Bulai, Kofa, Mulon and Njai; while the second wave came migrated from the Mandara Mountain into the region and moved westwards of the Benue River to the Bagale Hill. The Bata never established a centralized authority but, lived in separate small communities each under its kindred leader. They established a number of chieftaincies like Demsa-Poa, Kokumi, Bagale, Zumo, Mulke and Njobolio. However, by the nineteenth century, they were driven westwards down the Benue River as a result of the Fulani campaigns.

As pointed out already, the Fulbe were the late entrants into the Fombina area and their earliest centre of dispersal was to the east within the Senegal Basin. There are various traditions regarding their origin, but the most plausible was that they must have emerged as a result of intermingling between Berbers and Negro farmers on the Ferlo Plateau. Because of this contact, they gradually inter-married their darker, southern Negroid neighbours and the product of such unions may probably have been the Fulbe.<sup>8</sup> From the Senegal River Basin they moved eastwards, and by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century they had reached Hausaland and by the 16<sup>th</sup> Century they had moved as far east as Bagarmi.<sup>9</sup> By the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, therefore, they were in substantial numbers both in Hausaland and Borno.

While in Borno, the Fulbe began to move southwards because of Bagarmi hostility and also because of *Firgi* (Loamy soil) which impeded movement for both man and herd. They moved southwards in the dry season and northwest wards in the wet season. Because of this transhumance movement, they began to drift in large numbers into Fombina from Borno. Fombina, unlike Borno, was a very fertile area, containing vast expanses of perennial pastures.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Fulbe were established in substantial numbers among the Bata and a large concentration of Fulbe groups can be found in the region to the north of the Benue. The migration of the

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<sup>2</sup> Sa’ad (2008): *Lamibe Fombina*..... p. 17

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 13

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 15

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 16

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 23

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 50

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 53

Fulbe into Fombina continued in the nineteenth century. Unlike their earlier migrations that of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were triggered by events in Borno. On their entry to the area they had to acknowledge the political supremacy of their local hosts mainly, the Bata, who were exercising political control in the Benue and Faro plains. However, as their numbers grew, coupled with their increased influence on the Bata chiefs, often by way of intermarriage, subservience became distasteful to the immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Jihad and the Establishment of an Emirate**

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was the outbreak of the Jihad in Hausa land led by Shaikh Othman b. Fodio, and by “1809, not only were all the Hausa States conquered, but also that the movement of rebellion had extended to the neighboring regions of Borno, Bauchi, Nupeland, the northern fringes of Oyo Empire, the Gongola Valley, the Upper and Middle Benue Valley”.<sup>11</sup>

The Fulbe on their entry to Fombina, since they were an alien minority, had to acknowledge the authority of the chieftaincies they resided in, negotiate grazing rights and practice some social norms prevalent in the chieftaincies which were contrary to the Fulbe code of conduct. Among these practices was the marriage custom *Jus primaenocis* (law of first night) which gave the prince of the chieftaincy to spend the first night with the bride.

In many chieftaincies, the relations between the Fulbe and hosts were cordial and there were inter-marriages between the leading *Ardoen* and the leaders of the chieftaincies. In these cases, they obtained favourable conditions for their people. But in most areas, the relations were not cordial in which cases they were over-taxed and their cattle confiscated. By the end of the eighteenth century, armed conflicts started to erupt between the Fulbe and some of their hosts. What probably prevented a general Fulbe uprising was perhaps the fear of a possible negative outcome since they were a minority.<sup>12</sup> This was remedied by the outbreak of the Jihad in Hausaland. The Fulbe in the Fombina (Adamawa) area, also, in response to the happenings in Hausaland and Borno sent a delegation to Shaikh b. Fodio to receive authority to fight the Jihad in their area of residence.

The leading clan leaders (*Ardoen*) in the Benue Valley sent Modibbo Adama to the Shaikh Othman b. Fodio for authority to fight the Jihad in the area.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Adama was given the flag for the Jihad in the lands in the south (because the Shaikh referred to him as *amir-al-yamanor* leader of the south), with the instruction to return to his people and seek their support. He was also authorized by the Shehu to give subordinate flags to the *Ardoen* to pursue Jihad in their “respective areas as the intermediary between them and the Sheikh in Sokoto”.<sup>14</sup>

When Modibbo Adama returned, he found it difficult to start the Jihad because the leading *Ardoen* refused to acknowledge his authority. But after three years, he was able to start the Jihad with the support of some clan leaders and also made some flags for other clan leaders.<sup>15</sup> Adama began the Jihad with the Bata in the Benue and Faro valleys, extending it to the Mandara and by 1841 he had established Yola as the capital of the Emirate. By the time of his death in 1847, Adama was able to bring a large area under his influence. As noted by Sa’ad “he had bequeathed to his successors a robust political system under a government whose effectiveness towards meeting the challenges of that time was never in doubt”.<sup>16</sup>

Modibbo Adamawas succeeded by his sons one after the other, Lawal, Sanda and Zubairu who continued the Jihad until its termination with the coming of the European at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Emir Lauwal was more of an expansionist and after him the subsequent wars did not add substantially to the external frontiers already set at the end of Lauwal’s rule and the wars were more in the nature of consolidation within Fombina (Adamawa).<sup>17</sup> Thus, Adamawa Emirate at its peak extended from Marua and Madagali in the north, to Ngaundere and Tibati in the south, and from Lere and Rei Baba in the east to Mayo Lope in the West.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Pre-Colonial Emirate Administration**

The Jihad in Hausaland came to an end around 1810, with the establishment of Sokoto, as the capital of the Caliphate, but the struggle for the establishment of emirates as part of the caliphate continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Fombina area, for instance, where the Jihad started late, the struggle to have a central administration continued as the Fulbe had to conquer the Bata and associated groups before they could establish

