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Ehrhardt, D.W.L.

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The paradox of co-producing governance with traditional institutions: Diaspora chiefs and minority empowerment in Nigeria

David Ehrhardt

Leiden University, Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs, Leiden University College, Den Haag, The Netherlands

Correspondence
Dr. David Ehrhardt, Leiden University, Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs, Leiden University College, Anna van Buerenplein 301, 2595DG Den Haag, The Netherlands.
Email: d.w.l.ehrhardt@luc.leidenuniv.nl

Abstract

Diaspora chiefs are traditional authorities of migrant communities. In Nigeria, they can function as representative brokers who empower their communities and co-produce governance with the state. This article shows how in Kano, Nigeria's second-largest city, this brokerage produces paradoxical outcomes. Based on original interviews and survey data, it describes how, on the one hand, diaspora chiefs are highly popular and have indeed created new spaces for minorities to access public resources. But, on the other, the constraints inherent in these newly created, traditional spaces mean that minority empowerment may well come at the expense of reproducing their nonindigenous, second-class citizenship status.

KEYWORDS
brokers, co-production, empowerment, governance, migration, Nigeria, traditional authorities

1 | INTRODUCTION

On 25 April 2019, a Chinese trader named Mike Zhang was given a traditional chieftaincy title in the Islamic Emirate of Kano in northern Nigeria. Mr. Zhang was clothed and turbaned according to the Emirate traditions and was given the title *Wakilin Yan China*, or leader of the Chinese residents of Kano Emirate. The newly crowned *Wakili* was tasked with strengthening the relations between Kano people and their Chinese neighbours and earnestly promised to do

so in his inauguration speech. In this way, he became part of Kano's class of *diaspora chiefs*,[1] alongside traditional leaders of the minority Igbo, Yoruba, Kanuri, Edo, and other ethnic communities living in the city.

The "invented tradition" of recognising prominent individuals from migrant communities as diaspora chiefs is one of Nigeria's emergent institutional innovations that help manage its ethnic, religious, and regional divisions (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Mustapha, 2002). While Kano has, to my knowledge, been the first Nigerian city to grant a *Wakili* title to a Chinese person, almost every large city in the country has traditional title holders from its ethnic minority communities. Even abroad, Nigerians in diaspora create traditional titles and positions of authority, such as the *Eze* of the Igbo in Germany or the *Oba* of the Yoruba living in the United States.

As we will see below, this practice often emerged out of migrant associations, which appointed the chiefs to promote a community's customs in their new place of residence. But in addition to promoting minority culture, diaspora chiefs were quickly recognised to have broader potential as brokers, representing migrant (or, more precisely, 'settler'[2]) interests towards the 'native' political system, and connecting the 'native' political elites to the minority communities. As such, some of these diaspora chiefs became recognised, formally or informally, by the local traditional system or even the state authorities.

This kind of brokerage is a common role for traditional authorities throughout Africa and may well help to explain their resurgence in the last few decades (Ubink, 2008). But it is not a simple role, as it requires diaspora chiefs to serve the interests of different principals simultaneously: their 'settler' constituencies as well as the 'native' political elite. Their 'settler' communities expect them to act as custodians of custom and promote their festivals and other cultural expressions. But they also want diaspora chiefs to empower them, by creating spaces to connect with the state in order to access resources and services and acquire public office. This form of 'settler' empowerment is particularly pertinent in Nigeria, given the second-tier citizenship status of nonindigenes[3] and the systematic inequalities they face, for example, in accessing public financial support, educational opportunities, public employment, health care, or opportunities for public office (Ehrhardt, 2017; Fourchard, 2015, 2021; Nigeria Research Network [NRN], 2014).

Diaspora chieftaincy may be a solution to the weak political position of 'settlers' in Nigeria; but local state authorities also view the diaspora chiefs as useful channels to extend their reach into ethnic minorities, and as potential partners in managing intercommunal relations and conflicts. This multiplicity of alliances raises the question: who benefits from the brokerage of diaspora chiefs? Do they in fact empower their communities, or merely benefit themselves or the local state authorities? These questions have sparked lively debates, both in scholarly and public circles. On the one hand, supporters of diaspora chiefs stand opposed to those who see them primarily as self-serving rent-seekers (cf. Ukpokolo, 2012). On the other hand, even if diaspora chiefs benefit their communities, there are deeper concerns about their precise impact, in particular on 'settler' relations to the state. Do diaspora chiefs create new pathways for 'settler' communities to co-create governance with the state as citizens, or does their brokerage reproduce the 'settler' status as ethnicised, nonindigenous, "permanent minorities" (Mamdani, 2020)?

I address these questions with a case study of Kano, a sprawling metropolis of around 5 million people in northern Nigeria. It is a predominantly Muslim, Hausa-Fulani city, but also home to significant non-Muslim, non-Hausa groups from southern Nigeria. Many of these Nigerian 'settlers' live in the *Sabon Gari* neighbourhood, where their

[1]I use the term *diaspora chief* to denote traditional authorities representing migrant minority communities, either from within Nigeria or from abroad. The term is borrowed from Nigerian public discourse on these, often recently, "invented" traditional leaders (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), and emphasizes the long-term connection of the 'settlers' with their place of residence. The *traditional* authority claimed by the leaders is essential to understanding their roles and position, and to contrast them with other forms of 'settler' organisation (e.g., hometown unions, community associations, or religious leaders).

[2]I use inverted commas for the words 'home,' 'native,' and 'settler' because these terms are analytically important, but also fluid and contested in the way people use them to identify themselves and others. 'home' is used to denote the communities that 'settlers' identify as the place from where they migrated to Kano; it is the place where their family roots lie and their ancestors are buried. 'Settler' denotes communities in Kano with migrant origins. Most of them are Nigerian, from all parts of the country. The major 'settler' communities in this study are the Igbo and Yoruba; the survey also includes a category clustering other smaller 'settler' minorities. 'Native,' finally, is used to denote those who identify as Kano people (*Kanawa*), often Muslim and Hausa-Fulani.

[3]The status of being an "indigene" of a place in Nigeria is marked officially by indigeneship certificates, which are required for accessing various public (and sometimes even private) services and opportunities. The majority of 'settlers' in Kano do not have access to indigeneship certificates and consider themselves nonindigenes in the city; see Ehrhardt (2017) for more details.

predecessors were forced to live under colonial rule. Although colonial residential restrictions were lifted after independence, the post-colonial pressures of resource scarcity, poverty, interethnic conflict, and patronage politics have reproduced the marginal position of Kano's 'settlers' vis-à-vis its 'natives'—especially in terms of their cultural status, political power, and access to public resources (Ehrhardt, 2012; NRN, 2014). The analysis in this article is based on life history interviews with traditional leaders in the city, including prominent diaspora chiefs, and a representative perceptions survey of Kano's population.

