

The Role and Contribution of Sir Abubakar Saddiq III in the Economic Development of the Sokoto Province

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Abstract

Sokoto Province was created over the territory of an Islamic polity called the Sokoto Caliphate. The Caliphate emerged as a product of the Sokoto Jihad of 1804. A number of *Caliphs* ruled the polity before it was occupied by the British colonial administrators. After the occupation and the subsequent consolidation of colonial rule, Sokoto Province was created and the Caliphal system was changed to Sultanate. Consequently, a number of Sultans ruled contributed significantly to the development of their subjects and or the Province as whole. Of all the Sultans, Sir Saddiq Abubakar III is considered to be longest and most contributory Sultan throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. This paper examined the role and contributions of Abubakar III in the economic development of Sokoto Province.

Keywords: Sir Abubakar Saddiq III, Economic Development and Sokoto Province.

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INTRODUCTION

Sir Abubakar Saddiq III (d. 1998) was the seventeenth Sarkin Musulmi (Sultan) of the Sokoto Caliphate. He was the longest ruler among all the leaders of the Caliphate. He was born the very day the British conquered Sakkwato (Sokoto) metropolis; the capital of the Caliphate. To be more specific, it was on 15th March, 1903 at Dange District of the Sokoto Emirate of the present Sokoto State in the North-western part of what is known today as Nigeria.

He was brought up under the care of his uncle Hassan, who made him Sardauna on 31st March 1931, after gaining two years experience as a district scribe of Dange, which started in March 1929, and the position of Wakili (representative) in Zamfara. In 1938 he became the district head of Talata-Mafara and the Seventeenth Sarkin Musulmi respectively [1].

The aim of this paper is to highlight as much as possible the role played by Sir Saddiq III in the economic development of the Sokoto province. It will at the same time see the contribution he made for the economic progress and development of his people. But

before then, it will start by looking very briefly at his personal life.

SIR SADDIQ III'S PERSONAL LIFE

We need to know that Sir Saddiq III was brought up as a prince by his uncle Hassan, who was initially the secretary of the district head of Dange. Hassan later became the district head of Dange and was subsequently installed as the 16th Sarkin Musulmi on 24th November 1931.

Though Sir Saddiq III was brought up as a prince, he was not raised up as a 'prince' of our contemporary society. He was raised up like every other individual. His standard of living, the house he lived, the food he ate, the clothes he wore, were in all respect similar to everyone else around him [2].

Sir Saddiq III is certainly a model for our present leaders and indeed for all of us to copy. This is because; he maintained his simple life style even when he attained the position of Sarkin Musulmi (the spiritual leader of the Muslims throughout the present day Nigeria and beyond). In fact, it is still fresh in my memories that when I was a boy, I used to frequent his house together with my age mates immediately after the

¹Boyd, J. Sir Siddiq Abubakar III, Sarkin Musulmi, Spectrum Book, Ltd, Ibadan, Nigeria, 13.

² Ibid , p. 3

sunset, (precisely, after Magrib Prayers). As is known, it is the custom of people in Sakkwato metropolis to take their dinner immediately after Magrib, and as such those who went to his house at this time had to eat there. It was certainly a pride for us to eat at his house, because we usually eat together with him. This was quite common due to his love for children and also our love for him. In most cases and on several occasions, we ate Tuwan Dawa, which was regarded as the food for the masses throughout the town [3].

This was one out of the many simple life, which was led by this humble Sarkin Musulmi throughout the era of Nigeria's economic prosperity. Above all, after his death, he did not leave even a single personal house of his own, and so all his family had to move to Nasarawa house, which also was a Gidan Sarauta (a lodge under the Sultan Palace). This was Sir Saddiq III, whose life is easy to follow, but very difficult for those who are too materialistic.