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10. Ibid.,

11 Sa’ad (2008): *Lamibe Fombina*....., p. 82

12 Ibid,

13 Sa’ad’s, *Lamibe Fombina*, Njeuma’s *Fulani Hegemony* and Alkasum Abba’s *History of Yola 1809-1914*, pp. 27-58.

14 Sa’ad (2008): *Lamibe Fombina*..., p. 97

15 It was said that twelve (12) flag bearers were the first to be authorized by Adama see Sa’ad A., LF, p. 104

16 Op.cit., p. 165

17 Njeuma (1978): *Fulani Hegemony*.....p. 63

18 Yakubu, (1997): *Chronicles of a Golden Era*... p. 6

a government. Thus, “upto the founding of Yola as capital in c. 1841 a proper emirate government did not exist”.<sup>19</sup>

In Hausaland the creation of an administrative system was facilitated by using the already existing, though rudimentary, administration of the Hausa states, and by replacing the indigenous rulers with Fulbe. This could hardly be done in the Fombina area, where the Fulbe found predominantly non-centralized and autonomous chiefdoms.<sup>20</sup> The administration that came to be established may be regarded as a pyramidal political system. This was where, according to Ver Eecke, the offices and their power were strongest and most diverse in the state (Emirate) capital and the subject districts were primarily a simplified version of the capital and were partially independent.<sup>21</sup>

However, it can be said that a modicum of an administration was established in the area, no matter its fluidity or minuteness. This type of administration came to be known as the Emirate type of administration as part of the larger Caliphate administration. The duties and obligations of the Emir to the Caliph were many. It was obligatory for all Emirs to visit the Caliph on his appointment, payment of tribute and they were expected to send troops (*Maddad*) to the Caliph. The numerous emirates were founded by the first emirs “each leading his own forces without any military aid from the *amir-al-Muminin*”.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, what was obtained in the general Caliphate was replicated in the Fombina area as Modibbo Adama was authorized by the Shaikh to issue flags to other *Ardoen* to prosecute the Jihad in their respective areas. While Modibbo Adama and his close associates pursued the Jihad with the Bata, those to whom he gave flags pursued the conquest of the non-Fulbe in their different areas. In his area of influence, he was the commander (Emir) and the *Ardoen* under him his officials. However, in the areas outside the Modibbo’s area of activity the *Ardoen* (those who received flags from him), who led their kindred groups were the defacto commanders (later they became *Lambe* (p) and their officials were the *Maube* (leaders) of the groups.<sup>23</sup>

During the lifetime of Modibbo Adama, the emirate administration was rudimentary as he did not appoint a large body of officials. As noted by Sa’ad “the early Fombina government was simple. It was adhoc in nature, established to serve the purpose of a community that was engaged in wars and undergoing transformation. It reflected a nomadic Fulbe society where government rested with the *Maube*, and the *Ardo*. In a sense, Modibbo Adama was the *Ardo*, and the *Maube* were his officials and the subordinate *Lambe* of the sub-emirates on the Benue Plains”.<sup>24</sup>

After the death of Modibbo Adama (in 1847), with subsequent expansion and consolidation of the emirate, the need for an elaborate administrative system became imperative. At the head of the Fombina administration headquartered in Yola was the *Lamido*,<sup>25</sup> who was the descendant of Modibbo Adama. A group of public officials who assisted the *Lamido* are the councilors or *majalisa* who served regularly under him, irrespective of their ethnic origins.<sup>26</sup> There was a class of household officials who were more often than not, slaves. However, the most prominent councilors were – *Waziri*, *Galadima*, *Alkali*, *Ajiya* and *Sarkin Yaki* or *Madawaki*.

The structure of the sub-emirate (district)<sup>27</sup> administration was a replica of the administration in Yola. At the sub-emirate level was the *Lamido* whose ancestor had received the flag from Modibbo Adama, and assisting him were officials like the *Waziri*, *Galadima*, *Alkali*, etc. In some (districts) sub-emirates that were large with outlying villages, “the *Lamido* appointed *Jauro’en* to administer their affairs and be answerable directly to him”.<sup>28</sup> However, there were areas that were not under the jurisdiction of *Lambe* (sub-emirs) and could be regarded as fiefs. It was the *Lamido* who usually appointed officials’ resident in Yola to oversee these areas and collect tributes from them. Each sub-emirate established had its *Majalisa*, chosen from notable individuals, many of whom were hereditary. The councils of the various sub-emirates served the same kind of function as the *Lamido*’s Council in Yola.

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<sup>19</sup> Sa’ad (2008): *Lamibe Fombina*.... p. 139

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Ver Eecke,(1988): *Pulaaku: Adamawa Fulbe Identity and its Transformations, Ph.D. Thesis: University of Pennsylvania*,p.249.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.251.

<sup>22</sup> Obaro Ikime, ed.,(1980):*Groundwork of Nigerian History*; Ibadan: Heineman, p. 306

<sup>23</sup> Sa’ad (2008) *Lamibe*..... p. 139

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 143

<sup>25</sup> Njeuma (1978) *Fulani Hegemony*.... p. 96

<sup>26</sup> *Lamido* (Emir) Adama throughout his lifetime has not been referred to as *Lamido* but as *Modibbo*. The title came to be used from Lawal who succeeded *Modibbo Adama*.

<sup>27</sup> Op.Cit, p. 91

<sup>28</sup> Njeuma seemed to be referring to the sub-emirates as districts but this writer feel that districts were colonial creations from the Hausa word *Gunduma*.

### **European Contact and Conquest**

European interest in the Fombina area began with the Richardson Mission known as the British Central African Mission (1848-57) and was mainly or motivated by the general desire in Europe to make the routes of communication, especially river communication into the interior regions of Africa known in Europe.<sup>29</sup> Heinrich Barth, a member of the mission moved from Borno to Fombina and “was the first European visitor to the emirate in 1851, nearly fifty years after its foundation”.<sup>30</sup> The Lamido, Lawal, however, was not favourably disposed towards Barth as he came from Borno- a state considered as an enemy and he had no permission of the Sokoto Caliph. It was said that the Lamido “urged him to retrace his steps back to where he had come but that whenever he returned with a letter from Sokoto, the Lamido would receive him with open arms and allow him to travel freely throughout the emirate”.<sup>31</sup>

Though, Barth received a hostile reception in Yola, he had accomplished a great feat, especially the ending of the lacuna about the source of River Tchadda.<sup>32</sup> In addition to this was the fact that the area had numerous inland waterways, rich economic resources and high potentials for commercial activities. Barth’s visit, therefore, increased the tempo of European visits to the area. For example, “between 1853 and 1893, a period of forty years, nine European missions were sent to Fombina to either conduct further investigations, or negotiate commercial links”.<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, they began establishing their foothold by commercial links, signing of treaties and consequent political control.