Based on this data, the article shows that diaspora chiefs are remarkably popular in their communities, and perceived to help their members solve problems and access state services and resources. The question to what extent diaspora chiefs actually empower 'settlers,' however, brings out a more complicated, and even paradoxical answer. On the one hand, their brokerage creates new spaces for 'settlers' to access and interact with the state. On the other hand, the newly brokered space is tightly constrained due to its location within the semiformal system of traditional rule, the Kano Emirate. This location means that diaspora chiefs are subject to the same constraints as traditional authorities, including their institutional fragility, their dependence on informal and cordial relationships with the state, and their need to stay aloof from electoral politics. Furthermore, diaspora chieftaincy incentivises 'settlers' to interact with the state as nonindigenous ethnic minorities, rather than as citizens.

Together, these findings suggest a paradox in the impact of diaspora chiefs on 'settler' empowerment and complicate our understanding of traditional leaders as co-producers of public goods (e.g., Baldwin, 2015). While diaspora chiefs can indeed act as productive governance partners to the state and bring benefits to their communities, in doing so they risk legitimising the second-class citizenship status of their 'settler' communities. The article will continue by situating the study in the existing scholarly literatures on brokers, traditional leadership, and migrant association. A brief methodological section then sets the stage for the empirical analysis of Kano's governance assemblage around diaspora chiefs, and its paradoxical impacts on 'settlers.'

2 | DIASPORA CHIEFTAINCY, BROKERAGE, AND EMPOWERMENT

Diaspora chiefs are part of a class of leaders referred to in Nigeria as traditional authorities. Many traditional authority systems have long histories and were used by the British during colonial rule. Others were created under British rule, and yet others after independence, as is the case for diaspora chiefs. The defining feature of traditional authorities is therefore not their actual historical longevity but rather the public perception that they are people with legitimate authority derived from custom and tradition (cf. Ubink, 2008). Diaspora chiefs are different from most other traditional rulers in the sense that they represent 'settler' communities residing outside their 'native' lands. Like non-diaspora chieftaincy, diaspora chiefs' traditional status comes from titles, adherence to custom, and various other sources of perceived traditional legitimacy; but unlike them, their connection to place is different because of the 'settler' status of their community.

This article analyses diaspora chiefs as brokers, connecting different communities and organisations in ways that allow them to function together (Barkan et al., 1991; Koster & van Leynseele, 2018). Brokers, as defined in the introduction to this issue, are intermediaries bridging gaps in social structures by facilitating a two-directional flow of goods, information, opportunities, and knowledge across those gaps (Stovel et al., 2011: 1). They "assemble government, citizen and corporate actors, institutions and resources" and, in doing so, produce new, emergent social structures, or assemblages, and outcomes that make space for new forms of agency and empowerment (Ekeh, 1983; Koster & van Leynseele, 2018; Goodhand and Walton, this issue).

Brokers can thus change the shape of governance arrangements, and shift the distribution of power within them, by creating new spaces for agency and by changing flows of resources, information, and influence. Following Gaventa's (2006) emphasis on the importance of spaces for the exercise of power, brokers cannot only create new spaces but also change the rules of engagement of old ones. Kano's diaspora chiefs function as cultural and representative brokers (Stovel & Shaw, 2012): leaders of 'settler' communities who build links to the 'native' communities

and the local political elite, within the 'native' Emirate and the state. Representative brokers have the potential to empower their constituents, by creating new spaces where they can "speak to power" and participate in political decision-making, or by enhancing their position in existing political spaces (Meehan & Plonski, 2017). But while representative brokers have this potential, the extent to which they actually do empower their followers is the subject of academic debate.

First, there is concern about the extent to which representative brokers benefit others, or function as self-serving rent seekers. If we bring together scholarly literatures on brokers, on migration and migrant organisation, and on traditional authorities, there is broad agreement that representative brokerage benefits brokers, but can also be good for 'home' communities—the villages or towns from which the migrants hail originally—or the migrant communities themselves (Barkan et al., 1991; Beauchemin & Schoumaker, 2009; Bosiakoh, 2012; Chauvet et al., 2015; Mazzucato & Kabki, 2009; Ukpokolo, 2012). But this brings out a second concern, about the way that representative brokerage impacts on the political position of their minorities, especially in relation to the state

Here, we can outline four distinct theoretical models for the political impacts of representative brokerage based on the literature, labelled as co-production, shadow states, decentralised despotism, and exit (see Table 1).

In co-production, first, brokers collaborate with state authorities to provide public goods and services. They function as complementary partners, and as such create a space where minorities can genuinely influence governance. Second, as decentralised despots—much like the Native Authority under British colonial rule—representative brokers are co-opted by the state with the purpose of controlling their minority constituencies. This scenario provides few benefits to minorities, and marginalises them politically. Third, as shadow states, the state outsources governance to representative brokers, who then provide important services to their communities but do little to improve their political position vis-à-vis the state. Exit, finally, is an extreme outcome of a shadow state: a situation where brokers find ways to escape the influence of the state altogether, for example, by out-migrating or creating new governance units (e.g., Local Government Areas in Nigeria).

In terms of empowering minorities, the literature highlights co-production as the only model in which representative brokerage explicitly creates a space that increases the influence of minorities vis-à-vis the state. Exit can also empower minorities, by way of secession; but this has so far not been part of the strategy of diaspora chiefs in Kano. The other two models may or may not benefit minority communities, but they do not create spaces in which minority communities can acquire and exercise political power. In fact, they risk doing the opposite by facilitating the status quo to go unchallenged and thus, inadvertently, "entrench[ing] disempowerment" of the broker's constituents by creating relatively marginal spaces of empowerment that keep more fundamental challenges to the system in check (Meehan & Plonski, 2017).

The empirical analysis below will demonstrate that diaspora chiefs in Kano are engaged in governance as co-producers as well as shadow states. But it will also show that the political impact of their brokerage is constrained by the particular space it operates in: the semiformal space of traditional authorities, the Kano Emirate. This highlights a dynamic of brokerage and co-produced governance that has been neglected in the literature: that the constraints inherent in the political space opened by brokers can fundamentally affect the nature of the co-production these brokers are able to facilitate.

