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Metropolitan Adamawa and Its Erstwhile Outlying Principalities, 1922-1960: A Re-Examination of Inter-African Relations under Colonial Rule

Dr. Abubakar A. Fari

Associate Professor, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

Abstract:

Since the beginning of the twentieth century relations between Adamawa and its former dependent territories have been strained. The strain has been explained in terms of the degradation of the people of the periphery by the metropolis which, put in plain language, meant little more than the de-establishment of their ruling dynasties in favour of potentates imported from the centre. But the explanation is patently deflective. What constitutes a sound explanation was the raison deetre of British colonization. Indirect rule as implemented by the British colonial administration in Northern Nigeria demanded strict compliance with policies, order and directives for which the Emir was held solely responsible. Under the circumstances, the Emir had in alternative but to replace a recalcitrant local ruler with a trusted appointed from the metropolis who would carry out orders to the letter. This policy, which in the end resulted in the overthrow of the peripheral ruling dynasties was not only unprecedented in the history of relations between Adamawa and its dependent territories but, regardless of the benefit which the Emir and the metropolitan aristocracy may have derived from it, was possible only with the encouragement and support of British colonial administration.

Keywords: *Degraded, indirect rule, sub emirates, de-establishment of dynasties, liege lord-vessel*

1. Introduction

Since the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, the relationship between metropolitan Adamawa and its erstwhile outlying provinces, that is part of the former German colony of the Cameroons, namely the Northern Cameroons subjected to British rule under the trusteeship of, first, the League of Nations, and later, its successor, the United Nations Organization, following the defeat of Germany in the first World War with which it was merged for administrative convenience has been anything but warm and trusting. Indeed, the relationship has been marked on the part of the former outlying provinces (interchangeably referred to in this paper as the sub-emirates) by an attitude of distrust, resentment and even outright hostility towards metropolitan Adamawa. Naturally, this has provoked in return an estranged and imperious attitude on the part of the former metropolitan power.

The grudge which the former outlying provinces nursed against metropolitan Adamawa has been the driving force behind the separation of the former from the latter to make up the Sardauna province in 1961 and the recent and unrelenting clamour for a state, consisting, if possible, exclusively of that province. The resentment also lay at the bottom of the attacks which Madagali, a former sub-emirate, mounted in 1996 on vehicles bearing Yola (i.e. Adamawa's capital) registration number plates. The grievance of Madagali on that occasion is that it failed to become the seat of administration of the newly created local government in the area. This erosion of its perceived historical preeminent position was blamed on metropolitan Adamawa which, faced with opposition from the ousted Hamman Yaji ruling dynasty in 1953, installed an alien as the new District Head of Madagali at Gulak and thereby contributed to the permanent relocation of the headquarters of the area to that town. The implication of both these developments is that the estrangement from metropolitan Adamawa was not limited only to the de-established dynasty. It was also harboured by the populace as well.

The strain in relationship between metropolitan Adamawa and its former sub-emirates has been largely, if not completely, explained in terms of oppression. The general belief among the ordinary inhabitants of the former sub-emirates is that metropolitan Adamawa had lorded it over them and degraded them.¹ It is fairly quite this much argument that has also been advanced by Dr. Umar Ardo, though made more explicit and pitched at a higher level of sophistication by means of a theory of colonialism which has, as its essential element, intra-class conflict arising from the determination of the Yola aristocracy to exploit the peripheral Fulbe ruling dynasties of the Northern Cameroons for the purpose of self aggrandizement (Ardo, 1998). The only difference between Ardo's version and that of the ordinary people is that the former is devoid of the popular dimension.

It is with the main claims of this explanation that this paper is concerned. Undoubtedly, the explanation is very attractive, nay, perfectly plausible. But it is defective and misleading. In fact, it is sophistry at its best. In this regard, it is the aim of this paper to examine the validity of the argument so as to make for a better and more rational understanding of the relationship between metropolitan Adamawa and its former outlying provinces in the twentieth century. This is done within the context of the relationship and in the light of past connection between the two sides.

2. Antecedent Relations

A dominant theme of the history of the area comprising the former sub-emirates of Adamawa and the metropolis itself and known together as Fombina (Fulfulde, meaning south) in the nineteenth century was the enterprise of the Ful be to establish and run on their own account, in contradistinction to acting as tools, a polity on the basis of Islamic values. The vastness of the theatre of that enterprise, circumscribed in the north by the Lala plateau, in the south by the Hawul river and the east by the Lagone river to the north-east and the Southern plateau to the south-east, the fragmented political background of the Fulbe and, indeed, most, if not all, of the inhabitants of the area and the intellectual/religious bases of the jihad (Arabic, war for the sake of Islam) all conspired to determine both the manner of the foundation and organisation of the resulting polity (Abubakar, 1977; Adeleye, 1971; Smith, 1961).²

In terms of foundation, the sub-emirates making Fombina, numbering forty-odd, were set up independently, albeit simultaneously, mostly through conquest and largely without assistance from the centre between 1811 and 1837 by leaders of local Fulbe groups who had been given flags by the paramount leader of the jihad movement in the Upper Benue valley, Modibbo Adam b. Hassan, signifying their appointment as his deputies with the responsibility for carrying out the jihad (Abubakar 1977: 49-51). In consequence of this and in line with the principles of Islamic government and the segmented socio-political conditions of the area, Fombina was organized and ran along decentralized lines (Abubakar, 1977). Thus, the sub-emirates were microcosms of the metropolitan government to which they were bound through the profession of allegiance.

