A Question of Taste?

Findings from a Survey of class distinction in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract— *Marxist theory has been the basis of social stratification in Northern Nigeria, some researchers have sought to use other dialectical theories to explain class notions in terms of pre colonial class sensitivities. But northern Nigeria has undergone significant socio political changes since those theories were applied and there has been little effort to define class in contemporary Northern Nigerian society. This paper presents the findings of the largest quantitative investigation into class distinction in Northern Nigeria. Framed around the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, we demonstrate the existence of class boundaries defined prominently by cultural capital as opposed to the hereditary and religious definitions proposed by previous researches.*

Keywords- *Class Distinction, Northern Nigeria, Habitus, Cultural Capital*

I. INTRODUCTION

The interest of sociologists in class dynamics in Northern Nigeria has been dominated by its aristocratic past. Great endeavors by Yeld (1960) and Smith (1959) have focused on explaining class relationships along the religious and tribal lines of the dominant aristocratic structures of colonial Northern Nigeria. But as Azarya (1978) recorded, by the 1970s changes in power structures have already started to erode those class boundaries .

Other local Nigerian researchers have attempted to project Marxists theories and define Northern Nigeria's class dynamics in dialectical terms, but as Fienstein (1973) noted, much of those endeavors have been clouded with leftist expectations of a coming class struggle, an event that is still yet to materialize. The classical indicators used to treat class dynamics in these previous endeavors had been mostly hereditary links. One's heritage as a prince of an Emirate or his family's hereditary claim to the seat of a district, town or city usually qualifies him/her as a member of the upper class. As Smith (1959) also noted, education, another of such indicators had been predominantly the preserve of the upper and middle classes, with princes and other male nobles given priority at schools. This was also not a conspiracy to keep the lower classes uneducated as some later leftist literature have suggested (Usman, 1987), rather, the education of the next generation of Native administrators was a pragmatic attempt by the government to ensure that leaders and administrators have the skills and tools necessary to cope with the changing patterns of governance and administration. (Bello, 2008).

A lot has changed in Northern Nigeria since the researches of Smith and Yeld. A coup in 1966 has upturned regional administration and subsequent reforms by the military have dismantled much of the Native administration that once controlled local and provincial governments. Today, while the Emirates still run in parallel with elected and (more often appointed local administrators), financial resources and indeed much of administration is held in offices that are supposedly democratically elected or meritoriously appointed.

This, has affected the underlying conditions of the works of Smith, Yeld, Dudley and others, who have modeled class and class behavior based on the strict advantages of birth and hereditary titles. A class of military rulers had controlled state resources for many decades forming new conditions of class behavior and social definitions. Years of corruption by the military and bureaucrats have created a new segment of wealthy people with little or no links to the hereditary structures once defined as the main indicators of class distinction (Last, 2005)

But as Newman (2013) has suggested, Class in Nigeria and in Northern Nigeria is not merely a function of economic capital, indeed if such were the case, modern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria in particular would be considered a classless society Newman (2013). So in the absence of well defined indicators for social classification and with wealth being a fluid factor in contemporary Nigerian society, is Northern Nigeria becoming classes or do we need new measures of class distinction that will adjust correctly to the new realities of Northern Nigerian society as happened in other post aristocratic societies such as modern Britain?

This article contributes to this debate by proposing a new model of social class which, using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu adjusts class distinction using social , economic and cultural and academic capital. We analyze the data generated from the largest surveys of of Northern Nigeria from 2016-2017. Using Bourdieu's theory as framework, we would show that apart from the upper and lower classes proposed in colonial researches, and the middle class being suggested in government statistics, there exists other classes that shape modern Northern Nigerian society with cultural capital being the primary currency of class mobility.