3 | METHODOLOGY

To better understand these dynamics, I use Kano metropolis as a most-likely case for the positive impacts of diaspora chiefs. Past studies have consistently shown the legitimacy and influence of the Kano's traditional authorities (Ehrhardt, 2012, 2016); moreover, these institutions have a long history of effectively integrating 'settler' communities, and some of the country's oldest and most established systems of diaspora chieftaincy (Ehrhardt, 2012). Furthermore, 'settler' communities in Kano have strong organisations, and their diaspora chiefs are deemed to be closely connected to their communities. All these factors suggest that Kano's diaspora chiefs are well set-up to

TABLE 1 Four models for the political impact of representative brokers on their minorities

Model	Summary	References
Co-production	Brokers co-produce public (or club) goods with other political elites, esp. the state because they have: (i) close connections to their communities, (ii) personal stakes in the welfare of their communities (skin in the game), (iii) long-term commitments to their position of leadership, and (iv) relatively equal and complementary relations with other political elites. There is evidence for co-production in brokerage of traditional authorities, e.g., in providing security in Nigeria, as well as migrant associations; but it is not universal.	Baldwin (2015), Baldwin and Raffler (2019), Osaghae (1994), Barkan et al. (1991), Bosiakoh (2011), Amelina and Faist (2008); Tsai (2007).
Shadow states	Brokers are co-opted by the state, but only to ensure that they provide public (or club) goods in lieu of the state. This shifts the responsibility of providing public goods and services away from the state towards informal or private initiatives organised by diaspora chiefs. This can serve to further entrench the governance system that marginalised minorities in the first place—even despite its intentions to the contrary.	Osaghae (1998); Honey and Okafor (1998)
Decentralised despotism	Derived from the literature on the impact of indirect rule on native authorities in British colonies. Brokers are interested in rents for private gain, and/or become co-opted by the political elite to such an extent that they become disconnected from their original constituencies. As a result, they are more preoccupied with their own interests and those of the elites than those of their communities, weakening brokers' responsiveness and downward accountability.	Mamdani (1996); Ntsebeza (2005); Ukpokolo (2012)
Exit	Brokers help their communities to thrive and develop outside the control of other political elites, in particular the state. Their brokerage involves negotiating for autonomous space for their followers, e.g., acting as "bulwarks" against state maltreatment, to protect their followers' interests and, in some cases, even effectively helping them to "exit the state" (e.g., by clamouring for a new Local Government Area where their community is dominant, or by out-migrating).	Barkan et al. (1991); Osaghae (1999)

benefit their 'settler' constituents, and therefore provide a useful case study to explore the extent to which they actually do so.

To evaluate this, I use interviews with traditional leaders and key informants, alongside a representative survey of public perceptions conducted in December 2019 ($N = 420$). The interviews focused mostly on understanding the governance assemblage that emerged around diaspora chiefs, as well as the chiefs' everyday activities and self-perceptions. They were conducted in different moments over a long period of time, starting in 2006; the most recent set were conducted in 2019 by Gaddafi Abubakar. The interviews include 20 Emirate traditional authorities, four

diaspora chiefs, and two key informants, and were semistructured. Interviewees were asked for informed consent to participate in the study, and to use their personal details. They were free to refuse, or request anonymity; where necessary, the interviewee details have been anonymised. The interviews were transcribed and coded thematically. Further details of the interviews are included as footnotes throughout the text.

The survey is used to measure public perceptions of diaspora chiefs. Diaspora chiefs, and traditional authorities generally, elicit strong opinions among Nigerians, both positive and critical. A representative survey is therefore key to evaluating the relative weight of the different views, also across groups. The questionnaire itself focused on respondents' perceptions of a range of issues, including background characteristics of the respondent, trust in traditional and other authorities, as well as vignettes and open questions on the role of traditional rulers in their lives. The sample size is 420 respondents (with equal numbers of male and female respondents), resulting in an error margin of the findings below 5% (Ehrhardt, 2012). Households were selected by the enumeration team through stratified random sampling in order to ensure adequate coverage of all ethnic and religious communities in the city, including 'settler' minorities. Individual respondents were identified through random walking patterns and a random selection of a respondent within a household, given the absence of a complete listing of Kano's households and residents.

4 | THE GOVERNANCE ASSEMBLAGE AROUND DIASPORA CHIEFS IN KANO

Diaspora chieftaincy takes different forms across Nigeria. In Kano, diaspora chiefs wield positions that have emerged out of migrant associations and were subsequently integrated into the city's Emirate, the main system of traditional authority in Kano (Osaghae, 1994). While the Emirate ceded formal executive authority to the Local and State Governments in the 1970s, it is still part of the wider system of city governance and has close ties to the state. The emergent assemblage around diaspora chieftaincy has therefore extended and transformed not only the Emirate institutions, but also the wider governance system. To understand the workings of this assemblage, this section will begin with a sketch of Kano's Emirate institutions and its connections to the state. Subsequently, it will show how the diaspora chiefs are positioned historically and institutionally not just as part of the Emirate, but as brokers at the intersection between the Emirate, their own 'settler' communities in Kano, and even the traditional authorities in their 'home' communities elsewhere in Nigeria (see Figure 1).

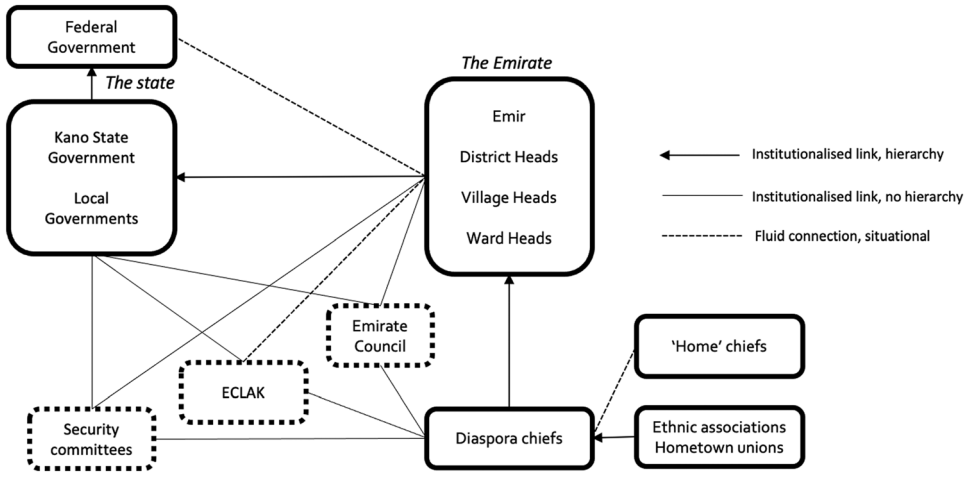

FIGURE 1 The governance assemblage around diaspora chiefs in Kano

4.1 | Kano Emirate and the state

Figure 1 represents the governance assemblage that has emerged around diaspora chiefs in Kano. It centres on the Emirate that, prior to the local government reforms of the 1970s, was the official government in the city—first independently, and then under British over-rule. Now, however, it is a semiformal organisation, sanctioned and, to some extent paid, by the state but operating independently. The precise boundaries between state and Emirate change over time, depending on societal dynamics as well as personalities within both organisations. Under the current Governor Ganduje, there is a clear hierarchical relationship between the State Government and the Emirate—even if the Emir's status gives him more informal and fluid connections to the Federal Government in Abuja.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Emirate is hierarchical, with the Emir at the apex, followed by district heads (*Hakimai*, sing.: *Hakimi*), village heads (*Dagatai*, sing.: *Dakachi*), and ward heads (*Masu unguwa*, sing.: *Mai unguwa*). The Emirate has functions both in religious affairs and governance. In religious terms, all imams in Kano need official recognition by the Emir to perform prayers. Similarly, the Emir leads festivals such as the Kano Durbar and calls the sighting of the moon at the start of the Islamic period of fasting.[4] In governance, traditional rulers use their community links to mediate disputes within their communities, and between their community and the state. Although the executive responsibility for maintaining security lies with formal authorities, it is culturally and politically preferred that disputes and other social disturbances be resolved informally, without resorting to the formal channels of law enforcement and adjudication (Paden, 2005).