Significantly, the vast emirate of Fombina was built on a foundation of acute racial, socio-cultural, linguistic and political fragmentation. There have been no less than a hundred and sixty-two and, perhaps, more ethnic groups in Fombina with near or equal number of socio-cultural institutions, traits, and practices (Kirk-Greene, 1969). But none of these groups was able to establish a political organisation on a scale significantly large enough to encompass the majority of the inhabitants of the region (Abubakar, 1977). The highest form of political organisation contrived by the inhabitants of the region were the petty though, in some instance, highly centralized kingdoms and chiefdoms of the Chamba, Bata, Jukun and Sukur. The rest of the people seemed to have lived under the most prevalent and basic form of political organization, namely community government (Fari, 1988). In terms of religion, the inhabitants of Fombina were animists, worshipping multifarious objects. The only exception was the Islamized among the Fulbe, Hausa, Kanuri and Bata. It is this pluralism that helped to shape society and relations in Fombina.

At first, pluralism created new social groups of which the most prominent were the emergent ruling aristocracy, masters, slaves, commoners/freeborn, protected people (Arabic, dhimmis) "believers" and "unbelievers". These groups overlapped and may have even changed overtime. But generally speaking, the Fulbe and their supporters, mostly the Hausa and Kanuri and some of the indigenous people who accepted Islam constituted the new ruling aristocracy, masters and "believers" while the non-Ful be were generally the "unbelievers", slaves and protected people (dhimmis). On the other hand, unbelief and common descent/freeborn were characteristics which the non-Ful be shared with the more nomadic (Fulfulde, Mbororo) and sedentary Fulbe respectively. Secondly, on the basis of the emergent social groups and simultaneous with their evolution, pluralism called into being two forms of relations, both based on power, among the inhabitants of Fombina.

3. Intra-Ruling Class Relations

The first form of relations was that of the liege-lord-vassal, subsisting among members of the ruling aristocracy. The metropolitan rulers, by virtue of their being the source of all authority in Fombina, reserved certain basic rights to loyalty on the part of their lieutenants on the periphery. These were the power to appoint and depose the local rulers, exact tribute from them, demand their participation in, or collaboration on, all major campaigns, command obedience to directives and payment of periodic personal homage (Abubakar, 1977). But apart from these prerogatives, rulers of the sub-emirates had a free hand in administering their domains (Adeleye, 1971). They appointed local officials, made conquests for the expansion of their territories, levied taxes and collected tribute from their vassals (Abubakar, 1977).

But domestic autonomy notwithstanding, the attempt to exercise these prerogatives once the suzerain-vassal relationship had been forged constituted the main cause of friction between the metropolitan rulers and those of the southern sub-emirates. The earliest conflict to arise as a result of different perspectives on relations involved Buba Njidda, the ruler of the powerful sub-emirate of Rai Buba who, on account of his wealth and power, was discontented with his subordinate position (Abubakar, 1977). As a result, he not only refused to either respect the autonomy of the nearby petty sister sub-emirates of Balda, Wuro Mayo Njarende and Mbere or participate in a joint expedition against the Namshi but ultimately declared his independence following, it is claimed, an attempt on his life, first, at Yola to which he had been summoned and subsequently at the Faro.

But although the determination of Yola to restore its sovereignty over Rai Buba even by force of arms if necessary coupled with mediation by Yerima (prince) Halilu ended the sub-emirate's attempt at independence, revolt reared its ugly head again when Buba Njidda stopped the payment of tribute. On that occasion, Yola invaded the sub-emirate, deposed its ruler and installed his son, Jauro (Fulfulde, village head) Salihu. But no sooner had the invading army left than Buba Njidda returned and took over power. Thereafter the sub-emirate adopted a defiant attitude towards Yola. Its rulers refused to visit Yola or swear loyalty to the Emir, becoming in effect a nominal vassal (Abubakar, 1977).

Besides Rai Buba, Tibati under Ardo Hamman Sambo also aspired to independence which it succeeded in gaining from Caliph Abu Bakr Atiku (Atiq) (Abubakar, 1977). However, the independence was short lived as Hamman Sambo was prevailed upon by counterparts to return to the fold. Even then the concern about Tibati's predisposition towards independence led Yola to take advantage of the death of Hamman Sambo to reduce the power of the sub-emirate and thereby render it more amenable to control. Accordingly, the sub-emirate was divided between Hamman Sambo's two sons, Hamman Tukur and Adamu (Abubakar, 1977). But this course of action which ignored the right of Hammadu Nyambula to the succession on the basis of the principle of primogeniture coupled with his popularity impelled him to rise against his brothers, whom he killed, and reunite the sub-emirate under his rule.

