The Sokoto Caliphate, Colonialism, and the Formation of Identities: The Construction of “Northern Nigeria”

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Our recent experience has taught us that the Pagan Gwaris, Kederas, and other tribes yield to none in bravery. They all speak Hausa, and I hope to enlist many as soon as we get in touch with them at the new headquarters. It is, in fact, my desire to make the West African Frontier Force, as far as possible, a Hausa-speaking pagan force, and I am convinced that it will thus be a far more reliable source of military strength (Frederick Lugard, 1900¹)

The degree to which unity was achieved was in no small part determined by the nature of the colonial territories which had been marked out by the Europeans (Patrick Chabal, 1994²).

Introduction

The opening quotation is one example of the way *identity* is constructed and reproduced under conditions of colonial domination. The assignation of particularistic identities to specific social groups, such as ‘pagan gwari’ (note the linkage to bravery, loyalty and military prowess), and the choice and elevation of a specific language or culture (in this case the Hausa language and culture) as the dominant mode of-social organization, underscore two critical, issues often taken for granted in the exercise of colonial power. The first is the fragmentation of pre-colonial societies and their reconstruction as bearers of several competing

¹ Frederick Lugard, quoted in Phillip J. Shea’s, ‘How Indirect was Indirect Rule? A Documentary Approach to an Administrative Problem,’ *Kano Studies*, New Series Volume 2, Number 3, 1982 / 85, p. 157.

² Patrick Chabal, *Power in Africa: An Essay in Political Interpretation*, New York, St. Martins Press, p.51.

particularistic identities. Then there is also their forcible integration into a centralized, colonially constructed identity underpinned by a new territorial space.

This paper attempts to address the question of colonial territoriality and its impact on the processes and patterns of identity formation with particular reference to northern Nigeria. I must say that this is not a new debate at all. Though the political debates of the 1960s and 1970s attempted to address these questions, such debates focused on narrower issues of national integration and political instability, to the neglect of wider issues of the formation of identities and nations. The violent resurgence of various forms of particularisms in Nigeria and in former colonized societies since the early 1980s however forces us to again re-examine these questions, and to reassess their impact on the formation of identity and nations. This kind of reassessment is necessary if we are to inquire of the nature, processes, and constitution of post-colonial societies, and of the origin and dominance particularistic identities have come to assume in the politics of such societies. Though quite illuminating, the debates of the 1960s and 1970s appear to have grossly underestimated the role and impact of Colonial territoriality on processes of identity formation and its consequences

³ Most studies of postcolonial societies have chosen to focus on those patterns and processes that could be shown to have a direct bearing on 'nation building' in the new independent states. Studies hardly raise questions of how new and old identities were constructed or transmuted. Colonial territoriality was taken for granted, was posed as a necessary and sufficient precondition for the formation of nations/identities, and the resultant new, too often conflicting identities were simply cast as manifestations of intense competition between the elite for political power. Not all of these studies are however so restricted. There are those that sought to examine the impact of colonialism on intergroup relations, though in some of these, both the focus and the discourse in which the relationship between colonial territoriality and identity formation were posed, is colonial. See, for example, Erne O. Awa; *National Integration in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects*, Distinguished Lecture Series Number 5, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan, 1983; J. F. Ade Ajayi, *The Problems of National Integration in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective*, Distinguished Lecture Series Number 11, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan, 1984; and Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Intergroup Relations in an Evolving Nation State*, Presidential Inaugural Lecture, 30th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1 May, 1985.

on the organization of social and political spaces. Today, these issues are violently resurfacing, sometimes with terrible consequences. Conflicts - religious, communal, and ethnic - have been on the increase. It is estimated that there have been about 250 of such conflicts in Nigeria since the *Maitatsine*, in 1980 which, together with the Tafawa Balewa (1991) and Zangon Kataf (1992) conflicts, constitute some of the most serious identity conflicts in recent times, especially in view of the violence and depth of particularistic feelings that they reflected. Communal violence still rages in Delta State between the Urhobo, the Igbo and the Itsekiri; in Osun State between the Ife and the Modakeke; in Benue State between the Tiv and the Idoma; and in Taraba State between the Jukun and the Kuteb. Similar conflicts rage in other parts of the country. Although no one general satisfactory explanation has yet been proffered for these conflicts, it is instructive to note that neither the literature of the 1960s, nor current studies have examined closely the very *constitution of post-colonial societies* and its possible relationship to the current resurgence of particularistic identities.

This paper argues that the constitution of post-colonial societies is a crucial, if, largely neglected factor in any attempt to understand identity formation and intergroup relations in post-colonies. For, central to it are larger questions of the colonial demarcation of internal and external boundaries, of the new “spaces” or fields of power such boundaries created, and of the consequences of both on identity and nation formation, as well as on intergroup relations. These are what constitute the elements of the newly constructed and imposed *colonial territoriality*.⁵ Focus

⁴ Iheanyi Enwerem, *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*, Ibadan, IFFRA, 1995.

⁵ The term *colonial territoriality* refers not just to the restricted notion of a geographical space; on a broader and deeper level, it refers to *fields of power* in which multiple layers of consent and resistance coexist. The term denotes the convergence of various fields of power and the fusion and fission that characterizes such convergence. For this particular usage, see Jean Francoise Bayart's *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* Longman, London and New York, 1993; Pp.

on such issues is significant not just for scholarly purposes. To begin to raise questions of the constitution and diversity of post-colonies, and of northern Nigeria in particular is to begin to force a critical intellectual and practical confrontation with the important question of the nature, origin, and basis of the social categories that came to constitute such societies. More specifically it forces us to begin to genuinely confront, and to understand the kind of spaces and fields of power that resulted from colonial conquest, the dialectic of fear and dominance such spaces created, and the consequences of these on relations between constituent social categories. This kind of re-examination begins to raise the fundamental issue of the origin and constitution of the political and territorial expression “northern Nigeria” and of similar territorial expressions elsewhere. More specifically, such a rethink draws attention to some fundamental questions: under what conditions and by what mechanisms are new social, territorial and political spaces in colonized societies constructed? How did these new spaces impact upon pre-colonial spaces and identities? What is the effect of these processes on intergroup relations in post-colonial societies? By which mechanisms are these spaces and identities reproduced, and what is the relationship between these new spaces/identities and the violent resurgence of ethnic, communal and

260-272. The construction of new territorialities was one way through which colonialism imposed overall control over pre-colonial societies, even as these societies were internally fragmented. Thus the delimiting of international boundaries by colonial powers merged diverse peoples who prior to colonial rule may have had no relations and separated many more that lived together. There is also the case of the construction of internal administrative boundaries within colonies, which followed a similar fragmentary pattern. Both measures no doubt imposed external and internal geographical spaces; but in a more profound way, they imposed new social, cultural and political spaces. Far from being immobile, concrete struggles were fought to define and redefine such spaces. Yet, analysis of nation and identity formation often glosses over the processes of the construction of these spaces, of the creation, elevation and imposition of some identities over others, of the uprooting of whole groups and identities, as well as of the patterns of power and conflict these processes generated. See for example, Sa’ad Abubakar’s ‘Peoples of the Upper Benue Basin and the Bauchi Plateau Before 1800,’ in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Obaro Ikime (Ed.), (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books for the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1980), Pp. 165-186. See also Phillip Shea, *Op. cit.*

religious particularisms in the post-colony?⁶ It is the objective of this paper to examine these questions with reference to “northern Nigeria.”

The Formation of Identities

The processes of formation of identities are inextricably linked to those of nations, though the two can be analytically distinguished. The notion of nationhood implies a community of people with similar sets of myths, legends, distinct territories, as well as educational and information systems.⁷ Although identities may, and in certain cases do, transcend territorial boundaries territory has become a significant factor in the formation of identities especially in former colonized societies. Identities and nations are not fixed.⁸ The existence of all or some of these characteristics simply indicate the level to which various peoples and cultures have either been blending into a *national identity*, or drawing away from it, thereby strengthening *particularistic* identities. Within these broad limits, the strength of particularistic identities would then depend on the interplay of specific historical forces. Such historical forces may or may not influence the emergence of a crisscrossing network of language, culture, myths

⁶ Chabal argues that the general processes of the creation of a political community are linked to the question of political accountability. This is because in the constitution of the political community lie mechanisms which determine the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The specific ways in which a political community is constituted and the extent to which it projects itself as one, are likely to determine what patterns/principles of political accountability and intergroup relations are generated and practiced. See his *Power in Africa Op. cit.* See also John Lonsdale, ‘Political Accountability in African History’ in Patrick Chabal (ed.), *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1986, Pp. 126 -157.

⁷ Anthony Smith, ‘The origins of Nations’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 12, Number 3, 1989, Pp. 340 - 367.