SIR SADDIQ III AS SARKIN MUSULMI

Sir Saddiq III was installed as the new Sarkin Musulmi in June 1938 to succeed his uncle Hassan, who passed away on 31st March of the same year. In that year, Sakkwato was quite unlike what it is today. Boyd and Maishanu described the whole of Sokoto Province in 1938 as a country side where there were only seven hundred miles of all season lacerate roads and none was tarred there was no electricity in Sokoto (Sakkwato), no piped water, no cinemas, no banks, no petrol stations (but, petrol was obtained at the Native Authority (NA) workshop), very few cars, and no regular air services. The city walls were still clearly visible and so the fortresses were disused since 1931. Moreover, in those days, a person standing at a very far location of the town, say at Rijiyar Dorowa could see at the other end of the city, say right across to Kantin Daji (the initial commercial layout of the city) [4].

This shows that there was certainly need to change in order to bring awareness of modernization to the people. However, one should realize that Sir Saddiq III was born the very day the Europeans conquered Sakkwato metropolis and that he was raised up under the full care and guidance of Sarkin Musulmi Hassan, which shows that he was raised up wholly in the administration of Europeans. This situation and other circumstances made him to face very challenging demands, because, in one way or the other, he had to balance the demands of the successive governments in

its efforts to spread change and the needs of his people from many works of life [5].

This clearly indicates that Sir Saddiq III had to in one way or the other integrate the needs of his subjects and the interests of the European colonialists. This is due to the fact that he once complained to his people that, we must move ourselves if we don't want to be pushed by others, but his Dattibai (senior citizens) won't see that, and they used to asked for the need of change. Certainly, this type of challenge was not an easy one. Nevertheless, the Sarkin Musulmi took up the challenge and the task and married the two demands together. Later, he was quite able to integrate the two demands of the two opposing sides.

IN THE PUBLIC FINANCE BEFORE BECOMING SARKIN MUSULMI

Sir Saddiq III's role and contributions to the economic development of the Sokoto Province started since when he was young under the care of his uncle Hassan, who was then the secretary to the district head of Dange. At that time, according to Boyd and Maishanuⁱⁱ he went on tax collection tours with his uncle throughout the Dange district. It was also from there that he learnt the importance of financial discipline and probity. It was here he acquired the experience that, as soon as the tax money were mobilized, it was put into bags and later be head-loaded to Sakkwato treasury [6].

In the year 1934, Sir Saddiq III was made to be the Councilor responsible for collecting Jangali (cattle tax) and Haraji (poll tax). This appointment according to Malami took him into the world of financial responsibility. During this time he moved from place to place collecting the taxes and he never waited until the time of collecting came. The report of His Excellency, Priestman described Sir Saddiq III as one who had done a very good work in the district, both with regards to Jangali and Haraji matters. I-le definitely and rightly got things done [7].

In March 1931, Sir Saddiq III was made the Sardauna of Sakkwato (Sokoto). Now, apart from the responsibilities of the Sardauna, he was also engaged in the supervision of tax collection. Paden stated that the major share of the supervision of tax collection was undertaken by the Saraduna, referring to the (late Saddiq III). The acting Resident of Sokoto, M.V. Backhouse also continued the integrity and financial discipline of Sir Saddiq III when he was the Sardauna. According to him, the works of Sir Saddiq III in Jangali and Haraji met up the standard and emphasized that they were up to the usual standard.

³ Malami, A. S. Sir Siddiq III: 17th Sultann of Sokoto, Evan Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Ltd, Ibadan, Nigeria, 7.

⁴ Paden Ahmadu Bello, J. N. Sardauna of Sokoto: Vaues and leadership in Nigeria, Hud-Huda Publishing Company Zaria, 111.

⁵ Malami, opcit, 79.

⁶ Malami, opcit, p.102

⁷ Ibid, p 29

He was made the district head of Talata-Mafara in 1938. At that time, the responsibilities of the district head, according to Malami were to make the census of the district population, which served as the basis upon which each village's financial dues are calculated. However, one of the primary duties of the district head basically had to do with the collection and centralization of taxes from village heads in order to transmit them to the provincial headquarters.

