

A History of Hajj in Borno (Past and Present): Socio-Political and economic Impact

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Abstract

Hajj is an Arabic word meaning “pilgrimage”. It is a religious obligation to be taken once in the life of Muslim believer. But it is only compulsory to one who has the ability to undertake it. The security referred to covered finance, health and security, Borno was formerly on Islamic Caliphate, but later with colonialism came to be incorporated to the present day Nigerian area (or state). It is located to the South-West of the Lake Chad. Apart from the Spiritual derivations, Hajj has some social, political and economic values. This is due to the fact that, it involves movement of people from one place to the other. It paved the way for economic advancement. In this part of the world, historical records show the royal pilgrimages. These royal pilgrimages were organized in such way that many people accompanied the ruler to the holy land. As such, they had to take a lot of provisions for the journey. This journey also take months, for other years to complete. Preparation for such a journey involved huge funding to the extent that the economy of the states is affected. The mass exodus of people affects communities along the Pilgrimage route. This has social and political implications. This is what this paper intends to unravel.

Introduction:

This paper will first look at how and when Islam reached Kanem-Borno before dwelling on the fifth pillar of Islam (Hajj). Islam reached the African continent through two waves: first down the East coast along the Indian Ocean. This accounts for Islam in East and South Africa. But the second which affects the study area, across the Sahara desert further North-West. This spread from North Africa under the able leadership of the companion of the Prophet (S.A.W.) Amr Ibn Al-As in Egypt in 641 A.D. paved the way for Uqba’s campaign in North Africa (667 A.D.). And finally, Islam penetrated Kanem-Borno peacefully through the efforts of scholars and traders.

There were several versions of Islam in Kanem-Borno, some writers reported Islam in the state as early as the seventh (7th) century A.D. But the popular accepted version in the academic circle emphasized eleventh (11th) century A.D. with the conversion of the ruling Mai Humai Jilmi (Abdul-Jalil) by the scholar Muhammad Ibn Mani. According to Alkali, 1993:172)

“Muslim population in Kanem was rapidly growing
Up to the 11th century and indeed, Muhammad Ibn Mani
himself was a product of this Islamization process”.

At the initial stage, Islam was personal but with the conversion of the ruler, it was taken to the official circle. The Pilgrimage tradition exposed Kanem-Borno more to the international circle. This is because, prior to Islam, the people engage in trading activities up to the Mediterranean. Lavers, (1980:189) observed that, by the 5th century B.C. they were unified in a centralized state which engaged trade with the town of the Mediterranean littoral”. With Islam, Hajj brought added dimension to the

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lives of the people in Kanem-Borno and beyond. As we shall see, socially, and publically and economically the region and other areas benefited from this venture.

Statement of the research problem:

Kanem-Borno presently in the Savanna region and shares boundary with the Sahara desert to the North and the forest region to the South. The earlier period recorded considerable economic activities on the shores of the lake. With desiccation and desert encroachment, there were problems all over. But Islam, has with the Institution of Hajj opened an avenue for more interaction. There were movement of goods and services. In the process, there were locations and dislocations. What then accrues to the state involved in Hajj? What benefit do the individuals gain? What kind of impact does it have on the host and other communities? There are some of the question this paper seeks to address.

Methodology:

This research uses both primary and secondary sources in collecting data. The primary sources include colonial documents deposited in archives like National archives in Kaduna, Centre for Tran-Saharan studies, University of Maiduguri and Oral interviews conducted with scholars and Hujjaj (pilgrim).

While the secondary sources include textbooks, newspapers and journals in the library. Content method of analysis is employed in this paper.

Scope and Limitation:

The study covers the pre-colonial period up to the present. That is, Hajj by road to new system of Hajj by air, terminating with Muslim President (Muhammadu Buhari).

The limitation of the study would be accessibility to data. Government officials prepare to hide information as secrets. This will constitute a major impediment to the findings in this study.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this paper lies in the value attached to pilgrimage by Islam and the Muslims. The paper will highlight on the usefulness of engaging in this laudable project and its benefit not only to the people and societies involved, but to humanity at large it is hoped that, diplomats, business class, academics and general public will benefit from it.