The Fombina area (Adamawa), thus, became a ground for competition among the European powers. By the time of Emir Zubairu(1890-1903), as a result of the increased European activities, he concluded treaties with the three powers- Britain, France and Germany. However, the French were forced out of the area resulting in an Anglo-German agreement “which partitioned the Emirate of Fombina in November 1893”.<sup>34</sup> With the agreement, the eastern part of the emirate went to the Germans while the western went to the British with the latter conceding about seven-eighth of the land mass of Fombina to the Germans, while retaining just one-eighth.<sup>35</sup>

The Anglo-German agreement of 1893 appeared to have sealed the fate of the Emirate, with the Germans beginning the occupation of their apportioned area from Tibati. Meanwhile in the larger caliphate, the British, through the Royal Niger Company (RNC), had captured the emirates of Nupe and Ilorin. Events in the larger caliphate, therefore, had repercussions on the Emirate. By 1900, the British had revoked the charter granted the RNC, and had declared a protectorate over the caliphate. With this, Britain eventually began effective occupation of all the emirates.<sup>36</sup>

Emir Zubairu had remained recalcitrant and uncooperative towards the British, and on the charges of slave trade and slave raiding, the latter decided to attack Yola. During the rains when it was possible to sail up to Yola, specifically on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1901 “the steamers *Liberty* and *Nkissi* and consisting of 15 officers, including two medical officers..., 7 British N.C.Os, 365 rank and file, four 74-mm guns, and four maxims, under the command of Colonel Morland”<sup>37</sup> left Lokoja for Yola. Because of the disparity in the military technology of the two groups – the British and the Fombina forces- the battle between the two did not last long. The British subdued the Fombina forces and Zubairu fled with some remnants of his followers. For sometime, he continued to be a thorn in the flesh of the British but was subsequently killed among the Gudu on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1903. The conquest of Yola brought to an end the era of the emirate type of government under the Sokoto Caliphate and the beginning of British over lordship of the emirate and the Sokoto caliphate in general.

### **Establishment of British Colonial Administration over Northern Nigeria**

As already stated, by 1900 the Royal Niger Company had lost its charter over Northern Nigeria and a protectorate was proclaimed over the area with Lugard as the High Commissioner. Colonel Morland had by September 1901 defeated Yola, and Lugard with a few men and resources was able to depose the Emirs of Kontagora and Nupe. In the dry season of 1902 Captain Moloney, the Resident of Zaria was killed, with the assassin escaping and finding refuge in Kano. The demand for his surrender was refused and with this action British onslaught on Kano was a foregone conclusion. In January 1903, under the command of Colonel Morland, they set out from Zaria to attack Kano, defeating and occupying it. A force under Kemball proceeded

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<sup>29</sup> Njeuma(1978): *Fulani Hegemony*..... p. 150

<sup>30</sup> Sa’ad(2008): *Lamibe*..... p. 225

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 22

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 228: The “Tchadda” was what the Europeans called the Benue at the time.

<sup>33</sup> A. Abba(2003): *History of Yola 1809-1914*,Zaria: ABU Press, p. 120

<sup>34</sup> Op. Cit, p. 319

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 320

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 331

<sup>37</sup> A.H.M.Kirk-Greene(1958): *Adamawa Past and Present* ;London: OUP, p. 57

to Sokoto and occupied it. Later on, Lugard followed arriving there on March 19, 1903 to receive the submission of the people. The following day, the elders led by the Waziri, assembled at the British camp, where the conditions under which they were to govern was spelt out to them. The formal installation of a new Sultan also took place. The fall of Sokoto marked the end of the Sokoto Caliphate and the beginning of the establishment of British suzerainty over what came to be known as Northern Nigeria. At Sokoto, Lugard justified the British conquest with “the legitimacy of over lordship by right of conquest.”

Lugard at the beginning had proclaimed three provinces which were – firstly, the Middle Niger, to include the country west and north of the Niger with Ilorin and Bida; secondly, the Benue to cover the country North and South of that river, including Muri, Bauchi and Adamawa, and thirdly, Kano, to consist, quite simply, of the remainder of the protectorate.<sup>38</sup> In addition to these conquests “a good start had been made toward laying the basis of an administrative system”.<sup>39</sup> In the process many recalcitrant emirs had to be deposed and more subservient ones installed.

With the conquest, there was the need to administer the territory, and the most essential principle as advocated by Lugard was “rule through and by chiefs” and it became the foundation for a new school of colonial administration.<sup>40</sup> Lugard might have adopted Indirect Rule more out of practical realities than conviction. The reality on ground was that the “vastness of the new territory and the size of its population made direct rule by British officers unrealistic”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, another mitigating factor for introduction of Indirect Rule was the “shortage, if not indeed the complete absence of subordinate clerical and technical staff and artisans to help establish the new administration”.<sup>42</sup>

The cardinal principle upon which the administration of Northern Nigeria was based is called Indirect Rule which was “rule through native Chiefs, who are regarded as an integral part of the machinery of Government, with well-defined powers and functions recognized by government and law, not dependent on the caprice of an executive officer”.<sup>43</sup> It was apparent that from the limitations the British officials faced, a small administrative organization was necessary to supervise, train and guide native rulers who were to be retained as a vital factor in British control.<sup>44</sup> Organs of administration were therefore set up and the personnel for these departments – political, secretariat, treasury, judicial, police, medical, postal and transport – were selected, their duties defined, salaries fixed, and departmental budgets set up.