⁸ Studies on nationalism especially in the former colonies tend to treat the nation as a living entity wherein questions of integration and unity became the most dominant themes. Studies from the modernization school are especially given to this line of reasoning. For a different view that treats the nation as an unfolding process of formation involving various conflicts and tensions, see Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

and legends that could transcend particularistic identities. Which identity - national, or particularistic - gains dominance, is as much the outcome of the balance of historical forces, as it is of specific political and situational contexts. It is on this basis however, that an identity or a nation - conceived as a community distinguished from others with a history and culture, a territory, an economy, a mass education system as well as some common legal framework -coalesces.⁹ The presence of all of these in a specific case is more ideal than real, but scholars have drawn attention to a combination of these characteristics in varying degrees as crucial determinants in the formation of identities and nations.

Whatever form and degree these characteristics may take in concrete situations, they draw attention to the diversity of the processes of the construction of nations and identities. Behind this diversity and variation, however, lies a fairly common denominator: nation and identity formation involve processes of the “mobilization and centralization of resources, defined as natural, social or cultural, into a single or multiple power points.”¹⁰ Such mobilization and centralization could be peaceful or violent, gradual or revolutionary. Whatever form mobilization takes, the processes are not one-dimensional. They indicate that during the development of nations and identities, some peoples, cultures, groups or languages absorb, or are absorbed by others. Those absorbed may, and in certain cases have resurged. In other cases, a kind of symbiosis blends peoples and cultures, resulting in either a coherent, or a discordant hybrid. The ‘blending’ of such legends, myths and forms of social organization draws strength either from notions of a glorious historical past, or such glory is invented

⁹ Anthony Smith, Op. c/f. See also his ‘Opening Statement: Nations and their Past,’ and ‘Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner’s Theory of Nationalism,’ in *Nations and Nationalism*, Volume 2, Number 3, 1996, Pp, 358-65 and 371-388 respectively.

¹⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation - State and Violence*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987.

anew.¹¹ Such a process shapes, and is in turn shaped by the development and expansion of surveillance, bureaucracy, military power and ideology.²

The specific ways these developments take and their particular manifestations in different historical contexts, have occupied the attention of scholars. Some of these scholars have placed emphasis on war as the dominant factor in nation and identity formation. Thus, the mobilization and centralization of resources is seen by Tilly¹³ as profoundly influenced by the need of nations to wage, and to prepare for war. The nature of war is determined by the way it is financed, a matter that in turn determines the degree of internal cohesion and territorial breadth of the nation. The financing of war depends on two kinds of settings: capital-intensive and coercion-intensive settings. The

¹¹ The debate rages over whether nations and identities have a historical past, or they are invented anew. In Ernest Gellner's words, the question is 'do nations have a navel?' His answer, rooted in the modernist approach to the formation of nations, is that nations may indeed have a navel, but such navels were irrelevant in the understanding and analysis of nations and of nationalism. See Gellner's position in his 'Do Nations have Navels?' *Nations and Nationalism*, Volume 2(3), 1996, pp. 366-70. On the other hand, Anthony Smith, steeped in the primordial position, argues that nations do have navels, that they (nations) are not just invented ex *nihilo*, and that historical memories play a crucial part in their formation and sustenance. It seems to me, that if this debate admits of the theoretical necessity to distinguish between nations and states, it becomes easier to see that all nations as well as other smaller social categories for that matter, properly so called, require some historical myths common memories, heroes, villains, or some other distinguishing characteristic that could draw them together. At the same time, the reproduction of these, ideologies and the blending of groups into a closely-knit social unit is a matter on which modernists have a point. Thus, although the dominant case is where historical memories have played a part or are imagined to have played a part, there are a few cases where historical memories were invented to support particular nations. One obvious case is Indonesia. It appears more rewarding to examine the issue not in terms of set and rigid boundaries - of historical memory versus modernity, but in terms of a process. For this view, see for example David Henley, 'Ethnographic Integration and Exclusion in Anti-colonial Nationalism: Indonesia and Indochina,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 37, Number 2, 1995, pp. 286 -324. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins -and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991 and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1990.

¹² Anthony Giddens, Op. off.

¹³ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States; AD 990-1990*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, 1990.

former represents a pattern of nation formation in which large empires usually result. In the latter, small city states usually predominate, because these are largely trade and agriculturally based states.¹⁴ Along similar though subtly different lines, Moore argues that the formation of the modern state results from the various conflicts and coalitions between landlords, peasants, and the bourgeoisie in which one of these social forces at any one time remains in opposition to others. These forces are identified as the major centralizing tendencies in the formation of nations and identities.¹⁵

These approaches however raise a series of problems. To begin with, reducing the complex and variegated processes of nation and identity formation to war is too mono-causal an explanation, for the simple reason that it overlooks the myriad roads through which modern nations and identities are or could be constructed. To be sure, war is a significant factor in nation and identity formation. In the central Sudanese belt of West Africa for example, war has been an important vehicle in the formation of states and identities, though it was less crucial in the imposition of the dominion of one state or identity over another. It would appear, for example, that a position of military parity existed in the states of the central Sudan between the 15th and 18th centuries, where no single state was able to impose its dominion over others. Raids between these states, and even the momentary victory of one state over another were regular in those years. But none of the states was able to effectively impose its rule, or expand its territory until the spatial, ideological and territorial re-mapping of the region by the Jihad of 1804.¹⁶ Even in the case of Europe, war is

¹⁴ Charles Tilly, *Ibid.* See also his *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1995, and *From Mobilization to Revolution*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1978.

¹⁵ Barrington Moore, Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Beacon Press, New York, 1968.

¹⁶ Mahmud Tukur, "The Historian, the Jurist and the Sokoto Jihad" in Tanimu Abubakar (ed.), *The Essential Mahmud*, ABU Press, Zaria, 1990.

too limited and reductionist an explanation of state formation.¹⁷ Similar criticisms could be raised of Moore's position. The nature, capacity and configuration of classes and centralizing tendencies to which he entrusted the construction of nations and identities are not historically given. In addition to the variety of forms and the contexts in which they appeared, there are parts of the world where some of these classes have played only minor social roles and, as ! such, were not that significant in such transformations. There has } not been a large landowning class in Africa south of the Sahara for example, and the constitution of the working class is such that its capacity for mobilization must be examined in relation to the specific historical conjunctures of 20th century world history.¹⁸ And though Giddens' emphasis on the mobilization and centralization of resources highlights the question of the role and strength of surveillance, ideology, bureaucracy and military power in the formation of identities, these tendencies, when they do occur may not *ipso factor* result into nations as the case of the Hausa states clearly demonstrates. On the contrary, spatial, social and military factors may impose a situation of internecine wars, thus preventing the emergence of a single dominant nation and identity.¹⁹ Equally significant is that there may be differences in "1 the degree of centralization, an issue which would have serious implications on the composition of nations/identities, and on the degree to which a single national, or several particularistic identities assume dominance. Thus, even though by the beginning of the 19th century the Sokoto Caliphate had established dominion

¹⁷ See Jack Goldstone, 'States Making Wars Making States Making Wars...*Contemporary Sociology*, Volume 20, Numbers 1 - 3, 1991, Pp, 176 -178; Michael Mann, 'Review of Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990 - 1990*,' *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 96, Number 5, 1992, Pp. 1260-1261; Arthur Stinchcombe, 'Autonomy Makes the State More Predictable,' *Contemporary Sociology*, Volume 20, Numbers 1- 3, 1991, Pp. 178 -179; Sydney Tarrow, *The People's Two Rhythms: Charles Tilly and the Study of Contentious Politics*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 38, Number 3(A), 1996, Pp. 586-600.

¹⁸ Jean - Francoise Bayart, *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804 -1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies*, New York, Humanities Press, 1971, p. 22.

over a large part of the Central Sudan, the degree of territorial centralization and the extension of political authority in this vast area remained tenuous up till colonial conquest in 1903. Essentially a political and religious rather than a territorial community, and lacking a standing army as well as the surveillance apparatus to police resistant “pockets states”, Caliphal suzerainty could not be absolute both within and outside its borders.² Such centralization of authority as was achieved depended largely on the efficacy and observance of Islam. And when resistance began to be organized against the authority of the Caliphate on religious grounds, its control over its frontiers became even more tenuous.

Nevertheless, such historical processes and events that enter into the making of nations and identities. Smith has drawn attention to the relevance of the historical past and its impact on the origin of nations and identities. Nations and identities, he argues could be, and are often traced back to pre-modern ethnic communities or ethnics.²¹ Such ethnics represent a historical and culturally defined community that is either tightly or loosely bound territorially which, “through a complex of myths, symbols, values and memories,” ensures a “sense of common ethnicity, of...common descent and belonging, which characterizes a ‘community of fate.’” Although the reproduction of a “sense of common ethnicity” is the ultimate end of these processes, reproduction could take several forms, two of which are for Smith, clearly more dominant. The first are the territorial, “civic” nations that “tend to develop from aristocratic ‘lateral’ ethnics through £ process of ‘bureaucratic incorporation’ of outlying regions and lower classes into the ethnic culture of the upper classes, as occurred in France, England and Spain.”²² The second are the more numerous, ethnic nations “emerging from demotic ‘vertical’

²⁰ R. A. Adeleye, *Ibid.*

²¹ Anthony Smith, *Op. c/f.*

²² Anthony Smith, *Op. c/f.*, p. J46.

ethnics through processes of cultural mobilization that turn an often religiously defined and passive community into an active, politicized nation.”²³ Smith’s contribution raises important questions in relation to the significance of ethnics in the formation of identities and nations as well as to the existence of many several competing identities within the same territorial space. He attempts to open up the question of nation and identity formation to the influences of historical forces. But as we consider historical memories, Gellner²⁴ reminds us to also seriously consider the modern origins of nations, that such memories could be invented to suit particular purposes where they were non-existent, and to pay close attention to the development of education and communication that are today crucial- in the creation of nations and identities.

