Part 4: 
Case Studies:  Nov. 3-8: “Sokoto Caliphate”

Nov. 8 ‘Legacies of the Caliphate’
Indirect Rule led to creation of three ‘regions’:

- south west (region of chieftaincies, resistant to Sokoto Caliphate, extensive Christian influence – first indigenous Christian pastors (even a Bishop) from this region, included Lagos – protectorate since mid 19th century, important for commerce)

- south east ('stateless societies', small communities ruled by village elders – British had to ‘create’ chiefs to rule in their name, critical in Palm Oil trade, had been centre of slave trade, focus of Christian missionaries – freed slaves all Christian)

- north (Caliphate, federation Islamic ‘emirates’, transitioned from loyalty to Sokoto Sultan to loyalty to British High Commissioners – majority Muslim (a few exceptions in ‘Middle Belt’ who had escaped Sokoto control)
Regions Under Colonial Rule
Regions Under Colonial Rule

Political activity galvanized during WWII/returning soldiers:

- rooted in colonial created ‘regions’
  [compare with political activity being rooted in Ethnically based ‘associations’ in Zanzibar – reflection of same British policy ‘indirect rule’]

- 1946 Richards Commission:
  • all Nigerian Legislative council, advisory only, two Nigerian representatives
  • three regional councils: South East, South West and North

Entrenched Colonial Policy
Northern Leaders: Kano & Bello

Northern Elements
Progressive Union:
Led by Amin Kano

1951 became Northern People’s Congress:
Led by Sir Ahmadu Bello

(1951 also saw short-lived political party in ‘Middle Belt’
Richards Commission: consequences

Intended as ‘moderate’ reform, responding to slowly changing ideas of colonialism in London:

- widely criticized in Nigeria -- even by elite it was supposed to please
- led to emergence of ‘tribal nationalism’
- ‘regions’ galvanized majority ethnic groups into ‘dominant’ ones: for North, meant ‘Hausa-Fulani’
Constitution revamped 1951 (Macpherson Constitution):
- greater devolution power under Federal Government
- regions increasingly identified with ethnic groups:
• Ibo/Igbo (south east)
• Yoruba (south west)
• Hausa-Fulani (north)

Potential thereby strongly established for religious divides as well:
‘Christian south’ versus ‘Muslim North’

Recommendations scrapped in 1954: impact already present in Nigerian politics
Richards Commission: consequences

1954 generated ‘constitution’ that placed even more emphasis on the role of the ‘Federal’ government (in effort to deal with ‘regionalism’):
- regional ethnic rivalries and tensions by then well entrenched
- 1957 South East and West were granted ‘self-government’
- 1959 the North also gained local control

1960 Nigeria gained full independence:
- Nnamdi Azikiwe first Governor General leader South East
1963 became republic:
- Azikiwe first president
- Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Northern People’s Congress) first Prime Minister

[also author of ‘Shaihu Umar’]
Governor General and Abubakar Tafawa Belewa on Independence day
Instability brought first military coup in 1966: Aguiyi-Ironsi (Ibo-eastern)
- Balewa, other officials killed
- return to civilian rule promised
- but Ibo favoritism feared, especially in north
- Muslims felt excluded: 30,000 Ibos killed, 1 million fled as refugees to eastern homeland
- Aguiyi-Ironsi assassinated soon after
- Lt. Gowon (Christian, supported by northern Muslims): moved to civilian rule
- further divided four regions into twelve states
- Ibos feared for position: seceded as Biafra
- civil war broke out with Federal Go’vt lasting June 1967-january 1970
Post Independent Nigeria

Between then and now:
- Nigeria has had 5 civilian Presidents [civilian President Obasanjo was also previously (1976-79) Military Commander]
- 9 military leaders
- 3 leaders died in coups, a fourth in prison under ‘mysterious’ circumstances
- several were jailed at some point by incoming regimes

Within the first decade:
- bloody-civil war almost tore the country apart as Biafra (south east) attempted to secede
- issue: control of oil (legacies of that war, struggle to control wealth from oil away from state and oil companies) continues
Nigeria only returned to the path of democracy in 1999 after a devastating decade of military rule:

- Governor Ahmed Sani of Zamfara State in Northern Nigeria campaigned on the banner of the restoration of Islamic justice (in contrast to corruption, violence associated with previous military and civilian regimes)
- he was successful

Initiated another decade of instability, violence: religious, ethnic conflicts around implementation of this ‘Islamic Justice – sharia law."
Independence and Sharia Law

How to explain?

