Traditional Public Administrative System: An Exposition in African Context

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Abstract. The study set out to affirm that Traditional Public Administration existed in pre-colonial Africa, specifically Nigeria. These pre-colonial administrative systems performed all the functions that are currently being executed by the modern public administrative systems, such as designing the best strategies for efficient delivery and the attainment of public goods. The case-study approach was adopted, in which old Oyo, Benin, Kanem Borno, and Oron Kingdom amongst others were comprehensively evaluated. This approach unveiled the structures and processes through which the aforementioned empires and Kingdoms were effectively governed. The focus of this paper was to identify and analyze the structure and processes, which amounted to public administration in these empires that performed the roles which are currently being performed by modern public administration. The findings revealed that old Oyo, Benin, Kanem Borno, and Oron Kingdom had standard processes for the implementation of what constituted public policies in these social entities. The successes of the administrative system accounted for the long duration of these pre-colonial states and in many cases, the colonial masters relied on them, for the administration of the territories they conquered. A case in point was the 'indirect rule' system in Nigeria and other West Africa States, which aided the continuation of the colonial administration. The role performance in the traditional system might have been fused, however, the functions of public administration were effectively carried out in these pre-colonial social entities. This exposition might have accounted for the long years of existence of these empires until internal contradictions, colonial conquests and rules resulted in their collapse. The study through the use of qualitative data affirmed the existence of traditional public administration in Africa and Nigeria in particular. This indeed was one of the notable 'primitive gloriana' (glory of the primitive past) of pre-colonial Africa and Nigeria in particular, that cannot be wished away by Eurocentric scholars.

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1. Introduction

The area of Africa, known to the Arabs slave traders as 'Bilad el-Sudan' or 'the land of the blacks' boasts of great states such as old Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Kanem-Bornu, Oyo and Benin empires and kingdoms respectively, many of which lasted beyond the arrival of the various colonial masters in West Africa and central Africa (Ade-Ajayi & Espie, 1965; Uya, 1984). These states, empires and Kingdoms of pre-colonial Africa, were formed through the 'band' regarded as the most rudimentary political community, known as the 'tribe', which is a larger political community involving more than one residential unit. Then the 'chiefdom,' where the notion of a central focus of authority is institutionalized. Then the 'state,' which is an entity more complex than chiefdom with a greater degree of centralization, role specialization and professionalization of certain services (Mazrui, 1977). The long period of existence of these empires and kingdoms out of the warrior tradition is a reflection of the administrative sagacity of their rulers. It was their shrewdness in administering these far-flung entities with effective public service delivery, which added value to the lives of their citizens that we referred to as 'traditional public administration' in this study. It would be recalled that the traditional public administrative systems in these empires and kingdoms, performed the functions of 'planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordination, reporting and budgeting in their conception and execution of public policies during the pre-colonial epoch.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The major problem of this study rested on the fact that numerous pieces of literature in the field of public administration, including those that are authored by African scholars often trace the origin of public administration to the United States of America perhaps because of Woodrow Wilson's seminal paper on the subject. The study was conducted with the aim of repudiating such assertions and adding to the corpus of knowledge that without prejudice to the widely held opinion, there was traditional public administration in pre-colonial Africa, which performed all the functions that modern public administration performs in modern states. The spectacular administrative structure and processes in the pre-colonial Benin and Oron Kingdoms, Oyo and Sokoto empires were classical examples of the existence and operations of traditional public administrative systems worthy of note. The issue is that emerging scholars in the field may be

inclined to rest on the western origin of the practice. This is conceived as erroneous by some recent generation of scholars. Therefore, the central problem of this study was that erroneous information has been spread over the years by Eurocentric scholars that public administration was a product of European societies alone with scant regard to the public administrative system that existed in pre-colonial societies in Africa, notably Nigeria.

1.2. Research question

The problem statement above triggered the following research questions:

- Does Public Administration exist in pre-colonial Africa, particularly Nigeria?
- How effective was the traditional public administrative system in pre-colonial era in Africa compared to modern public administration?
- What was the role of leaders in pre-colonial empires and kingdoms in Africa in ensuring the successful implementation of public policies through executive orders?
- Does traditional public administration in pre-colonial Africa perform the same role as modern public administration in terms of basic service delivery to the public?

