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**BRIEF DESCRIPTION ON CALIPH ABUBAKAR ATIKU (1837-1842)  
OF SOKOTO CALIPHATE**

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**Abstract:**

*Shehu Danfodiyo established Sokoto Caliphate through strivings to clear innovations, and polytheism out of the Hausaland. He was the first commander of the faithful who received oaths of allegiance from his adherents. After him, successive caliphs followed. Every Caliph had his own specific role which he played. Atiku was the immediate successor of Muhammadu Bello of the Sokoto Caliphate. Atiku was selected after Bello and spent five years and months on the throne. Atiku was born at Dagal and raised during the critical time of the Shehu's cause. He received formal education and had eyes in all sciences of Islam through his family and quasi. He had become a closer of Shehu during all his time. He was the reservoir of Shehu and protector of his secrets. He had performed in all the battles fought by the people of Shehu. His upbringing was a nature with good character and knowledge. A staunch upholder of truth and justice culminated due to his family nature, which earned him trust by Shehu and Bello. During the ill-health of Bello he served as his deputy and after his death he was selected by the Electoral College as substantive Caliph. After coming on board, he formulated and executed many policies to uphold the traces laid by Bello and to safeguard the integrity of the Caliphate. He left no year to pass without performing an expedition to consolidate the Caliphate; his attacks were mainly to clear the Gobirawa of Tsibiri and Maradi, Zamfarawa and Kabawa, who are still against the Caliphate. He ensured the abolishment of plays, singing, drumming and relations. He ensured the upheld of justice by checkmating the activities of the judges and courts and distributing wealth to*

his subjects. Laconically, his time was characterized with the laying of justice, Shariah and abolition of plays.

**Keywords:** Caliph Bello, Caliph Atiku, Sarkinn Musulmi, Sokoto Caliphate, justice

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### **Introduction**

In Africa, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was opened with the 1804 Sokoto jihad. This jihad challenged the status quo and eventually led to reformation over the fundamental issues in religion, justice, politics and relations. This movement was chaired by Usman Danfodiyo, the famous Islamic scholar of that time<sup>1,2</sup>. This jihad and its actors have been subject of discussion in various forms; little was published about the Caliphs of Sokoto and their demeanour on the throne<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the objective of this paper is trying to examine the brief account of the Caliph Atiku of Sokoto before and after enthronement to the Caliphal throne concerning the role he played in founding and nurturing the Caliphate<sup>4</sup>.

### **Early background of Abubakar Atiku**

Personally, Atiku was small in stature and slight in build. His face was full, his complexion is reddish and he has soft voice. He usually keep his eyes lowered and even during conversation. He was unique with the behaviour of always going out armed, always with his weapon/ sword or bow. Abubakar Atiku was 4<sup>th</sup> son to the 19<sup>th</sup> Usman Danfodiyo. He was born by Hawwau (the Shehu's third wife and a learnt personality) to the family of Shehu, the mother of the famous Muhammadu Bello<sup>3</sup>. Atiku was born at Dagele in the year 1784 when Shehu was about 28 years old and during the critical phase of *daawah* in the Hausaland. The time when Atiku was raised had contributed hugely in shaping his life to be very important in Sokoto Caliphate like his brother Caliph Muhammadu Bello<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

Traditionally, Atiku was firstly taught by his mother Hawwau along with his elder Muhammadu Bello, then by his father Shehu Danfodiyo. His uncle Malam Abdullahi was also among the host of Scholars who taught Abubakar Atiku. Therein, Atiku had passed all the stages of learning in Islamic education from basics to advanced sciences. He was a graduate of the famous School of Advance Studies established by Shehu to gush-forth individuals, who later

served as vanguard for the 19<sup>th</sup> century jihad. Atiku was among the first 20 individuals who studied under Shehu and became his staunch helpers in the course of jihad<sup>1,5,6,7</sup>. Atiku was regarded as the most confident and reservoir of Shehu. He had always been with Shehu wherever he was. Normally, he is the first and last person to leave Shehu in every daily endeavours. It was believed that he received 115 secrets from Shehu, including all what had happened with Shehu and Sokoto Caliphate in the course of jihad. This point to the nature of character and intelligence of Atiku, portraying how careful, knowledgeable and trusted he was. However, there are only few books that were said to be written by Atiku. This might be due to his calm and silent, and shyness nature. He was not usually talkative<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

### **Contributions of Atiku under the administration of Caliph Muhammad Bello**

Atiku was bestowed with the blessing of moving along with Shehu in any activity. This made well-versed in knowledge and worthy of character. He had been along with his brother Muhammadu Bello in all battles fought and assignment. The aforementioned reasons culminated in making Atiku worthy to maintain any post giving to him by Caliph Muhammadu bello<sup>5,6</sup>.