Next, Hammadu Nyambula attacked Tinger, which had revolted against the sub-emirate. He captured the ruler and his leading notables and had them executed in utter disregard for Yola's order to release them. It is in order to punish him for this insubordination that Yola excised Tinger from Tibati and made it an autonomous sub-emirate. But if anything, this response determined Hamman Nyambula to harass Tinger even more. It is this harrying of Tinger that twice brought matters to a head between him and Yola. But on both occasions, Yola failed to conclusively settle the differences between it and its vassal. In the end, it was the limitation of Hammadu Nyambula's ambition to the unification of Tibati under his rule that paved the way for reconciliation, renewal of allegiance and the payment of tribute which served to keep Tibati within Fombina. However, under his successor, Lamdo Buba, Tibati became a nominal vassal, having dispensed with all obligations to Yola.

The last challenge to the authority of Yola came from Bundang which declared its independence of Ngaundere in c. 1845 and eventually of Yola itself (Abubakar, 1977). Though the revolt was quickly suppressed, Bundang was in c. 1880 recognised as an independent sub-emirate so as to punish Ngaundere for its intransigence in continuing to wage indiscriminate campaigns against the Laka and Gbaya. In retaliation, Lamdo Abbo stopped sending tribute to Yola (Abubakar, 1977).

In contrast with Tibati, Ngaundere and Rai Buba, the rest of the constituent units of Fombina, particularly the northern sub-emirates and those of the Benue plains, which were more numerous, territorially more limited and politically less powerful, more readily accepted the over-lordship of Yola. The acceptance was also, in part, the result of friendship and a relationship of military assistance subsisting between the rulers of most of these sub-emirates and Yola (Abubakar, 1977). Modibbo Adama is known to have been on friendly terms with Modibbo Hamman Song and Ardo Dembo of Malabu. But more importantly, he received considerable support and assistance from them in his campaigns along the Faro valley in the Benue plains between 1811 and 1830. It is these considerations that led Modibbo Adama to subdue the Bata of Song and Malabu and install Modibbo Hamman Song and Ardo Dembo Malabu as respective rulers over them.

Next, Modibbo Adama, twice in 1825 and 1834, invaded Mandara, a fairly quite powerful polity to the north of Fombina in aid of the Fulbe communities which lived under its constant threat (Abubakar, 1977). The first invasion not only worsted Mandara and ended in a successful campaign against the Marba but served to consolidate Marwa, Mendif and Bogo as sub-emirates in the Gasawa plains. Although on the occasion of the second invasion in 1834 the clash between the two sides was inconclusive, it, nevertheless, paved the way for the return of the ruler of Madagali, Ardo Njidda, who had been driven out of his capital by Mandara forces, and the emergence of the sub-emirates of Duhu, Moda and Michika in the Yedseram valley. What is even more important is that these sub-emirates, both in the Gasawa plains and the Yedseram valley, continued to receive military support from Yola long after they had been founded.

It is in regard to this crucial military role which Yola played in the emergence and consolidation of the northern sub-emirates and those in the Benue plains that these constituent units were reluctant to revolt against the Emirs of Fombina (Abubakar, 1977). But even so considerations relating to power got the better of loyalty on two occasions. In 1880 Buba Sujito, who had been deposed nine years earlier, rose in rebellion and harassed Madagali (Abubakar, 1977). The rebellion was ended only when he was captured and detained in Yola for the rest of his life. Similarly, Jauro Iliyasu of Uba revolted against the appointment of his nephew, Belal b. Buba to the sub-emirship. He too was captured and detained. But he repented and, as a result, was not only forgiven but appointed as the Jauro of Mugelbu.

4. The Relationship between Rulers and Subjects

The relationship subsisting between the Fulbe rulers and the rest of the inhabitants of Fombina, particularly the indigenes was that of domination of the latter by the former and constant hostility between them. In the course of the best part of the first half of the nineteenth century a host of the inhabitants of the Upper Benue valley either submitted and accepted Islam, submitted but refused to convert to the faith in which case they became dhimmis (Arabic, protected people) or were conquered (Abubakar, 1977). For example, the Bata of Mulon, Kokumi and Kopa and the people of Gudu and Gider submitted to the Fulbe and accepted Islam. On the other hand, the Bata of Mboi and Mulke, the Vere of the Alantika Mountains and Gang

Damashi of the Chamba submitted but elected to retain their traditional system of belief. But nevertheless, both groups were, to all intent and purposes, subjected to Fulbe rule.

The mark of the subjection of these groups to Fulbe was the regular payment of tribute in the shape of the Jizya (poll tax) and Kharaj (land tax) in the case of the dhimmis and the rest of the subjects respectively (Abubakar, 1977).³ But for a significant and growing number of the population the badge of subjection to both the Fulbe and eligible non-Fulbe alike was slavery, the ultimate form of domination. Significantly, it is the servile class, a byproduct of the constant wars being waged by the Fulbe and their supporters that constituted the pillar of the imposing political and economic edifice of Fombina (Abubakar, 1977). In the innumerable *dumde* (Fulfulde, slave farmsteads) dotted about the polity the slaves produced the grains needed to sustain their masters. At the same time, they constituted the bulk of the Emirate's military force.

