

## Origin and Development of *Wizarah* under Sokoto Caliphate

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### Abstract

*Wizarah* is a religious institution which traced its origin from the earlier prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them) and gradually developed during the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The practice of *Wizarah* which was facilitated by the prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) continued under the reign of his successors. This practice of *Wizarah* continued in the succeeding Islamic State and varied in administration due to its importance and sphere of influence. Similarly the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century adopted the same.

**Keywords:** Origin, Development, *Wizarah* and Sokoto.

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### INTRODUCTION

The institution of *Wizarah* (Vizierate) in an Islamic state is however, the most important of all offices under the Caliph. Thus, the role of an upright *Wazir* is equally very important in the political set up of every society. This is because he awakes the leader if he sleeps, gives him sight if he cannot see and reminds him if he forgets. The greatest catastrophe which can befall leaders and subjects is the deprivation of good *Wazir*. The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him) was quoted to have said [1]. It is in line with this *Hadith* that Allāh guides His servants, His Prophets through upright *Wazir*. The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said [2]. It can therefore be said that the *Wizarah* originates from the Prophets (peace and blessing of Allāh be upon them). The *Qur'ān* mentions some of the functions of *Wizarah* of some Prophets. For example, Allāh guides Prophet Mūsā (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) with Prophet Hārūn (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) as his upright *Wazir* in answer to his prayer as reported in the *Qur'ān* [3].

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) appointed his two *Wazirs* on earth (Abu Bakr and Umar) in consonance with tradition of Allāh as seen in the above *Hadith*. It is also in line with that tradition that the four rightly guided Caliphs chose their upright *Viziers*. The title *Katib* (Secretary) was used to refer to *Wazir* during the time of the Umayyad

and the Abbasid Caliphates. But towards the end of the period of the Abbasid Caliphate, the title *Katib* was replaced with *Wazir* [4]. Similarly, there were other advisory counsellors who advised the Caliph on the affairs of the Caliphate who took the function of the Advisory *Wazir*, and the title was not used officially [5].

*Wazir* was not used as an official title before the emergence of the Abbasid Caliphate. It was only used in respect of someone who bore a burden and thus, came to mean a helper. But when the Abbasid Caliphate developed, special offices and titles were defined. The title of *Wazir* was adopted by the Caliphate and was also used by most of the states which came after it. Though, the numbers of officials bearing the title of *Wazir* were many, their importance and spheres of influence varied. For example, among the Seljuks, the office of the *Wazir* was placed low in hierarchy of offices while in the Muslim Spain, the offices were so numerous that the senior *Wazir* was called chamberlain. The Hafids assigned military duties to the office of *Wazir*. The Almohads (*Al-Muwahhidun*) restricted it to secretarial work, while the Fatimids changed it from civilian to a military appointment. The Ottoman Empire also modeled their vizierate on the Abbasid system and the senior *Wazir* was given the title Grand *Wazir* (*Al-Wazir al-A'azam*). He held the title of Minister of state and was among the highest dignitaries [6]. In the Sokoto Caliphate, the

vizierate was fashioned along the Abbasid and Ottoman models. The Caliphate did not copy any recent Muslim state in the appointment of *Wazir*. The first appointment of *Wazir* in Sokoto was based on the Qur'anic sense [6]. To trace the origin and development of Vizarah under Sokoto Caliphate, this paper is going to discuss the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, historical origin of *Wizārah* in the Caliphate, classification of *Wizārah* according to the *Jihad* leaders and its developmental stages. It comprises the *Wizārah* during the time of the *Shaykh and* during the consolidation of the Caliphate up to the colonial period.

### Establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate

Sokoto Caliphate was established in Hausa land during the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Jihad* movement, led by *Shaykh* ʿUthmān b. Foduye [7]. The Caliphate started when the *Shaykh's* community appointed him as their *Amīr al-Mūminīn* at Gudu marking the beginning of the *Jihad* and subsequently the establishment of the Caliphate. With the fall of Alkalawa, the capital of Gobir Kingdom in 1808, the Caliphate came into being but fighting continued in many areas for many years [7].

