Origin and Development of Wizarah under Sokoto Caliphate

Tambari Abbas Bashar, Ph.D*

Department of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, P.M.B. 2346, Nigeria

DOI:10.21276/sb.2019.5.8.9  |  Received: 04.08.2019  |  Accepted: 23.08.2019  |  Published: 30.08.2019

*Corresponding author: Tambari Abbas Bashar

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.

Copyright © 2019: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution license which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use (NonCommercial, or CC-BY-NC) provided the original author and source are credited.

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 Allah be upon him) was quoted to have said [1]. It is in line with this Hadith that Allah 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 Allah be upon them). The Qur’an mentions some of the functions of Wizarah of some Prophets. For example, Allah guides Prophet Mūsā (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with Prophet Harūn (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as his upright Wazir in answer to his prayer as reported in the Qur’an [3].

Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed his two Wazirs on earth (Abu Bakr and ‘Umar) in consonance with tradition of Allah 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 Kāthīb (Secretary) was used to refer to Wazir during the time of the Umayyad and the Abbasid Caliphat. But towards the end of the period of the Abbasid Caliphate, the title Kāthīb 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 Hafsids 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’zam). 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 Wizarah in the Caliphate, classification of Wizarah according to the Jihad leaders and its developmental stages. It comprises the Wizarah 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 19th century Jihad movement, led by Shaykh ‘Uthman b. Foduye [7]. The Caliphate started when the Shaykh’s community appointed him as their Amir al-Muminiin 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, ‘Abd al-Allâh 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 ‘Uthman b. Foduye as Amir al-Muminiin, he assumed the responsibilities of the general administration of the emerging caliphate. The Amir al-muminiin 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 wazarat were limited to five. They were ‘Abd Allâh b. Foduye, Muḥammadu Bello, ‘Umar al-Kamnu, Muḥammadu Sambo and Sa’d Alhasan.

According to Sultan Muḥammad Bello, there were four Wazarat; who included Muḥammad Sambo a Wazir, a Chief Judge and an Imam, 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 Wazarain’ died at the battle of Tsuntsuwa, The remaining three Wazarat were ‘Abd Allâh b. Foduye, Muḥammadu Bello and ‘Umar al-Kamnu. ‘Umar al-Kamnu died when he was at Zuma, around June, 1805 C/E. That was also the time when the Shaykh was living at a place called Racin Samu after the community left Sabongari for Gwandu. In Wakar Žayyaye of Nana Asma’u, the death of ‘Umar al-Kamnu was in Shaba’aban around June, 1805, while Shaykh’s flight to Gwandu was in Ramadan, around July, 1805 [12]. Yola listed four Wuzar at 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 Wazarat and other advisory councilors of the Shaykh were not named with their titles by Shaykh, their primary role signified their position. Wazir was neither called Wazir by the Shaykh nor was he appointed with the title. ‘Abd Allâh who was also called the senior Wazir 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 Raki and Galadima. Maradun in his work, quoted Dangaladiman Wazir, Alhaji Bello Gidado that Danjada was performing the duty of Magajin Gari, while ‘Umar al-Kamnu as Magajin Raki and Doshiro acting as Galadiman Gari. None of them ever called him with any of these titles [14].

Wazarat in the then period performed different functions of the Wizarat. Sometimes, they looked like delegate Wazarat 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 Wazarat, who implemented the Caliph’s order and sometime acted as advisory Wazarat. They also combined the whole functions of the above wazarat [15]. With all these, we can therefore name them as Multi-functional Wazarat.

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 ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Qadir 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 Dogara'ar [16].

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

The Caliphate was blessed with upright Wazara’, who guided their rulers when they forgot and reminded them when they slept. The Wazara’ are no more than, the Council Members of the Caliphate. They are Wazir, 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 Muhammad 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, Koyamamba 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 Muhammad Bello to appoint him as Galadiman Gari and one of his Senior Council members [20].

Ubandoman Gari was first conferred on Amman 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, Ubandomu was a ‘Kofa’ or link between the Sultan and Zurmi, Kaurar Namoda and later Kontagora [21].