The head of the administrative system that was established in Northern Nigeria was the High Commissioner<sup>45</sup> who in turn was responsible to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The High Commissioner determined policies and assumed the blame in case of failure.<sup>46</sup> The Resident was the most important of the subordinate officials in the service and was provided with a small staff consisting of only one or two junior officers, a half dozen native agents and interpreters and one or two clerks.

The structure of the colonial administration established in Northern Nigeria was headed by the High Commissioner (later Lt- Governor). The territory was divided into a number of provinces headed by a Resident, while, a Chief or Emir, was regarded as the highest indigenous authority. The provinces were further broken into Divisions with the District Officer (D.O) as the head while an Emir within a Division was the highest indigenous authority. A number of Emirates made up a Division. The divisional level was the lowest level of posting of the colonial political or administrative officers.

The remaining levels of administration from the divisions downward were headed by indigenous officers as their authorities. Below the division were the Emirates and group of Districts constituted an Emirate. The Districts were led by District Heads who had under them officials termed village heads. Lastly, came ward heads who were in charge of the smallest administrative units. In the process of establishing their authority, the British reorganized and in some cases altered the boundaries of emirates, and sometimes Emirates were created out of an Emirate. Likewise, in the case of Districts, some were created and those deemed not viable by the British were merged with others.

Lugard had found in the North a preexisting system of administration which fitted very well with his idea of Indirect Rule. But there were practices he abhorred in the preexisting local government which have referred to as ‘three evils’. These, according to him, were: a) absentee rulers; b) *Jakadu* (tax gatherers); and c)

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<sup>38</sup> Margery Perham(1960): *Lugard: The Years of Authority, 1898-1945*, London: Collins,, p. 38

<sup>39</sup> A.N Cook(1964):*British Enterprise in Nigeria*, London: Frank Cass, p. 153

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 165

<sup>41</sup> Isaac M. Okonjo (1974):*British Administration in Nigeria1900-1950*, Lagos: Nok Publishers, 1974, p. 26

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>43</sup> Op. Cit, p. 178

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 166

<sup>45</sup> The title of the colonial head has gone different transformation from High Commissioner to Lt-Gov., to Governor.

<sup>46</sup> A.N Cook (1964): *British Administration*..... p. 174

disconnected areas of jurisdiction. The titled officials who oversaw outlying districts, slave officials, *Jakadu* and discontinuous matter of authority and responsibility were very troubling to Lugard.

In the pre-colonial emirates, authority was personal to an official or clan head. The British however, wanted to base authority on territory, so that everyone within a given area would be subordinated to the same official. Personal allegiance was against the British interest. The British wanted to have a system where the tax gathering authority was the responsible official. For the British, the function of local government was first and foremost for tax collection, and they saw taxes as the sign of allegiance.<sup>47</sup>

### **Establishment of Native Authority and Creation of Colonial District System in Adamawa**

One of the most fundamental elements of Indirect Rule was the recognition of a single chief or emir with authority over a large area with a great number of people. In exchange for paying allegiance to the crown, this ruler was recognized as a Native Authority.<sup>48</sup> Lugard defined a "Native Authority" in his *Political Memoranda* as any chief or other native so appointed by the Governor, and a 'recognized chief' is one whose status has been formally recognized by government.<sup>49</sup>

Under the Indirect Rule system in Northern Nigeria, the legal authority for local government was vested in the Emir and he was designated as Native Authority. He was supported by a bureaucracy known as the Native Administration. It provided the Native Authority the political means to exercise authority at the local level. The system also allowed decentralization where sub-units were created for territorial administration. These sub-units were known as districts, to each of which an administrative District Head, responsible to the Native Authority, was appointed. The Emir became the nerve centre of Native Authority and at the height of British rule, "was responsible for the administration of the people".<sup>50</sup> Organs of Native Administration included Central Office, District and village administration, Police, Prisons, Veterinary, Judiciary, Education, etc. Districts thus, became part of the organizational format of Native Administration.

The British, having made Districts part of Native Administration and having put their heads in the middle of the administrative structure, went on to give them boundaries and territories. From 1902, when the pacification of Northern Nigeria was almost over, the British went on establishing their own type of government by undertaking the following steps: creating 'homologous' Districts by merging together all the villages within a particular area, thus dividing the emirates; basing authority on territory and subordinating everyone within a given area to the same official called a District head, and lastly appointing a single tax-gathering authority, (the District head) in each given area (i.e. District), thereby drastically reducing the levels in tax-gathering hierarchy. With these measures, the British integrated tax collection and administration.<sup>51</sup> With these also Lugard's three 'evils' were curtailed.

At the time of the British conquest of the Emirate less than ¼ of what used to be Fombina<sup>52</sup> was left for the Emir (Lamido) to administer. In Adamawa Emirate there were in existence two types of Districts- i) sub-emirates which had heads resident in their areas of jurisdiction but whose authority sometimes went beyond areas not contiguous to where they were settled, and ii) those Districts that were under the supervision of title-holders who were resident in Yola.<sup>53</sup> The District Heads from the former are presently referred to as *Ardo'en* and these are of Malabu, Song, Ribadu (Balala), Daware, Mayo Farang and Zumo.<sup>54</sup>

After the colonial conquest, Adamawa was divided into five divisions:

- i. South of the Benue Division with headquarters at Yola.
- ii. North of the Benue Division with headquarters in Song; (comprising of Goila, Zumo, Malabu and Daware former sub-emirates).
- iii. Emirate "Pagan" Division with headquarters in Pella comprising (Hong, Uba, Ga'anda and Margi Districts).
- iv. Gongola Division with headquarters at Numan; and
- v. Chukkol Division with headquarters at Chukkol.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Isa Abba (1985) *Changing Pattern..* p. 237

<sup>48</sup> Willard B. Stouffer Jr.(1970) :*The Development of District Councils in Sokoto: A Study of Institutions for Popular Participation in Northern Nigeria*, Ph.D Thesis: Duke University, p. 36

<sup>49</sup> Kirk-Greene(1965): *The Principles of Native Administration....* p. 73

<sup>50</sup> HaliruSirajo (2007): *The British Administration and the Creation of the District Head system in Zazzau Emirate: A case study of Igabi District, 1907-1976*, M.A. Dissertation: BUK, p.96.