If we focus on historical memories (*a la* Smith) and on modernity (*a la* Gellner), it is perhaps possible to offer fruitful analyses of colonial territoriality and of the twin processes of fragmentation and centralization involved in the formation of identities and nations. Underlying these twin processes is the question of the construction of identities - and of nations.²⁶ Although the processes of the construction of identities and nations are diverse across the former colonies, they have in general tended to rest on the selective elevation of some social category, and there

²³ Anthony Smith, *Op. c/f.*, p. 346.

²⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Op. c/f.*

²⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Op. c/f.*

²⁶ A number of scholars seem to think that these new identities are artificial. Asiawaju, in his *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries: 1884 -1984*, holds this position. He puts across the notion of how boundaries are political, and how continuing relations between peoples had made such boundaries artificial. The *political* nature of internal social and external boundaries in fact makes the *reproduction of difference* implicit in the notion of boundaries more real than artificial. There is certainly little doubt about the fact that the numerous intra- and inter-border crises across Africa are testimonies to the impact of colonial territoriality on intergroup relations. These make it particularly difficult to refer to colonial territoriality as artificial. The several civil wars, the violent communal and intergroup clashes such as those in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Somalia, Sierra Leone and low intensity violence in Nigeria since the early 1980s effectively foreclose such conceptions of the artificiality of colonial territoriality.

fore of some particularistic identity to a level of political exclusivity in a way that threatens the very 'unity' that has been: the *raison d'être* of the post-colony. Beside the colonial policy of the simultaneous elevation and subordination of social categories, this tendency also seems to have found intellectual justification in first, colonial anthropology, and second in modernization literature. Such literature has tended to focus on political stability and national integration - "unity at all costs" - to the neglect of the role of colonial territoriality in shaping processes of the construction of identities and nations.²⁷ Such a focus encapsulates an *a priori* assumption that the imposition of homogeneity on what colonialism first invented, and then accentuated as heterogeneous, is the only possible road to modernity. Such a position obscures the much deeper and complex processes of the invention and reconfiguration of the identities of people in the former colonies. Besides, it neglects the political impact of these newly invented identities on intergroup relations, as well as their role in the justification of colonialism's claim to "establishing order", "abolishing barbaric practices" and "building a nation" out of an otherwise endless "tribal chaos". Such 'order' and 'nation building' in many cases, but especially in northern Nigeria, meant the construction of new social, spatial and territorial boundaries and power spaces. These boundaries were not just at variance with pre-colonial patterns; they in addition imposed new, transmuted old, and in other cases created hybridized²⁸ identities that radically conflicted with pre-colonial forms. This has frequently been a source of tension between social groups in post-colonial

²⁷ For a summary of the main issues in the debates on national integration and political stability, see: Donald Morrison and Hugh Stevenson, "Cultural Pluralism, Modernization, and Conflict: An Empirical Analysis of Sources of Political Instability in African Nations," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 5, 1 (1972 A), pp. 83-103; and their "Integration and Instability: Patterns of African Political Development," *The American Political Science Review* 66, 3 (1972 B), pp. 902-927. For a more detailed examination of this position, see Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Jersey Princeton University Press, 1968.

²⁸ Bernard Conn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.

societies.²⁹ In this sense, identities and nations in post-colonies were invented, and are of modern origin.

The colonial construction of social, spatial and territorial boundaries in the 19th century, and the texture of such patterns was however only partly a modern phenomenon. Colonial territoriality was also dependent on the nature and degree of political and territorial integration achieved in the pre-colonial period, a factor that came to exert quite an influence on the interface between pre-colonial states and colonialism. Within the territorial breadth of the area colonialism came to define as “northern Nigeria,” the Sokoto Caliphate and the Bornu, Nupe and Jukun Empires, were the largest and most centralized in the region. Interspersed between these centralized states, were smaller states and chiefdoms that were at various stages of political centralization. Even in the larger, more centralized states, the degree of centralization and the authority of these states within their frontiers not only differed; it was also tenuous, especially when we note that within the breadth of this vast territory, reside between 200 - 300 linguistic and cultural groups. Yet it is these diverse states that colonialism first fragmented, and then forcibly centralized into this newly constructed space of power, “northern Nigeria.” Although the new territoriality massively disrupted pre-colonial social, political and territorial boundaries, in almost all instances, it depended in some way on pre-colonial patterns. In this sense, nations and identities in post-colonies do have “navels.”

Both processes therefore, inhere in the formation of nations and identities in the post-colony. What links them is the twin process of fragmentation and centralization, which their construction took. This fragmentation and centralization appear,

²⁹ One example of the impact of colonial territoriality is on Itsekiri - Urhobo relations between the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. The British attempt to force both groups into a single political and juridical system not only introduced a serious source of conflict in their otherwise strong relations, but it also exacerbated old tensions between them that became the nuclei for intense intergroup conflicts to date. See Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri - Urhobo Relations and the European Presence 1884 -1936*, New York, Humanities Press, 1969.

on a general level, to have followed two main patterns. The first was the dual categorization of pre-colonial states and peoples: some were 'stateless,' and others 'centralized.' Such characterizations coincide with a whole socio-political field of power. Thus, the appellations 'paganism,' 'republicanism,' 'bravery,' 'loyalty' etc. is assigned mainly to the peoples of the numerous chieftaincies and states in the Middle Niger Region characterized as 'stateless' societies. And though colonialism was interested in imposing a centralized administrative system that could supervise all its conquered territories in this part of the Central Sudan, it recognized and elevated the administrative system of the Sokoto Caliphate above other centralized states, such as Bornu and the Jukun Kingdom of Wukari. It was the emirate administrative system that became the model upon which new power relations were constructed, and the other centralized states were broken up into small administrative units. The second is the invention and accentuation of the distinction between 'official' and 'Mahdist' or 'militant' Islam most evident in the near-centralized Islamic states of Sokoto and Bornu. Such categorization: coalesced around the active promotion of the former, and the suppression of the latter.³⁰ Overall, the whole area that became

³⁰ One of the most significant forms of opposition within these areas then was Mahdism, or what the British referred to as militant Islam. It should be noted that the Mahdist movement was widespread in the Caliphate. Though not in any way uniform as to present a common front, the movement constituted a huge threat to both Caliphal authority and to the British. This was with some Emirs collaborating in its suppression. Though there are others who not only spurred European support in dealing with Mahdism, but also some in addition actively supported it. Though the British finally suppressed the Satiru Revolt, it is worth noting that the Emir of Gwai gave it his support. Similar support has been accorded such movements especially in northeastern part of the Caliphate, where the activities of Mallam Jibrin Ghani threatened emirates of Bauchi, Gombe and Misau. Thus, the accentuated dichotomy between "official" "militant" or "Mahdist" Islam constituted one out of the several newly invented fields of power through which colonial rule was imposed and justified. See P. K. Tibendrana, *SoMo Pro\ Under British Rule 1903 -1939: A Study in Institutional Adaptation and Culturalization of a Col Society in Northern Nigeria*, Zaria, ABU Press Ltd. See also Asmau G. Saeed, 'The British Fight Towards the Mahdiyya in Northern Nigeria: The Study of the Arrest, Detention and Deportation of Shaykh Sa'id b. Hayat, 1923 to 1959: A Bibliographical Note', *Kano Studies*, New Series Volume Numbers, 1982/85, Pp. 95-119.

“northern Nigeria” was rigidly defined as Islamic and Hausa, thus sharpening a *particular* social and territorial distinctiveness, as well as elevating the social categories Islamic and Hausa into a more politically dominant position not only *within* the area, but especially *outside* it. In and through these and other characterizations, new forms of identity and the power relations to sustain them were constructed. The overall objective was to administratively centralize such reconstructed spaces while simultaneously accentuating and exploiting their differences.