One of the leading foes of the Caliphate then was the Gobirawa. Consequently, the Caliph Bello established a policy of making various *ribat* towns to guard the Caliphate as dicatated by Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Atiku was entrusted to protect the ribat at Bakura and Gandi to checkmate the invasion of Gobirawa and Tuareq and the rebellious Zamfarawa. Atiku succeeded in achieving this arduous task diligently and his descendants had to continue with task after he left. Parable, Amadu had been at Bakura *ribat*, where he left Muhammadu Sambo to continue when he left to Sokoto; Umaru Nagwamatse was there to protect Gwamatse and later Katuru, all in Zamfara<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

Similarly, Atiku occupied the stage of foreign affairs minister of the Caliphate during the reign of Bello. He facilitated the diplomatic missions of the Caliphate with Caliphates of *Masina*, *Kunta*, *Azawad* during the last phase of Caliph Bello. At least 17 manuscripts could be credited to Atiku in his internunciary deliberation with outside of the Caliphate. The ATIKU had an opportunity of deputizing for Caliph Muhammadu Bello during the last 7 months he had been

battling with health challenges. This Accord ATIKU more experience to be a good candidate for Caliphate leadership<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

### **Enthronement of ATIKU to the Caliphate throne**

During the reign of Caliph Muhammadu Bello an electoral college for the selection of new SARKIN Musulmi of Sokoto was fully entrenched. Wherein, Caliph Muhammadu Bello passed away, the major individuals contending the throne were ATIKU, Muhammadu Buhari and Aliyu Babba. Then, the Electoral College sat and chose Abubakar ATIKU as successor to Muhammadu Bello. The new Caliph was turbaned at WURNO Mosque in 1837<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

### **Selected achievements/contributions of ATIKU as Caliph of Sokoto**

When ATIKU came on board, he was preoccupied with the task of maintaining and consolidating the already established system by his predecessors. There is relative ease from the die-hard goes of the Caliphate, the Gobir, Kabi, KATSINA, Maradi, Zamfarawa, Damagaram and relations. Therefore, Atiku had to bend his power on clearing the remnants foes. The five years reign of ATIKU was characterized with expeditions and wars <sup>7</sup>.

- . Immediately after taking over, he took an expeditions on 1837 21st November in the dry season to Damri and Burmi to settle the Zamfarawa
- i. In the next year (1838/1839) he took up another expedition against the pagan Katsinawa along with his cousin Khalil bn Abdullahi of Gwandu.
- ii. He combined forces to fight an aggregation of Gobirawa, Katsinawa, Tuareg, and Damagaram (of Bornu)
- iii. In the next year, he took another expedition along with Khalil bn Abdullahi around Zamfara River against Gummi and Zauma
- iv. In the autumn of 1842, during the months of Shaaban and Ramadan he led another combined attack on Tsibiri. In this battle, he got an injury which resulted in his death
- v. He fought more than 14 battles. Therein, he mostly served as the commanding officer of the army he gathered
- vi. He successfully made Sokoto town as administrative and spiritual seat of the Caliphate. It was Atiku that sat mostly at Sokoto instead of his brother Bello who made most of his reign at WURNO
- vii. He re-appointed his son Amadu as SARKIN ZAMFARA, and the governor of the city

- viii. He used to distribute the wealth of treasury (*Baitil Mali*) to the commoners. He is very kind and generous. This singular aspect had earned him so much love and reverence from his subjects. This was due to his already behavior of giving his wealth without the fear of poverty
- ix. He instituted a system to checkmate the activities of judges to fish out the wrong judgments for sake of annulment. He treated all equally in the eyes of the law
- x. He forbade singing, drumming, and other forms of clubs or plays. He was very stringent in that prohibition
- xi. He sought the pious people to his court, especially the scholars and shun away evil people
- xii. He paid enough attention to the urbanization of towns and villages and rehabilitation of markets by ensuring no one is beguiled
- xiii. He forbade backbiting and all related forms. He never entertained such evil talks
- xiv. He ensured reconciliation among his subjects in time of any dispute
- xv. He listen keenly to complaints of his subjects and take appropriate measures to attend to them
  - He usually warn wrongdoers and met them with appropriate penalties<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

### **Some battles fought by Atiku during his reign in the throne**

Atiku had been relentless to consolidate achievements made by his predecessors. Therein, he personally led many battles including the following:

- *Yakin Burmi* of Zamfara
- *Yakin KATSINA da Cikaji*
- *Yakin Zauma*
- *Yakin Gobir 1*
- *Yakin Gummi* of Zamfara
- *Yaun Tsibiri 1*
- *Yakin Tsibiri 2* <sup>5,6</sup>.

### **Death of Caliph Atiku Abubakar**

Caliph Atiku passed away as *Shahid* due to an injury he got during the battle of Tsibiri to get rid the Sokoto Caliphate of the remnants Gobirawa die-hards who camped at Tsibiri and Maradi. During that battle he sustained an injury which

took him sometime nursing and eventually joined his ancestors on his way back at a place called Katuru in Zamfara. His death was recorded on Thursday 20 *Shawwal* 1258 AH or 1842 AD after spending five years and three months on the throne. He died at the age of 60. He passed with sweat on his face and was the first Caliph to die as Shahid in Sokoto. The tomb of Atiku is still laying at Katuru of nowadays Zamfara. Some of the people who passed along with him are Malam Khalil bn Abdullahi Gwandu and Abdulkadir bn Waziri Gidado, may Allah be please with them all <sup>5,6,7</sup>.