<sup>51</sup> Isa A. Abba(1985) *Changing Pattern.....* p. 226

<sup>52</sup> Sa'ad(2008) *Lamibe.....* p. 352

<sup>53</sup> By the 19<sup>th</sup> C there were about 60 sub-emirates answerable to the Lamido (see Sa'ad (2008), p. 497 for list).

<sup>54</sup> For the list of Districts and District Heads as of 1991 in present day Adamawa Emirate see Y.A Yabubu (1997):*Chronicles of a Golden Era*, p. 176

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 431

Similarly, following the colonial conquest, Adamawa Emirate came to compose of three types of Districts: (i) the former sub-emirates with hereditary heads; (ii) former fiefs whose heads were appointed by the Emir, and (iii) 'Pagan' Districts who were never part of the Emirate. For this last group of Districts, at the beginning of colonial rule they were allowed to be ruled by their Native Chiefs and their chiefdoms broken in to a number of districts. But, subsequently, with the pacification of the independent non-Muslim communities of Northern Adamawa, especially the chiefdoms of Lala, Hona, Bura, Ga'anda, Yungur, Kilba and Margi, they were placed under the Lamido along with the Districts of the former sub-emirates.

However, by 1910/1911 all the non-Muslim ethnic groups within the borders of the Emirate were placed under *Khalifa'en* or "Fulani guardians" who were supposed to administer the non-muslim communities 'through their tribal authorities'.<sup>56</sup> By 1912, *Khalifa'en* were abandoned in most of the non-Muslim Districts in favour of resident Fulani District Heads. The former native rulers of the non-Muslim groups were considered 'sub-district heads' but performed the duties of District heads. The supporting staff of the District administration apparatus in most of these non-Muslim districts: judges, village heads, interpreters and court scribes were non-natives.

It should be noted that there were former sub-emirates of Adamawa which after the colonial conquest went to the Germans. These sub-emirates included Madagali, Michika, Uba, Mubi, Mayo Nguli, Sorau, Belel, Holma, and Kwagol in the north; and territories like Nassarawo, Toungo, Gashaka in the south. The Adamawa Emirate (Yola Emirate before 1926) came to constitute just a miniscule of the former Fombina or less than ¼ of what Fombina was prior to its conquest.<sup>57</sup> The struggle to regain these lost districts became a recurring decimal in the Emirs' relations with the British. The Emirs during the early years of colonial rule, having realized their reduced territories and diminished status, became uncooperative towards the British. That was why Lamido Bobbo Ahmadu was removed by 1909.

#### **Transformation of District Administration in Adamawa Emirate**

As already stated earlier, with the conquest of Northern Nigeria in 1903 and the subsequent imposition of colonial administration, Lugard instituted the Indirect Rule system. The system, as noted already, was to be run through local chiefs who were termed by Lugard as Native Authority. Thus, the Emir/Lamido became the Native Authority supported by a bureaucratic organization known as the Native Administration.<sup>58</sup> In his *Political Memorandum*, Lugard laid emphasis very much on the doctrine of indirect rule by noting that there was to be a simple chain of responsibility, from the Emir through his councilors and district heads to the village heads. At no point, he opined, should political officers in their eagerness to achieve immediate reforms break this chain. Thus, Lugard outlined the type of relationship that should exist between the colonial officers and the natives as well as the structure of the administration.

Lugard's administrative structure was determined mainly by the financial resources at his disposal and since his revenue base was weak, he had to allow the Emirs' right to taxation. Thus, the main duty of the Emirs and the District headmen under them was the collection of taxes and maintenance of law and order. At the time of the conquest, there were taxes<sup>59</sup> which though Lugard felt was oppressive had to be maintained because the very structure of the Emirs' government would collapse if the flow of revenue were checked by hasty reforms.<sup>60</sup> As noted by Alkasum Abba, one of the primary reasons for the imposition of taxation was to provide sufficient funds to maintain the colonial administration including the Native Authority.<sup>61</sup>

It was because of the paucity of funds that Lugard established the doctrine of Indirect Rule whose cornerstone was the Emirs and chiefs. Lugard referred to this type of administration Native Administration. Kirk-Greene identified four pillars which constitute any worthwhile Native Administration: (i) taxation and finance (Native Treasury); (ii) Justice (Native courts), (iii) the chief and his council (Native Authority); and (iv) administrative supervision (the responsibilities of the Resident and the District officer).<sup>62</sup> Thus, as outlined by Lugard in his *Political Memoranda*, Residents were to rule through chiefs and to educate them in their duties as rulers as well as Native Authorities and how they should collect and disburse their own revenues.<sup>63</sup>

The Native Treasury was not established during Lugard's first tenure (1898-1906), but was instituted after he left. The Native Treasury, which was meant to regulate the Emirs' share of direct taxation was known as

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 431

<sup>57</sup> Sa'ad (2008) *Lamibe* ... p. 352

<sup>58</sup> A.D. Yahaya (1980) *Native Authority* .....p.3

<sup>59</sup> At the time of the conquest Lugard identified a number of dues to which the Emir was entitled to like tithes, taxes p merchandise crops, stocks as well as levy on all forms of handicraft.

<sup>60</sup> M. Perham (1960) *Lugard*..... p. 165.

<sup>61</sup> Alkasum Abba (2003): *History of Yola*..... p. 122.

<sup>62</sup> Kirk-Greene (1965): *Principles of Native Administration*... p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.14.



the *Beit-el-mal*. The reform was initiated by Henrich Palmer in Katsina and it fairly spread quickly to the other emirates. The Emirs revenues were now paid into an official treasury and a simple budget drawn up to cover all the salaries and to distinguish them from the various other expenses of the administration such as public works, education and district and village administration.<sup>64</sup>

The transformation the district administration went through was closely linked with that of the NA since it was part and parcel of it. Furthermore, from the time that Lugard laid the basic rudiments of indirect rule, not much has changed in the duties of the native rulers. Most of the changes depended on the nuances of the various Governors who came after Lugard and depended on their understanding of what indirect rule actually entails and whether to be interventionist or non-interventionist.