The Emirate authorities are positioned in a semiformal institutional space, between Kano's residents and the state. On the one hand, the organisational structure of the Emirate enables ward heads, district heads, and even the Emir to retain a close connection to their people. The ward and village heads are part of the community they supervise and usually live in a central part of the area. They stay informed about the welfare and the problems of the people in their community and report disturbances and problems to their superiors in the Emirate, or directly to the state authorities, when they occur.[5] For example, if state actors such as the police misbehave or hurt their communities, the Emir or the district head will file an official or unofficial complaint and defend the interests of the people against the police. And although the connection between the traditional rulers and the wider Kano community has suffered from the increase in the city's population, an important part of the role of the traditional ruler has been retained, especially in Kano's Old City.[6]

On the other hand, the Emir also has close links to the Kano state government. For example, the Emir chairs the Emirate Council, an advisory council to the government that consists of Local Government chairmen and other elites, includes the *Eze Igbo* and *Oba Yoruba* as representatives of 'settler' communities. The Emirate Council was instituted after the creation of the Local Government to allow the Emirate an institutional entry to the state (and vice versa). Policies and laws proposed by the government are reviewed by the Emirate Council to make sure "they will not cause conflict […] and will be helpful for the people, useful to the community."[7] Although no formal power is attached to their advice, the governor listens to the Emirate Council because of its broad base of popular support.

In addition to the Emirate Council, so-called security committees exist on the state and local government levels. At the state level, the security committee:

> involves the executive governor, the commandant of the military, the police commissioner, the Emir, the director of the state security services (the state intelligence) and other key people within the state. The same structure trickles down to the local government and if you come down to the wards it is more or less similar: the councillor of the ward is considered to be the chief security, the village head is there to assist him, the Divisional Police Officer is there.[8]

[4]Dr Salahudeen Yusuf, imam Sabon Gari mosque, 13/12/2006 in Kano.
[5]Abdullahi Sule, president Youth and Environmental Development Association, 15/8/2006 in Kano.
[6]*Tafidan Kano*, District Head of Kura, 15/9/2006 in Kura.
[7]*Tafidan Kano*, op. cit.
[8]Abdullahi Sule, op. cit.

These committees provide a forum in which traditional authorities, the state government, and the federal security services can exchange information about the security situation in Kano—which, historically, has been very volatile (Ehrhardt, 2012; Mustapha & Ehrhardt, 2018). If deemed necessary, the Emir or his district heads can also contact the governor or the police directly and advise them on particular problems in or between communities.

4.2 | The institutional position of diaspora chieftaincy

The state and the Emirate thus exchange influence and resources for information and legitimacy in a broadly mutually beneficial way. The first attempts to insert diaspora chieftaincy into this governance arrangement originated from ethnic associations, the umbrella organisations of migrant hometown unions, and date back to colonial rule (Olaniyi, 2002). These attempts, however, faced prohibitive resistance from the British (Osaghae, 1998). Consequently, the first diaspora chief to be turbaned in Kano was the *Oba* of the Yoruba Community (or *Sarkin Yarabawa* in Hausa), in 1974, followed by the *Eze Igbo* in 1988 (Osaghae, 1998).

Diaspora chiefs are often elected from the ranks of their ethnic association, or at least by the ethnic association's leadership, on the basis of factors such as age, career success, knowledge of custom, and community contributions. Unlike the Emirate leaders' strong connections to aristocratic families, diaspora chiefs can come from many walks of life. In fact, many of them are successful businessmen, traders, and entrepreneurs who have done well commercially and rewarded for their success with a traditional title. In some communities, such as the Yoruba Community and Edo Community, diaspora chiefs also serve as ethnic association presidents; others, such as the Igbo Community Association, have separate executive bodies. Like ethnic associations, diaspora chieftaincy is subject to power-sharing agreements to ensure that power rotates between the various regional, State, or home town chapters that make up the umbrella organisation. Similarly, in composing their cabinets, diaspora chiefs are careful to ensure they reflect the diversity of the community association's membership (Osaghae, 1998).

Given their diverse backgrounds, which often have less to do with custom than with commercial success, diaspora chiefs have to do some work to claim customary legitimacy. Part of this work is done by organising festivals and other expressions of minority culture, as so-called custodians of culture. For example, the Igbo *Eze* organises the Ofala festival, where red-cap chiefs are crowned, as well as celebrations around Osho and the New Yam Festival[9]; in the Edo community, the diaspora chief is present at convocations and other opportunities where he can showcase Edo culture.[10] But diaspora chiefs also have to show that they embody the ideals of their community's culture, in the way they conduct themselves in everyday life.

But besides their ties to ethnic associations and their position as custodians of custom, diaspora chiefs can also be supported through formal recognition from the Emirate, and sometimes by the traditional leadership in their place of ethnic origin. The *Sarkin Edo* (or *Olotu*—"solver of problems"—of the Edo Community, or EC) Fred Akhigwe provides a useful illustration of these dynamics. Akhigwe has long been a successful businessman and deacon in his church, as well as an active member of the EC.[11] His late wife had also had several active roles in the association, including as treasurer and chair of the association's women's wing (ChuchuTalks Blog, 2020). Son of a peasant farmer community chief in Edo State, Fred Akhigwe moved to Kano in 1975 to work for Niger Motors and, later, as an entrepreneur. After the death of the former Edo leader, Alhaji Abubakar Sa'idu, in 2012, Akhigwe was elected by the EC as their next leader—with the explicit support, according to Akhigwe, of the Oba of Benin. Akigwe was coronated as *Sarkin Edo* by the late Emir Ado Bayero in 2012, in the presence of representatives of the Oba of Benin.

Fred Akhigwe's triple recognition—from the Emir, the EC, and the Oba of Benin—underlines the intermediary position he occupies, between the 'native' community, the Edo 'settlers,' and the 'home' community in Edo State. The relative importance of each of these relationships varies by community and personality of the chiefs. In

[9]Anonymous Igbo chief, in Kano,16/9/2019, Kano
[10]Fred Akhigwe, Sarkin Edo, 5/1/2019, Kano.
[11]Fred Akhigwe, op. cit.