1.3. The objectives of the study

The main aim of this exposition is to illustrate that there were traditional public administrations in Africa during the pre-colonial era. The specific objective of the treatise is to demonstrate that all the functions of modern public administration were carried out in the empires and kingdoms which dotted the pre-colonial African continent. Another objective of the study is to establish whether wherever there was a semblance of government over territory, there is a public administration to convey executive decisions into valued actions in such empires and kingdoms. Finally, it is also the aim of this study to show that the presence of powerful leaders leading these empires in pre-colonial Africa, implies that the structures and processes for the implementation of executive orders existed in pre-colonial Africa, which amounted to public administration.

1.4. The Scope of the study

The latitude of this study covered the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial nature of the practice of public administration. The data were mostly drawn from pre-colonial empires and Kingdoms, which existed in Nigeria purposively. In terms of periodization, it drew data from the period 700-1960. Contextually, it evaluated the dynamics of the pre-colonial empires and that of the modern states. The data indicated that

it was traditional and modern public administrative structures and processes that provided the engine of stability in both eras.

2. Literature review

These pre-colonial African states and empires of old Benin, Oyo, Kanem Borno and Sokoto caliphate, as well as the Oron Kingdom, were often extensive in their reach. They lasted several years in their zenith before the advent of colonialism (Ade-Ajayi & Espie, 1965, 1965; Buah, 1986). They usually engaged themselves in trades, wars as well as schools and agricultural development. They also traded in slaves and maintain courts as well as kept records. The processes and structure of the administration through which these empires and kingdoms were sustained, amounted to traditional public administration. This is because the pre-colonial structure performed all the roles that modern public administration currently performs in terms of service delivery to the public.

Scholars in public administration (Famularo, 1972, Adebayo, 1980, Sapru, 2013) have all agreed that the ultimate goal of public administration is to create strong institutions made up of men and women who could design and choose the most rational policies and decisions options to apply in converting executive policies into outputs for the benefit of citizens in the various social classes in society. The results of such actions are measurable. It was valid to equate that when the policy outputs meet the expectation of the citizens and generate greater support for such a government. As a matter of fact, these empires and kingdoms had political executives from where 'political direction' of the 'general will', which Rousseau (1712-1778) referred to as: 'Volonte Generale', intended to benefit the general public. Hence, these policies were translated into concrete outputs and impact through the traditional public administrative structures.

Conventional discourse on public administration particularly in the USA traced it to Woodrow Wilson as the father of Public Administration based on his seminal paper 'the study of public administration' in 1887. Other western authorities of the disciplines are Dwight Waldo (1955), 'the study of public administration', Herbert Simon (1947), 'administrative behavior: a study of decision-making processes in administrative organization'. Chester Bernard (1938), 'the functions of the executive' and Mary Parker Follett (1949), 'Organizations: theory and practice' amongst others. These Eurocentric scholars probably believed that public administration started and ended in the west, without taking into consideration the African version of it. Afrocentric scholars, on the other hand, are desirous to present qualitative data indicating that there were 'primitive gloriana' (the glory of the primitive past) on which the subject matter of this exposition is anchored on and worthy of intellectual discourse.

The contributions of Fritz Morstein Marx in his book 'The Element of Public Administration (1946), Paul H. Appleby, 'Policy and Administration (1952), Frank Marini ,'Towards a New Public Administration (1971) amongst others gave the impression that the practice of public administration was a western phenomenon learned by Africa. The rise of several schools of public administration in the United States and the rise of

the administrative states from the West further added to the assumed Eurocentric origin of the subject, while ignoring its practices elsewhere.

This study avoided the temptation of dating the origin of the Public Administration in Africa in order to skip unnecessary controversy. It, however, raised salient propositions to affirm the fact that public administration was a universal phenomenon, which arises in every administrative state, namely pre-history, medieval and modern. Thus, Africa's pre-colonial societies could not have been exceptions.

Scholars such as Balogun (1983) in his treatise, 'Public Administration in Nigeria- Developmental Approach' contended that public administration existed in traditional society in Nigeria albeit in a limited scope. Within the traditional societies in Nigeria, goals were identified, human and material resources were allocated, including roles for inter-tribal wars, hunting and pastoral activities, construction of shrines, exaction and collection of tributes and the maintenance of public order. Frank (2007) on the other hand, observed that public administration in Africa's pre-colonial period was tied to the practice of the 'warrior tradition'. The warrior tradition was a major link between the individual and the society because after a military conquest comes the administration of the conquered territories. Both of these scholars and many others have all departed from the Eurocentric view of the American origin of public administration to support the central thesis of this study that indeed there was public administration in Africa's pre-colonial epoch. This accounted for why most of the empires and kingdoms lasted for many years, if not centuries, before the colonial conquests.