- Colonial Rule had permitted ‘legal pluralism’ (in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa): ‘customary law’ permitted within larger framework of Western Values and British Common Law
- Sharia considered ‘customary law’
- even in most powerful emirates, qadi’s could not rule on charges that might have led to execution, for example
- before moving to Independence, British ensured that all criminal law removed from Islamic courts
- constitution included Human Rights charter based on European model
- sharia effectively limited in application to personal relations between Muslims
Independence and Sharia Law

Goals:
- provide Muslims with sense of religious fulfillment
- cater to religious pluralism and equal citizenship,

Associate Justice of the Nigerian Supreme Court, Dr. Karibi-Whyte:

“The government of Northern Nigeria [on the eve of Independence] was in a dilemma. Though extremely anxious to preserve the entrenched position of the religion of Islam and Moslem law within its territory, the government was at the same time prepared to conform to the general pattern of legal jurisprudence and development to achieve the balancing of the social order of which the Northern region is an integral part”.

Independence and Sharia Law

Nigeria inherited legacy of legal pluralism:

- ‘patch-work’ satisfying neither demands modern democracy nor desires to return to traditional religion and culture.
- Muslims protested integrity of Sharia violated
- Some clerics interpreted proposal as plot by ‘Christian crusaders’ to undermine Islam.
- Opposition continued to mount against what was referred to as ‘policy of Anglicization of Islamic justice’
Independence and Sharia Law

During years of intermittent military-civilian rule, each time civilian government returned, constitution revisited question of sharia:

- 1976 Constituent Assembly deliberation on Sharia: northern Muslim delegate to the assembly articulated argues that, unlike other religions, “Islam is a way of life. If you take away Sharia [from a ] Moslem, you are taking his religion away”.

- to refuse to create Federal Sharia Court of Appeal is to violate freedom of religion of Muslims since Sharia is a divine component of the Holy Quran whose observance is integral to a ‘true and complete’ experience of Islam.
Independence and Sharia Law

Debates repeated:
- 1979, eve of Second Republic
- 1989, transition to democracy
- 1995, yet another return to democracy (after military rule)

At these negotiations the key issues were both the status of the Nigerian nation-state and the place of Sharia in it.

And each time the Nigerian political rulers settled on a compromise that failed to please either ‘side’. Dissatisfaction grew significantly among Muslims in the north – but increasingly, not only among the elite
Independence and Sharia Law

When Governor of Zamfara State campaigned on the banner of the restoration of Islamic justice, argued that law intended to check prostitution, drunkenness, stealing, robbery and gambling

- not only what elite, ulama were waiting to hear

- most importantly, resonated among poor, oppressed who were disenchanted with what ‘anglicized sharia system’ had brought to society

[See ‘Nigerian Muslims Welcome Sharia Law’, Add’l Resources]
Independence and Sharia Law

Other states, including most populous state of Kano, announced intentions to follow Zamfara’s example:

- a week prior to passage bill in Zamfara, Kano state assembly passed similar bill – awaiting governor’s signature
- Kano home to many Christian migrants from south
- Niger (third state), governor announced decision to present sharia bill to state assembly
- provoked immediate demonstrations, shutting down shops by Christians
Independence and Sharia Law

Although in each case, Governors stipulated law would only apply to Muslims, Christians fearful of how it would affect their lives:

- how will police implement?
- What about cases involving Muslims and Christians?
- How will conflict with Human Rights legislation be addressed?
Independence and Sharia Law

In 2000, Sharia Penal Law of Zamfara State came into effect:

- created different Sharia courts with full criminal jurisdiction to try offences ranging from trivial crimes like possession, sale and drinking of alcoholic beverages to other more serious offences like prostitution and adultery
- recognized guild of Islamic clerics who could act as judges of Sharia courts
- grants power to award death penalty (stoning) in the case of adultery by a married or divorced woman
- role of public prosecutor more or less performed by vigilante group set up by Governor “Hisba” (“Sharia Police”)

Not just Kano and Niger but a total of eleven other northern states soon followed same path.
Independence and Sharia Law

Responses Immediate -- In Kano:
- Ethnic rioting broke out in which Hausa locals attacked Yorubas from the south
- gangs attacked Yoruba shops, burnt buildings
- Yoruba community sought protection in military barracks
- related to violence in southern town (Sagamu) in which Yoruba attacked Hausa, killing at least 50 and forcing hundreds of others to flee

See ‘Kano Tense after Ethnic Riots’, Add’l Resources
Independence and Sharia Law

Responses Immediate in Kaduna:

- riots broke out between Christians-Muslims in which more than 1000 people killed
- three months later, conflict broke out again drawing in extra police and soldiers
- 200 reported killed
- poorer neighbourhoods hardest hit: mosques and churches burnt down, bodies on streets’ hundreds of buildings burned down
- official denial that this was about ‘religion’: local people confirm that ‘gangs’ were organized on Christian-Muslim affiliation