TABLE 2 Ethnic groups and their traditional authorities ($N = 416$)*

	Emirate	Emirate & diaspora	Emirate & diaspora & 'home'	Diaspora chiefs	Diaspora & 'home'	'home' chiefs
Hausa-Fulani	100%	-	-	-	-	-
Multiple identities	90%	-	5%	5%	-	-
Minorities	48%	-	-	4%	-	48%
Igbo	24%	9%	-	64%	-	3%
Yoruba	17%	-	-	44%	28%	11%
Total	87%	1%	0%	8%	1%	3%

particular, the 'home' connection can be very different from the example from the Edo people used here. Among the Igbo, for example, there is deep contestation around the legitimacy of diaspora chieftaincies, and conflict between chiefs in Igboland, the umbrella organisation of Igbo chiefs, the Igbo cultural umbrella organisation Ohanaeze, and the diaspora chiefs outside Igboland (see also Section 5). But despite these variations, diaspora chiefs always have to engage with their 'home' communities, the 'settlers,' and the 'natives.'[12] Where possible they use these multiple connections to draw out legitimacy and influence, and position themselves as bona fide traditional authorities and community leaders.

5 | PERCEPTIONS OF DIASPORA CHIEFS AND THE BENEFITS OF THEIR BROKERAGE

In the competitive market for Nigeria's nonstate leadership, however, legitimacy and influence are not always easy to come by. This section uses survey and interview data to capture public perceptions of diaspora chiefs and the contributions they make to the lives of Kano's residents. It shows that diaspora chiefs can count on considerable public support, and are widely perceived as trustworthy and influential problem solvers as well as channels to access state funds and services. As such, they lend credence to both the shadow-state and co-production models for diaspora chieftaincy's brokerage. There are, however, considerable differences between ethnic groups, and more fundamental challenges discussed in Section V. But I will turn to those concerns later; for now, let us begin by looking at the way Kano residents view their leaders. As a starting point, Table 2 provides an answer to the question "Who do you consider your traditional leader(s)?" disaggregated by different ethnic groups[13]living in Kano.

The open-ended answers to this question were clustered into three main types: the 'native' Emirate institutions, the 'settler' diaspora chiefs, and the traditional authorities in the 'home' community elsewhere in Nigeria. Table 2 shows many important patterns of recognition of traditional authorities, with significant differences between ethnic groups.[14] Perhaps most strikingly, it highlights that the Emirate is not considered as traditional authority by everyone, and much more frequently by the 'native' Hausa-Fulani and people with multiple affiliations (of which Hausa is often one) than by others. The other groups, in contrast, are much more likely to consider diaspora chiefs as their traditional leaders, especially the Igbo and Yoruba. 'home' chiefs, finally, are mostly recognised by the Yoruba and smaller ethnic minorities.

[12]Anonymous Igbo chief, op. cit.

[13]Nigeria has hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups, many of which are represented in Kano. For the purposes of this paper, I use the ethnic categories of the country's three major groups—Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba—alongside categories for minorities and for individuals who identified with multiple ethnic categories (beyond the Hausa-Fulani combination). Hausa-Fulani is a composite category of all those who identified as Hausa, Fulani, or Hausa-Fulani. This decision reflects the reality that the boundaries between these three categories are blurry, particularly in the urban context. For the purposes of cross-ethnic comparison, therefore, merging the three into Hausa-Fulani is a justifiable analytical simplification.

[14]In Tables 2–8, a star (*) denotes that the p value for the Pearson χ^2 is <.05, suggesting significant differences between the reported categories. For Tables 2–6, the reported N excludes "Do not know" responses and missing data; for Tables 7 and 8, the reported N includes "Do not know."

TABLE 3 Mean trust and perceived influence of different Kano authorities (from 1 = *very low* to 7 = *very high*)

	Trust	Influence
Religious leaders ($N = 421$)	6.3	6.5
Traditional rulers ($N = 408$)	6.0	5.9
Hisbah (Islamic police/social services) officials ($N = 376$)	5.7	5.2
Courts ($N = 409$)	4.1	4.9
Police ($N = 415$)	3.9	4.7
Government officials ($N = 392$)	3.2	3.5
Politicians ($N = 409$)	2.1	2.8

TABLE 4 Mean trust and perceived influence of different traditional authorities in Kano, by ethnicity ($N = 407$, from 1 = *very low* to 7 = *very high*)

	'home' chiefs		Diaspora chiefs		Emirate leaders	
	Trust ($N = 18$)	Influence ($N = 19$)	Trust ($N = 39$)	Influence ($N = 40$)	Trust* ($N = 350$)	Influence* ($N = 358$)
Hausa-Fulani	-	-	-	-	6.0	6.0
Multiple identities	-	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.5	5.8
Minorities	6.4	6.0	7.0	7.0	5.3	5.7
Igbo	6.0	7.0	6.8	6.7	5.5	5.7
Yoruba	6.0	5.3	6.8	6.8	4.5	3.0
Total	6.2	5.9	6.8	6.8	5.9	5.9

These patterns of recognition suggest that diaspora chiefs are relevant to 'settlers,' but that there is also intergroup variation. Moreover, recognition by itself does not imply legitimacy or perceived benefits from leadership. To assess those dimensions, the survey asked Kano residents about their trust in, and the influence of, their traditional leaders compared to other authorities. Tables 3 and 4 presents the results, on a scale from 1 (low trust/no influence) to 7 (high trust/high influence). Table 3 confirms a pattern that has been demonstrated before: religious leaders and traditional leaders are both trusted and perceived as influential, followed by the Islamic police and social service provider, the *Hisbah*. Politicians and state officials are distrusted, even if they are believed to have influence (Ehrhardt, 2012).

Table 4 shows respondents' views of different traditional authorities, disaggregated by 'home,' diaspora, and Emirate chiefs. It shows a remarkable but consistent picture: that trust and perceived influence of diaspora chieftaincy are consistently higher than of either the 'home' authorities or the Emirate; and that trust and perceived influence for the Emirate leaders are lower for the groups with strong diaspora chiefs than for the 'native' Hausa-Fulani. In other words, even within the well-respected category of traditional leaders, diaspora chiefs appear to have an especially strong position. Where does this legitimacy come from? One of the most common claims about traditional authorities is that they are legitimate and trusted because they are close to their people. In Kano, this closeness has historical roots in the pyramidal organisational structure of the Emirate; it was also, ironically, a feature used actively in the governance strategies of the British colonisers, in particular for its ability to gather intelligence (Last, 2008).