Classification of Wuzara’ in Sokoto Caliphate

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

However, ‘Abd Allâh 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 Wazir. 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 Shura 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 Allâh b. Foduye, ‘Umar al-Kammu, ‘Uthman Gidado and Muhammdu 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 Muhammdu Bello, the responsibility of electing the spiritual leader fell upon ‘Aliyu Jedo the Commander in-Chief of the Jihad, Muhammadu Muyido 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 Dundayye, most of them are district heads [22].
The third institution of Wizarah 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 ‘Abd Allāh stated in Diwā al-hukkam [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.

Wizarah under Sheikh ‘Uthmān b. Foduyе 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 Allāh and other lieutenants who were assigned to be a secretary or commander in war while some may be consultative body member, like ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammadu Bello and cUmar al-Kamnu.

Wazīr Gidado served as Wazīr to Bello before ‘Abd Allāh relinquished his post to Gidado in Kalambaina The episode was after the death of Shaykh ‘Uthmān b. Foduye when Sultan Muḥammadu Bello defeated ‘Abd al-Salām, where the followers of ‘Abd al-Salām 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. ‘Abd Allāh was unable to dislodge them to their evil intention, and therefore appealed to his nephew for help. Sultan Muḥammadu Bello responded at once and led his forces against the rebels. He joined forces with ‘Abd Allāh in front of Kalambaina and together they stormed the place. The joint action of Sultan Muḥammadu Bello and Wazīr ‘Abd al-Allāh at Kalambaina was the occasion of their formal reconciliation [24].

When they met outside the town, Sultan Muḥammadu Bello as the younger man prepared to dismount and went to greet his uncle, but ‘Abd al-Allāh mentioned to him to remain in the saddle and Wazīr ‘Abd 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 Wazara’ (Dogarai) were appointed by the Sultan Muḥammadu Bello to perform policing functions. They delivered the messages for the Sultan 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 Wuzara’, 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-Shura, 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 Wazīrs 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 Dan’uwan Majojdo, Muhammad Ajia, Maikai, Magatarkada Bindowwo, Alami Sarkin Tudu, Mudiegel and Modibbo Ali [26]. The serving delegatory Wazīr in the period include ‘Abd Allāh b. Foduye, Muḥammadu Bello b. ‘Uthmān b. Foduye, ‘Umar al-Kamnu, Muhammad Sambo, Sa’ad b. Al-Ḥasan and Sa’ad b. Al-Ḥasan [26].

Wizarah under Sultan 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 Wizarah 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 ‘Abd Allāh and Sultan Muḥammadu Bello were not resolved immediately because each one of them found himself busy with more pressing problems to allow him time for reconciliation. Sultan Muḥammadu Bello was faced with ‘Abd al-Salām’s rebellion, while Wazīr ‘Abd Allāh was faced with a similar situation with the followers of ‘Abd 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 ‘Abd al-Salām, under Dan Boya, a former student of Wazīr ‘Abd Allāh, rebelled against him at Kalambaina. The harassment of ‘Abd 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 Allāh’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 Allāh 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. Nanna 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-mašalīḥ.

The following Wuzara’ performed the delegatory function with full authority, from the period of Caliph Muhammadu 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 Allāh 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]. Dogari 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 Wuzarah 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.
REFERENCES

1. Sajistain, S. A. Sunan Abi Dawud, Maktabat al-Ma’arif, Riyad, nd, Hadith no. 2543.
2. Nas’a’l, A. S. Sunan al-Nasa’l, Dar al Salam, United State of America, nd 300, Hadith No. 2296, see also, M. Hibban, Sahih b. Hibban, Shabbiir Brothers, Pakistan, nd p. 300, Hadith No. 4571. See also, S. A.Sajistain, Sunan Abi Dawud, Opicit Hadith no. 2543.
11. Arnet, E. J. Gazetteer of Sokoto Province, Waterlow and Sons Limited, London, p.30, see also, M. B. Idris, From Maratta to Sokoto, Sultanate Council, Sokoto, Sokoto, p17, see also, Wakar Zagaye of Nana Asma’u.
14. Foduye, A. Tazin al-waraqat, np, np, see also, S. Yusuf, A History of Islam, Scholarship and Revivalism in Western.
15. Foduye, A. Sudan, Being an Annotated Translation with introduction of Infaq ul-Maisur fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukur of Sultan.
17. Shehu, I. G. Sarkin Yara (Yari Hussaini 1804), Zuri’ar sa da Sarautun da sukeyi a Daular Usmaniyyah, nd, np pp.1-2, see also,K. Rotimi, 1-2.