But subjection to Fulbe rule cannot be claimed in respect of all the conquered groups, especially the Yungur, Chamba, Lala, Gude, Diu, Baya, Laka, Fali, Tengelen, Voko and Mbum among others. The subjugation of these and other groups was in many instances either partial or ephemeral. To begin with, the Bata of Bagale were conquered while those in the Mayo-Ine valley were driven out of the area but a substantial part of the western Bata retreated to Demsa Mosu where they continued to resist the Fulbe until the end of the nineteenth century (Abubakar, 1977). Similarly, most of the Vere neither submitted nor were they conquered. It is the same situation with the majority of the Chamba, particularly those inhabiting the mountainous region (Abubakar, 1977). On the other hand, the Diu, occupying the upper reaches of the Benue, who had been subjugated by Rai Buba had revolted against the sub-emirate (Abubakar, 1977). Still the Bata to the west of Mayo-Ine, the Tengelen north of the Benue near Garua, Gulak in Madagali, Gereng in the metropolis, the Daka in Mayo-Luwe region, the Sagje in the north-east and many others rose in rebellion at one time or another during the nineteenth century (Abubakar, 1977).

The attempt of the sub-emirates to deal with these revolts as well as to subdue pockets of unconquered peoples both within and without their territories, while attendant with quite some measure of success, produced a state of permanent hostility between them and the groups in question for virtually the whole of the nineteenth century, reflecting, on one hand, the determination of the Fulbe to consolidate and extend their rule and, on the other, the extent of the resistance of the various peoples to subjection which may also have been juxtaposed with resentment of Fulbe domination even on the part of those who had submitted or surrendered. But then given the decentralised organisation of the polity the resistance was localized and uncoordinated as was most of the Fulbe response. It was in this condition – imposed Fulbe rule, attempt at consolidation and expansion, resistance to conquest, resentment to subjection and revolt against it – that European imperialism burst upon the emirate of Fombina.

5. The Partition of Fombina

During the European scramble for African territories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's, the Emirate of Fombina was coveted by Britain, Germany and France. But in the end, it was Britain and Germany that were able to stake out a claim for the emirate. In October, 1887 Britain, in response to a spirited attempt by Edward K. Flegel, a German national, to establish trade on the Upper Benue, extended the protectorate which it had taken of the territories on both banks of the Benue river from its confluence with the Niger up to and including Ibi in June 1885 (F.O.84/1715), also a reaction to the unexpected German annexation of the Cameroons in July, 1884 further to the region beyond Ibi up to and including Yola (F.O.84/1239). The significance of the German annexation of the Cameroons is that it was a prelude to that power's expansion in the Benue districts. Thereafter Germany worked to acquire a large hinterland for the new colony in the north-western districts of the Benue to which it dispatched an expedition under Dr. Zintgraff. The expedition arrived at Yola in July, 1898 by way of Ibi (F.O.84/1940).

It was the determination of Germany to expand in the north-western districts of the Benue which not only threatened British interests in the area but was equally opposed by the representative of those interest, the entrenched National African Company, that hastened the composition of the differences between the two countries. In an agreement reached on 1st July, 1890 the boundary between the British protectorate of the Benue region up to Yola and the German position to the south-east was settled (F.O.93/36/24). At the same time Britain also sought and achieved the composition of its differences with France in Africa through the exchange of declaration on 5th August, 1890 which fixed the limit of French sphere of influence to the south of her Mediterranean possession. According to the declarations, the limit of the French sphere of influence was to consist of a line to be drawn from Say to Barrawa on Lake Chad. But the line was to be drawn "in such a manner as to comprise in the sphere of action of the Niger Company all that fairly belonged to the Kingdom of Sokoto" (F.O.84/2206). But in spite of these agreements, which in leaving the boundaries to be delimited by subsequent negotiations would appear to have allowed the signatories to jockey for position and in so doing contributed to, rather than anticipated, the race for the undivided parts of the Benue region, France and Germany, whose agreements with Britain permitted each power to conclude treaties in the north-eastern part of the Benue area, continued, beginning from 1891, to send expeditions to Fombina (Fari, 1988).

The intensification of European rivalry in the Benue region, particularly the French variety which took the shape of the dispatch of a stream of expeditions and conclusions of treaties in the north-eastern part of the area, apparently, with the tacit approval of Britain served to draw the latter and Germany together and thereby facilitated the final delimitation of the boundary between their respective colony and protectorate on 15th November, 1893 (F.O.403/187). The delimitation of the boundary and the subsequent convention reached between Britain and France on 14th June 1898, which upheld the Say-Barrawa agreement of August, 1890, effectively excluded the French from the Benue region and Fombina (Obichere, 1971).

The only exception was a foothold at Bifara on a tributary of the Benue, the Mayo-Kebbi, which France obtained from Germany as a result of the conclusion in December, 1893 of an agreement on their respective spheres of influence in the hinterland of the Congo and the Cameroons (F.O.403/200).