Today's Kano is far too large for the Emirate to play this role as effectively as it did in the first half of the 20th century, having grown from around 260,000 inhabitants just after independence to over 5 million today (Ehrhardt, 2012; Paden, 1973). Yet as Table 5 shows, traditional authorities continue to be among the most accessible leaders in the city, third only to the religious authorities and, particularly for Muslims, the *Hisbah*. Notably, Table 6 shows that diaspora chiefs are often considered *even more* accessible than Emirate authorities.

TABLE 5 Mean perceived accessibility (from 1 = *very low* to 7 = *very high*) of different authorities in Kano city, by ethnicity

	Accessibility religious leaders ($N = 420$)	Accessibility government officials* ($N = 398$)	Accessibility Hisbah* ($N = 376$)	Accessibility politicians ($N = 406$)	Accessibility police ($N = 417$)	Accessibility courts ($N = 399$)	Accessibility traditional rulers* ($N = 417$)
Hausa-Fulani	6.3	3.1	5.9	2.0	5.6	5.0	5.6
Multiple identities	6.1	3.8	5.5	2.2	5.3	5.1	5.9
Minorities	6.4	2.4	5.7	2.3	5.5	5.1	5.4
Igbo	6.8	3.6	4.4	2.2	5.4	4.9	6.2
Yoruba	6.3	3.2	5.9	2.4	5.6	5.3	6.2
Total	6.4	3.2	5.8	2.1	5.5	5.0	5.7

TABLE 6 Mean perceived accessibility (from 1 = *very low* to 7 = *very high*) of different traditional authorities, by ethnicity

	Accessibility 'home' chiefs ($N = 19$)	Accessibility diaspora chiefs ($N = 40$)	Accessibility emirate* ($N = 353$)
Hausa-Fulani	-	-	5.9
Multiple identities	7.0	5.5	6.1
Minorities	6.6	6.0	5.4
Igbo	7.0	6.6	4.6
Yoruba	6.5	6.6	4.3
Total	6.6	6.6	5.8

TABLE 7 Perceived benefits of interactions with traditional leaders over the past year, by ethnicity

	In the last 12 months, how often have traditional leaders done you a personal favour?* ($N = 420$; % once, few times, often)	In the last 12 months, how often have traditional leaders solved community problems?* ($N = 420$; % once, few times, often)
Hausa-Fulani	29%	70%
Multiple identities	14%	38%
Minorities	24%	69%
Igbo	67%	82%
Yoruba	50%	72%
Total	32%	69%

The accessibility of traditional authorities presents a stark contrast with the perceived distance of politicians and government officials, as shown in Table 5; it is likely part of the explanation for traditional authorities' popularity, and raises questions about why state authorities have been unable to learn from traditional authorities in this regard. But of course, accessibility alone is not everything: even though the police and courts are rated as relatively accessible, they do not garner the same trust and support as traditional or religious leaders do. What also matters, is how people interact with their traditional leaders. To get a sense of this, we asked how often respondents had approached their traditional leader "about some important problem" in the last 12 months. About one third of the respondents had done so in the overall sample; but remarkably, around half of the Yoruba had done so, and more than three quarters of the Igbo, far more than for the Hausa-Fulani.

Table 7 gives a sense of what these interactions are about and for whom they are most important. It shows that, generally, traditional leaders solve community problems more often than they provide personal benefits to respondents. And again: the numbers for the Igbo and Yoruba communities are higher than for others in the sample. These results match the public discourse on traditional leaders' contributions to society, which emphasises them as being "in charge of everything pertaining to tradition and culture,"[15] as well as managing tensions and informally settling disputes (Osaghae, 1994). As a prominent Igbo chief in Kano explained, "the *Eze Igbo* [...] is father of the Igbo, he is the custodian of Igbo land, he maintains the culture and tradition of the Igbo, he makes sure that the life of every Igbo is secure"[16] (cf. Ehrhardt, 2012, 2017).

[15]Chief Boniface Ibikwe, op. cit.; and Chief Olayiwole Adeaga, op. cit.
[16]Anonymous Igbo chief, op. cit.

TABLE 8 Perceived benefits of government assistance through traditional authorities, by ethnicity

	Government assistance to your traditional leader?* ($N = 420$, % yes)	Resources given to traditional leader benefited you? (asked only if government assistance was given; $N = 95$, % "a little" + "very much")
Hausa-Fulani	20%	66%
Multiple identities	5%	100%
Minorities	32%	88%
Igbo	46%	93%
Yoruba	33%	83%
Total	23%	74%

As discussed extensively above, even if people benefit from brokerage, a key question is whether these benefits stem from co-produced governance or shadow-state behaviour, because the former is more likely to promote genuine empowerment than the latter. In this regard, it is important that the interviews and survey data suggest that brokering relations with the state is an important part of why diaspora chiefs benefit their constituents. These relations can be institutionalised, for example through the Ethnic Community Leadership Association Kano (ECLAK), the Emirate Council, and other bodies such as the security committees. But they are also personal: traditional authorities are often a first port of call for government officials and politicians in any particular area, in case there are problems (e.g., communal violence) or the officials need their support (e.g., during elections). Both the institutional and personal connections between diaspora chiefs and the state have been used not only to enhance the status and presence of 'settler' culture and customs in Kano, as Osaghae (1994) already highlighted, but also to channel benefits and resources down to the communities. As such, they suggest that governance, at least to some extent, is at least in part a result of co-production by the state, the Emirate, and diaspora chiefs.

Again, the survey data shows that these patterns are more common for 'settler' communities than for 'natives': in Table 8, between one third and half of the Igbo and Yoruba respondents state that their traditional leaders have received government assistance or resources over the last 12 months, as opposed to about less than a quarter in the overall sample. But more importantly, of those who had seen resources from the government come to their traditional leaders, around 75% said that they felt these resources had benefited them - with much lower percentages for the 'native' Hausa-Fulani than for all the others.

Conversely, the connections between traditional leaders and government can also be used by Kano residents to access individual benefits or services from government. In this regard, the survey asked people to imagine they tried to get an identity document, like an indigeneship certificate or a permit, from government: who would they contact for help? Around 50% of the respondents said they would contact their traditional leader, either in the first or second instance (if the first option failed). These results made traditional leaders the second-best option only to government officials—the formal route—and only by a small margin. Igbo, Yoruba, and minorities were slightly more likely to approach their traditional leaders in this instance, but not by a large margin.

Overall, the picture of diaspora chiefs that emerges from the survey data is a rosy one: not only are they perceived as trustworthy and influential, even more so than the Emirate, but they are also seen to benefit both individual Kano 'settlers' and their communities. This picture is further confirmed by reports on corruption experienced by the respondents: while more than 10% of people say they have had to pay bribes to government, hospital, and school officials (and over 20% to the police) over the last 12 months, this number is below 1% for traditional rulers—on par with religious leaders and the Islamic *Hisbah* officials. So even as diaspora chiefs help their communities access state services and resources, they do so in a way that people perceive as circumventing the bribery required in more official channels.