Hajj during the pre-colonial period:

Migration or shifting families has been an ingrained culture based on agriculture. This made the people of West Africa to be referred as Takri Pl. Takarir. The world Muslim Gazette and Islamic council of Europe in 1980's gave the Muslim population in Africa continent as sixty two (62) percent. As pointed above Islam, started growing gradually and the rulers accepted Islam. Not only that, but took it serious. The small turned to large annual caravans of Muslim running into thousands.

The first ruler Mai Hume Ibn Abuljalil, performed his first pilgrimage in order to fulfill the religious duty. He was reported to have died on his way back in Egypt in about 1108, Alkali (1985:128). His son Mai Dunoma Humemi performed pilgrimage four times but was said to have drowned in the Red sea, on the fourth occasion, Al-qalqashandi (1913-19:116-18). The Boarnoan authorities accused the Egyptians for conspiracy. The Diwan of the Mai's mentioned certain reasons for such an action:

- (a) That the king was drawn because he was accused of taking side with some Egyptian parties in their quest for power.
- (b) The Mai was eliminated for being seen as a threat to the Egyptians.

- (c) That the Egyptians feared the Mai as planning to take control of Egypt. In order to boost scholarship and also to take care of the pilgrims welfare, the rulers of Kanem-Borno built a school and hostel for pilgrim in Egyptian the year 1242. This suggest not only that the pilgrimage was regular and on the increase, but the power of the Kanem-Borno state. Muhammad (2007:4) asserted that,

“The truth of the matter was that Al-Azhar University was closed and shutdown by the Ayyubis for a complete century from 567 A.H = 1175 C.E. This event might have underscored the reason why Kanem-Borno rulers embarked on the establishment of similar school to Al-Azhar in Al-fustat”.

The Kanem-Borno people played vital role in the economic life of Egypt. They were said to have established absolute monopoly and control of imports and export of Egypt, by becoming money lenders. But not like ‘Shylock’ the Jewish money lender in Shakesprean times, they gave loans interest free as ordained by Islamic injunctions. Egyptian authorities sustained government through taxes paid by Kanem-Borno business class. (Muhammad, 2007:4). The relationship between the region and Egypt was the extent that social relations were cemented. The ruler, Al-Muntasir Billah Sa’ad (1039-1094 A.H.) had a black mother from Bilad al-Sudan.

The people and their rulers in Kanem-Borno took Hajj very serious. Despite the distance, insecurity, the pilgrimage was always increasing, and therefore there are more Muslims in the Maghrib and the Nile Valley who had not performed the Hajj than those found in the Central and Western Bilad al-Sudan, al Naqar (1970:36). Even today one can find Muslims born and brought in Saudi Arabia, but have not performed the Hajj. This point to the degree of commitment and sacrifice by the rulers and people of Kanem-Borno.

The routes and the Journey to Hijaz:

The routes traverse by the Pilgrims changes from time to time, depending on the weather condition (whose people consider wind direction) distance (some routes were later discovered to be shorter) and security (high way robbery, rebels etc.). There were four main routes: one, run through Morocco, Taodeni to Timbuktu in the Niger bend. The second route from Tripoli passing Ghadames and the Oasis of Ahir to the Hausa land. The third began in Tripolis then through the Oasis of Fezzan to Borno Caliphate. The last but not the least, linked Tripoli (in modern Libya) through Kufra, Bagirmi with Wadai (modern Chad) and Derfur (in Sudan), port Sudan Egypt Hajar. Through these routes, towns and cities in the Savanna were linked up and connected with the forest zone. Thus, there was vertical and horizontal linkage, where the Savanna and the forest zones meet and also linked up with the East and West, North and South. Goods and services were exchanged between those different areas for centuries before colonial rule.

The journey to the holy land was tedious and hazardous, even through the shorter route, pilgrim take months or years before they reach Hijaz, but of course, this depends on the preparation: Naqar (1970:17) spelt out condition for according to informants, most pilgrim spend a year or two before reaching Hijaz. Thus, the pilgrim could be grouped into two. One those that have taken time to prepare before embarking in the journey, once they commence, they were not destructed by trade or studies en route. The second category, who are in majority, will start with a little requirement but enriching it along the route. They engage in trading activities, farming and craft before finally reaching the Hijiz. Some of them hardly made the pilgrimage but established settlements en route. At Sudan in Sennar, Gadarif, Madani, Haj Abdallah etc.