The creation and imposition of new state forms and the demarcation of new international and domestic political boundaries after all, indicate not just the processes of the construction of new socio-political spaces. Behind such spaces lay profound changes in the forms of social categorization and identity formation, in notions of power and responsibility, and in the ideas of community, in a sense of ‘who is in and who is out.’³¹ Fragmentation and centralization introduced new fields of power that began responding to the logic of colonial conquest and domination. It thus created and sustained a duality by force: the exploitation and heightening of social and cultural heterogeneity on the one hand, and the imposition of administrative and geographical homogeneity on the other. The reconfiguration of identities and power along a single dominant or a number of dominant social categories dictated the choice of certain integrative mechanisms that could suppress the identity of smaller, less powerful social groups. It also led to intense struggles for the assertion of particularistic identities, the expression of which often takes place through the struggle over the control of the state apparatus.³² The colonial encounter was thus not just a modern encounter or a fixed quantity but also a historical process whereby arbitrary creation and imposition of new spatial, social and territo-

³¹ Michael Walzer, ‘Exclusion, Injustice and the Democratic State,’ *Dissent*, Volume 40, Number 1 1993, Pp.55-65.

³² Patrick Chabal, *Op. cit.*

rial boundaries were closely related to pre-colonial forms of domination. For, the colonial encounter did not simply create new categories and identities; it also accentuated existing ones, the social and economic contexts in which diverse identities began to struggle for dominance on the basis of new rules and spaces. If one considers nation -/ identity formation generally as involving a process of the growth and spread of common myths of descent, common memories, common culture, and a common territoriality, it is then legitimate to also ask of the reverse of that question. Thus, the question of how differences were accentuated, and the historical conditions for such accentuation becomes a significant question, as Zubaida³³ points out:

Ethnic identities and solidarities only make sense in a field of difference: one identity is defined in contra-distinction to others. Every complex society offers, differentially, to its members a range of possible identifications, of which the 'national,' if and when it exists, is only one. Which identification becomes the basis of political solidarities and actions at a given point in time is contingent upon particular conjunctures of processes and events...the question is under what conditions these became the foci of political solidarity as against other possible identifications, for whom, and with what degree of success. The question therefore is under what historical conditions did specific identities assume dominance over others. With specific reference to the Central Sudan, what forms of identity became dominant, and under what conditions?

The Formation of Identities in the Central Sudan: The Sokoto Caliphate

Patterns of the formation of identities and nations in the central Sudan were not only long and tortuous, they in addition demonstrate

³³ Sami Zubaida, 'Nations: Old and New Comments on Anthony D. Smith's 'The Myth of the Modern Nation' and the "Myths of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 12, Number 3 1989, Pp, 330-331.

a recurring theme in the history of this area: the continuous struggle to establish large states that was not fully played out up to colonial conquest. Long before this however, and as early as 10th century AD, small city-states had been expanding outwards and occupying outlying areas and villages. Such an expansionary trend ultimately had limitations, for available 'free' areas and villages were not infinite. This gradually brought such city-states and chiefdoms into conflict in which none except Kanem Bornu was able to establish its hegemony (militarily, territorially and ideologically) over any other state or chiefdom for long.³⁴ The various Hausa states, though constantly engaged in war especially between the 14th and the 18th centuries, were never integrated into a single political unit, nor were any of the states able to establish a lasting dominance over the others.³⁵ This state of war and internal political struggles continued until the spatial and political remapping of the area by the *Jihad* of 1804.

The Jihad was an altogether different ideological and military centralizing force. Its mobilization power and capacity exceeded any that the former states could muster. It not only demonstrated that the Hausa states in general, and *Habe* rule in particular were ideologically bankrupt, it in addition became a powerful social force for the mobilization and establishment of cross-cutting alliances between diverse social groups. While these crosscutting networks and linkages were not strong enough to integrate all the areas under the Jihad's influence into a single polity, they were sufficient to have provided the *idea* of such

³⁴ R. A. Adeleye, Op. c/f. See also Mahmud Tukur, Op. c/'f., and Michael Watts, 'On Peasant Diffidence: Non - Revolt, Resistance, and Hidden Forms of Political Consciousness in Northern Nigeria, 1900 -1945, *Global Crises and Social Movements: Art/sans, Peasanfs, Populists, and (fie World Economy*, Edmund Burke, III (ed.), Boulder, Westview Press, 1988, Pp. 117 -144.

³⁵ See Mahmud Tukur, Op. c/'f. Reasons have been advanced for this. The thesis that the existence of a balance of military power between the states prevented the emergence of the territorial hegemony of any one state is plausible, especially when seen also in the context of the sheer territorial vastness and social diversity of the region. In any case, this underscores the complexity of the processes of state formation, and indicates that the marshaling / centralization of forces and the resultant state types depend on numerous factors.

integration. These networks certainly served in integrating the diverse social groups and territories that constituted the former^ independent Hausa states irrespective of territorial and, to a much lesser extent, cultural boundaries. The *Jihad* created an ideologically coherent and bureaucratically centralized state structure that depended on Islam. It thus created a concrete ideological and territorial *sense of community* that served as a beginning for the re-organization and centralization of a large part of the central Sudan, excepting Bornu.

Although a widely accepted result of the Jihad is the creation of a politically and territorially unified identity, the *ummah*. A less acknowledged but important consequence is that it laid the *ideological* and *territorial* foundations for a more general *pan-Hausa* identity that came to assume great political significance within the context of colonial domination. Nevertheless, it is this notion of the *ummah* that served as a master-frame for the attempt to unify several of the hitherto warring states and social groups into a loosely centralized state, thus transcending, at least initially, many forms of particularisms. Such a state, and the degree to which it exercises control within and outside its frontiers, is however not simply a matter of ideology or belief alone. It is a practical political question of how to secure and defend the new community, and of how to administer the diverse social groups constituting such a community. Such a process of legitimizing has in some quarters been seen as gradually evolving into a common identity and nation. Thus, Sail³⁶ notes in the case of an Islamic state, that though:

Social groups in any society could be divided along different lines (i.e., linguistic, ethnic, or racial), the Islamically significant and politically relevant element of social differentiation is the ultimate purpose that brings the community members together and unites them with one another. The organization of purposes attains its

³⁶ Louay M. Safi, 'The Islamic State: A Conceptual Framework', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Volume 8, Number 2, 1991, p. 223.

highest expression in the state, the central organization of any -society; The cohesion of collectivities is maintained by a system of norms (normative system) that determines the socially acceptable behaviour of the individual members. Likewise, the cohesiveness of the state is guaranteed by a political consensus (ijma) on a set of principles and values, which constitute the fundamental law of society. No state, Islamic or otherwise is likely to enforce its rule without some kind of consensus and agreement by most social groups in the society, and hence the concept of Ijma...

While the concept of consensus or *Ijma* is significant in the legitimizing of the state, such a consensus could be affected greatly by the nature of the processes of centralization, as well as by the nature of the diversity of the collectivities that constitute the state. Such legitimacy could also be greatly affected by the territorial cohesion of its frontiers. Safi's supposition is that *ijma* and the politically and ideologically potent concept of the *ummah* would displace territoriality as a significant feature in the definition of nations and states. The matter is however not so easy. As a set of relations between social groups locked into conflict, the state is a tensioned unity that underscores the power of the most dominant social categories in society. While some level of consensus is required in the day-to-day operation of the state, it would be misleading to treat such consensus as the critical element. The state is a particular form of the organization of the relations of exploitation and domination. This requires some relations of force if the privileges of dominant groups are to be protected. Such relations of force acquire a position of significance especially in the initial phases of state and identity formation. Thus notions of an ultimate purpose serving to bring diverse groups together and of the state being the highest expression of such ultimate purpose are tenuous. The cohesion of diverse groups is not at all achieved only through a system of norms, nor does the state's cohesiveness rest only on political consensus.

Such problems become clearer when we examine the specific processes of centralization and the nature of the diversity of constituent units in the Central Sudan. To begin with, patterns of state-building and identity formation in the Central Sudan have been very closely related to the question of force, something that is amply demonstrated in the development of war technology.³⁷ The diversity of constituent social groups, the small scale level of state formation, constraints in social and physical communication made the gradual evolution of a pan-Hausa or pan-Central Sudanese state and identity, problematic. Although the Sokoto *Jihad* overran most of the area known as Hausaland, there are areas that remained outside its dominion. Kebbi, for example, was subjugated only as late as 1849. Some of the defeated areas retreated, carved out some polities, and continued fighting the caliphate. Such areas include Abuja (formed by breakaway Zazzau), Zango (breakaway Daura), Maradi (breakaway Katsina), and Tsibiri (breakaway Gobir).³⁸ Furthermore, in the area *within* the caliphate's frontiers, were numerous political entities such as Zaberma, Dendi, Fogha, Yagha and Gurma, to the west. Similar entities are to be found in the Bauchi Plateau and the Adamawa Highlands to the south, in addition to the small groups and chiefdoms in the middle Niger region.³⁹ Such linguistic and social groups existed alongside territorially larger political units such as the Bornu and Jukun, and Nupe Empires. The *Jihad* that centralized most of Hausaland and these outlying areas however, was unable to completely displace all the pre-colonial states, nor impose its overriding identity on some others. A significant number of such states not only retained their original identities and independence, caliphal authority had itself recognized the 'trust' status of some of them. These areas constituted great sources of conflict and tension, and the caliphate

³⁷ Joseph Smalldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, London: Cambridge, 1977.