II. STUDYING SOCIAL CLASS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Research into class stratification in Northern Nigeria was pioneered by Lady Flora Lugard and the first generation of administrators of Northern Nigeria (Lugard, 1964), this first generation researches where heavily speculative endeavors and mostly dominated by a sense of Moorish romanticism. The influx of more administrators from the political bureau soon allowed the works of Visser and Johnston (1910) and Charles Lindsay Temple (Temple, 1912). These first generation anthropologists relied heavily on existing caliphate era texts in forming a model of the social structure of the Nigerian North, and as Tibenderana (1988) noted, it was mostly marred by errors which had serious administrative and social consequences, for instance the the creation of Sole Native Administrator on the false assumption that the caliphate era Emirs had unchecked powers had negative consequences to the administration of the region (Tibendrana, 1988). Subsequent colonial administrators such as Herbert Palmer soon succeeded these researchers with more informed undertakings at assessing the society of Northern Nigeria (Palmer, 1967)

A second generation of Sociologists and historians such as John Paden (Paden, 1968), E. Yeld (Yeld, 1960), Sidney John Hogben (Hogben, 1930), Micheal Garfield Smith (Smith, 1958), Billy Dudley (Dudley, 1963), Murray Last (Last, 2005), William Keith Rodely Hallam (Hallam, 1996), Abdullahi Smith (Smith, 1970), Anthony Hamilton Millard Kirk-Greene (Kirk-Greene, 1965) Ronald Cohen (Cohen 1961), Micheal Crowder (Crowder. 1964), David Muffet (Muffet, 1964), Philip Shea (Shea, 1984), the Americans: Cleophaus Sylvester Whitaker (Whitaker, 1967), John Paden (Paden, 1968) etc soon established, using prevailing scientific methods a model of class relations in Northern Nigeria. But also using those prevailing realities of hereditary rule (in the native administrations) working in symbiosis with party democracy dominated by an oligarchy under the Northern Peoples Congress (Dudley. 1963). In the wake of the upheavals in 1966 that saw swift changes in power relations, a few from this generation like Philip Shea and Murray Last were to refine their theories. Others like Elizabeth Allo dealt only sparsely with the subject (Isichei, 1983). Norma Perchonock (Perchonock, 1985) branched out from Ishcei's tradition by hinting at a gender dimension.

This generation was followed by a third generation of scholars dominated by their students, mostly of leftist leanings. Researchers from this group like Patrick Wilmot (Wilmot, 2007), Haroun Adamu and Yusuf Bala Usman (Usman, 2005) continue to dominate the discussion on class relations in Northern Nigeria. While the second generation of sociologists have justifiably limited their views on class through the lens of the prevailing power structures of the government of Northern Nigeria (where local governance is in the hands of hereditary officials) this third generation have unfortunately remained reluctant to explore class nature beyond the dialectical framework of socialist theories. Others such as Ado Kurawa, Abdullah Uba Adamu and the Bayero University circle of scholars have also not relented in interpreting society through ancient lens of Sultanate and Emirate periods (Adamu, 2010). Class schema is usually presented as a binary of upper and lower class, the same model presented in the protectorate era by Lugard, Orr and other early researchers.

Non judgmental reports such as the annual quantitative reports of national organizations like the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics have also not been very helpful in this regard.

Political interference in state institutions (Igbokwe, 2016) has eroded public confidence in the data they present (Omotayo, 2017).

The early generations formed a pragmatic scheme of class distinction based on true measures of qualifications to power, where hereditary structures guard access to power and to some degree also wealth.

Latter generations adopted these same schemes but even in the face of changing power dynamics, chose to amplify the earlier theories borrowing heavily from dialectical theories and emphasizing on a class struggle. These scholars usually dismissed records of social mobility in terms of the "rising slave" theory of Mamluks or further amplified influential model of class while still maintaining assumptions of class conspiracy. Thus, we can see that at present, the question of class in northern Nigeria is dominated by four prevailing scholarly traditions:

1) *The ABU Circle*

The Ahmadu Bello University Circle dominated by strong ties to Marxist tradition continues to emphasize a dialectical framework. These scholars dominate the Zaria, Illorin academic axis.

2) *The Jos Circle*

The Jos Circle dominated by the traditions of Elizabeth A Isichie and her students who focus more on the smaller tribes of Northern Nigeria. Drawing from Ishichie's own experiences in Oceania they frame class notions around an aboriginal framework

3) *The Bayero University Circle*

The Bayero University Circle, heavily reliant on the traditions of Philip Shea, this circle extends its influence to Usman Danfodio University of Sokoto and still relies on framing class discussions around a romantic notion of the Caliphate and Sultanate periods (Yakubu, 1996).