It should be noted that the *Shaykh*, ʿAbd al-Allāh and Muḥammadu Bello never used the term 'Sokoto Caliphate' to refer to the Sokoto Caliphate they established. Their concern was the need to appoint a Caliph, but not the name of the territory introduced [8].

### Historical Origin of *Wizarah*

With the appointment of *Shaykh* ʿUthmān b. Foduye as *Amīr al-Mūminīn*, he assumed the responsibilities of the general administration of the emerging caliphate. The *Amīr al-mūminīn* as the overall organizer and supervisor of the members of the community and the Islamic territory could not be expected to carry out all his duties alone, hence the necessity to delegate some of his powers to other able and trustworthy lieutenants to assist him in running the state affairs.

Under the Islamic system, the responsibility of administering the Caliphate rests on the Caliph, since he alone cannot discharge all his responsibilities. It is therefore necessary that he delegates some trustworthy people with some official responsibilities to ease his leadership burden [9]. Among the most important of these offices was the office of *Wazir*, who will assist the Caliph in delegative, executive or advisory capacities [9].

Before the fall of Alkalawa, the *Shaykh's* authority was limited, and the concentration was mainly within the confines of Gobir. Therefore his *wuzarā'* were limited to five. They were ʿAbd Allāh b. Foduye, Muḥammadu Bello, ʿUmar al-Kammu, Muhammadu Sambo and Sa'd Alhasan.

According to Sultan Muḥammadu Bello, there were four *Wuzarā'*; who included Muḥammad Sambo a *Wazīr*, a Chief Judge and an *Imām*, and excluded Sa'd Alhasan [10]. According to Gidado [11], there were four of them, but he included Sa'ad Alhasan and excluded Muḥammadu Sambo. The later two *Wazirain'* died at the battle of Tsuntsuwa, The remaining three *Wuzarā'* were ʿAbd Allāh b. Foduye, Muḥannadu Bello and ʿUmar al-Kammu. ʿUmar al-Kammu died when he was at Zauma, around June, 1805 C/E. That was also the time when the *Shaykh* was living at a place called Rafin Samu after the community left Sabongari for Gwandu. In *Wakar Zagaye* of Nana Asmā'u, the death of ʿUmar al-Kanmu was in *Sha'aban* around June, 1805, while *Shaykh's* flight to Gwandu was in *Ramadān*, around July, 1805 [12]. Yola listed four *Wuzarā'*, after the fall of Alkalawa in which Sa'd was included. This might be an oversight, because Sa'ad died in the first year of *Shaykh's hijrah* at the battle of Tsuntsuwa, before the fall of Alkalawa, and the fall of Alkalawa was in the fourth year of *hijra* in 1808 C/E [13].

It is necessary to clarify the issue of the vizierate in this period, because all the titles of the *Wuzarā'* and other advisory councilors of the *Shaykh* were not named with their titles by *Shaykh*, their primary role signified their position. *Wazīr* was neither called *Wazīr* by the *Shaykh* nor was he appointed with the title. ʿAbd Allāh who was also called the senior *Wazīr* had never himself used the title, but presumed it through his functions, because most of the affairs of the state were run by him. Similar things applied to the titles of Magajin Gari, Magajin Rafi and Galadima. Maradun in his work, quoted Dangaladiman *Wazīr*, Alhaji Bello Gidadawa that Danjada was performing the duty of Magajin Gari, while ʿUmar al-Kanmu as Magajin Rafi and Doshiro acting as Galadiman Gari. None of them ever called him with any of these titles [14].

*Wuzarā'* in the then period performed different functions of the *Wizārah'*. Sometimes, they looked like delegate *Wuzara'* by conducting most of the affairs of the state, at other times they acted as Army Generals leading wars or serving as treasurers of the Caliphate. They also looked like the executive *Wuzara'*, who implemented the Caliph's order and sometime acted as advisory *Wuzarā'*. They also combined the whole functions of the above *wuzara'* [15]. With all these, we can therefore name them as Multi-functional *Wuzarā'*.