In the *Political Memoranda*, Lugard, in his hierarchy of administration, put the District head below the Emir or paramount chief whose area of jurisdiction is divided into districts. He (the District head) replaced the former fief-holder and also the *Jekada* or tax gatherer.<sup>65</sup> The duties of the District headman as outlined by Lugard include (i) tax-collecting (which is his primary function), (ii) maintenance of law and order; (iii) the recruitment for forced labour; (iv) control of land (distribution, allocation, etc), (v) maintenance of markets, government buildings, roads (including construction); (vi) control over village and ward heads, and (vii) mobilise people for war efforts, school enrolment, environmental hygiene, new farming methods etc.

Some of the governors, like Cameron felt that indirect rule had gone too far in the direction of creating isolated autocratic states in the North.<sup>66</sup> He, therefore, put forward a number of reforms among which was the suggestion that:

An attempt should be made to devise means that will allow the people to express themselves periodically, possibly through village heads and elders in conference with an administrative officer, the District Head and a representative of the Native Authority.<sup>67</sup>

Cameron thus introduced a minor theme which was the seeking of popular opinion which Temple had earlier curtailed.

Furthermore, because of the enormity of the tasks of district administration it was decided to improve their education to enhance performance. A yearly conference of District Heads at the Headquarters (Yola) was inaugurated which include question and answer sessions with classroom type instructions from British officers. There were further efforts at improving district administration in the 1930's by introducing courses in treasury procedure and report writing for the District scribes who were employees of the NA and served as secretaries to the District heads.

Below the ladder, District Heads were also encouraged to hold annual conferences with village Heads and elders. These conferences were to be the basis for generating ideas and suggestions for the annual District Heads conference with the Lamido. The early developments of these conferences were, however, not successful because of a number of reasons as noted by Stouffer in the study of district councils in Sokoto. Some of the reasons why the conferences were not successful were that as a result of the worldwide recession, the British reduced their tasks to simple routines of supervision of central administration officials and District heads. Also, officials of the NA and the District heads were not keen on the participation of the lower echelons of the society in these conferences.

A further impetus to the development of local administration was the Creech-Jones<sup>68</sup> Dispatch which came to be known as the Local Government Dispatch of 1947. In this document, he enumerated a new policy for local government which called for the introduction of a new system of government at the grassroots which would facilitate the utilization of funds accruing to them. He was also of the view that:

The stage has been reached when, paper plans must be translated into action and it is in the *townships* and villages, among the people themselves, that much of this action must take place. There are many development schemes which success ... can best be secured through the leadership of local authorities.<sup>69</sup>

It was because of this that the District and Village councils were inaugurated and their membership enlarged. There was, for example, the entrance of representatives of the trading community into the District Councils which marked the first step of the participation of elements outside of the pyramid of authority in government. The district councils were mainly to consider recommendations from village councils and any subject that the native authority wishes to have an expression of opinion.

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<sup>64</sup> Perham (1960): *Lugard: The Years of Authority*.... p. 472.

<sup>65</sup> Op Cit, p. 123.

<sup>66</sup> Stouffer(1970):*The Development of District Councils in Sokoto*..... p. 119

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 120

<sup>68</sup> Arthur Creech-Jones became the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1947.

<sup>69</sup> Kirk-Greene (1965):*Principles of Native Administration* ... p. 239

The District Councils' decisions could not, however, be implemented because they had no control over funds which was remedied with the introduction of District Councils' Funds in 1949. This was because the Regional Government wanted Native Authorities to delegate resources as well as responsibilities to District Councils. The District Councils were given the leverage to select the projects in which the money would be spent. They were also tasked with coordinating requests from the villages, gathering information about the cost of the projects and the availability of materials, supervision of the work, and usually the selection of the contractor.<sup>70</sup> The membership of the district and village councils marked the beginning of popular participation in the decision-making process of Native Administration. The District and village Heads acted as chairmen of the councils. While the meetings were sometimes, just routine with the village Heads requesting and the District head obliging, the meeting afforded some amount of feelings in popular participation.

As independence approached in the 1950s, there were stringent criticisms of Native administration by the emerging Northern educated elite in which two trends—revolutionaries and moderates emerged. Their grudge against the NAs hinged on the lack of popular participation in existing councils where an Emir, proclaimed as sole NA, was not legally obliged to consult his council at all. In law, he alone constituted the local authority and the council (if at all), existed at his pleasure.

### **Reasons for the Reforms**

The Native Authority system continued to exist and dominated local administration in the North throughout colonial period until the 1950 with just some minor adjustments. By 1950 however, there was a major shock to the Emirs with the motion of Tafawa Balewa seeking for the abolition of sole NAs. Undoubtedly, Tafawa Balewa, was a representative of the emergent Northern western-educated elite who were frustrated and marginalized in the NA scheme of things in spite of their education. It was in this regard that a small group of western educated elite, with Tafawa Balewa as a vocal representative, was able to put pressure on the colonial administration to reform the vast powers of the emirate aristocracies.

Three strands of thought emerged in the North in the 1950s. These were the conservatives, mainly composed of the traditional rulers, who wanted to maintain the status quo; the modernists, composed mainly of the western educated elite (mostly in the NPC), who wanted the NA to be modernized and the revolutionaries, composed mainly of NEPU elements who wanted the total overhaul of the NA system. Balewa's motion received wide support from the unofficial members of the Northern House of Assembly. He was seconded by Alhaji Tajudeen from Kano and supported by Malam Yahaya from Ilorin, Shettima Kashim from Borno and Muhammadu Ribadu from Adamawa.<sup>71</sup> Yahaya Ilorin, for instance, said that though he was nominated by his N.A., he was moved by genuine concern which transcended narrow interests. According to him, democratic reforms in Northern Nigeria would be futile as long as the local government system remained under the whims of Emirs as Sole Native Authorities.<sup>72</sup> Muhammadu Ribadu in his support of the motion observed that nothing short of the total overhaul of the NA system would guarantee popular participation.