3.   Research approach

The case study technique was adopted in the data-gathering processes. It involved a detailed examination and analysis of the particular issue, and in this case, it was concerned with everything that was significant in the history of Benin, Oyo, Sokoto and Kanem Borno empires and Oron kingdom respectively. To obtain data on the subject of inquiry and to throw light on the situation of Public administration as having existed in pre-colonial Africa-Nigeria and other parts of the African continent, it examined the role of modern public administration with a view of locating the same in the aforementioned pre-colonial empires. The process permitted deep and intensive historical inquiry, analyses and interaction between the variables in the cases considered. It typically involved examination of records as well as secondary data sources, observation of the events, and the entire culture of people of those empires. It was an intensive inquiry of the phenomena under study and the reason for its creation and sustainability. It was indeed a qualitative inquiry. The essence of the case study in this context was to gain an in-depth understanding, replete with meaning for the subject. It focused on the process rather than the outcome and discovery rather than confirmation. It was the most appropriate technique when 'how', 'who' 'why' or 'what' questions were to be asked or when one has little control over the event. Thus, we interrogated, 'how' these empires and kingdoms emerged, who pushed for their expansions, and why did they last the length of time they did.

The appropriateness of the strategy served as preliminaries to major investigations. This approach refuted a universal generalization that public administration did not exist in Africa pre-colonial era. The use of multiple sources was a major advantage of the method (Ndiyo, 2005). A critical implication of this approach to the study remained its multiple sources of obtaining information, which was later triangulated through converging lines, thereby improving the trustworthiness and dependability of the data gathered. Corroboration makes a case study report more convincing as we did in this study on the empires and kingdoms where we sought to find uniformity of structures and processes of delivering public values in the pre-colonial African states. In each case studied, it was apparent that specific structures and processes served the roles assigned to public administration in modern society. The principal evidence, therefore, was to illustrate the existence of several empires and kingdoms which lasted for several years due to the efficacy of the public administrative structures and processes in pre-colonial Africa.

One of the significances of the method adopted in this study was that an understanding from one case study that traditional public administration existed in pre-colonial African-Nigerian societies would illuminate and almost address the problem of this study. Another was conceptual description where we looked at the descriptions of public administration and evaluated whether what took place in the case studies could be equated to the conceptualization of public administration. The procedure consisted of taking notes from observations, documents, diary notes audiotapes, and computer disks. They were all organized according to the public administration roles and topics and then synthesized and integrated into the meaning and roles of public administration.

4. Conceptions of Public Administration

Shields & Whetsell (2017) observed that public administration dealt with the stewardship and implementation of the products of a living democracy. They went further to state that the products are those items that are constructed or produced for instance roads, laws and schools as outputs for public goods. It was the management of public programs and the translation of politics into realities that citizens see every day. Igwe (2005) however noted that public administration is a universal organizational phenomenon. It is an authoritatively coordinated process for the achievement of group objectives. Public administration deals with the management of public affairs, where bureaucracy plays a prominent role, and where administrative controls form part of the normal routine. Some of the features of public administration stressed in the above conception included: (i) it is authoritatively controlled to ensure that the policies of the political authorities are not mutilated to void the intended objectives. (ii) It is the management of public affairs with administrative controls. In the empires and kingdoms of Africa, there were often metropolitan and far-flung parts of the empires trusted by the loyal servants of the emperors under different titles. They have to be administratively controlled through various norms. (iii) The policies ensue from the political heads.

Public Administration in the conventional sense would involve (i) institutions of public policy within the state, which include organizational structure for public decision-making; (ii) It involves organization for delivering public services. The civil service forms the heart and arteries of public administration in the modern state; (iii) Its actions and inactions affects the entire society; (iv) it is the act of administering the entire area. (v) It is a structure used in conveying authoritative values from the executive branch to the entire citizenry to enhance their general well-being.