During the reign of Sultan Muḥammadu Bello, the organization of the Caliphate was improved upon. He appointed the Inspector General of Police to take care of this office (office of the Executive *Wazir*) through the children of *Yari* Husaini. He therefore appointed Muḥammadu Alfa ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b.

*Yari* Husaini to supervise and execute the punishment on criminal offences, such as stealing, committing adultery or robbery. Where the punishment was by mutilation or death, the condemned criminal was tied to a pole in the city market and his head was cut off with a sword by someone called Hauni through the command of *Sarkin Dogarai* [16].

In respect of the Advisory *Wazīr*, it is a known fact that no ruler can rule alone without a *Wazīr*, because every ruler must either have a positive *Wazīr* or a negative one [17].

The Caliphate was blessed with upright *Wuzara'*, who guided their rulers when they forgot and reminded them when they slept. The *Wuzara'* are no more than, the Council Members of the Caliphate. They are *Wazīr*, *Magajin Gari*, *Magajin Rafi*, and *Galadiman Gari*, then later *Ubandoman Gari*. The *Wazirin Sokoto* is the first Councilor before and after the British occupation of the Caliphate. He was the Gate or *Kofa* and the Chief Minister in-charge of all the Eastern Emirates and he was known as *Amir al-Masalih* [18].

*Magajin Gari* is next to *Wazir*. He is the second most Senior Council member in the hierarchy of Sokoto Caliphate. During the colonial re-organization the *Magajin Gari* was assigned the District headship of Gumbi and came to Sokoto whenever meetings were held, until 1932 when the title holder came to stay in Sokoto permanently [19]. Today the office of *Magajin Gari* is a Senior Council member and a member of Kingmakers and Council of Chiefs. He performs his duties and functions in the day to day administration of the Sultanate Council [20].

*Magajin Rafi* title was conferred on Mudagel the son of 'Umaru al-Kammu, one of the closest companions of the *Shaykh* since his days at Degel. His son played a very important role in the *Jihad* and was given the office of *Magajin Rafi* by Sultan Muhammadu Bello [20]. The title of *Magajin Rafi* office is also a Senior Councilor in the Sultanate Council and Minister in-charge of Bauchi affairs before colonial period. He was a member of *Sarakunan Karaga* "Ministers near to the Palace", the *Magajin Rafi* is also one of the Kingmakers who select a new Sultan when the office becomes vacant [20]. *Galadiman Gari* before the Colonial period was a Minister in-Charge of Katsina and Gusau Affairs as well as overseeing the Districts of Dingyadi, Gora, Koyambana and Chafe. The title is held by the descendants of Doshiro b. Mujakkah, one of the earliest disciples of the *Shaykh* [20].

Doshiro was said to have possessed a large number of livestock and was living in Gobir before the advent of the *Shaykh*. On *Shaykh's* rise of the standard, Doshiro left with a large number of livestock and came to join the *Shaykh* in his course. He contributed a lot of

his wealth to the course of the *Jihad*. This remarkable contribution made Sultan Muhammadu Bello to appoint him as *Galadiman Gari* and one of his Senior Council members [20].

*Ubandoman Gari* was first conferred on Ammani the son of Modibbo Muhammad son of Ali, a brother of the *Shaykh*. Thus, he was a nephew of the *Shaykh*. He was a member of the Sultanate Council but he was never a kingmaker [21]. The *Ubandoman Gari* gallantly participated in Kebbi and Gobir wars during the *Jihad* and was given the title of *Ubandoman Gari*. Before the Colonial period, *Ubandoma* was a '*Kofa*' or link between the Sultan and Zurmi, Kaurar Namoda and later Kontagora [21].