### **The children of Caliph Abubakar ATIKU**

Caliph Abubakar Atiku died and many left sons and daughters. They are about 37 of them as mentioned below:

- Abdulkadir
- SARKIN Musulmi Amadu Maichimmola
- Ahmad Rufai
- Alhassan
- Alhussain
- SARKIN Musulmi Abdurrahman
- Isa Fari
- Nuhu
- Dalhatu
- Haliru
- Isa Gajere
- Sulaiman
- Umar Nagwamatse
- Ibrahim
- Khalidu
- Mualledi
- Muhammadu Na Bakura
- Abdullahi Bayero
- Muallim Garko
- Abdullahi Mai Bodinga
- Maituta
- Abubakar Maikwato

- Hamidu
- Muhammadu
- Dahiru
- Ishaka
- Basharu
- Ibrahim Auta
- Hide
- Nana
- Hawwau
- Halimatu
- Aishatu
- Maryam
- Hafsatu
- Asmau
- Khadija<sup>5,6,7,10</sup>.

### **Selected writings of Abubakar Atiku**

Considering the nature of Atiku and the background he passed through he is fit to write prolifically in all aspects of Islamic sciences and relations. Therein, only few manuscripts were said to be credited to Atiku. This might be due to his taciturn nature and the failure of predecessors to preserve the ancient manuscripts. Selected writings credited to Atiku include:

- *Ajwibah*-a book discussing some issues to Sheikh Ahmad bn Abubakar Masina
- *Rasail*- A book written to reconcile the *Azbinawa*, *Kelawai*, and *Ateseyen*
- *Kitab Al'asrar*-Written to discuss some of the secrets given to him by his father
- *Risala al'intiqal*<sup>5,6</sup>.

### **Some characters of Abubakar Atiku**

Atiku was a man of high character and learning. He is a staunch follower of the right. Some of his characters include:

- He is very kind and generous among the children of Shehu. He give out wealth like he fear not the poverty

- He is always with his weapon. This delineates his braveness and staunchness
- He is very shyfull. That is why he cannot face people faces while talking
- He shun all forms of backbiting and slandering
- He is very deserting to the worldly affairs and beguiles. When he died he left nothing to his heirs pertaining wealth
- He is a just person who fears nobody in executing the justice and truth <sup>5,6</sup>.

**The descendants of Atiku and where they are holding leadership positions**

Atiku was blessed with more than 30 sons and daughters and many of them or their scions had occupied many positions across Hausaland and other places. They are rightful heirs to many places and positions. It might be they are still holding the positions or are still the possible contenders <sup>5,6</sup>. Some of the positions and locations where Atikawa are rightful heirs are listed in the table below:

Table 1: Places and leadership titles belonging to Atikawa as rightful heirs

Serial number	Name of town/village	Title of position/leadership title	Exact location	Rank
1.	Sokoto	Sarkin Musulmi	Sokoto state	Sultan
2.	Maiyurno of Sudan Republic	Sultan	Sudan Republic	Sultan
3.	Kontagora	Sarkin Sudan	Niger state	Emir
4.	Gwadabawa	Sarkingobir	Gwadabawa local government	District head
5.	Gada	Marafa	Gada	District head
6.	Tangaza	Marafa	Illela	District head
7.	Illela	Sarkin Rafi		District head
8.	Jabo	Sarkin Burmi	Tambuwal	District head
9.	Chimmola	Sarkin Gabas	Gwadabawa local government	District head



10.	Gongono	Bunu	Tangaza government	local	District head
11.	Wauru	Bunu	Gada government	local	District head
12.	Wushishi	Sarkin Wushishi	Kontagora Emirate		District head
13.	Kaddi	Sarkin Rafi	Gada government	local	District head
14.	Huchi	Dangaladima	Gwadabawa government	local	Village head
15.	Mammande	Ardo	Gwadabawa government	local	Village head
16.	Takatuku	Dangaladima	Bodinga government	local	Village head
17.	Dimbiso	Bunu	Wurno government	local	Village head
18.	Sabon Birnin Sokoto	Bunu	Sokoto city		District head
19.	Rijiyar Dorowa	Durumbu	Sokoto city		Village head
20.	Sabon gari	Galadima	Illela government	local	Village head
21.	Kalaba	Bunu	Gwadabawa government	local	Village head
22.	Gwadabawa town	Galadima	Gwadabawa government	local	Village head
23.	Chimmola town	Sardauna	Gwadabawa government	local	Village head
24.	Asara	Marafa	Gwadabawa government	local	Village head
25.	Danchadi	Sarkin Zamfara	Bodinga government	local	District head

Source: Adapted from <sup>8,9, 10,11,12</sup>.

## Conclusion

Atiku was enthroned to the stool of Sokoto Caliphate as caliph after Muhammadu Bello's death. Like his brother Muhammadu Bello, he did all his best to consolidate on the achievements made by the past leaders. He struggled to preserve the integrity of the Caliphate territory through wars, justice, staunch uphold of the truth, and other policies. He succeeded in implementing the Caliphate tenets.

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