Bhagwan and Bhusan (2006) identified principles of public administration to include (a) principles of political direction, meaning that the objectives and goals of administrative actions are defined and authorized by a political authority; (b) Principle of Authority, which is the authoritative allocation of values. Hence, those authorizing actions must possess legitimacy before giving orders. Those exercising authority in this context have the legal right by rules and regulations of administration to do so; (c) Principles of Public Responsibility, which implies that public administration is responsible to all in all of its actions through the political executive; (d) Principles of Social Necessity, which strives to provide for the social needs of the entire society; (e) Principles of Efficiency, which means that public administration is supposed to be efficient in the delivery of public services; (f) Principle of Organization, which means that public administrative service must be organized into sets of activities to be assigned to a specific person to perform a task. It connects the public to the political authority in a public relations stunt.

Another scholar (Self, 1972) averred that public administration is the active business part of the government, which includes (a) it is the bridge conveying the policies of government to the civil society in order to improve the society and add value to the people in the form of development; (b) The processes of public administration involve firstly ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) which specialized in each sector of societal need; (c) The MDAs are organized in functional lines into bureaucracies; (d) Each ministry is under the direction of a political head who oversees that policies are adhered to and executed effectively and efficiently; (e) The MDAs assist in shaping policies and providing data as well as evaluating the impact of policies on the people; and (f) Administrators are paid for implementing the policies of the national government (also see Frank, 2013).

In a nutshell, Shields & Whetsell (2017) posited that public administration serves as a conveyor belt, which carries public goods from the executive to the entire society. Bhagwan and Bhusan (2006) opined that it manages policies from the political authority with legitimacy and delivers it to the entire society. The principles of public administration in all the above-mentioned submissions were also noticeable in traditional public administration. The empires had emperors, the kingdoms had kings such as the Obas, Sardauna, Alafin, El-Kanemi, who have constituted legitimate political executives. The structures and processes through which their territories were administered constituted traditional public administration.

4.1 Procedure of evaluating public administration in Nigeria

The procedure for the evaluation of public administration in Nigeria and African empires and kingdoms would include validating the assertion that something akin to public administration existed in the empires and kingdoms. The case-study procedure consisted of (i) outlining the public administrative norms and practices of modern society and identifying the same as practiced in the kingdoms and empires in pre-colonial Nigeria and by implication the African continent. (ii) The sampling decision was purposive; thus, we choose the kingdom and empires for the case studies without any definite order. We decided to study the Benin, Oyo, Sokoto empires and Oron kingdom respectively; and (iii) The findings from these sources were validated through triangulation with data from other sources.

4.2 The Case Studies

The case studies for this treatise will focus of the great empires and kingdoms of Benin, Kenem Bornu, Oyo, Sokoto, and Oron.

4.2.1 The Benin Empire

The Benin empire founded about 11th BC, lasted till 1897 when the British army conquered and incorporated it into the southern protectorate. It was headed by an 'Oba', who held absolute political power. He was also the head of the military as captured in the 'Warrior tradition' of African pre-colonial states. The 'Ezomo' title holder commanded the military as the chief of army staff with 'iyasere' as the prime minister who commanded the metropolitan battalion in 'Bini' where the Oba resided (Anene, 1965). The Oba was advised by the 'Ezama' group of titleholders. The trade minister of the empire was the 'unawagwe /Eribo' that monitors trade in the empire and advises the Oba accordingly. 'Ologbosere' was the chief priest who performed the 'ritual role' to grant the warriors supernatural power, sacrifice criminals at the mouth of Benin river to attract European traders, and assists slaves of the Obas to commit suicide so they would continue to serve the dead Oba in the 'afterlife'. This was how the cabinet of titleholders was structured to perform specific functions for the good governance of the empire.

The security of Benin, the headquarter of the empire was secured with a deep 'moat' dug around the city to protect it from invaders, which some scholars have referred to as the 'wall'.

Administratively, the 'Enogie/Onogie' or the duke was appointed by the Oba to govern a specific ethnic area or vassal community. The other social organization, which embraced all, was the age-grade system, which encompasses the 'Iroghae', the youth and young men (they swept and clean the village streets, open spaces and cared for the community shrines; The 'Ighele' the mature and adult men, whose roles included

falling of large trees, house-building, building and repairs of shrines; and the 'Odionwe' the elders and the Onogie kept the custom and tradition of the Binis (Anene, 1965).