### Classification of *Wuzarā'* in Sokoto Caliphate

Considering the function of *Wizārah* that was practiced before the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), the prophetic period, classical period of Islam, and the period of the *Shaykh* 'Uthman b. Foduye, the *Wizārah* can be classified into four.

However, 'Abd Allāh listed three classes, which are

- Delegatory *Wazir*
- Advisory *Wazir*
- Executive *Wazir*

All these Institutions in existence today have their functions to perform. Similarly, the Institution of *Wizarah* has its own functions as well. The most important officer is Delegatory *Wazīr*. This is because he was the Chief advisor to the Caliph and the officer in-charge of people's welfare and head of the Electoral College which elects Caliph. The second most important office was the consultative *wazir*, otherwise called *al Shurah* or advisory councilor. Under the Sokoto Caliphate, the appointment of the Caliph rests on the *Shura*, the consultative assembly, popularly known as the Sultanate Council today. Initially, it was the sole duty of 'Abd Allāh b. Foduye, 'Umar al-Kammu, 'Uthman Gidado and Muhammadu Bello. These men were the first members of the first Caliphate Council who elected no other person than *Shaykh* 'Uthman b. Foduye and were the *Ahl al-hal wa al-aqd* (those who can tie and untie) [22]. During the reign of Sultan Muhammadu Bello, the responsibility of electing the spiritual leader fell upon 'Aliyu Jedo the Commander in-Chief of the *Jihad*, Muhammadu Moyijo a Military Commander and Ardo of Shuni [22]. With the growth of the Caliphate in size and strength, other people were appointed members of Emirate Council for administrative convenience. They included the *Magajin Gari*, *Magajin Rafi*, *Galadiman Gari*, *Ardon Shuni*, *Baraden Wamakko*, *Ardon Dingyadi*, *Sa'in Kilgori* and *Sarkin Adar of Dundaye*, most of them are district heads [22].

The third institution of *Wizārah* is the executive office of *wazīr*. He conveys order from the Caliph and executes it... Under Sokoto Caliphate the executive *Wazīr* was the Security Adviser or Minister, as ʿAbd Allāh stated in *Ḍiyā al-ḥukkam* [23]. He supervised security issues and executed the rulings of the judiciary. It is important to consider the pre-colonial practices of the Institution of vizierate and specifically the function of delegatory *Wazīr*.

### ***Wizārah* under Sheikh ʿUthmān b. Foduye of the Sokoto Caliphate**

The function of *Wazīr* in this period developed gradually and a *Wazīr* may assign someone to perform religious, social or political functions on his behalf. Such assignment may be delegative, executive or advisory.

The function of *Wazīr* was not in a systematic or an organized manner. In the early period of its development, a *Wazīr* may be delegated to perform a special duty, like Abd Allah and other lieutenants who were assigned to be a secretary or commander in war while some may be consultative body member, like Abd Allah Muhammadu Bello and cUmar al-Kammu.

*Wazīr* Gidado served as *Wazīr* to Bello before ʿAbd Allāh relinquished his post to Gidado in Kalambaina. The episode was after the death of *Shaykh* ʿUthmān b. Foduye when Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello defeated ʿAbd al-Salām, where the followers of ʿAbd al-Salam dispersed, but the hard core, under the leadership of his son *Bukhari*, migrated to the south where, after a period of wandering took the possession of the fortified town of Kalambaina, which was under the leadership of Danboya near Gwandu. ʿAbd Allāh was unable to dislodge them to their evil intention, and therefore appealed to his nephew for help. Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello responded at once and led his forces against the rebels. He joined forces with ʿAbd Allāh in front of Kalambaina and together they stormed the place. The joint action of Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello and *Wazīr* ʿAbd al-Allāh at Kalambaina was the occasion of their formal reconciliation [24].

When they met outside the town, Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello as the younger man prepared to dismount and went to greet his uncle, but ʿAbd al-Allāh mentioned to him to remain in the saddle and *Wazīr* ʿAbd Allāh moved forward and greeted his nephew as *Sarkin Musulmi*. It was there he said to Gidado “You are to Bello as I was to *Shaykh*” [24].