The partition of Fombina between Britain and Germany was as unequal as it was destructive. The exercise gave seven-eighth of the emirate to Germany while the tiny remainder in which the capital, Yola, was situated went to Britain. It is in recognition of this most inconsiderate division of a polity and the likelihood that it would provoke a backlash that the two countries undertook to induce the Emir of Fombina and his vassals to accept the partition. Specifically, Britain pledged to induce the Emir to accept the division on the understanding that Germany would prevail on the sub-emirs and people in its sphere of influence to maintain their allegiance to their liege lord. Nonetheless, it was, to say the least, only a pious wish to think that the Emir and his vassals would be induced to accept the partition; and this much is reflected in the British motive for seeking the agreement and, more importantly, having it recorded by an exchange of notes. It was to deny Germany a legal basis on which to appeal to her to resist Yola in the event of opposition. Naturally, it was military power, ruthlessly deployed against the Emir and his vassals between 1898 and 1901, which imposed the partition on Fombina and subjected it to European imperial rule.

6. Adamawa Province under Colonial Rule

In September 1901 the British share of Fombina which its first Emir under colonial rule, Lamido (Fulfulde Emir) Bobo Ahmadu (1901-1909), likened, in comparison with the vast size of the former polity, to "merely the latrine of my [i.e. his] kingdom" (Kirk-Greene, 1969) and to a head whose body had been cut off was constituted into the Yola Province. But the defeat of Germany and the Central Powers at the end of the First World War paved the way for the restoration of some parts of former Fombina that went to form the German Cameroons to Yola Province. In 1916 the British had defeated German colonial troops and occupied those parts (Kirk-Greene, 1969). In addition, in 1920 it was handed over territories in the northern part of the colony by France on the basis of the Simon – Milner agreement on boundary delimitation in the area reached the previous year (Kirk-Greene, 1969). In 1922 both these strips of territory, officially styled the Northern Cameroons, were formally made over to Britain under mandate by the League of Nations. Thus, the Northern Cameroons came to be administered as an integral part of the metropolitan area of Yola Province from 1923.

The resulting enlarged province was renamed Adamawa Province in 1926 following a major administrative reorganization of the Northern provinces. But despite the restoration of parts of former Fombina to Adamawa Province, the period of separation, lasting over two decades during which the rulers of that area seemed to have enjoyed considerable power and freedom of action if not active material support of their activities on the part of their colonial masters, under a respective inchoate and barely instituted German and French rule, turned out to be inimical to integration. It has the effect of dissolving all loyalties to Yola and making for a difficult relationship between erstwhile collaborators under that system of colonial administration rather inappropriately referred to as indirect rule.

The application of indirect rule as a system of colonial administration entailed a total transformation of the emirate system of government as hitherto operated by Fombina. To begin with, indirect rule redefined the whole basis of government. The Sharia (Islamic Law) and Islamic ideas and norms from which the government of the emirate and that of its sub-units, leadership and the nature of relationships and obligations among rulers and between them and their subjects derived legitimacy and the erstwhile Sokoto Caliphate of which Fombina, the predecessor of Adamawa Province, formed a part were superseded by British principles of government (Adeleye, 1971). It was thus a complete break with the past. Secondly, indirect rule divested the Emir of Adamawa of sovereignty. Under British administration the Emir had virtually no power let alone the autonomy which he previously enjoyed under the Sokoto Caliphate. He was no longer the source of all authority in his territory; he could neither appoint and depose subordinate rulers, exact tribute from them, give directives to them nor command their obedience to same any more. Above all, he was a subject who was required to take an oath of allegiance to the British crown and its representative, the High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria (Ajayi & Crowder, 1974). Thirdly, indirect rule returned the Emir of Adamawa into its instrument.

According to F. D. Lugard, the High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, British Colonial administration was not made up of two sets of rulers – the British and the natives working separately or in cooperation, but a single government in which the indigenous chiefs have clearly defined duties and acknowledged status equal with the British officials (Ikime, 1980). Thus, the Emir of Adamawa was essentially an agent of British colonial rule whose role was to obey orders for which he received a salary. It is, therefore, mistaken to advance that the Emir continued to wield much the same power as before under colonial rule or that he enjoyed more of it than his predecessors on account of his being styled sole Native Authority. The new state of affairs was adequately driven home by Lugard when he stated thus:

- The Fulani in old times under Dan Fodio conquered this country. They took the right to rule over it, to levy taxes, to depose kings and to create kings. They in turn have by defeat lost their rule which has come into the hands of the British. All these things which I have said the Fulani by conquest took the right to do now pass to the British. Every Sultan and Emir and the principal officers of the State will be appointed by the high Commissioner throughout this country. The High Commissioner will be guided by the usual laws of succession and the wishes of the people and chiefs but will set them aside if he desires for good cause to do so. The Emirs and Chiefs who are appointed will rule as of old time

and take such taxes as are approved by the High Commissioner, but they will obey the laws of the government and will act in accordance with the advice of the Resident (Crowder 1972: 226).