4) *The Emergent Traditions*

These are the emergent traditions of class that differ from or branch out of the established dominant narratives of class in Northern Nigeria. Norma Perchonock further liberalized the narratives first hinted at by Ishcei with concepts built around cultural relativism. Her attempts at framing class around a gender dimension are the first sociological feminist narratives in Northern Nigerian academia. Her students in Ahamdu Bello University and the University of Jos continue with the tradition in local Nigerian journals.

Changes in the power dynamics of northern Nigeria have undoubtedly changed the assumptions on which previous models of class have constructed, secondly, the assumptions of Marxist and dialectical theories, especially those that contended on a class struggle, modeled after 19th century European notions of class have also proven inadequate. Thus, this research attempts to present a new alternative to the construct of class, one framed around the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984). Conceptualizing class around Bourdieu's theories will mean that unlike previous models in which power relations (Social Capital) and wealth (economic capital) play important roles, cultural capital can also be used to augment for the social changes that have taken hold in Northern Nigeria. This will allow for a multi dimensional approach at understanding class where these economic, social

and cultural forces interact to define boundaries. This is will also be in following other more recent attempts to define class such as in the great British class survey (Savage et al., 2013)

III. THE SURVEY

Our survey was deigned to present a measure of class distinction based on the three capitals of Bourdieu's theory. We recognize that previous attempts at modeling social stratification in Northern Nigeria have fallen to the trap of projecting a European model on the North, this might have created the serious biases that later undermined such concepts, therefore, we avoid the highbrow classifications adopted by European endeavors like Savage et al. (2013) and instead opt for a plain multi-dimensional approach that measures all three capitals with a bias towards the socio-cultural realities in Northern Nigeria. We extend Bourdieu by including an additional capital, Academic Capital to measure not just the educational grounding of participants but also their academic competence, this was inline with our indicator selection methodology where we used the findings from a focus group to determine the indicators to use for measuring habitus in the Northern Nigerian context.

10,000 questionnaires were sent across the 20 political divisions of Northern Nigeria (19 states and the federal capital territory). To capture the population deemed "elite" in previous models, we had to also focus on the classical native authorities of the old Northern Region, this has been difficult in the face prevailing realities, certain provinces like Benue which had more than 20 native authorities in the old Northern Region had to be scaled down inorder to capture the most prominent. Other classical emirates have also experienced significant restructuring since the 1970s, We attempted to capture the 32 classical emirates and some of the recent emirates classified as "first class" in the edicts of the various States. Traditional crafts (Building, tailoring etc) and professions (State/federal civil service cadre, Managerial and sub managerial positions in the private sector) were captured. The population was slightly skewed towards civil servants . The old crafts such as building, blacksmiths, leather workers, butchers (pawa) were less represented than in the classical reviews such as Smith (1959 and Yeld (1960).

In the absence of well validated sociological scales which could serve as indicators, a focus group composed of randomly selected individuals from different economic, educational and social (hereditary) strata was interviewed in order to select the correct indicators for the survey. Individuals were asked to create an index for each of the four factors (Social, Cultural, Economic and Academic) and the results averaged. In all cases, scores were computed as numerical values of the indices while for social capital as number of contacts multiplied by the indices.

While there are 500 respondents from each state, geographical distribution is calculated as the number participants that satisfy class parameters averaged by 10 (see maps)

A. Economic Capital

Basic Income, Savings, ownership of home and average value of the homes in the location of the said home were the main indicators used to asses economic capital. Other questions used in the questionnaire such as list of assets were dismissed

on account of the cultural sensitive of Nigerians towards giving out such information. We acknowledged that people would be reluctant to give correct figures of income so the Income figures given by the participants were averaged with other information (place of work and cadre). The same information about the participant's parent/guardian were also used, therefore a person with a very low score could do well if her/his parent/guardian has a high score.