³⁸ M. G. Smith, 'Kebbi and Hausa Stratification,' *British Journal of Sociology*, Volume XII, Number 1, 1961, Pp. 52-64.

³⁹ R. A. Adeleye, Op. c/'f.

was never able to subjugate such areas up to the imposition of colonial rule.

Thus, though the *Jihad* centralized a greater part of this landmass, the scope and reach of the newly established identity (the notion of the *ummah*), was limited. The identity was not, and given the diversity of the region, could not have strictly been Islamic or Hausa. A large number of ethnic and linguistic groups of different religious persuasions were already resident here by the outbreak of hostilities, and some of the incorporated areas were not even part of the old Hausa states. Some areas remained pockets of resistance, and the caliphate never successfully imposed its authority on these areas for any length of time up to the advent of British rule in 1903. Thus, the caliphate never fully consolidated its power over all territories even *within* its frontiers. Such pockets of resistance continued in areas to the south and in the central parts of the caliphate that include Adamawa, Bornu, Bauchi, Zuru, Zaria, and the Niger valley around Kontagora, Minna, and beyond. Adeleye⁴⁰ notes that:

An important aspect of the history of the caliphate is that many states and communities both outside and inside its peripheral' frontiers successfully rejected the integrating ideology. Many of such groups threatened the very existence of the caliphate in its \ early years. These enemies -were mostly those against whom the Jihad had initially been waged but who were not subjugated thereby. Within the peripheral frontiers, there -were pockets of enemy territory, -which resisted the caliphate's control throughout its ninety-nine years. Even within the perimeter of each emirate, the degree of acquiescence of various groups differed....In a significant way, therefore, the Caliphate -was faced with problems of integrating disparate peoples under its sway similar to earlier attempts in the region to found large states. The caliphate was a , community bound together and to the caliph by Islamic values.

⁴⁰ R, A. Adeleye, *op. c/f.*, p. 22.

***This** bond did not depend on territorial unity, which the caliphate never attained (my emphasis).*

Caliphal authority was undermined not just by the enemies outside its frontiers, which it never completely subdued, but also by the many 'pocket states' within those frontiers. In addition to these, various revolts in the form of Mahdist uprisings against general caliphal or a specific emirs' authority were breaking out, and they were serious enough to question the basis of the caliphate's identity. Indeed, that "the preservation and, where possible, the enlargement of *Dar al Islam* against enemies never ceased to be the caliphate's preoccupation," indicates the tenuousness of its authority over a significant part of its frontiers, and especially in the non-emirate areas. This indicates the tensions that caliphal administration faced not just from its attempts to impose hegemony over outlying areas, but also from those emerging from the diverse forces and identities that continued to question its authority within its frontiers. There is no doubt however; that the Jihad territorially and ideologically created an identity that transcended previous particularistic ones. It created its myths, symbols, legends, heroes, and shared in the collective spirit several battles generated. It created a new form of community that encompassed the former Hausa states and other outlying areas, new notions of power, and, above all, the means through which these collective symbols could be shared and transmitted: a language, and an educational and legal system. These formed the basis for a new kind of solidarity, and this was what it meant to establish a new political and religious community called the Sokoto Caliphate.

What the caliphate was less successful in doing was to provide, on these bases, a dominant and unifying political and ideological system throughout the land mass around, but especially within, its territorial frontiers. Such a political and territorial centralization was specifically a colonial creation, though its basic

⁴¹R. A. Adeleye, *Op. at.*

elements were created by the *Jihad*. But though the *Jihad* laid down the grounds for a fairly coherent, if territorially porous polity, the tensions converging on such a polity were managed fairly well in so far as the ‘master frame’ underpinning its establishment remained the overriding organizing ideology. It follows that a change in the nature and goals of the polity, especially in its notions of community, power and mechanisms of integration, will likely change radically. It will, perhaps, intensify the tensions between diverse social groups as new patterns of identification, new concepts of territoriality, and new forms of domination are introduced, which selectively enhance or downplay certain aspects of that polity. This was precisely what happened with the colonial conquest, for in its attempt to establish control over these areas; colonialism selectively fragmented and preserved certain pre-colonial social categories and polities according to the nature and intensity of anticipated or encountered opposition.

Colonialism and the New Territoriality

The British conquest of the area that became known as “northern Nigeria” is not simply to be read as the imposition of colonial domination on indigenous populations. It is much more than the replacement of one form of rule with another. The colonial conquest of the caliphate rather draws attention to the expansion of its territorial, political and social spaces, to the fragmentation of such spaces and their subsequent centralization under a new territorial framework, to the rise of new notions of power, authority and community, and to the erosion of the caliph’s power, and therefore his political and ideological relevance.² The arbitrary demarcation of such a territory, as of other colonized territories, rarely coincided with pre-colonial territorial and social boundaries. Though aimed generally at whittling down opposition, some of these territorial demarcations were not so arbitrary as they initially

⁴² Sa’ad Abubakar, *The Northern Provinces under Colonial Rule: 1900 -1959* in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, 1980, Pp. 447-481.

seem, for quite a number reflect attempts to either exclude “militant Islam” from British controlled territories, or to stem its growing influence.⁴³ This external demarcation of boundaries however went hand in hand with the imposition of internal administrative boundaries that came in the wake of the conquest and pacification of the hinterland. It was through such demarcations of internal and external boundaries and the pacification of the hinterland, that the ‘pockets’ of resistance to both caliphal and colonial authority were incorporated into “northern Nigeria.”

There are two thrusts to this incorporation. First, in the non - emirate areas, British policy was ostensibly aimed at “developing among them the same measure of self-government as is accorded to the Moslem states.”⁴⁴ But the concrete situation reflects a direct form of rule. Lugard notes, for instance, that “in Yo’la Province, the government policy with regard to the Pagans had not been followed...Independent pagan tribes had been placed under the Fulani rule with five consecutive cases of failure.”⁴⁵ Indeed, as Donald Cameron’s condemnation of the application of indirect rule indicates, British rule was in general direct and highly concentrated. He notes that “if it be correct, as it undoubtedly is, that the allegiance of a people to a tribal head, freely given and without external cause, is the essence of true indirect administration, we have in fact - although we seem to have been oblivious of this - been in many circumstances administering pagan communities directly and not indirectly, and even then not through our own officers but through Moslem headmen.”⁴⁶ Lugard’s observation with regards to Adamawa Province and Cameron’s lamentation are by no means isolated cases. Throughout colonial rule, instances abound where, as Shea⁴⁷ notes:

⁴³ Philip Shea, *Op. c/f.*

⁴⁴ Quoted in Philip Shea, *Op. c/f.*

⁴⁵ Quoted in Philip Shea, *op. c/f.*, p. 156.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Philip Shea, *op. c/f.*, p. 156.

⁴⁷ Philip Shea, *opcit.*, p. 157.

*Non-Muslims were placed under alien rulers, who are sometimes Muslim and Hausa speaking, but not in all cases...over the years some Yoruba were placed under Nupe rule in Pategi, the Chief of Jos was a Hausa, the Chief of Makurdi was a Yoruba Muslim, and many Tiv were placed under the rule of the Jukun in Wukari ^hot to mention other areas where Hausa and Fulani District Heads were appointed to govern non - Muslim areas appended to the larger Emirates. Even within the emirates, outsiders ruled many people, such as in the southern Katsina Emirate where many village heads who were appointed were not only from northern Katsina but also even from Zaria and Kano Emirates. These patterns seem to have accelerated considerably as from the early 1920s, and were sustained so long as they ensured the . reproduction of the colonial system in, for example, the collection of taxes, the production of cash crops, the suppression of anti -' colonial revolts and the supply of cheap labour. It was these patterns nonetheless that began to reorder colonial territoriality, I power spaces and the grounds for new identities. This reordering of territorial and political spaces was also fueled by colonial historiography and anthropology that projected the history of precolonial societies as a series of discrete "tribal" and "cultural practices."*⁴⁸

Second, in the more centralized areas where emirate rule had been the practice, the pattern of fragmentation and integration appeared in the form of a distinction between official and non-official Islam, a point that has been raised in passing. From the point of view of colonialism, this was necessary in order to confront and deal effectively with the phenomenon of Mahdism and Islamic revivalism not only within British controlled territories in northern Nigeria, but also across those territories that shared a common border with northern Nigeria such as Niger and Cameroon Republics. The fear of the spread of anti-establishment

⁴⁸ Philip Shea, Op cit. pp. 159-60.

Islam has for example been noted by Lugard⁴⁹ when he remarked that “both the Arabs in the East and the Fulani in the West are Muslims and by supporting their rule we unavoidably encourage the spread of Islam, which from purely administrative point of view has the disadvantage of being subject to waves of fanaticism, bounded by no political frontiers.”