The tax collection system at that time was however, based on the principle of progressive tax whereby each rich person contributed more than the poor. In addition to this, each district head was informed that he was responsible for the welfare of his community at all levels. Perhaps, this was what made Sir Saddiq III to be welfare oriented [⁸].

ON THE WELFARE PROGRAMS

Though Sir Saddiq III was confronted with the two conflicting objectives of satisfying the needs of his subjects on the one hand, and on satisfying the interest of the his colonial masters on the other, he was seriously more concerned with the welfare of his subjects. He frequently advised his district heads to in any circumstances put the welfare of their people first. This he did in order to comply with his predecessors who always advised the district heads to take more and serious interest in the welfare of the subjects. For instance, his great grandfather, Caliph Muhammad Bello stated in his book (Al-Gaith) that the leader is the protector of his people. He should ensure their security, integrity and sees to the payment of their entitlements.

Moreover, this type of orientation made Sir Saddiq III to be very close to his subjects, so as to identify their demands, and provide them with their needs. As a result of his concern with the well-being of the ordinary citizens, Sir Saddiq III identified that at his time the best way to benefit the ordinary citizen in Sokoto was to give him a place to farm, water, a place to graze animals, and a variety of crafts to practice so that one can make a living without falling into disgrace.

The manner and mode of providing the needs of the people as far as Sir Saddiq III was concerned was through identifying and choosing projects by the Majalisa (district councils), which had to be approved by the Sarkin Musulmi's Advisory Council and the N.A. throughout the province, the core areas of development were geared towards the construction of schools, provision of dispensaries, building of market stalls, clearance and construction of dry seasons roads, digging of wells, building of village halls, provision of washing places, construction of slaughter slabs, the establishment of cattle inoculation centers, forestry plantations, provision of routes for livestock to follow and irrigated farms.

⁸ Ibid, p. 61

Sir Saddiq III inaugurated the new district council at Isa, where he informed the council that it had two major functions according of Boyd and Maishanu had to do with the execution of various projects which Sir Saddiq II gave it to do and, which were parts of the Emirate's Development Plan. These projects he said should be distributed fairly according to the need. These include the building of wells, sanitation drains, market stalls, slaughter slabs, the clearance of long distance cattle trails, grazing grounds and space for amenities, the enlightenment campaigns for the pursuit of education, the building of dispensaries, dry-season roads, rest houses and mortuaries, the planting of trees, the giving assistance to good self-help scheme and the proper care of socially deprived children. He lastly, advised that the district council should ensure that everyone participates in these and other projects.

Like his predecessors, Sir Saddiq II also practices leadership truthfully, honesty and sincerely. In order to effect what he advised his district councils of giving priority attention to the welfare of his subjects, each of the district councils in the Sokoto Emirate was given a sum of money equal to the number of the district's taxpayers for the execution of its community development projects. This money was disbursed so that policy planning would be transformed into reality. To this effect, 'the Sokoto Emirate was able to provide 95 wash taps, 48 washing places, 150 new traditional type wells, 31 canoes, 37 guet houses, 32 concrete troughs for cattle, 32 slaughter slabs... and each district had a nursery for supplying trees, and everywhere, cattle tracks and grazing grounds were cleared' [⁹].

On 6th July 1934, Sir Saddiq III wrote to Mr. Patterson, the then Acting Commissioner, Northern Provinces that he was in agreement and supported the construction of wells and the issuance of order which prohibited the people from using the dry pools in the river bed as their drinking water. In this regard, in an effort to remedy water problems in the Sakkwato city, by the end of 1952, he opened the urban water supply project, which provided the city with the piped water to serve seven water points. Moreover, it was also in the same year that he opened the new electricity power station in Sakkwato (Sokoto), which provided electricity from 6.30p.m to Midnight. In fact, the Sarkin Musulmi, Sir Saddiq III participated very effectively in all the development projects and that there was no aspect of the country's development, which he neglected.