As an agent of colonial rule, the Emir of Adamawa was placed under the control and direction of British officials who were responsible for the administration of the units into which the province was divided. At the head of the corps of officials stood the Resident, a powerful figure who, under the camouflage of "advising" the Emir, dictated policy and supervised its implementation (Ikime, 1980). He was responsible to the High Commissioner for the government of the province. Next to him was the District officer, who was in charge of the Division of which the number fluctuated between three and five in the period from 1901-1918 (Kirk-Greene, 1969). He was the actual linchpin of the colonial administration, closely watching over the management of affairs in the Division and driving everybody from the Emir of Adamawa (in the case of Yola) down to the lowest worker (Ikime, 1980). The District Officer was answerable to the Resident. But Yola Division, which was coterminous with the emirate, was under a Senior District Officer. Next to the District Officer was the Assistant District Officer who had charge of one of the touring areas (each made up of districts and village areas) into which the Division was in turn partitioned (Kirk-Greene, 1969). It is in this manner in which tight control was exercised by the centre through a hierarchy of officials who generally obeyed orders and referred to the sources of their commands that colonial rule involved a centralization of administration.

But despite centralization, British colonial rule allowed the Emir of Adamawa to maintain an aura of importance and respectability and a façade of some considerable measure of influence. After all, the Emir stood at the pinnacle of the local component of the colonial administration and served as the point of linkage to the central part. For this reason, British officials not only paid attention to etiquette and showed respect for the Emir in their dealings with him but as a matter of policy largely used him as the medium for dealing with the local administration and subordinate rulers on account of which he was held responsible for the execution of government programmes in his territory. This treatment of the Emir of Adamawa by the British colonial administration was designed to lend credence to that greatest fiction of indirect rule, namely that the British preserved intact the governmental system of the emirate after it has been rid of its more serious abuses (Ajayi & Crowder, 1974). It is this situation in which the Emir of Adamawa was transformed from an autonomous ruler with judicial, executive and legislative powers in the past into merely a glorified instrument of British administration that largely determined the nature of the relationship that came to subsist between him and the District Heads in the Northern Cameroons. Another factor which also, in part, influenced the relationship was the mutually antagonistic interests of the metropolis and the Northern Cameroons.

7. The Relationship between Metropolitan Adamawa and the Northern Cameroons under Colonial Rule

The relationship between Metropolitan Adamawa and Northern Cameroons was established under inauspicious circumstances. The Emirs of Adamawa, who had been engrossed in an attempt at regaining territory lost during the partition (Ardo, 1998), were, naturally, enthralled with the return of the Northern Cameroons to the metropolitan division of the province under British mandate. Perhaps, this is because, even though the integration of the territory into Adamawa Emirate could hardly have meant the exercise of sovereign power over it by the Emir as this was precluded by the nature of British rule, it would have resulted in increase in his prestige. Even under Fombina, the powers of the Emir over the outlying sub-emirates were more apparent than real in view of the decentralization of authority and the vastness of the polity. It is, therefore hardly likely that the Emir of Adamawa would have any illusion about exercising power over the Northern Cameroons under conditions of British rule.

On the other hand, the District Heads in the Northern Cameroons did not want to be merged into Yola Division of Adamawa Province as this would bring them under British rule which would cost them the latitude they had had in local administration (Ardo, 1998). The prospect that they would lose that freedom under British rule must have begun to dawn on them during the occupation and the process of merger. But it was at a meeting at Yola in 1924 in the presence of the visiting Lieutenant – Governor of Northern Nigeria, the Resident and the Emir of Adamawa, Muhammad Bello (1924-28), that the status of the District Heads in the Northern Cameroons as subordinate agents of British rule with the sole function of obeying orders was made abundantly clear to them (Ardo, 1998). And it is as if to drive home the point that the Emir, as the principal agent and vehicle of those orders, undertook a tour of duty of the Northern Cameroons three months later.

But notwithstanding the attempt at accommodation, the District Heads in the Northern Cameroons were unwilling to merely obey orders except, perhaps, when it suited them and forgo latitude in local administration. This was reflected in their attitude to the Emir Muhammad Bello, during his tour of the area (Ardo, 1998). Equally, the Emir was not prepared to brook insubordination. He was wont to recommend any disloyal District Head for dismissal and was nearly always supported by the British officials (Ardo, 1998). It was these attitudes that set the stage for an uneasy relationship between the Emirs of Adamawa and the District Heads in the Northern Cameroons which culminated in the deposition of almost all the latter.