Through these, in both emirate and non - emirate areas, colonialism thus created a new territoriality which encompasses not just the loose territorial boundaries of the caliphate and of the areas it was unable to subjugate, but also new spaces of power and concepts of authority, as well as new forms and basis of group identity and intergroup relations. It was through these that former centralized states, such as the Bornu, Jukun, and Nupe states were broken up into smaller administrative units and then absorbed into the new territoriality; “northern Nigeria.” The overall objective and pattern were to fragment pre - colonial societies in order to weaken resistance, and then to reconstruct them on the new political terms dictated by colonialism. In the case of northern Nigeria, this pattern depended on, and was accelerated by, the promotion of a select cultural social category and the controlled promotion of its hegemonic structures, an issue that reinforced its sense of historical continuity with pre-colonial efforts at identity and nation formation. Colonial rule thus generally dictated the categories and sets the frame by means of which individuals and communities could acquire new identities. In place of the caliphal identity of the *ummah* in which Islam played a significant role, the new identity came to reflect the fragmentation and social divisions colonialism created, as well as the power spaces, social nuances and patterns of dominance these divisions generated. Chabal⁵⁰ notes the impact of such fragmentation on colonized societies in the following terms:

⁴⁹ Lugard, quoted in Asmau G. Saeed, *Op. cit*, Pp. 97 - 98.

⁵⁰ Patrick Chabal, *Op. cit*, p. 42.

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As power essentially derived either from new identities or from old identities as redefined by the colonial mind, the colonial community became one in which the traditional was fitted into the European vision of the African community...thus the colonial community could accommodate feudal chiefs such as the emiv\$ of the northern parts of West Africa but it had little time for the deliberations of the governing bodies of 'stateless' villages. It could accommodate ethnic groups within a territory but had less patience with migrant, nomadic peoples or trading communities. Colonial officials could accept pagan rituals of African religions but were not prepared to tolerate independent prophetic churches. Similarly, they could comprehend (if not always readily accept) modern structures of African representation (e.g. parties, trade unions, Christian churches) but not 'traditional' ones (e.g. age-groups, spirit mediums, African churches, oath-groups). The colonial era thus ossified many fluid 'traditional' attributes and spawned divisions where none had existed before...the colonial legacy was, therefore, not so much the notion of a community where modern and traditional fitted within a modernizing rationality, but rather one in which the modern obscured the continued evolution of African communities artificially redefined...A new community had indeed been invented but one whose rationality remained, whatever the colonial pronouncements, anchored more firmly to its African than to its European roots.

The redefinition of African communities is not that artificial, however. Such patterns of power had to be consolidated if colonial domination was to be reproduced. The consolidation of such new forms of power, territorial spaces and notions of community required a strong, interventionist state not just in ensuring economic production, but also in order to “act as the ultimate agency of political reproduction.” Such a state must be capable of creating and imposing a political and legal order that

could, provide legitimacy to conquest.⁵¹ Although the most obvious aspects of the construction of this state include the development of commodity production, the construction and imposition of the political and legal order ought not be separated, for the generally secured the legal framework for the exploitation of colonized peoples. Such a framework included the rationalization of administration; the establishment of centralized administrative and legal system such as the native authority, the construction of colonial despotism on the basis of "customary law," the articulation of Islamic jurisprudence with the colonial legal structure, and the extension of the emirate system to non-emirate areas. These administrative changes coincided with changes in the legal and ideological order. Customary power was established as the local arm of the state that directly dealt with peasants, thus establishing a powerful control mechanism - constantly shifting institutional parameters in which both the definition and the enforcement of such laws resided in emirs and administrators.⁵² Such newly created spaces of power, and the new tensions and identities they created required violence to hold together. The attempts of various peoples to assert their identity in opposition to the new colonial territoriality were violently put down, though most of this violence was directed towards the most visible power fields of colonialism: customary law and the native authority administrations.⁵³ Where the caliphate coexisted with the so called 'pocket states' within its frontiers and held some of the

⁵¹ B. J. Berman and J. M. Lonsdale, 'Crises of Accumulation, Coercion and the Colonial State: the Development of the Labor Control System in Kenya, 1919-1929, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Volume 14, Number 1, 1980, p. 81.

⁵² Mahmud Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1996.

⁵³ Phillip Shea, Op. c/'f. notes, "Quite early in the colonial period, one finds that local disturbances were often directed against the African chiefs and -other surrogates of the British. An early example was the case in Bassa Komo(now in Benue State) in 1911, when nine Hausa traders were massacred because of the activities of Hausa tax gatherers. This was usual. Other examples of opposition directed against African Chiefs, tax gatherers, village heads and District heads rather than the British abound," p. 159.

non-emirate territories in trust, colonial territorially reconfigured this relationship through the fragmentation and integration of the area into the geographical expression “northern Nigeria.”

The Construction of ‘Northern Nigeria’

The construction of northern Nigeria has to be understood within these historical contexts, and in particular within the context of the attempt to fashion out a post-colonial state that is as close to foreign interests as possible. In the attempt to do this, the British sought to devise an administrative system that is not only as inexpensive as possible, but also one that had to appropriate pre-colonial hegemonic structures. In fashioning out such an administrative system, the British, like the caliphs before them, had to contend with the sheer geographical spread and social heterogeneity of the caliphate and the landmass around it, for these posed great political and administrative challenges. To accord recognition to each of the states and chieftaincies was, as far as colonialism was concerned, out of the question. What was required was an administrative structure that could ensure a close surveillance of the whole conquered territory and keep the peasantry under control, for only such a system could centralize the many states and chiefdoms into a single territorial and political unit amenable to colonial domination. This system of centralization and surveillance found roots in the emirate administrative system.

Although the surveillance capacity of the emirate system was limited in scope and reach, it nonetheless had much to recommend it as a model for the colonial incorporation of northern Nigeria. That this system could hold quite a large territory together and reproduce the system in general, says much about its capabilities. Such capabilities however resided less in the caliphate’s surveillance capacity, than in its ideological underpinnings, and in particular in the notion of a newly formed community, the *ummah*, that came to serve as a “master frame”

within its frontiers. This “master frame” depended not just on symbols and myths, but was given institutional support by an organized bureaucracy most clearly manifest in the administration of financial and juridical matters. A fairly coherent supervisory system directed by the center, and based on the various qjnirate bureaucracies as well as on a centralized judicial and taxation system were thus operative at the time of colonial conquest. Though this supervisory system was not so centralized, Smith aptly notes, that it was such a system that linked cities to villages through a hierarchical structure of authority, and that “while kings and administrators residing in capitals were incapable of regulating economic life in outlying and dispersed regions, and though some chiefs in walled towns and outlying economic districts enjoyed greater autonomy, cities and rural communities were linked by taxation.” Taxation was indeed central in the linkage of city and countryside and in the maintenance of authority.⁵ Alongside these, was the overriding Islamic ideology that helped foster a sense of community, the *ummahl*. These provided initial anchors from which the colonial state drew legitimacy, for it appeared generally as if there was a continuation of the old emirate system although the shift in power was lost neither to the ruling classes nor peasants. The issue was that both the interests of the colonial administration and the caliphal ruling classes converged within the overall context of the domination of the peasantry. It was this organized bureaucracy, with a highly selective use of the “master frame” where it appeared significant to do so, that the British appropriated. The appropriation of the political and ideological structures of the caliphate became the easiest way to impose the colonial project, and the emirate system was transformed into the

⁵⁴ M. G. Smith, ‘Historical and Cultural Conditions of Political Corruption among the Hausa,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Volume 4 Number 2, 1964, Pp. 164 -169.

⁵⁶ Polly Hill, The Relationship between Cities and Countryside in Kano Emirate in 1900,’ *West African Journal of Sociology and Political Science*, October 1975, Pp. 3-19.

‘native’ authority system. Since the stability of the system constituted the first critical step in the construction of the colonial state, supporting, albeit in a modified form, certain pre-colonial forms of rule and domination became a colonial potent strategy.⁵⁶ Though the British appropriated this administrative system, such appropriation was neither automatic nor total, and was mediated by certain dynamics, the most significant of which are the various changes introduced into the system, and the way old hegemonic processes reacted to these changes. The emirate administrative system had to change. This was not just because its territorial breadth had been expanded to include areas that were hitherto opposed to the caliphate. Rather it was no longer possible to maintain that system on its old ideological foundations; nor was it possible to fully advance the imagery of the *ummah* as a master frame across the area that now came to be known as “northern Nigeria.” The appropriation of the caliphate’s territory (and the outlying areas), as well as its intellectual and bureaucratic apparatuses not only reconfigured its internal power structure, patterns of identity and its mechanisms of integration, such an appropriation did raise fundamental problems and questions of authority and of legitimacy. For, it is not only that the architecture of power had changed; its configuration and anchorage have also been substantially altered. First, the colonial state appointed new, and deposed or murdered those emirs and chiefs that continued the resistance. To demonstrate colonial power effectively throughout the region, a series of depositions and murders of emirs took place. Thus, about ten emirs and chiefs were deposed, forced to abdicate, or killed between 1901 and 1906.⁵⁷ Second, until the 1930s, new measures prohibited contact between emirates, and between them and the caliphate’s capital (Sokoto). Third, emirs were forced to

⁵⁶ Larry Diamond, ‘Class, Ethnicity, and the Democratic State: Nigeria, 1950-1966,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 25, Number 3, 1983, Pp. 457- 489.