Benin Empire in accordance with Bhagwan and Bhusan (2006) paradigm of public administration possessed principles of direction in the Oba, who defined and authorized political actions. The Oba had the legitimacy for the authoritative allocation of values. More than that, the Oba was publicly responsible, he had a chief of army staff and directed the construction of the famous Benin moat for wading away invaders. The Ologbosere, who is the chief priest performs spiritual cleansing of the empire and appeased the gods on behalf of all. The 'unawagwe' ensured that trading was efficient and inform the Oba promptly. The 'ologbosere' also helped Oba's slaves to commit suicide to serve any dead Oba in the 'afterlife'. The Oba's appointed Enogie/Onogie to administer far-flung areas on his behalf. Furthermore, the council of title chiefs constituted the civil service of the empire (Ifemesia, 1965). The Oba's action affected the entire empire and added value to them in return they obeyed his orders.

4.2.2 Kanem Bornu Empire

The government in this empire (c 700 -1380) was under a ruler known as Shehu rather than 'Mai' who combined both spiritual and temporal power in his person. He was assisted in the administration of the empire by a council of titleholders consisting of the 'Nokena' (Maina princess of royal blood and Kokenawa, the new men. Kokenawa consisted of the Kambe (men of free birth and Kachela the eunuchs and men of servile origin).

The kokenawa provided the administrative officials for the empire and received no salaries but were given lands and governorships in return. One of the outstanding administrative officials was 'Digma' who served as foreign affairs secretary and officer in charge of an administrative district.

In terms of security, the empire had a standing army consisting of infantry soldiers, mounted troops and those armed with bows and arrows. During the war all vassal provincial districts would contribute fighting men.

The empire consisted of the main Bornu ruled directly by the Shehu and the vassal states ruled by their own chiefs but subject to a tribute of produce and slaves to the Shehu. The empire crumbled to the superior colonial forces of the Germans, French, and British in 1900.

The principles of public administration inherent in the Kanem Bornus Empire were very obvious, they included; (a) Shehu of Bornu, who is the political head who ruled over the empire and his authority prevailed; (b) The organization for the delivery of public policy was appointed by him and consisted of the council of 'Nokena' who were the kokenawas that serve as administrative officers of the empire; (c) In the

vassal states, the governors were subject to the Shehu in the implementation of policies throughout the empire (Ifemesia, 1965).

4.2.3 The Oyo Empire

The Oyo Empire was founded and strived between 7th to 18th centuries. The relevant practices, which we identified as the traditional public administrative system consisted of the political head known as 'Alafin/Oba' who had the onerous responsibility of keeping the entire empire, including the vassal states safe from attack and ensuring the welfare of all within the empire. He was often selected by a council of chiefs known as 'Oyo-mesi' within whose rank was the 'Bashorun', the prime minister who was, in turn, a member of the Oyo-mesi. The Oyo-mesi and the Ogboni cult of elders serve as both the legislature and checks on the powers of the Alafin/Oba. The Alafin/Oba appointed the 'Ajele' who administer the vassal states captured by the Alafin in their wars of empire expansion. They also played the role of electoral council because they were the custodian of the processes and customs of choosing another Alafin/Oba when the opportunity arises. They also consulted the oracle 'ifa' and inform the Alafin/Oba of their findings if necessary. The Bashorun was the commander of the Oyo army. The empire had a title chief who oversees commerce. The administrative structure of the empire consisted of metropolitan Oyo and tributary Oyo or conquered or vassal states where the Alafin usually appoints his trusted chiefs or his sons to administer and return tributes to the headquarter at Ife. The policies for the good governance of the empire emanated from the Alafin/Oba and were communicated through the various structures to the provincial administrators of the vassal state (Rotberg, 1964).

4.2.4 The Sokoto caliphate

The Sokoto caliphate established after the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio, had an elaborate administrative system based on Sharia law. Consequently, when the British concluded their conquest and settled to administer the protectorate of the north, it became prudent for them to use the pre-existing structure and processes of administration, popularly known as 'indirect rule'.

The major features of the system were: (i) the pre-conquest indigenous aristocracies who had been conquered administered the protectorate between 1899-1906 using the local administrative structures and processes; ii) According to the 'Dual Mandate' Africans had to be ruled through the Africans own institutions. Thus, chiefs and royalty continued to exercise their traditional powers over their subjects; (iii) Chiefs were appointed for areas with no chiefs; (iv) This was feasible because Sokoto caliphate already

possessed highly sophisticated administrative systems headed by emirs with the Sultan as the supreme head; and (v) The hierarchical structure of the system, permitted British control of the emirs who in turn controlled other titular heads who controlled vast areas (Lugard, 1965)