Similarly, the executive *Wuzaraʾ* (Dogarai) were appointed by the Sultan Muhammadu Bello to perform policing functions. They delivered the messages for the Sulṭān and his Emirs. They collected the taxes and arrested the offenders. They also provided security in palaces of the Sultan and his Emirs [25].

This institution enabled the Caliph to recruit individuals to serve as spies and agents in various ways and means to negotiate or deal with the executive *Wuzaraʾ*, territorial chiefs and members of the Caliphate. They were regarded very vital and they provided security and order and executed the rulings of the judiciary, thus, ensuring safety and security of people and their properties [26].

The other office established was the office of the Advisory *Wazīr*, that is the consultative assembly, otherwise, called *al-Shurāʾ*, though, the delegatory *wazīr* in this office was the Chief Advisor and was also the President of the Electoral College which elected Caliph and advised the Caliph on the appointment of the key officers. Other *Wazirs* were appointed for different offices, but it seemed that they were not directly under Gidado, the Grand *Wazīr* of the Caliphate, but they held offices independently. Those people were Abu Bakr Jada, Galadima Doshiro, Yero Danʿuwan Mojaydo, Muhammad Ajiya, Maikai, Magatakarda Bindowwo, Alami Sarkin Tudu, Mudagel and Modibbo Ali [26]. The serving delegatory *Wazīr* in the period include Abd Allāh b. Foduye, Muhammadu Bello b. ʿUthmān b. Foduye, ʿUmar al-Kammu, Muhammad Sambo, Saʿad b. Al-Ḥasan and Saʿad b. Al-Ḥasan [26].

### ***Wizārah* under Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello to the Colonial Period**

This was the period where the function of *Wazīr* was practiced well; all the three types of *Wizarah* came into the existence. Of all the offices in the administration of the Caliphate, the office of delegatory *Wazīr* was the highest. Its character was sanctioned and defined by the classical antecedents which none of the other major offices, like the office of the Advisory *Wazīr* and Executive *Wazīr*, has been defined clearly.

The following discussion describes each one of the types of *Wizarah* in details one after the other. The first is the *Wizārah* under a delegatory *Wazīr*, followed by that under Advisory *Wazīr*, and lastly followed by the one under Executive *Wazīr*.

When Bello became *Amir al-Muminin*, Gidado served as his *Wazīr*. The disagreements between *Wazīr* ʿAbd Allāh and Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello were not resolved immediately because each one of them found himself busy with more pressing problems to allow him time for reconciliation. Sulṭān Muḥammadu Bello was faced with ʿAbd al-Salām’s rebellion, while *Wazīr* ʿAbd Allāh was faced with a similar situation with the followers of ʿAbd al-Salām. It was only after the defeat of these rebels that Bello turned to help his uncle to crush the other group. For three years the defeated followers of cAbd al-Salām, under Dan Boya, a former student of *Wazīr* ʿAbd Allāh, rebelled against him at Kalambaina. The harassment of ʿAbd Allāh’s men

continued until one of his wives, the mother of Khalil and Bello's aunt, sent to Bello asking him to aid his uncle against the rebels [27].

In 1819, Bello organized an expedition against Kalambaina, but, before attacking the rebels, he sent Gidado b. Laima to Dan Boya to negotiate peace and reconciliation between them and 'Abd Allāh. Bello asked them to recognize 'Abd Allāhi's authority or leave the area. Danboya and his followers refused to accept the peace terms. The combined forces of Gwandu and Sokoto then attacked Kalambaina and became victorious. It was reported that after this victory 'Abd Allah recognized Bello as the legitimate successor of *Shaykh* 'Uthman b. Foduye [28]. From the aforementioned, one can conclude that the appointment of Gidado as *Wazir* was not made official until after the victory against Kalambaina. This is because he was a *Wazir* to Bello even during the period of *Shaykh* 'Uthman b. Foduye, when the *Shaykh* assigned the responsibility of administering the eastern flank of the Caliphate to Muhammadu Bello. Nana Asma'u recalled in her poetry, the areas under Gidado that were assigned to him by Bello. They are: Kano, Borno, Zazzau, Daura, Katsina and Gobir. But after the abdication of the office by *wazir* 'Abd Allāh b. Foduye, the appointment became official [28].