ON PUBLIC FINANCE AS SARKIN MUSULMI

Sir Saddiq III being the leader of the Muslims all over the country and beyond brought him yet into another financial burden. He was therefore, the

⁹ Ibidp. 61

custodian of Muslim's treasury. All the financial positions of the Muslims were entrusted on him [¹⁰].

However, with the experiences he had earlier, he was able to do as he did before. In trying to generate the revenue to meet the needs of his subjects, he laid much emphasis on two strategies. They are donations and contributions from the people and the revenue, which was generated from taxes, which also came from the people. He therefore, launched so many appeal funds in order to mobilize revenue and meet the demands of the people. Sir Saddiq III had not only launched the appeal funds, but also gave his personal financial contributions and donations. This no doubt motivated people to emulate him, as he was their leader. Thus, he was a model for everyone to imitate [¹¹].

One of the impacts of the Second World War was the world economic depression of 1930s. This impact was felt not only in Europe but also in Nigeria. There were many development projects, which were not carried out due to acute supply of money in the country. However, Sir Saddiq III at that time agreed to contribute some amount out of his salary to the government so that essential services could be provided to his subjects. He even made his Emirs of the thirty-six Emirates, which made up of the Sokoto Caliphate to follow his suit. They all agreed to give five percent of their salaries to this contribution.

He was once the chairman of the Northern Regional Self-Development Fund. Under the leadership of Sir Saddiq III the fund was able to raise funds in order to carry the Northern case to the colonial office. In that appeal fund, more than £30,000.00 was raised during its launching in 1950. Moreover, following the Sokoto Province Development Fund, the Sarkin Musulmi, Sir Saddiq III, also launched the North Western State Development Fund where he personally received the donations for the self-help projects [¹²].

On the part of revenue generation which came through poll and cattle tax, we already know that it was the responsibility of the district heads to collect the taxes. It was therefore, assumed that most of them were trustworthy and faithful, and that they used to bring what they collected. Therefore, on his seven-day tour of the Sokoto Emirate in March 1968, the Sarkin Musulmi advised all the district and village heads to be fair and merciful in the process of assessing tax. As far as he was concerned, many district and village heads did not take into account the position, situation and condition of the people. Some of the masses, in fact, had great difficulties in feeding themselves and their families. Therefore, instead of imposing taxes, which the masses

could afford to pay, the district and village heads simply imposed taxes as they deemed it. This consequently led some farmers unable to pay and thus evaded the taxes. He warned that this attitude of imposing high taxes had to be stopped. He then, advised the district heads to enquire about people's situations and ask them to charge the masses only what they could afford to pay [¹³].

Perhaps that was why in trying to get rid of the above mentioned problems the tax was later fixed at £4.00 per annum. Sir Saddiq III then in one of his Eid-el-Kabir speeches stated that, as for the poll tax, you already know it is fixed at £4.00. We advised you to pay quickly. Contrary to the assumption made on the district and village heads of being truth and faithful, not all of them were good. This was what made the Sarkin Musulmi to be highly concerned with probity, and to that effect he tried to see that all the tax fiddlers, those who refused to pay loans and those who misused their power were called to order.

At one time the Sarkin Musulmi heard of the inconsistencies in the issuance and payment of tax receipts. He then quickly asked the dishonest district head, why that had happened. Then he directed the district head to immediately go to the treasury at Sakkwato and pay the missing money. But he had to inform the Sarkin Musulmi whenever he paid; otherwise, Sir Saddiq III would no doubt take swift and dealt with him ruthlessly. In the case of looting the accounts' treasury, the Sarkin Musulmi directed the person concerned to send the court fees immediately; otherwise, he would not get his wages [¹⁴].

AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Agriculture was and is still very important in the economic development of Nigeria. It was, not left behind by the Sarkin Musulmi, Sir Saddiq III. The role he played and the contribution he made in this great and reliable sector, took the forms of campaigns advising farmers, inspection of improved varieties of seeds and attending agricultural shows.

In 1951 he sent a team of scholars to Gwadabawa to promote the agricultural campaign. Likewise, he used to make a series of meeting with farmers. In addition, he addressed thousands of farmers, district and village heads as well as elders on agriculture and the problems of foodstuffs in the country. Moreover, Sir Saddiq III was always ready to talk to cattle ranchers, onion growers, etc. On the 6th of February 1966, he was reported by Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo, Hausa language newspaper, advising farmers in his province about the newly introduced farming facilities and the use of modern fertilizers. In another occasion,

¹⁰ Maifada, T. Legacies of Sokoto, Al umma Printing Press Sokoto, 28.

¹¹ Ibid p.56

¹² Malami Opcit, p. 55

¹³ Ibid, p.4

¹⁴ Paden, J. N... OPCIT, P. 44

he advised the farmers to perform the seasonal tasks connected with the production and selling of food [15].

In 1969, Sir Saddiq III attended two agricultural shows: one at Tsafe and the other at Birnin Kebbi. At Tsafe, many types of crops, animals and handicrafts were displayed. Later, he warned against extravagance and then advised the masses to keep something aside both in cash and food crops. At Birnin Kebbi on the other hand, he made a very important speech where he likewise advised every person to make it his business to farm. He later, strongly appealed for more spendthrift and self-help. According to him, we must all reverse, all types of idleness, roaming about aimlessly and begging. He added that if these were taken seriously, the community would prosper [16].

In a giving some accounts of the Sarkin Muslulmi, Sir Saddiq III's diary, Boyd and Maishanu show that on the 4th January of 1968, he inspected improved varieties of seeds, fertilizers and ploughs at Kasarawa, and later distributed prizes at the farm centre. He went back again in 1970, and warned students that they must be careful in handling farmers because the masses's knowledge of agriculture was the traditional one, which had been built up over years.

INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

The importance of infrastructural facilities in economic development cannot be over emphasized. Sir Saddiq II therefore took much and great interest in any kind of developmental projects. He used to be present physically wherever any interesting projects was to be commissioned. He also directed the NA to give priority in the development projects throughout the province. For instance, in 1952, in all the district headquarters, new streets were surveyed and pegged. A year later, in 1953, the Sarkin Muslulmi was personally present when bus and lorry park was opened. The Sarkin Muslumi however, was not there physically, he nevertheless, recorded his voice in which he addressed the gathering.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Availability and good condition of road no doubt facilitates the industrial activates in any economic development policy. After the provision of good transport facilities, industrial expansion in Sakkwato metropolis then started to show up. Therefore, when the Sokoto Cement factory was to be commissioned. Sir Saddiq III emphasized and circulated the information about the counterfeit currency notes in circulation and the need for vigilance. He also directed that all the strangers in the towns and villages should be checked and monitored. Likewise, he was more concerned with the farmers, especially with regards to the market intelligence. In one occasion, he stated that the farmers

should wash the wheat, because the washed fetched twice the price of the unwashed.

MARKET AND MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Market is no doubt the nerve center of all the economic activities. It is thus, one of the fundamental elements in business. The importance of security for smooth running any business needs not to be over emphasized. To this effect, Sir Saddiq III emphasized and circulated the information about the counterfeit currency notes in circulation and the need for vigilance. He also directed that all the strangers in the towns and villages should checked and monitored. Likewise, he was more concerned with the farmers, especially with regards to the market intelligence wheat fetched twice the price of the unwashed [17].

When the bill which asked the farmers and middlemen to get licenses before the beginning of any buying seasons, was passed by the colonial masters, in an effort to prevent the export of poor quality goods, the sarkin Musulmi totally opposed and rejected it. According to him, the bill should only be applicable to the middlemen, but certainly not to the generality of people who gathered in the market for selling to each other the goods they bought with them.