B. Social Capital

Networks of power were the primary indicators of social capital used in the survey. Occupational and non occupational reports of contact to power (knowing an individual in power), familial relation to a person of influence were also used. Additionally, hereditary ties (as in other classical models) were also used but unlike in the classical models, bias to patriarchy is only used when a participant is in the feasible line of succession , thus, a participant having a patriarchal ancestor being an Emir will score the same as one descended through the matriarchal line unless in such a case as the participant is likely to succeed the seat of the ancestor. While there are royal seats that still follow a matriarchal line of succession in Northern Nigeria, the survey unfortunately was not wide enough to cover any.

Capital scores were computed using a Northern Nigerian Social and Power Index constructed for this research. The basic occupations in Northern Nigeria stratified and given a power index with the President of Nigeria at the summit and the unemployed who has never worked at the lower end of the spectrum. (See Table 1).

TABLE I. NORTHERN NIGERIAN POWER INDEX

Position	Index
President	20
Governor	19
Vice President	18
Governor of the Central Bank	17
President of the Senate/ Sultan of Sokoto	16
Emir of Kano/Shehu of Bomu	15
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court/ Other First Class Emirs	14
Minister/ Speaker of the House/Secretary to the Fed Gov/ Police IG/ Military Chiefs	13
Senator/Justice of the Supreme Court/ District Heads	12
Deputy Governor/ Commissioner/ MoHR/ LG Chair/ Ho Federal Govt Agency/ Fed Perm Sec/ Fed Directors/ Com Bank CEO	11
MoSHA/ HoState Agency/ Senior Manager in Priv and Govt Agency/ State Perm Sec and Director	10
Middle and Junior Private Managers	9
Contemporary Professional/ Employee of a Federal Agency/ LG Councillor	8
Ward Heads	7
Junior Grade Mainstream Federal Civil Servant/ Town Heads	6
Junior Grade Mainstream State Civil Servant	5
Junior Grade LG Civil Servant	4
Routine and Semi Routine Workers	3
Technical CraftsMen	2
Traditional Crafts Man	1
Never Worked	0

Power Index used in computing social capital

The index was developed using quantitative measures. 8 politically exposed and politically experienced individuals from Kano (including a Gubernatorial candidate, Federal

permanent secretary, first class district head, Federal Director, and other seasoned politicians and bureaucrats were asked to draft a list of the power hierarchy of Nigeria. The various positions were averaged across.

C. Cultural Capital

Although the definitions used by Bourdieu(1984) have been questioned in some researches (Savage et al 2013) we adapted it as a template for our own cultural measurements, this is because the criticism have been specifically tied to the cultural experiences of Europe and not to the general framework of Bourdieu's methods. Additionally, our own expansion of Bourdieu's own definitions, taking into consideration the uniqueness of Northern Nigerian culture might mitigate against such concerns. Differing from Bourdieu, we used “vintage culture” as the summit of cultural score, this is inline with the preferences of the higher class in Northern Nigeria as alluded to in some classical researches (Yeld 1959;Smith 1960).

Other measures include Polo playing vs Polo Watching (males that tend to watch and never play were scored lower by our focus group) choice of foreign vacation spots, Golfing for males, Playing 5 a side (lower to middle class), Watching European leagues in local cinemas (lower- middle class gradations), Interest in current affairs (higher- middle class gradations), Interest in books and poetry (higher- middle class gradations).