Gidado in his writings did not refer to himself as *Wazir* but listed himself as the messenger of the *Shaykh* and Muhammadu Bello and also as *Amir al-maṣāliḥ*.

The following *Wuzara*' performed the delegatory function with full authority, from the period of Caliph Muḥammadu Bello to the time when the caliphate was conquered by the colonial masters. Viziers who served in this period were:

- *Wazir* 'Uthman Gidado b. Laima (1817-1842 C/E)
- *Wazir* 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Uthman Gidado (1842-1859 C/E)
- *Wazir* Ibrahim Khalilu b. 'Abd al-Qadir (1859 – 1874 C/E)
- *Wazir* 'Abd Allāh Bayero b. 'Uthman Gidado (1874-1886 C/E)
- *Wazir* Bukhari b Ahmad b. 'Uthman Gidado (1886 – 1910 C/E)

#### **Advisory *Wuzaira*' from *Shaykh* 'Uthmān b. Foduye to the Colonial Period**

The Government of the Sokoto Caliphate which was designed to achieve its goals according to the teaching of Islam had taken various steps in achieving its goals. During the *Shaykh*'s life time, the Caliphate was organized on the basis of religion which exerted simplicity and austerity. When Bello came on board, he created new hereditary titles, such as Magajin Gari, Magajin Rafi, Galadiman Gari and later Ubandoman Gari. All title holders came to be regarded

as Sultan's councillors and were given different positions such as: *Wazir*, Magajin Gari, Magajin Rafi, and Galadiman Gari [29].

The Advisory *wuzara*' apart from the *Wazir* were:  
 Magajin Gari  
 Magajin Rafi  
 Galadiman Gari, and  
 Ubandoman Gari [30].

#### **Executive *Wuzara*' from *Shaykh* 'Uthmān b. Foduye to the Colonial Period**

'Abd Allah cited the example of the Executive *Wazir* as Dogari who executes the order of the Caliph [30]. This provides security in the palace of the Caliph and emirs in the Caliphate and after the *Jihad* was preserved and updated to suit the security requirements of an Islamic State that came into being [31]. Initially, the function of the Executive *wazir* under Sokoto Caliphate was performed by Yari Husaini who was supported by some officers who assisted him to execute the law in the Caliphate. This office was later expanded during the period of Bello, who appointed *Sarkin Dogarai* (Chief Security) to take charge of the Caliphate [31]. *Dogarai* is a local police under the leadership of *Sarkin Dogarai* guarding the palace entrance. Later, the Caliph seemed to have employed *Yan Kwana* as part of the Dogarai to discipline and if necessary imprison aristocrat princes within the palace if they commit any offence. The same officer was later employed by Bello to summon individuals for secret meeting. The holder of this office assisted the Caliph to recruit individuals to serve as spies and agents to work for the state.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The Institution of *Wizarah* is not a new phenomenon. It started from the earlier Prophets, like Prophets Mūsā and Dāwūd (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them) up to the period of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). During the time of the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and followers of the Companions and those who came after them, the office continued to be developed. During the Abbasid period, the Institution reached its highest peak where all the functions of the viziership were practiced. For example, it was during the Abbasid era that the office became well instituted and the influence of *Wazir* increased. For example, Harun al Rashid gave to his viziers the responsibility of the supervision of all government departments and the royal seal [31]. Sokoto Caliphate was established by the Triumvirate Muslim Scholars with the aim of administering their subjects according to the dictates of Islam taking Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as their model and also following the footsteps of his Companions. The Caliphate introduced the institution of viziership with full executive powers that acted on behalf of the Caliph.

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