These are optimistic findings, suggesting that these relatively young invented traditions have not only extended the reach of the state and Emirate, but also benefited 'settlers' and created political spaces where they can be empowered vis-à-vis the Emirate and the state. Not unimportantly, moreover, the positions of diaspora chieftaincy have opened up new channels of upward social mobility for the chiefs themselves, in which 'settler' economic elites can gain political influence through traditional governance structures. In this light, the findings presented here suggest a new phase in the empowerment of 'settlers' in a city like Kano: a phase in which their traditional representatives are not only shadow states (e.g., Osaghae, 1998), but are also beginning to co-produce governance with the state and Emirate in a newly brokered political space.

6 | THE CHALLENGES OF CO-PRODUCED GOVERNANCE IN KANO'S TRADITIONAL SPACE

However, if we zoom out from the snapshot of individual experiences recorded though the interviews and perceptions survey, the picture becomes more complicated. For while it is clear that 'settlers' perceive diaspora chiefs as beneficial, even to the point of facilitating access to the state, it still leaves open the question about the precise nature of these benefits. Do 'settlers' co-produce governance through diaspora chiefs as full citizens of Kano, or as nonindigenous, permanent minorities who need special treatment (Mamdani, 2020)? In this section, I argue that there are good reasons to believe the latter, due to the inherent limits to traditional power; the selection and learning effects of diaspora chieftaincy as an organisation; and the divisive effects of diaspora chieftaincy, both within and between 'settler' communities. I will discuss each in turn.

First, diaspora chieftaincy, by virtue of its integration into the Emirate, is subject to the same constraints facing the Emirate. The Kano Emirate, even though one of the most influential traditional authorities in Nigeria, has little formal power; it is dependent on the goodwill, and to some extent financial support, of the government. Its position is not well enshrined in law, and much of its success relies on careful statecraft: retaining the respect of their people, while also maintaining "cordial relations" with government and the resources that flow from it. This is no easy feat, especially since the very distance of traditional rulers from formal power and politics is a key reason for their legitimacy.[17] Traditional leaders therefore purposefully try to keep politics at arms' length, so as not to associate themselves too closely with the negative reputation of Nigeria's political class.[18]

But even then, their position is not uncontested. As representatives of the aristocratic *sarauta* (ruling) class in Kano, their existence propagates a contested class-based social distinction. Further, in a city that has witnessed a veritable explosion in terms of demography and diversity, traditional rulers are struggling to maintain the level of local control and support that has proven essential to their legitimacy.[19]

The recent removal of Emir Sanusi Lamido Sanusi by the Kano State Governor Ganduje provides an important illustration of the fragility of the Emirate, and also the severe repercussions for going against the government. Emir Sanusi had been unusually—for Emirate authorities, that is—critical of Governor Ganduje's governance of Kano, as well as a vocal proponent of sensitive reforms, including around girl education and family planning. After Ganduje had won a second term in office, the Emir was removed—and this was after his Emirate had been carved up into smaller pieces by the same governor. While much is uncertain about the precise circumstances of his dethronement, its central message was clear: traditional authorities, even if they are the Emir of Kano, cannot challenge the power of the state without risking their own position. Or as Governor Ganduje himself phrased it: "… as a king, […] you have to watch your tongue. And he [Emir Sanusi] didn't do that. […] He was trying to challenge the government on legitimate issues. Which is not acceptable to me, and I don't think [to] any reasonable governor" (Channels Television, 2021).

[17] *Tafidan Kano*, op. cit.
[18] Prince (Mahmud)Ado Bayero, District Head of Fagge, November 2008, Kano.
[19] Prince (Mahmud) Ado Bayero, op. cit.

Like their Emirate counterparts, diaspora chiefs have no formal power over government budgets beyond any stipends they receive, no formal say over who can stand for election, or who gets what official appointment from the state—all key factors for empowerment in Nigeria. Also like Emirate leaders, diaspora chiefs face strong incentives to stay aloof from electoral politics or, at most, support any incumbent regime.

What they *can* do, in political-economic terms, is use persuasion and their informal, "cordial relations" with Emirate leaders, politicians, and government officials to increase investment in their communities, and help their community members access government certification or resources, such as indigeneship certificates. In exchange, politicians and government officials can connect with diaspora chiefs when they need contact with 'settler' communities, for example when there is communal violence or when elections are near. This contact can be institutionalised, through the security committees or ECLAK. It can also be personal and direct, often mediated by other elites. The District Head of the Fagge local government encompassing *Sabon Gari*[20] takes an important role here; other government functionaries, for example from the police,[21] can also mediate, depending on the personal connections of the diaspora chief in question.[22] But its success always depends on remaining on good terms with the state.

Together, these constraints on traditional power highlight the limits of genuine co-production through the traditional governance assemblage: diaspora chiefs, and by extension their 'settlers,' are not equal partners to the state. But they also point to a second challenge to the empowering effects of diaspora chieftaincy: its selection and learning effects on 'settler' elites. I have noted above that diaspora chieftaincy is a source of social mobility for the chiefs themselves; but we have not considered the precise incentive effects of this mobility. What kinds of people become diaspora chiefs, and what do they learn (and teach others) about their incentives for (further) advancement?

Although these questions require further research, based on the current evidence we can suggest the following. In terms of selection, most diaspora chiefs are commercially successful elites from the 'settler' communities. Although they may have political skills and ambitions, they are not selected for them; rather, they are selected for having done well within the status quo, and for being a leading example of their ethnic minority's customs and values. As such, diaspora chieftaincy incentivises 'settlers' to conform to their ethnic minority, nonindigenous status—a trend that is only reinforced by the learning effects on the diaspora chiefs themselves. Because as noted above, diaspora chiefs can influence governance mostly through informal channels and cordial relations; and they face strong incentives to distance themselves actively from formal, electoral politics. As an organisation, therefore, diaspora chieftaincy incentivises 'settlers' to establish their credential as exemplary ethnic minority elites, and to stay away from the political process that might get them formal political power.

Third, these factors are compounded by the divisive effects of diaspora chieftaincy on 'settler' communities, which both reinforce ethnicisation and weaken the position of diaspora chiefs. These divisions exist between and within ethnic groups. Between groups, the analysis above has shown large differences in the success of diaspora chieftaincy. The Igbo and Yoruba communities are most successful, to the point where their chiefs have permanent positions in the Emirate Council and receive regular stipends from the Kano State Government. Other communities, such as those from Edo, Igala, Igbira, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom and the Northern Minorities, have also established diaspora chiefs but have not yet acquired the same level of recognition as the Igbo and Yoruba.[23] Yet others have no diaspora chieftaincy at all. This variation might be due to differences in longevity, the Igbo and Yoruba diaspora chiefs being the first ones to having gained official recognition. It might also be due to the strength of the organisational structure from which diaspora chiefs emerge: stronger structures, such as the hometown associations and ethnic associations of the Igbo and Yoruba communities, could well lead to stronger diaspora chiefs. But in any case, if they remain unresolved or even increased, the interethnic inequalities between 'settler' communities are a source of potential conflict and constraints on co-producing governance effectively (let alone on choosing to exit).