The pilgrims travel in group of twenty, thirty, sixty or more people, for security reason and comfortability. The official Caravan led by the rulers or group of pilgrims appointing their leader can embark on the journey, in Kanem and Borno, the pilgrimage was carried out in an elaborate way. Preparation or arrangement for the journey was done throughout the year. The wealthy class contribute by providing food shift, transport (camels, horses and donkeys). The Ulama prayed for the Pilgrims success and safety. Sometimes the pilgrim were robbed, taken to slavery, or attacked. In 1391, the Sultan of Borno, Uthman Ibn Idris was forced to enter into correspondence with the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt Barquq, Alkali (1983: Appendix) regarding the status of some pilgrims taken into captivity.

Hajj during the colonial period:

The late ninetieth century and opening years of the twentieth century saw the activities of the colonial powers in Africa. The colonial power of Germany, Britain and France had interest in Kanem-Borno. At least, from the Berlin conference they were able to share Africa like a cake among themselves. Kanem-Borno came to be divided into Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. And the colonial powers of Britain and France came to have rule over the area. The colonial powers were Christians and therefore Hajj came to be affected in several ways. The universal Islamic brotherhood, which aided the success of the Hajj was missed. The colonial governments introduced many policies which were not in favour of Hajj. For instance immigration laws seriously affected movement of people. They were against the basic philosophy of Hajj which is the unity of the Ummah (Islamic community). They were apprehensive of a situation where the Muslims coverage at the Holy land and organize against their rule. At the same time, they knew the suffering they encounter with Mahdi in the Sudan thus, allowing mass Exodus of Muslims, was a source of worry for the colonial authorities (NAK, SNP, 1903).

The Hajj of Mallam Abubakar Yusuf in the early 1950's illustrate some of these points. He held from Mafa in Borno province. The fact that a certain pilgrim returned home, made the villagers to envy his newly acquired position. His old grandfather sold her belongings including animals to venture in to Hajj. They assembled at Talbari in the state capital to start the journey. They obtained travel documents, just papers not passport for the journey. Their group consisted of about sixty (60) people. He was their youngest (just enrolled in Quranic school i.e. around six years). They also changed their sterling pounds into Francs in Chad (being a French territory).

The well to do used motor transport, other pack animals, unlike others were on foot. From Gamboru-Ngala they reached Kusseri and the Fort Lomy (now N'djamaena). Mustapha Gadoye was their transporter. They proceeded to Borno, and then Atia. From Atia, they run to Abashe, where they were vaccinated. They hired a motor to the boundary between Chad and Sudan known as Genaina. It was a big town, and they were quarantined. They proceeded to al-Obeid (at Darfur). Al-Obeid was linked to Port Sudan by rail. Rich people paid £ 20-50. The poor will be forced to farm or trade before proceeding on the journey with the Gezira scheme in 1925 and shortage of manpower that were welcome. (Yamba 1995) Bornoan and Fulani pilgrim have established some villages along the route like Hilatil Bir, Uru Undu (well town) dominated by the Kanuri's and Fulani's. they stayed for about two (20 to three (3) years before reaching Saudi Arabia. At Khartoum they got passport for the pilgrimage. Between Port Sudan and Jeddah, it requires nothing less than twenty four (24) hours to cross the Red Sea. The pilgrims were quarantine at Ma'ajar, certified

medically fit before allowed entry into the Holy land. They were said to have reached Makka in 1954.

Hajj after Independence:

At the attainment of political independence, the nationalist were faced with a lot of challenges, more especially the 'Hajj by road'. There were a drain of manpower, which made the Balewa/Sardauna group to appeal for Nigerians abroad to come back home. The Borno pilgrims and other Nigerians through this route engage in illicit trade, including drug trafficking, prostitution and homosexuality were later developments. This unlawful trade according to Mallam Abubakar (2016) was first started by Nigerians, known as (Asha iyiger). Many people lost their senses by becoming mentally ill. The lucrative trade attracted many people, even scholars were involved, he added. Thus, the government was forced to fight it through legislation, and imposition of capital punishment, including death penalty. The travel overland was discouraged by making pilgrims to deposit large sum of money which for exceeds the return air fare to Hajaz. This paved the way for the national airline to now undertake the transportation of pilgrims.