4.2.5 The Oron Kingdom

The Oron kingdom, which is located in the core Niger Delta prevailed from the 12th century in the present-day Akwa Ibom State. The kingdom resisted the colonial masters until 1900 when it fell to the superior commercial tricks of the colonial masters. The Oron kingdom was led by a warrior known as 'Abang' who adopted the title of 'Atta' and had eight (8) children who constituted the eight (8) clans of Oro-nation. The political leader 'Abang' appointed his children as the 'clan-heads' who were known as 'Ifong-afaha' who in turn appointed 'Ifong-udung, 'Ifong –Afaha' and 'Ifong-udung' constituted the 'Isong-council' where critical decisions were made with the awareness of 'Abang' or 'Attah' of Oro. The decisions of the 'Isong-council' were conveyed by 'Ifong-udung' (village-heads), who in turn debrief 'Ubuhu-ufok' or family-heads or lineage heads (Frank, 2015).

'Nka' or age-grade system (boys and girls born approximately the same year/season) was very prominent in the implementation of public policy in the Oron-Kingdom. 'Nka-ukparasung' was charged with cleaning of the market squares and maintaining the streams, which were the community sources of clean water. 'Nka-ufere' cleans the shrines and enforced oaths on those alleged to have committed social problems such as witchcraft. 'Nka-ikponoenwi' or elders were the advisors to every group. The village and smaller 'unit-heads' had the duties of law maintenance and justice administration in the locality. These structures and processes of administration in pre-colonial Oro kingdom affirmed the presence of traditional administrative system which can be equated to modern methods of public administration (Frank, 2015).

5.   Critical Analyses

It is important to situate the subject of public administration and its dynamism in African context, as having been responsible for the longevity of the empires and kingdoms, due to their effective service delivery to their people. This was indeed evidence that public administration existed in pre-colonial African societies. As reflected in the above cases and conceptions of public administration, were the fact that: (i) these empires and kingdoms existed and had political heads as emperors, Obas or Alafins, who ensured that public policies were properly administered in their empires, as well as in the vassal states; ii) The administrative systems in pre-colonial Africa were very functional and suitable hence the colonial masters sought to replicate same where non-existed. This brought about the concept of the 'warrant chiefs' as found in the Southeastern part of Nigeria, where the tradition of a very strong and all-powerful traditional

ruler was an aberration. The attempts to enforce the 'warrant chief' concept later led to massive protest, which culminated in the '1922 Aba Women Riot'. Theory of 'indirect rule' in which the British colonial authorities relied upon in places such as the Northern Nigeria, meant that the system was functional, hence, their reliance on it. David Chalmer in 1898 observed that the only possible form of government in the protectorate was through the chiefs themselves (Crowther, 1976 cited in Frank, 2007). Oron kingdom had clear structures and processes for administering their nation.

The various empires and kingdoms lasted over considerable years, if they were not delivering services to the citizens, they would not have lasted the periods they all did, as there would have been several rebellions.

As a matter of fact, the ecology of public administration was created wherever people settle and have a governing body to pursue development among the people of that nation. This was because the head was charged with defining the public goods to ensure peaceful co-existence. This was the case in the entire empires and kingdoms that existed in pre-colonial African states.

It is instructive to note that wherever people congregate together in large numbers, the need for security and many other necessary administrative actions arises, this was emblematic of the pre-colonial African empires and kingdoms. In these pre-colonial societies, the social structures assigned to perform the various functions were often fused into the 'warrior tradition' in the 'age-grade social structures' and these structures worked well in the public interests.

It is pertinent to add that in every conglomeration of mass of people, 'norms, values and mores' are often created to bond the communities together. In pre-colonial administrative systems, the chief priests were assigned to perform 'ritualistic functions' to appease the gods or deities in order to continue to ensure that untoward circumstances do not befall the people as a consequence of violating the community mores. Such rituals enhance both nation and state-building.

The various communities very often expanded to include clans and villages. The leaders would often appoint clan-heads who in turn appoint village-heads according to the laid down rules to ensure consanguinity and other roles intended to ensure the continuity of the nation. This was a classic structure of traditional public administration.