Within 'settler' communities, furthermore, the increasing influence of diaspora chiefs brings another, counterintuitive, threat to their position, as illustrated by the recent conflicts around Kano's *Eze Igbo*. Since the inception of

[20]Akhigwe, op.cit.; Anonymous Igbo chief, op.cit.
[21]Akhigwe, op.cit
[22]Akhigwe, op.cit.
[23]Anonymous Igbo chief, op. cit.

the position in 1987, there have been three *Eze*'s before the current one, Boniface Ibekwe: Nwalosi (1987–1989), Okonkwo (1989–1990), and Nnadi (1990–2008). The Igbo Community Association has set out clear conditions and rules for the selection of a new *Eze*, including one that states that in case of multiple competing candidates for the position, the Cabinet reviews applications and elects a winner (Osaghae, 1994). But while before 2008, all candidates had run for the position unopposed, *Eze* Ibekwe's assumption of the title led to deep conflicts within the Igbo community—conflicts that culminated in a High Court case on the matter in 2018, which ruled in favour of *Eze* Ibekwe (The Nation, 2018). This did little to resolve the conflict, however, and to this day the Igbo community is divided on the issue.[24]

The details of this decade-long conflict are beyond the purposes of this article; but it is interesting that this conflict not only involved competing sections of the Igbo community in Kano, but also the national Ohanaeze organisation that functions as a political umbrella for Nigeria's Igbo people, and the South-East Council of Traditional Rulers organisation uniting all traditional rulers in Igboland.[25] The latter two organisations have grown increasingly wary of the growing numbers of Igbo diaspora chiefs, fearing it as a threat to their own authority and an undesirable innovation of custom (Ukpokolo, 2012). Yet Igbo diaspora chiefs rely on their connections with the 'home' communities in Igboland, both for the legitimacy that they grant them as "genuine" custodians of Igbo custom and culture, and for the ability of Igbo hometown associations and the ICA to collect and redistribute funds. Although the internal dynamics around diaspora chieftaincy differ greatly between groups, the Igbo succession conflict does suggest a general pattern: as the status and influence of diaspora chiefs rise, so does the potential for conflict within the 'settler' community, and between the 'settlers' and their people at 'home.'

In sum, while the rise of diaspora chiefs marks a new phase in the settlement of non-'natives' in the city of Kano, all these factors—the limits to traditional power, the selection and learning effects of diaspora chieftaincy, and its divisive potential—constitute serious constraints on the extent to which they can co-produce governance as equals of the state authorities, and their ability to truly transform the marginal position of their communities. Ironically, this precariousness may even increase as their status improves; a dynamic underlining the inherent instability that is a feature of many brokered assemblages (Goodhand and Walton, this issue).

7 | CONCLUSION: THE PARADOXICAL EFFECTS OF CO-PRODUCED GOVERNANCE THROUGH DIASPORA CHIEFS

This article has explored the impacts of the brokerage by diaspora chiefs. It has shown how diaspora chieftaincy in Kano has emerged from migrant organisations and was integrated into Kano governance through co-optation by the Kano Emirate. Diaspora chiefs thus function as brokers between their 'settler' communities and the 'natives,' while also retaining connections with the 'home' communities elsewhere in Nigeria. Institutionally, they connect the ethnic and hometown associations and, to some extent, the 'home' chiefs to the Emirate and Kano's state authorities. This brokerage role has allowed the diaspora chiefs to rise in status and wealth; but it has also allowed them to increase the visibility and status of their 'settler' communities' cultures, and to gain considerable trust and respect in the eyes of their communities. Perhaps more importantly, their followers feel that diaspora chieftaincy contributes to their welfare in a range of important ways, not least by facilitating access to state resources.

The brokerage of diaspora chiefs has empowered 'settlers' by creating new semiformal political spaces to interact with the state. It has also given the chiefs themselves new avenues for upward social mobility, and helped the Emirate and the state extend their reach to include 'settler' communities. This matters in elections, and in moments of social instability or even violence, in which 'settler' communities have often been the prime victims. In one way, therefore, the governance assemblage around diaspora chiefs has not only empowered 'settlers' but created gains

[24]Anonymous Igbo chief, op.cit.

[25]Other ethnic umbrella organisations, such as the Afenifere, the Yoruba Council of Elders, or the Northern Elders Forum, have so far been less inclined to involve themselves in the politics of diaspora chieftaincy.

for all parties involved: the 'settlers,' the chiefs themselves, and the 'native' Emirate and state. This assemblage resembles Baldwin's (2015) model of effective co-produced governance, especially in the field of security. It gives credence to recent claims about traditional leaders as "indigenous" political institutions, better attuned to the specific needs, preferences, and norms of African communities than the "colonial" construction of the Weberian nation-state (Basheka, 2015).

Yet this paper has also highlighted limits to the gains produced by diaspora chiefs: specifically, the limits on traditional power, the incentive effects of diaspora chieftaincy, and the way it promotes ethnic identification and competition. If we allow for some simplification: diaspora chiefs can use their status and cordial relations to informally negotiate benefits for 'settlers,' so long as they approach the state explicitly as nonindigenous minorities, do not engage in official (electoral) politics, and do not grow too powerful.

This points to an important paradox for our understanding of diaspora chiefs, and perhaps traditional authorities generally. As brokers, they can have a legitimising effect on a governance arrangement, specifically when they act as co-producers or shadow states outside the formal political space. In deeply divided societies like Nigeria, this can have the paradoxical impact of both empowering minorities—and being very popular for it—and reinforcing their structural marginalisation as second-class citizens (cf. Meehan & Plonski, 2017). The case of diaspora chiefs and 'settler' empowerment in Kano has illustrated these dynamics.

Of course, though, Kano is not representative for all divided societies, and further comparative research within and outside Nigeria will be invaluable in mapping out the variations in the brokerage of diaspora chiefs, and its impacts and determinants. Also, given their relative youth, much remains uncertain about the longer term development of diaspora chiefs and their impact on governance. Can the semiformal spaces forged by diaspora chiefs and other traditional authorities, in the longer run, foster new forms of political engagement and empowerment? If so, under what conditions? And what can the pathways towards this kind of transformative change look like? These are questions with relevance not only for Nigeria, but for deeply divided societies all over the world.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The survey data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request for replication purposes. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions. Interview data cannot be shared due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID

David Ehrhardt https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9159-3838

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