[See ‘200 dead in Kaduna Riots’, in Add’l Resources]
Independence and Sharia Law

- since first riots (February), Kaduna increasingly segregated
- mixed neighbourhoods *where Christians and Muslims used to live together*, gradually disappearing
- 1000s Ibos returned to South Eastern Nigeria in fear (reminiscent of 1960s!)
- generated reprisal attacks: Ibo in Aba (major city of region) attacked resident (minority) Muslims
- Aba now fearful of renewed violence
- government fearful violence will spread to other regions
Independence and Sharia Law

Kano (left) 1999, Kanduna (below) 2000
Since 2001, Jos (Middle Belt) seen intermittent eruptions of ethnic and religious violence:

- in September 2001, more than 700 people killed in conflict between Christians and Muslims
- In 2004, a few kilometers of away in Yelwa, similar conflict led to 500 people being killed
- in November 2008, violence broke out again in Jos: almost 400 people killed, 1000s fled in fear
- in January 2010, more violence left about 30 killed, 300 injured and 1000s displaced, requiring Red Cross assistance
Independence and Sharia Law

Jos (central Nigeria) January 2008
Independence and Sharia Law

Jos (central Nigeria) January 2010
Independence and Sharia Law

Soldier guarding Mosque – Jos, 2010

Displaced Flee Violence, Jos 2010
Independence and Sharia Law

Across Northern Nigeria (centred in Maiduguri):
- 2009: emergence Boko Haram
  - name means “Western education is sacrilege” in Hausa
  - wants stricter version Sharia law across Nigeria
- July attacked Police Station: violence plus ‘crackdown’ left 700 dead, group’s mosque destroyed
  - leader ‘died’ in custody: considered execution
  - group went into hiding, even listening to sermon would lead to arrest

[see ‘Violence across Northern Nigeria’, YouTube video, Add’l Rdgs]
Independence and Sharia Law

Boko Harem Leader (above);
Followers Under Arrest (right)
Independence and Sharia Law

October 12, 2010:
- anniversary of 2009 attack: bombing of central police station
- group also blamed for random ‘drive by’ attacks on police and those who testified against members in trials following 2009 violence
- assassinated local cleric who denounced group’s Islamic ideology
- orchestrated massive prison break (750-800 prisoners, followers of sect) previous September
- authorities believe group has re-armed and is regaining strength
Independence and Sharia Law

Prison set on Fire (Maiduguri, Sept. 2009)
Abubakar Shekau, ‘deputy leader’ believed killed in 2009
Re-emerged summer 2010, current Boko Haram leader
Current situation raises question:

- can demands of Sharia supporters be met within framework assuring ‘equality and freedom’ to all Nigerian citizens?
- does legacy of Sokoto Caliphate filtered through Colonial Rule, create contradiction between ‘democracy and equality’?
- does it indicate a crisis, needing human rights intervention to resolve?
Independence and Sharia Law

Ironically, answer may lie in role of ‘Sokoto Caliphate’:
- in spite of challenges from Borno region (Maiduguri, Boko Harem)
- remains ‘backbone’ of Nigerian Islam [see ‘Hotbed of Extremism, Add’l Rdgs]
- National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) formed 1980s
- leading Islamic organization for Nigeria
- By tradition: Sultan of Sokoto is president; Shehu of Borno vice president
- distinguished Yoruba (south west, sizable Muslim population) legal scholar is the general-secretary.
Independence and Sharia Law

‘Sokoto Caliphate: an anniversay and its political undercurrents’ (2007):

- article evaluates contemporary power, influence and authority of Sokoto and its Sultan
- raises questions as to whether still as ‘powerful’ as it has been since the establishment of the Caliphate itself
- clearly author skeptical: interpreting ‘who’ attended anniversary and ‘who’ did not to ascertain
- actual discussion with other sources suggests Sokoto still predominant in terms of population, Sultan continues to exercise significant influence with President
- author concludes by suggesting we watch the election of 2007 as indication
- winner was Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, former governor Katsina State:

Would appear ‘the Muslim north’ continued to reflect the legacy of the Caliphate!
Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (1951-2010):

- Nigeria's first university educated leader
- President May 2007 until death May 2010

- 'political pedigree': father minister in post-independence administration (1960s)
- born in Katsina town, Katsina state
- former governor of Katsina state

[see his response to Jos Riots 2009 in 'Violence Across Northern Nigeria', Add'l Resources]
Independence and Sharia Law

Post-Script:

For an elaboration of a ‘political’ interpretation of the violence – of how Northern Politicians/Political Parties are using religion and ethnicity as ‘tools’ to further their own economic and political power – by a Nigerian journalist, see:

“Riot and Northern Nigeria” (March, 2009) in Additional Resources