⁵⁷ A. M. Yakubu, ‘Coercing Old Guard Emirs in Northern Nigeria: The Abdication of Yakubu III of Bauchi, 1954,’ *African Affairs*, Volume 92, 1992, Pp. 593-604.

cede control over their local economies, in that they no longer were able to raise or levy taxes on trades and goods in their respective emirates. Fourth, new policies on slavery, taxation, and justice, introduced further changes that affected the economic and ideological basis of the caliphate, the implication of which, among others, are that emirs were now placed on fixed salaries; that land belonged to the British colonial government; and that occupational taxes/tolls on trade etc, were abolished.⁵⁸ Fifth, as the 1930s approached, the colonial state came to perceive the threat posed by the anti-colonial and nationalist struggles in terms of the degree to which emergent radical political groups and individuals both of the left and of the right challenged its control over, and subordination of the peasantry. The victory of the Northern Elements Progressive Union in the Kano (*Kofar Waje*) Council Elections in 1950 was perhaps the first massive challenge posed to the colonial administration and emirate ruling classes, more so in terms of the spectre of other NEPU victories across northern Nigeria. It was not coincidental therefore that the colonial administration took a serious view of political developments as from the early 1940s, and the growth of anti-colonial and nationalist struggles was interpreted as the development of radical parties, an issue that was considered even more dangerous than the threats the administration faced during the initial years of conquest.⁵⁹ Within this framework the reform of 'native' administrations, the intensification of manpower training, the deposition and disciplining of 'old guard' emirs, monitoring of the development of political parties,⁶⁰ and so

⁵⁸ Sa'ad Abubakar, 'The Established Caliphate: Sokoto, the Emirates and their Neighbours,' in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, 1980, Pp. 303-326.

⁵⁹ In a secret letter, dated February 17th 1947, to the District Officers in Niger Province, the Resident, for example, wrote that "the object of this memorandum is to impress upon all administrative officers the fact, already strongly emphasized by His Honour, that the political side of their activities has, since the war, assumed an *importance never before exceeded even in the early years of the British occupation*" (my emphasis). AHA (Arewa House Archives) / SNP/ 42295.

⁶⁰ Sherwood-Smith/Bernard 'Informal Notes on the Present Political Situation in Northern Nigerian Emirates,' October 11th, 1951, AHA/ SNP/ 51069. This is one of the most instructive documents in

on were neither questions of choice or of a deliberate colonial policy of modernization as some held.⁶¹ On these were built the mechanisms, the notions of power, and community together with legitimating principles that gave flesh to the processes of centralization and fragmentation that form the system of colonial domination.⁶²

These measures, besides others, led to the invention of new notions of community and identity that became part of colonialism's operating system. As Cabal, observed, colonialism "established rigid territorial and regional boundaries which cut across existing political, economic, social, ethnic and religious borders and it set up an administration to manage these new colonial communities...colonial rule thus invented new communities with or without historical roots." The communities that arose from the new territorial demarcations required 'different forms of intergroup relations. While prior to colonial conquest the caliphate related to the non-Muslim neighbours on and within its frontiers on trust, such a delicate relation was effectively foreclosed by colonial domination. These new communities and identities reflect the pattern of rule imposed by colonialism: the selective fragmentation of states, peoples and social categories into smaller administrative and social units, the excision of some other areas that were part of the states and empires conquered, or the internal re-mapping of territorial and political boundaries. The selective expansion and contraction of the territorial, social and political spaces and boundaries - internal and external - were but

terms of its assessment of the anti-colonial and nationalist struggle in northern Nigeria, the role of the emirs and 'native' authorities, and what must be done to help the colonial administration and the emirs to retain their power in general, and especially their control over the peasantry.

⁶¹ For this view see particularly A. D. Yahaya, *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1950-1970: A Study in Political Relations with particular reference to the Zaria Native Authority*, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980.

⁶² Mohammed J. Kuna, 'Culture and the Development of Democracy in Nigeria,' Presented at the Conference on Human Rights Democracy and Development, Legal Research and Resource Development Centre, Lagos, 1994.

⁶³ Patrick Chabal, Op. cit. p.41.

one aspect of this general trend. Curving out emirates where there was no emirate system, slicing areas under the control of some emirates, and the imposition of groups that have historically been struggling for dominance over rivals became the major mechanisms through which colonialism reorganized the pre-colonial territorial, political and social power spaces. The balkanization of colonized areas was an essential part of colonial territoriality, and hence of its form of domination. Bornu had to cede areas such as Damagaram, Kanem, and parts of Kukawa. The Sokoto caliphate lost territories in the north to the French, and in the east to the Germans: in the north it lost areas in present day Niger Republic, and in the east, the state of Fombina lost about 7/8th of its territory to the Germans as a result of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1894. Zaria lost hegemony over its vassal states in the south such as Keffi, Doma, Jama'a, and Nassarawa, in addition to the excision of its non - Muslim areas lying to the south of the metropolis to form independent districts.⁶⁴ Such external territorial demarcations went hand in hand with the creation of internal boundaries. Abubakar⁶⁵ has further graphically demonstrated this point in the case of the Margi and Pabir peoples: *While a number of non-Muslim groups became autonomous through administrative changes, and others were reconsolidated into chieftaincies, some other groups remained not only divided but were left under the control of Muslim emirs. The Margi belonged to the last category. In/1904, for example, Borno Province comprised the Pabir, the Balewa, and the Margi. In 1906, however, the province was divided into west and east sub-provinces, the latter under Maiduguri and the former under Dumjeri. Then, it was re-divided into six divisions, the Margi constituting one, called Ajimar. But in 1909 the division was abolished and the Margi divided between Borno under the Shehu*

⁶⁴ Sa'ad Abubakar, Op, *cit.*

⁶⁵ Sa'ad Abubakar, 'The Northern Provinces under Colonial Rule: 1900-1959, Op. eft., 1980, p. 462.

and Bin under the Pabir, forming Margi and Askira districts respectively...Similarly, on the Biu Plateau the dominant group was the Bura -while the Pabir were a minority and there were a number of independent chieftaincies. But following the advent of the British, the majority were placed under the minority... The Bura majority remained part in Biu and part under the Emir ofYola. In short, the central idea, as Lugard⁶⁶ remarked, was to ensure that “the political interests of the rulers...rapidly become identified with those of the controlling power. The forces of disorder do not distinguish between them, and the rulers soon recognize that any upheaval against the British would equally make an end of them. Once this communication of interest is established, the central Government cannot be taken by surprise, for it is impossible that the native rulers should not be aware of disaffection.” And the quickest way this was achieved was through the fragmentation of the various pre-colonial political and territorial structures, while at the same time centralizing them through the native authority system that enhanced their separation.

The concretization of this system was however also a juridical matter. Thus laws such as the Native Courts Proclamation in 1900, the creation of the Judicial or Emirs' Councils in 1906, the various ordinances dealing with taxation, land, labor and agricultural production are all part of the overall pattern of the exercise of colonial power. Within these years juridical and administrative measures were taken, to centralize the diverse pre-colonial political structures of this large landmass within a general colonially constructed identity northern Nigeria Although this centralized colonial identity is internally fragmented, and is maintained through colonial force, it was set up and presented outwardly as a homogenous entity constituting a *single power unit* in contradistinction to others within Nigeria. The promotion of non-western political, educational and juridical forms, and the ‘shielding’ of the Northern Provinces from western

⁶⁶ Lugard, quoted in Asmau G. Saeed, *Op. cit.* p. 98.

influence was part of the mechanisms for the exercise of this form of domination. Of course, Islamic law and influences would be “moderated” through its harmonization with western law, but this would only involve matters ‘repugnant’ to natural law and good conscience, and to matters of a “political nature” and “subversive activities” that began becoming very serious as from the 1930s.⁶⁷ Thus, when disturbances or radical challenges to the colonial state occurred, they were externally motivated. As the Acting Resident of the Sokoto Province wrote to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces in 1949, ‘disturbances, when they arise, are likely to occur *amongst immigrant members* of the community who do not willingly recognize local Native Law and Custom and are frequently ignorant of it.’⁶⁸ It is through these and other processes that this part of the country began to take on a distinct, and separate identity. Overlooking the history of “disturbances,” more appropriately opposition, to the despotic rule of emirs in particular, and of colonial rule in general across “northern Nigeria.”