The first District Heads in the Northern Cameroons to be deposed on account of disobedience to the orders of the Emir, Muhammad Bello, were those of Michika, Moda and Uba (Ardo, 1998). In March 1927 the Resident of Adamawa Province, acting on the recommendation of the Emir, applied to Kaduna for permission to depose the District Heads in question; and they were duly dethroned following the grant of the application. These cases of deposition were followed by that of the District Head of Madagali, Hamman Yaji, who was accused of extorting money, imprisoning people without trial and interfering with judicial matters – all in utter disobedience to the orders of the Emir (Ardo, 1998). The deposition of the District Heads in the Northern

Cameroons on account of various offences, ranging from disloyalty, misappropriation of taxes and jangali (Hausa, cattle tax), corruption extortion to bad administration continued apace with the result that by 1934 no fewer than seven more District Heads in both parts of the territory had been affected (Ardo, 1998). Naturally, these acts of dethronement precipitated violent opposition on the part of the members of the ruling dynasties and their supporters. But the most serious resistance erupted in Michika, Namberu, Madagali and Gashaka which, in the case of the two latter districts, lasted till 1935 and 1939 respectively (Ardo, 1998). Although the resistance was eventually suppressed, it left a bitter feeling of resentment against the colonial administration, particularly its chief agent, the Emir of Adamawa.

The deposition of the District Heads in the Northern Cameroons was nearly always followed by supersession of their dynasties by appointees drawn from members of the metropolitan aristocracy. In fact, most of the appointees were either relations of the Emir of Adamawa or of members of his council (Ardo, 1998). The Emir was egged on along this line of action by no less a figure than the Lieutenant-Governor of Northern Nigeria who, during the search for a successor to Hamman Yaji, the deposed District Head of Madagali, advised him that not anybody from the metropolis may be appointed but a man whose loyalty to the Lamido (Emir) must be beyond all doubt (Ardo, 1998). Thus, a great store was set on obedience and loyalty to the neglect of such considerations as honesty and industry in the appointment of District Heads. This is what partly explains the recycling of Mallam Hayatu, a cousin of the Emir Muhammad Bello from the district headships of Namtari and Mayo-Ine districts to those of Madagali and Mandara despite his dismissal and imprisonment for maladministration in between (Ardo, 1998).

It is partly much the same consideration relating to loyalty that influenced appointments to position in the local administration. It has always been vehemently pointed out that all the staff in the districts in the Northern Cameroons including even the Dogarai (Hausa, henchmen) came from the metropolitan area (Ardo, 1998). But the policy of appointing mostly indigenes of the metropolitan area was pursued not so much because of considerations relating to personal aggrandizement on the part of the metropolitan aristocracy or local imperialism but largely on account of the nature of indirect rule which held the Emir of Adamawa province responsible for strict obedience to the orders of the colonial administration.

Another reason for the appointment of mostly indigenes of the metropolitan areas as district staff is the dearth, if not total lack, of enough educated locals to be employed. This is what caused most of the appointees in the districts to come from that renowned centre of learning, the Yola-Girei axis. Be that as it may, it was not until 1935 that recruitment of indigenes of the Northern Cameroons and even then, only for jobs that required little more than physical strength such as that of a messenger, labourers and henchman (Hausa, dogari) was begun (Ardo, 1998). But still progress in that direction was so slow that by 1960 when the Northern Cameroons was separated from Adamawa Province it had only 15% share of the total Native Administration personnel.

The policy of metropolitan Adamawa on the Northern Cameroons did not change much in the rest of the period under consideration. What had changed was the attitude of the international community to the territory (Ardo, 1998). In 1945 the United Nations Organisation which had supplanted the League of Nations took over the superintendence of the Northern Cameroons (thereafter referred to as Trust Territory) with the goal of ensuring its progressive development towards self-government in line with the lofty political ideals generated in the course of the Second World War. But otherwise and without prejudice to the right of the International body to periodically monitor the state of affairs in the territory the Northern Cameroons still remained an integral part of Adamawa Province and subject to the same pace of constitutional development as the rest of Nigeria. In consequence, the Emir of Adamawa still remained in-charge of local government in the territory with the support of the colonial administration; and this is what in 1953 determined him to appoint Dahiru Aminu as the District Head of Madagali in the face of unparalleled opposition and misgivings even on the part of some of the British officials (Ardo, 1998). The appointment turned out to be the most resented act in the chapter of metropolitan Adamawa-Trust Territory relations before the prospects of granting of independence to Nigeria. This and the need to decide the fate of the territory in time led to its excision from Adamawa Province and constitution into three separate Native Authority Areas in 1960.

8. Repercussion of Colonial Rule on Metropolitan Adamawa-Northern Cameroons Relations

Opinions about the relationship existing between metropolitan Adamawa and the Northern Cameroons during British colonial rule have been coloured by the respective experiences of the main protagonists. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of the Northern Cameroons have held the view that they were oppressed by the aristocracy of Metropolitan Adamawa. The main ingredient of this oppression, save inconsequential issues such as absence of physical development and social services which were characteristically lacking everywhere anyway, was the de-establishment of the local dynasties. It is this development that has been equated with the degradation of the inhabitants of the Northern Cameroons. Naturally, the most vehement exponents of this view have been members of the dislodged dynasties and their supporters. At every opportunity, particularly during the constitutional conferences in 1951 and political party activities the issue of the de-established dynasties and the imperative of restoring them were raised (Ardo, 1998). It is on account of the so-called degradation that Adamawa province and the metropolitan dynasty were resented.