TABLE II. CULTURAL INDICATORS

Index	Music	Language	Food	Clothing	Institutional Education	Professional Qualification	F-Vacation spots
10	Classical Hausa and Western	English (Queens Accent)	Celebratory Northern	Northern Regal	Red Brick English	Master's Requiring Royal Charter Qualifications	England
9	Hausa Poetry	French	French Cuisine	Northern Celebratory	Ivy League European	Degree Requiring Royal Charter Qualifications	Austria
8	Classical Hausa Political	Hausa (Emir's Accent, Sultan Abubakar's Accent)	Italian	Northern Formal	Ivy League American	ACCA	America
7	American Classics	German	Classical English	Western Formal	Ivy League Commonwealth (Aust, NZ,CAD)	Other Royal Charter Qualifications	Paris
6	Western Golden Oldies	Fula and Other Northern Languages	Celebratory European	Northern Work Wear	Prominent British	CFA	Saudi Arabia
5	Western Jazz	English Northern Conservative Creole	Classical African	Northern Informal	Less Prominent British	ICAN	Morocco
4	Western Country	English (American)	Contemporary English	Western Cocktail	ABU Zaria	COREN and NSE	Spain
3	Western R and B	English (southern Nigerian classical/Zik's Accent)	Contemporary African	Nigerian Formal	Prominent Commonwealth	Other British Professional Qualifications	Dubai
2	Afro Beat	Hausa (Fula accent)	Northern Fast Food	Nigerian Informal	2 nd Gen Northern JOS, BUK, ...etc	CIARB	Other Asian
1	Hausa Pop	English (Southern Pidgin)	Nigerian Experimental	nigerian Celebratory	Asian/ Northern Private/Other African	Other Chartered Nigerian Qualification	Others
0	Nollywood	Pidgin	Nigerian Fast Food	Western Contemporary	Other Nigerian/ Other American etc	Other Qualifications	

Indices of some indicators used in computing cultural capital

D. Academic Capital

Academic capital is the last measure used in the survey, the indicators used in computing it were more precise and easier to collaborate, these include :articles written in national newspapers, International Academic Publications, Academic degrees, (Phd, Masters and Bachelors) Medial Postgraduate Fellowships, etc

IV. RESULTS

Although we have employed hierarchical concepts, one of the objectives of our attempt at class definition has been to see whether a shift away from, the classical models that stratify class into one in which multi dimensional definitions can serve as a more objective function. In this regard, we were marginally successful. Results show that, as speculated by Azarya (1978) and Yakubu (1996), the hereditary elite has indeed significantly lost in terms of political influence, a dimension of social capital.

Surprisingly, the data shows that employment and occupation has little impact on economic capital except in certain groups like class 8: the uncultured poor.

A. Class Definitions

1) Class 1: All Factor Highs

This is the class that scores high on all four factors, naturally, the size of this group is small. Its mostly composed of the class of hereditary leaders that have managed to remain relevant enjoying an extremely high degree of education, usually PhDs and masters from the red brick universities of England. The group has a very high amount of savings (in the hundreds of millions of Naira) and manages to maintain influence by staying close to power. Geographically, this group is concentrated around the former regional capital of Kaduna and the commercial capital of Kano.

Geographical distribution of Class 1: The All Factor Highs

2) Class 2: Uncultured Powerful

This is the emergent power class of Nigeria, extremely advantaged in terms of political influence, exerting extreme wealth, usually as a result of their control of state resources but culturally, academically lagging. This children in this class are also not doing well of in these areas, the data found that they are usually confined to Asian (mostly Malaysian, and UAE) and American universities. Qualitative reviews show that the accent in this group diminishes to Northern Nigerian Creole for those above 40 and an admixture of that (Northern Nigerian Creole) and American slang for those under 30.

The religious elite also belong to this group, Muslim and christian clerics with a wide following mostly amongst wahabbi and American evangelical organizations,

euphemistically called the “new generation” organizations are widely represented here. While some might argue that the academic credentials of such individuals are high the data shows that very few of those within this religious sub grouping actually received substantial education levels.

The group is geographically concentrated in Abuja and its environs. There seem to be a correlation between the presence of this group and federal patronage, for instance we see a surprising hike in its presence around areas that have had citizens that served in important federal positions like Katsina and Kaduna, thus suggesting political patronage is the primary reason for its presence.

Geographical ditribution of class 2:Uncultured Powerfuls

3) Class 3: Educated Powerfuls

The main characteristic of this group is the relatively low score in terms of economic capital but high scores in cultural and academic capital. Average savings in this class are only in the tens of millions, non income generating assests such as undeveloped land etc are usually high. Average education in this group is a masters degree with significant professional qualifications. This group is usually large in the top tiers of the federal and state bureaucracies and there by giving them some political clout. Hereditary titles although not common are present with most members of the group saying they could trace their lineages back to a title holder.