In his attempt and efforts to improve the commercial position and prosperity of the Sokoto emirate, Sir Saddiq III also used to be present in so many commercial institutions. Likewise, he used to attend various opening ceremonies of some commercial organizations. For instance, he was present at the new premises of Barclays Bank (now Union Bank) in Sakkwato during its commissioning ceremony. He was also requested by the district manager of G.B.Ollivant Nig Ltd attend its opening ceremony, which he humbly honored [18].

There was frequent outbreak of fire in the old sakkwato central market (which is known as Yar Dole), in 1972 and 1979 respectively. These incidents coupled with the congestion and over-crowding of people in the market, led the Sokoto State Government to propose the construction of a new market, which would hopefully solve the problems. But the problem of space was about to hinder the progress of the proposal. Sir Saddiq III was however, able to rescue the failure of the proposal, through donating his farmland to his Sokoto State Government. The plough of this farmland where the new and current Sakkwato central market was built in 1980. Thanks to the generous donation of the Sarkin Musulmi, Sir Saddiq III. This is because, the land was not only able to accommodate the market, but also bus and lorry park, which followed the modern styles in the Sakkwato Metropolis.

¹⁵ Boyd, opcit, p. 36

¹⁶ Junaidu, I. Rayuwar Waziri Junaidu, Al umma printing Press, Sokoto, 11.

¹⁷ Boyd, opcit, p.78

¹⁸ AMMS 4/16/49,, Ta liqun wajiz by Waziri Junaidu, 14.

EDUCATIONAL UPLIFTMENT

In the sphere of education, which is the backbone of modern development through the development of human capital, Sir Saddiq III took up the challenge of its promotion through speeches, attending various opening ceremonies of newly established schools and launching appeal funds for educational development of the province [19].

He attended the opening ceremony of newly established middle school in Birnin Kebbi. He also urged the people in the province to join adult education classes in one of his Eid-Kabir celebration speeches. Ahmadu Bello Academy, Farfuru-Sokoto was also established through the effort of Sir Saddiq III. Further, he supported the building of the school through the Sokoto Province educational Development Fund.

He had only propagated education through speeches, attendance of appeal funds and establishment of schools, but also sent all his children and wards to the schools along with the children of his subjects (the Talakawa). One impressive thing to note here is the fact that no any special care and privilege was even given to children with the knowledge of the Sarkin Musulmi [20].

Sir Saddiq III, was a onetime President-General of the Jama'at Nasr-el Islam in Nigeria. In one of its meetings, which was held in June 1972, he launched two million pounds appeal fund with which it was hoped to open three hundred primary schools, four teachers colleges and a preachers training center.

CONCLUSION

Sir Saddiq III was raised up as a prince, and subsequently became the Sarkin Musulmi. He led a very simple life, at the time when he became Sarkin Musulmi, and at the time when the country he was its spiritual leader was experiencing prosperity in all endeavors of human life. As a leader, he did not enrich himself at the detriment of his subjects, as Nigeria is now experiencing. He was always after the welfare, progress and prosperity of his people. He advised, campaigned, encouraged and even gave practical examples to his people on the means and ways of attaining spiritual and material prosperity. This was due to the fact that he realized that the progress of any society certainly depends on the prosperity of its members.

Sir Saddiq III was no doubt a model for all of us to copy. He was quite able to integrate the

¹⁹ AMSS 4/5/21,, Al-Rihlat al Fakhira, 32.

²⁰ AMMS4/4/19 Arf al-Raihan by Waziri Junaidu, 4.

conservative attitudes of his people end the needs of the colonial masters, for his people to catch up with the rest of the people in the newly introduced economic advancements of our modern world. He was able to also bring his people out of the cottages to modern cities with all necessary social and economic amenities that without doubt brought them into prosperit.