However, what is intriguing is that most of the non-Fulbe inhabitants of the Northern Cameroons who should have been opposed to the local Fulbe dynasties as local overlords were generally in support of them in the resentment against metropolitan Adamawa. This is clearly demonstrated in 1953 by the large scale and threatening opposition to the installation

of Dahiru Aminu as District Head of Madagali both in that town and in Mubi, the headquarters of the Northern Touring Area. It is difficult to explain this attitude of the Non-Fulbe but, most likely, Muslim indigenes of the Northern Cameroons except in so far as it is the result of the occupation of a common territory and of the fact of also being subsumed under the control of Adamawa Emirate which, although it could not have, contrary to its portrayal as oppressive, unduly impinged on them, gave them cause for concerted action with the local dynasties. But otherwise it is unlikely that the dividend of indigenous rule could have been adequate and widespread as to engender a communality of interest in the restoration of the local dynasties. The non-Fulbe was never under direct rule by Yola; and what is more they were the target of wars of conquest, expansion and consolidation waged by the sub-emirates of the Northern Cameroons to which they were subjected. It is in recognition of this ultimate difference in interests between the non-Fulbe indigenes and the Fulbe that the latter came together to form the North Kamerun Democratic Party (NKDP) in 1959 for the purpose of ensuring the restoration of their dynasties (Ardo, 1998).

In contrast, the rulers of metropolitan Adamawa were dispassionate about, if not out rightly, unsympathetic to, the case of the de-established local dynasties and their supporters. This may be explained in terms of the fact that they did not relish being under colonial rule which not only cost them most of their territory and autonomy but led to the removal of many an Emir. In 1909 Bobbo Ahmadu was deposed on account of unacceptable behaviour resulting from the loss of territory and prestige consequent upon the 1907 International Boundary Convention (Kirk-Greene 1969: 144). On the other hand, his successor, Iya, was forced to abdicate in 1910 after reigning for only eighteen months (Kirk-Greene 1969: 145). Similarly, Ahmadu, also abdicated in 1953 because of his inability to reconcile with the fact of British domination (Kirk-Greene, 1969). Under the circumstances in which the position of the Emir was not guaranteed and having been made accountable for obedience to the dictates of colonial rule on the part of lesser rulers in the territory under his jurisdiction, the Emirs of Adamawa province had no alternative other than to discharge their duty even at the expense of de-establishing recalcitrant local dynasties for which they felt no qualm. But whatever benefits that may have accrued to them and members of their class as a result of that action, which are wont to be seen as evidence of personal aggrandizement, were only incidental. The overriding concern was to sustain colonial rule.

The basis of the actions which the Emirs of Adamawa province took in relation to the Northern Cameroons lies in British colonial rule. As was made clear by Lugard, the Emirs of Adamawa had lost the right to rule over their territories by defeat and that prerogative went to the British who, naturally, as the victors, could literally, do as they wish. By the same token and the fact that whatever latitude that the Emirs possessed in local administration existed only to the extent to which it conformed to the interests of British rule colonialism must be regarded as the main, if not sole, explanation of the unpleasant experiences of the Northern Cameroons. Indeed, the case for considering colonial rule to be the cause of the misery of the territory is even stronger when viewed in the light of the relationship subsisting between it and metropolitan Adamawa in the nineteenth century.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be argued, first, that the de-establishment of the local dynasties in the Northern Cameroons and other unpleasant experiences that became the lot of the territory were the result of the failure of the local rulers to cooperate with imperial rule. Metropolitan Adamawa was able to escape the de-establishment of its dynasty because it largely cooperated with colonial rule. But even so it nearly suffered dislodgment when in 1954 the British officials supported a bid by the Vizier, Mallu (Fulfulde, teacher) Hamman, to become the Emir. Second, that whatever action the Emir of Adamawa took in their dealings with the rulers of the Northern Cameroons it was generally taken in response to the exigencies of colonial rule, particularly that they did not de-establish a single peripheral dynasty throughout the previous century in which they held sway over Fombina. Third, that the experience of Adamawa Province and particularly those of the Northern Cameroons stemmed from the operation of British colonial rule in which case it is largely responsible for the plight of the local dynasties in the latter territory. Therefore, all in all the Emir of Adamawa neither imposed any form of imperialism on the territory of the Northern Cameroons nor degraded its inhabitants. It was the British for whom the Emirs of Adamawa were a reluctant instrument

10. Notes

- This is the author's understanding of the position of the former sub-emirates of Adamawa arrived at after many years of interaction, including heated debates, with their indigenes. The word which they commonly use in describing their experience under Adamawa's oversight is *hogidingo* which in Fulfulde, literally means to treat somebody as if he had no parent or relations of any kind. But metaphorically it would mean assigning little, if any worth at all, to a person because he is seen to come from a society that lacks civilization and culture. It is this sense that I have tried to capture by means of the word degradation.
- Saad Abubakar has been heavily relied on in this re-examination as his book remains an unparalleled source on the history of Fombina. I am thus greatly indebted to him.
- This is an area that needs further research as the scope and incidence of these sources of income for the emirate seem rather indeterminate.

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