Furthermore, even outside the legislature Balewa's motion received overwhelming support, especially among the western educated class as demonstrated by the support of all the headmasters of Provincial Middle Schools, the top brass of the emergent Northern Intelligentsia.<sup>73</sup> The dice was thus cast and it was left for the colonial authorities to find a middle ground which was not to annoy the Emirs and also not alienate the western educated elite. The alienation of the latter may radicalize them and turn them to the waiting hands of the revolutionaries. This, the colonial authorities wanted to avoid at all cost.

The Emirs were outraged and dismissed Balewa's motion offhand. On the composition of independent commission to investigate the N.A.s. as suggested by Balewa, they contended that the British had promised not to interfere with the basis of indigenous authority. The Shehu of Borno, for example, insisted that any suggestion for change must originate from and be implemented by the Emirs themselves.<sup>74</sup> On the need for democratic participation, they were against any alteration in the status of Sole Native Authorities. The only item which the Emirs budged was the need for training of N.A. staff to eliminate administrative inefficiency. However, their caveat was that the training should not be in formal schools perhaps out of fear that it may lead to further dissent. The consensus was that training on the job was more efficacious.<sup>75</sup>

Interestingly, the colonial administrators showed understanding with Balewa's demand, but felt that Emirs must be carried along in the reforms. The Governor, Macpherson took sympathetic view of Balewa's action, seeing it:

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 134

<sup>71</sup> A.M. Yakubu (2006): *Emirs and Politicians*..... p.88.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.88.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.90.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p.91.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.92.

As a legitimate disaffection of an acquiescent right wing group whose patience had been stretched to the limit. The group must be conciliated before it closed ranks with the leftwing elements who were bent on a revolutionary overthrow of the Administration.<sup>76</sup>

It was also believed that it was misconception and frustration which led to the demands by the western educated elite. In this regard, it was agreed that the educated elite and commercial elite be coupled into some local governments committees where they would be placed under the supervision of experienced N.A. officials.<sup>77</sup>

In order to collate views from people, the colonial authorities set up the provincial conferences on NA reforms which were arranged in two tiers. The first-tier was the NA conference comprising Emirs and their traditional councilors while the second tier was the general conference comprising educated and commercial elite. The two conferences, however, were to meet separately. The outcome from these conferences along with the Maddocks-Pott report would form the basis for a new local government policy.<sup>78</sup>

Some of the terms of the conferences were to: (i) suggest ways to stimulate popular participation at district and village council levels, and (ii) what steps would be taken to moderate district and village administrations; how bribery and corruption could be eradicated in public life; and how financial responsibility could be delegated to district and village councils within the established “administrative chain”.<sup>79</sup> The summary of the Provincial General conferences included among others...

1. The pyramid system of village, District and outer councils should be generally adopted;
2. Village councils should include elected members from each hamlet and a few representatives of special interest.
3. District and outer councils should not only be composed of members elected by the village and District councils respectively, they should also include local leads of departments and special representatives of interests not otherwise adequately represented;
4. District Heads should have some education and be trained in their job;
5. Steps should be taken to ensure that District and village councils are properly trained and supervised;
6. The chiefs’ advisory councils should be made more representative;
7. There should be more devolution of authority to district and village councils.<sup>80</sup>

The Native Authority Law of 1954 was the product of the conferences and Maddocks Pott Report. Among the considerable achievements of the Law was that it recognized NAs as councils consisting of traditional members and some representative elements and formally defined and enumerated the functions of local authorities. Furthermore, the 1954 Law gave legal recognition to two types of consultative bodies both below the Emirate council level – (a) District, Town and village councils; and (b) the Outer Councils. It was also recommended that the central NAs should delegate some financial responsibility to these bodies particularly the urban and district councils.<sup>81</sup> The membership of these councils was on the basis of direct popular vote.

In the Adamawa emirate by 1955, town councils were created for Yola, Jimeta and Mubi. District councils also started to be active, and the more progressive ones began raising a sort of local rate while village councils remain embryonic.<sup>82</sup> The 1954 Law, therefore, did away with the institution of sole Native Authority. From then on, the Native Authority came to consist of a chief and council, a chief in-council, or a number of other arrangements involving plural corporate bodies. There was the gradual spread of these councils in the North and by 1965 there were 650 District councils in Northern Nigeria.<sup>83</sup> The Native Authority Law of 1954 with minor modifications in 1955, 1957, 1960 and 1962 became the basis of local government in the North down to the end of the civilian regime in 1966.

By 1966 there was the first military coup in Nigeria which truncated the civilian regime. The continuity of administration from the colonial period maintained by the civilians was altered by the military who felt that it was necessary to shift political loyalty of the people from the NA to the government. It was in this regard that the then Major Hassan Katsina, the military Governor of Northern Nigeria, in his first press conference said that reforms were going to be undertaken in three areas – Native Courts, N.A. police and N.A. prisons. However, as the Ironsi regime was short lived, the reforms were only undertaken during the Gowon regime. By 1968, there

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.93.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>78</sup> A.M. Yakubu(2006):*Emirs and Politicians : Reform, Reaction and Recrimination in Northern Nigeria*, Kaduna: Baraka, p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.95.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>81</sup> A.D. Yahaya (1989): “Local Government Reforms: The Military Initiative” in P.P Ekeh (ed) *Nigeria Since Independence; Politics and Constitutions .. vol. V*, p. 119

<sup>82</sup> Kirk-Greene(1958) *Adamawa Past and Present.....* p. 151

<sup>83</sup> Op. Cit, 152

was the merger of the Native Courts with the Judiciary, the absorption of the NA police force under the operational control of the Inspector General of Police and their subsequent integration with the Nigeria Police in 1970 and the handing over of all N.A. prisons to the Federal Government.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, states were also created by the regime, the N.As. were dissolved and Local Authority Councils inaugurated with chiefs and council. What this meant was that the constitutional status of the chief is not higher than that of the council. The merger of the N.A. Police with Federal Police was no doubt because of the notoriety it gained in harassing and intimidating opponents of the N.A. especially, those who were not members of the NPC.