It is, therefore, necessary to reiterate that wherever there was a semblance of the existence of human societies, there would always be public administration to implement the policies and orders of the governing authorities. Since there were considerable governance structures in pre-colonial Africa societies, public policies and administration were ubiquitous to ensure that society moves on smoothly and these were executed through structures such as the 'age-grade system', 'chiefs-in-council', 'ekpe-emperium' cult, women groups etc., which were found almost everywhere with specific roles and functions

The traditional public administrative system might have had the challenges of effectiveness, equity, representativeness and procedures for representing the public interest, but these were resolved through oaths of fidelity to the ruler and many other forms of punishment. The system was much more transparent and accountable than the modern Weberian-based system. Of course, public administration in modern society has the onerous role of being the conveyor belt for the execution of public policies pronouncement from the executive governance structure in any society with specialization of functions. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the structures in pre-colonial African empires and kingdoms were fused, they also performed several functions effectively. Accountability was indeed visible in the traditional public administration, which resulted in the longevity of those empires and in many instances, the colonial masters relied on the established pre-colonial Africa structures and processes in their administrations.

5.1 Research validation

We stated that modern public administration takes place in a political setting consisting of a geopolitical entity, political heads and executive council, as well as paid employees in the form of a civil servant working in the public interest. This was the cases in Benin, Oyo, Kanem Bornu empires and in all other empires in the African continent. There were political settings in the named empires many of which lasted several years. They had political leaders, as well as geopolitical settings. They had public administrative systems through which public goods were administered to the larger society. We then submit that indeed public administration existed in pre-colonial African, notably in Nigerian empires and kingdoms, which had all the features of modern public administrative system.

Public administration in traditional societies delivered the set-goals through the executives for the empires and kingdoms, as well as committed human and material resources towards that end as reflected in the roles of the trade secretary in the Benin Empire. A specialist performed the ritualistic functions by engaging the oracle to cleanse the empire as well as reveal the empire's enemies. In Oyo, the presentation of empty calabash to the Alafia/Oba as a sign of rejection was a function set aside to be performed by designated officials specialized in those areas.

We then presented the case-studies in accordance with the method of the study applied, it was then asserted through the various conceptions that public administration consisted mainly of social structures and processes for implementing public policies for the well-being of the society at large. One of the objectives of the study was to affirm that public administration indeed was practiced in pre-colonial Africa. This treatise established that structures and processes for policy implementation were germane to public administration. All the case studies indicated the presence of structures and processes for successful service delivery in these empires and kingdoms.

It is a truism that modern public administration had job specifications and division of labor. In traditional public administration, these were chief priests, age-grade systems performing differentiated roles, while

the 'Oyomesi' and the 'Ogboni' cult in the Oyo empire and the 'Enogies' in Benin empire or 'Mai-gari' or emirs in the Sokoto caliphate all performed fused functions in an effort towards public wellbeing. The 'Ekpe emperium' was the actual unit of traditional governance in Oron Kingdom and among the Efiks of old Calabar in pursuit of good governance.

It is pertinent to note that all functions and structures performed in modern public administration could be a trace in traditional pre-colonial African, public administration in all the case-studies dealt with in this study. Hence, if public administration was ever-present in those cases, it then means that it existed effectively in the pre-colonial Africa. It is therefore pertinent to submit that the elements of modern public administration were all present in the traditional public administration in the delivery of public goods as found in the case of empires and kingdoms. From that vintage point, both the research questions and objectives have been addressed.

6. Conclusion

Public administration in the modern state serves among others the role of conveying policy decisions to the rest of the society for sustainable governance and development. The duration of the existence of the various empires and kingdoms attested to the functionality of traditional public administration in those empires and kingdoms. Although they used fused administrative structures, the policies and decisions of the Kings were discharged throughout the empires. A good number of these empires and kingdoms predated the commencement of public administration in America and Western Europe. An illustration of this view indicated that the old Oyo Empire lasted (1608 – 1800), Sokoto Caliphate (1806 -1906), Benin Kingdom (1200 -1800) and Kanem Borno (700 – 1900).

It is therefore the affirmation of this treatise that public administration structure and processes existed in pre-colonial Africa. For instance, in Nigeria, the colonial masters had to rely on it for the performance of many of its functions. Thus, all the functions that modern administration performs in the modern state were carried out by the traditional public administrative system. This was one of the 'primitive gloriana' of Africa and indeed Nigeria that must not be wished away in every scholastic pursuit. Whenever there is a semblance of government in an area, there are always administrative systems to deliver the public goods from the government to the citizens under its jurisdiction. Where the administrative system is effective in the delivery of public goods, the government no matter its form, last longer and vice versa. The duration of pre-colonial empires and kingdoms in Nigeria, points to the efficacy of the traditional public administrative system in pre-colonial Africa.

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