As the 1940s drew to a close, and due to pressures for desalinization arising at the end of World, War II, the colonial state began organizing discussions on the constitution and political future of Nigeria throughout the provinces. These debates graphically demonstrate the extent to which it was prepared to go to secure the territorial space termed northern Nigeria as a distinct form and space of power, and of how that power was to be exercised and reproduced in relation to other groups within and outside of this space. Though these debates simply indicate the

⁶⁷ There is a significant amount of evidence to demonstrate these trends. On the whole, the tendency is to find in the efficiency of pre-colonial Islamic political and juridical relations in such a way as to make them amenable to colonial exploitation. Several files in the Waziri Junaidu Arts and Culture Bureau indicate these trends. See, in particular, ‘Judicial and Prison Affairs’, Ref.: DOS\C.16\VOL.; ‘Subversive Activities: Instructions 1949-1964,’ Ref.: SO\210; ‘Notes for the Guidance of Moslem Legal Advisers and Native Authority Police in dealing with Subversive Activities,’ Ref.: SKT\32\2\8; ‘Native Authority Ordinance, 1943: Position and Powers of District and Village Heads etc.’, Ref.: SKT\32\2\16; ‘The Training of Junior Officers in the Methods of “Indirect” Administration,’ Ref.: NAK\M\NPROF\M304 [National Archives, Kaduna]. «‘Subversive Activities: Instructions, 1949-1964,’ Ref.: SOV210.

consolidation of a trend in colonial territoriality that began since conquest, they are nonetheless significant in highlighting the degree of difference with which the matters of the three constituent regions and the diverse cultural groups within them were approached and decided. These debates raised and addressed questions of the very constitution — Nigeria, and show the extent to which the policy of centralization and fragmentation reflected in the *separate development* of the regions had taken hold. For the debates decided issues of regional autonomy, self-rule, relations between social groups, notions of power, community, and representation. The debates of the Sokoto Provincial Council Meeting of July 11th 1949 emphasized the difference of the northern provinces from other regions in terms of culture and religion, and insisted that the boundaries of the regions ought not be redrawn.⁶⁹

Bukatarmu a dauka ma kowace Jiha ragamar mulkin kanta sadoda banbancin addini da al'adu da halusa tsakanin Jihar Arewa da sauran Jihohi: amma ga-wadansu al 'amura wadanda sunka shaft dukan Jahohi game ba Jiha daya ba ya kamata a barsu game - wuri daya.

The operation of both the 'native' authorities and the organization of juridical relations, reflect the twin processes of the fragmentation and centralization that are the essential ingredients in the construction of difference. The colonial re-shaping of the administrative and legal structures proceeded through the general policy of allowing the pre-colonial judicial system to operate under British supervision, a measure that was interpreted by emirs, especially with the Native Courts Law (1958) as eroding their

⁶⁹ Trans: "our position is that due to differences in culture, religion and language, each region should have its own regional government responsible for matters specific and internal to it. But where matters are general and affect all regions, such matters should be handled centrally." Minutes of the Sokoto Provincial Council Meeting 11/7/49, in Review of Political and Constitutional Future of Nigeria, 1949-1951, Ref.: SKT/NA / 6114.

powers.⁷⁰ Despite their opposition to the initial separation of the executive and judicial arms of power by the colonial state, there is no doubt that the reorganization of the judiciary, and hi particular, the attempt to harmonize Maliki and Roman laws led to a considerable expansion of their powers.⁷¹ Since 'native' courts were from the late 1920s empowered to deal with a wide range of cases, the emirs' control over people, especially the rural population, was multiplied several fold. Such enormous powers were used to determine who belonged, and who did not. It was these power spaces that determined what form of state, its constitution, what kind of independence and relationship to the colonizer, what kind of ideologies and classes, as well as what kind of relations between the three regions would assume dominance in the politics of the First Republic. The attempt to address these questions essentially reflects the attempt to construct a new community. In northern Nigeria, as elsewhere, the responsibility for this fell on the nationalists, and as Chabal⁷² notes, two major problems confronted them:

They had not only to invent a community that would seem to be, and in certain significant respects was ideologically opposed to colonial rule, [they] also had to make sure that such an opposition to colonial rule while striking a chord with their own peoples, does not thereby question the colonial order or its basis. Thus nationa-

⁷⁰ This issue is of the greatest importance, for emirs felt that the separation of the judiciary from the executive, directly challenges their authority. This opposition derives from some of the provisions of the new Native Courts Law (1956), and in particular to the provision dealing with the *siyasa* powers of emirs. Under the new law, "siyasa powers of the sovereign now rest with the sovereign in the form of the government rather than to the Emir." Though some of these powers were in some cases delegated back to the Emir - in - Council, the general feeling is that such powers were undermined, especially when juxtaposed to the attempt at making *alkalis* independent of emirs. See Judicial and Prison Affairs 1952-1968, Ref.: SKTA DOS\ C.16\ VOL. 1. See also C. N. Ubah, *Government and Administration of Kano Emirate 1900-1930*, University of Nsukka Press, Nsukka, 1985, pp.139-141.

⁷¹ Such interpretations were done mainly by the Wazirin Zaria, and numerous forms of action; also speech and literary words by opposition forces were criminalized and codified into law. See Legal Aspects of Subversive Activities, 1954-1959, Ref.: SKTA 32\ 2\ 8.

⁷² Patrick Chabal, *op. cit.* p.47

lists had to put across to two antagonistic audiences - the colonizer and the colonized - the notion of political community in which, on the one hand either a historical past is recreated, or invented anew, and on the other, one which would very much be acceptable to the colonizer. In this dual conception of the community, nationalists sought not just to replace colonial rule, but also to legitimize their rule if not to the approval of both antagonistic forces, then at least to the approval of the colonizer.

The structure built by the colonial state became a basis for the construction of the post-colonial state. The struggle for self-rule essentially took these two forms in northern Nigeria. The forces which had the most to gain and the most to lose - the colonial administration, the emirate ruling classes, and the emergent right wing elite - had to ensure control of the state apparatus. The emirs constituted these forces, the conservative wing of the rising elite, merchants, and bureaucrats. This force was actively supported by the colonial state, not least in defining who constituted its enemies, and of how to deal with them. This structure emphasized tradition and conservatism. It emphasized continuation with neo-colonial dependence. Though it saw the inevitability of change, it called for gradual modernization of the native authority system in a way that would generally preserve the system.⁷³

⁷³ Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's motion tabled before the Northern House of Assembly was a radical call for the reform of 'native authorities from the right wing. It not only pressed for reform, but for the maintenance of the most crucial structures in their operation. Thus, the motion holds in part, that "the present method of administration with authority descending from emir to district heads to village heads and to hamlet heads should continue. The following councils should also be maintained:- Village Councils, District Councils, The Outer Council, and The Emir's Council." Review of Political and Constitutional Future of Nigeria, 1949-51, Ref.: SKT\ NA\ 6114.

The forces that inherited the colonial state continued with this structure. It was no doubt modified in response to different challenges and situations. Basically, however, its goals remained essentially to ensure that the area known as northern Nigeria remained a distinct geographic area and concept. In this attempt, the notion of northern Nigeria has been presented as a continuation of the Sokoto Caliphate. This was politically expedient, for the legitimacy of the post-colonial state in northern Nigeria depended a lot on its alignment to two forces: pre-colonial hegemonic structures and colonialism.

Concluding Remarks

The area widely known as northern Nigeria, presented by both colonial historiography and the post-colonial, state as homogeneous, is in fact heterogeneous. For this homogeneity to have any political relevance and agency, the colonial, and later, the post-colonial states, had to lean on the politically useful strategy of projecting a “nation” back to the pre-colonial period, in this case the re-appropriation, through “indirect rule”, of the territoriality, as well as the political and ideological apparatuses of the Sokoto Caliphate. Thus, even as the colonial state was carving out and “unifying” as large and heterogeneous a social and geographical space as “northern Nigeria,” it was simultaneously fragmenting these spaces in order to facilitate its rule. Such fragmentation and centralization, essential elements in the creation of difference and separateness, have been active since the struggle for independence. Secondly, colonialism expanded this process of appropriation to include the incorporation of territories, areas and peoples either hitherto not part of the caliphate, those that have resisted incorporation, or those that have been incorporated but were not, as on the eve of colonial conquest, entirely subdued. In this sense, colonial territoriality and administrative reorganization ensured a fundamental shift in the architecture of power and the configuration of forces that led to the emergence of an identity that

admits of no heterogeneity within its assigned territorial boundaries, but reinforces it at every opportunity in relation to other peoples and regions outside of it. More than this however, the appropriation and expansion of caliphal territoriality includes a simultaneous appropriation, albeit in a changed form, of some of its ideological and political apparatuses while putting in place newer ones. Once created, the political and ideological interests underpinning this power base and structure had to defend it *as if it* were “one north, one people, irrespective of race, rank or religion.”⁷⁴

Thus, to begin to understand the basis of the tensions and crises between social groups in post-colonial societies, and in northern Nigeria in particular, analyses must begin to examine closely, how colonialism first fragmented pre-colonial-states and peoples, and then reordered them on its own terms as united territorialities. More than anything else, it is perhaps this separation and unity that characterizes the politics of the colonial and post-colonial states.

⁷⁴ *Constitution of the Northern Peoples' Congress*, Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation, 1951.