The most shattering transformation in the duties of traditional rulers at the local level was the local government reform of 1976 because “traditional rulers are for the first time, to cease being executives and even policy makers at the local level”.<sup>85</sup> In terms of impact, the local government reform curtailed the role of Emirs, Chiefs and their traditional officials. Adamawa Emirate, therefore, ceased to exist as a corporate local government under the Lamido and Districts came to constitute the five local governments that made up the Emirate. Also, the reforms took over from the Lamido direct supervisory control over all salaried traditional positions – district, village and ward heads and bestowed it on elected local executives.<sup>86</sup>

The whittling in the duties of traditional rulers, especially district heads, was further witnessed during the Second Republic. Some of the civilian Governors, to score political points, abolished both *Jangali* and *Haraji* which they saw as being oppressive and exploitative. For instance, the Gongola State Governor, a member of Progressive Governors Forum, abolished these taxes. Thus, the district heads were reduced to mere ceremonial figures. They could no longer collect taxes, and they could no longer maintain law and order which had long been taken over by the Federal Government. However, the military regime that came in December 1983 reintroduced these taxes, thereby giving the district heads some duties to do in addition to their custody of traditional title to land.

#### **The 1976 Local Government Reform and Structure of Administration after the Reform**

When the Murtala/Obasanjo administration took over power in 1976, they felt that there was the need for reforms at the local level in Nigeria. It was in this regard that a team was gathered in the Cabinet Office under the leadership of Yaya Abubakar Permanent Secretary, Political (Tukur: 1999, p.463). Old experienced administrators were also co-opted into the team as consultants. The team went round, had discussions with community leaders and universities, particularly the Institutes of Administration at Zaria and Ife were used in seminars which appraised the proposals (Tukur:1999,p.463).

The document that the team came up with was known as the *Suggested Framework for National System of Local Government* and became the guiding principle for the 1976 Local Government Reform. Some states adopted the *Framework* wholesale while others made some modifications. The grundnorm of these reforms was to have a representative and democratic local government as well as give the grass roots population power and initiative in local affairs as noted by Mahmud Tukur:-

It was to be a system which, through the devolution of functions and the decentralization of powers ensured the participation of the people and their traditional institutions in the management of local affairs. Then, local initiative and response to local needs would be maximized (Tukur: 1999, p.464).

The conception of local government envisaged by the reform was that it was going to be multi-purpose, but single-tier authority, created by State Law and directly responsible to it for specific functions. The ideal Local Government would serve a population range of between 200,000 and 600,000 for non-urban settlements (Tukur: 1999, p.464). Local Government Councils were created comprising mainly of elected Council members with a chairman. However, in order not to antagonize the traditional authorities, a redundant council, known as Emirate Council was created with no executive functions for them. The Emirate Council consisted of the Emir, traditional title holders, Chairmen of Local Government Councils and other persons appointed by the Governor to make it broadly representative of major facets of life in the Emirate (Tukur: 1999, p.464).

The traditional functions of local government such as maintenance of markets and motor parks, burial and grazing grounds, control of advertisement boards and land held by customary law under the reform, was left with the local governments. While functions like nursery, primary and adult education, agriculture and veterinary extension services, rural and semi-urban water supply, control of atmospheric pollution and the regulation and control of buildings could be done either by the local government or state.

In the defunct Gongola state, seventeen local government areas were created and Adamawa Emirate came to comprise of the local government areas of Yola, Gombi, Song, Mayo Belwa, and Fufore. The reforms cut down the powers of the traditional rulers by reducing them to advisory roles. There was no open resistance

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<sup>84</sup> M.M Tukur (1977):*Values and Public Affairs: The Relevance of the Sokoto Caliph Experience to the Transformation of the Nigerian Polity*, Ph.D. Thesis: ABU Zaria, p. 735.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 761.

<sup>86</sup> Sa’adAbubakar (2008): *Lamibe Fombina*..... p. 449.

from the traditional authorities, perhaps, because over time they have been coerced and the military regime might not tolerate any form of dissent. As noted by Ahmed Joda, a Federal Permanent Secretary during the Murtala/Obasanjo regime:

I remembered I came to Yola to explain the government's position in introducing the reforms. I delivered messages and went around Northern Nigeria to explain to others. I can say that the understanding that was shown by the Lamido here was very mature which helped a lot in the implementation of the changes. He himself asked me to come and asked me just simple questions (Abdullahi: 1997, p.102).

## II. CONCLUSION

Like other emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, Adamawa, was conquered by the British at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the conquest, the British called the area Northern Nigeria and divided it into divisions, and the Divisions were in turn broken into homologous districts. Adamawa Emirate became synonymous with Adamawa Division less the mandated Territories which were hitherto part of the Emirate before the European conquest.

In terms of duties of the District Heads, it gradually metamorphosed into making them almost irrelevant in the scheme of things. Under colonial rule, the District Heads had the duty of assessment and collection of taxes, maintenance of law and order, monitoring emigration, mobilising forced labour, etc. With demands for popular participation, District and Village Councils were constituted. Most of the duties of the District Heads remained intact during the First Republic. The beginning of the erosion of their powers and duties began with the first and second military regimes which removed native courts, NA police and prisons from the purview of the traditional rulers. The last straw came in 1976 with the local government reforms which removed them from all executive functions and created elected local government officials to take care of government at the local level. The transformation in the duties of traditional rulers is perhaps best described by the late Emir of Kano Ado Bayero in which he said "Da mu mukeyi, yadawoanashawartanmukaminayi, yanzukumayadawosai a gaya mana anyi" (we were the executives, we became advisers and lastly spectators).<sup>87</sup>

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