The group is geographically centered around Kaduna and Niger states with lesser concentrations in Katsina and Abuja

Geographical ditsribution of class 3: Educated Powerfuls

4) Class 4: Cultured Educateds

Intra group social networks in this group are abnormally high, members reports very low economic capital (lower than the educated powerfuls) but very high academic and cultural capital. The social capital of this group is relatively low with the group displaying significant medium to lower grade connections. He high cultural capital of the group also correlates with a high degree of ties to hereditary title holders with more than 90% reporting family connections to district heads and Emirs. Centered around the regional capital of Kaduna and around the historic academic towns of the 1970s, members of group can feasibly achieve mobility across class boundaries to become class 3.

Geographical distribution of class 4: Cultured Educateds

5) Class 5: Uncultured Educated

This group is defined by high – mid level academic capital but low cultural capital. Economic capital is also mid level ranging from hundreds of thousands to a few million. Other aspects of cultural capital also remain low with more than 90% seeing themselves as having an “American-like” English accent. This group has little connection to hereditary title holders and educational qualification ranges from a good(private) secondary education to university degrees. Around 7% report having postgraduate education around 95% of which reported haven been sponsored for the degree.

Geographical distribution of class 5: Uncultured Educated

6) Class 6: Uncultured Rich

This group has high economic capital but low levels of academic, cultural and social capital. They are apolitical wit h a majority reporting absolutely no political affiliations. They are

business oriented but confine themselves to businesses (usually trading) that keep them out of official government records. Around 80% of the respondents report “giving money to policemen” as their understanding of paying taxes, thus further suggesting their level of detachment from political conditioning. Their high savings and business turnover (ranging from the tens of millions to a hundred million) is usually kept out of the banking system. Around 67% of the respondents in this group pursue north-south trading and around 5% pursue international trade (usually with Cameroon, Niger, Chad, Saudi Arabia and Sudan). Educational qualification in this group is usually limited to local religious education and only a few (around 3%) report undergoing primary education. The group is geographically based around ancient commercial centers and cities prone to the Autumn migratory trade known as “*ci rani*” or *Trading in Winter*.

decedents of ward/district and town heads that lost out in the educational changes that swept the North since the 1960s

Geographical distribution of class 8: cultured poor

Geographical distribution of class 6: uncultured rich

7) Class 7: Political Poor (uncultured)

This group has relatively mid-level social capital but severely low cultural and economic capital. They are extremely politically active with more than 90% reporting to be attending political meetings at least 5 times a month. Their social connections are usually to mid level political office holders like chairmen, commissioners and members of state legislature. Education in this group is usually primary and some secondary education in public schools.

Geographical distribution of class 7: Political poor

8) Class 8: Cultured Poor

High levels of cultural capital but severely low levels of economic capital, total savings only in the tens of thousands to a few hundred thousands. Usually composed of children or

9) Class 9: Unskilled Workers

This class is the lowest in terms of all four capitals, they are usually unskilled workmen with savings in the few thousands to the tens of thousands. Poverty is rife in this group and cultural capital is severely low. The average number of children for 30 year old men is 18 and women around 5. They have little education (usually primary school level) and their social capital is low, political action in this group is usually limited to selling their votes at elections or serving in the entourage of a candidate.

Geographical distribution of class 9: Unskilled workers

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented a model of class distinction in Northern Nigeria. Based on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, this model is to our knowledge the first to frame socioeconomic and cultural data in such a manner. It presents an alternative to the Marxist and religious theories of social stratification used in earlier researches. Our approach presents social class in a multi dimensional prism as opposed to the High class/lower class dichotomy seen in classical definitions where hereditary titles and traditional religious education serve as the main indicators of class.

Although we have taken precautions to insure the data is well distributed, the concentration of the participants within the metropolis areas of the States could have skewed the data. Additionally, the population is slightly skewed towards civil servants, this is possibly an indication of their higher presence (9percentage wise) in Northern Nigeria's population centers.

Although in previous works such as Yeld (1960), there has been an effort by researchers to cover the old crafts, such works have been more qualitative than quantitative.

Our method of indicator selection might also result in different outcomes. There's been little attempt at validating these indicators, especially in the Northern Nigerian context and indeed, they differ significantly from some earlier indicators. Future research might try to validate our indicator scales and use a larger and more distributed sampling.

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