In July, 1973, Borno state government enacted a law establishing the pilgrims welfare board. It was vested with the organization of travel of pilgrims for the Hajj and lesser Hajj (Umra). The government takes the responsibility of organising Hajj operation, where pilgrims were charged for services rendered. The board with a Chairman and members, were responsible to the former. The government gave grant to the board to make pilgrimage arrangement. And was to give a financial year report to the Governor on its operation, with full account of all moneys received and expended during the year.

Before the opening of the Maiduguri International Airport by the Muhammad Goni administration (1979-1983) Borno pilgrims embark from Kano to the Holy land. The board now organises various committees in sub-divided into: Flight schedule compilation committee, Enlightenment Hajj camp committee, airport activities committee, public relations committee, uniform/Hand-bags distribution committee, then follow the off-share committee, which is divided into reception/accommodation team, Madinah facilitators, Jamarat support group, transport committee, Mina/Arafat Committee, finance management committee, report writing committee suit case committee, screening committee, feeding committee, weighing committee, medical committee, financial report committee.

Their committee under the board were answerable to the Governor and the National Hajj commission of Nigeria (NHHCON). They were to address the challenges of immigration law in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, take care of monetary policies like foreign exchange and all other complexities that affects the pilgrims. Due to the lukewarm attitude most of the committee members, their performance in rare cases is below expectation.

The impact of pilgrimage:

Apart from fulfilling the moral obligation, Muslims all over the world gathered to impact a lot of Hajj instilled solidarity and discipline at the international level. The pilgrimage therefore attracts social, political and economic benefits by individual and state involved. Even Allah (SWT) has discussed the politics and economy of Hajj in the Qur'an made outcry by Muslim countries for the need to be involved in management of Hajj affairs.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have taken the monopoly of running the Hajj operation as we shall see. The Ministry of pilgrimage control 95% of the financial inputs of what ought to be manned and managed by Muslim countries involved in

Hajj. The interior Ministry is the sole administrator of the entire Hajj affairs, as the chair of the highest central committee that administrators Hajj rites is the Ministry of interior. All the companies involved in the procurement of General services to pilgrims are Saudi based 'consortium'. Hence, the vital areas of the pilgrimage were dominated by Saudi staff: these areas include but not limited to; security: where the Saudi's used Hajj to clamp on opponent. The 1980/81 Iranian episode and last stampede of 2015 were cases in point. It was believed that toxic gas was used. Transport: companies that provides buses for the conveyance of pilgrims at the point of entities- Airport, Seaport and land.

Accommodation: The entire hostels and housing scheme for accommodating pilgrims in Makkah, Mina, Arafat and Madinah are Saudi's.

Feeding: All system of feeding for pilgrim was over the years where continental and intercontinental meals are served pilgrims by forced Saudi caterers' where million and billion of Riyals were squandered by those indigenous Saudi companies and firms.

The Hajj been a centre of Islamic learning gave room for massive production of literature on various fields. The classical Arabic literature was produced on politics, law, philosophy and the Islamic sciences. This account for the mass production and importation of Books to Borno and other Islamic lands. This became more glaring with the modern publishing companies Middle East. From the twentieth century this has changed colour with the wahabiyya tendency. Even though more books were produced, they seem to polarized the Ummah. The Saudi Arabian authorities openly declared their mistake after the September 2011 twin tower attack.

Another area where Hajj has impacted on the Ummah, is trading activities. With the organization, administration and dispensation of Hajj, state and individuals gained from the economic perspective. This international trade no doubt has strengthened the economy of the Muslim state. And in some instances, even Christian states benefited. This economic advantage of Hajj reinforced the economic condition of the entire humanity.

Conclusion:

In this paper, we have seen the organization of Hajj during the pre-colonial, colonial period was mixed with various experiences. Some of the experiences were laudable while some were source of concern. Thus, we can agree that, Hajj has impacted on the state and individuals with both advantages and disadvantages. Borno pilgrims founded towns and village in Chad and Sudan. Riwaq Borno exists in Egypt to date. And the Bornoan people in Jiddah, Makkah and Madinah have established themselves. Among the negative aspects, were illicit trade, drug trafficking, homosexuality, prostitution, theft etc. At any rate, where leaders and masses of the Islamic world converge, there are many benefits than the disadvantages. With seriousness, openness and equality, these problems will be overcome.

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