

## **‘A JOURNEY IN LEADERSHIP’ BY TIJJANI BORODO BOOK REVIEW BY PROFESSOR FABIAN AJOGWU, SAN<sup>1</sup>**

‘A JOURNEY IN LEADERSHIP’ by Tijjani Borodo, an accomplished Lawyer, Banker and Corporate Governance Expert, is indeed a masterpiece. Published in 2019 by May University Press Limited, Lagos, with ISBN: 978-978-51255-4-2, the 171-page book is set out in twenty chapters.

The style of the book is one of simple narrative delivered with a didactic approach. The author presents the reader with the simplicity of style. The humility of the author does not obfuscate the rich pedigree of the Learned Author. The book begins with a peep into the author’s early days from Bukuru, Jos (1956) in the chapter, ‘Mr Father’s House’. The author presents the larger-than-life metaphor of a mentor-father, Mallam Muhammu Borodo, the son of a nomadic trader originally from Sudan. He speaks of his mother, Hajiya Safiya Borodo, openly, and with unhidden affection. He presents the traditional African extended family system with the clear delineation of responsibilities and a collectivist approach to co-existence and development.

The second chapter presents the reader with the importance of a belief in learning, formal education and experience. The author’s meticulous approach to record-keeping takes its roots from his interactions with his father and opportunities to take on responsibilities. In chapters 3 and 4, the author’s academic journey is given a deeper dive with exhortations for his formative teachers and lecturers, namely - Messrs. Gordon, Amankwa, Egeokwe, Chukol, others.

The book is laced with photos of milestone events in the author’s journey. On a lighter note, the author’s photo in 1974/75 in his *bongo trousers* with his roommate Abu Hama Joda must have stopped him from being unduly critical of his growing teenage children’s fashion sense at their time. The author’s 1983 photo with his good wife, Hajiya Larai Borodo tells a thousand tales about a man who remembers his early days and the wife of his youth. We now fully know the source of those endless smiles and joyful approach to life that the author has. One thing is clear from the photos – they were primarily about his family and friends. They were not about fame, power, connections or glory.

---

<sup>1</sup> Disclosures: The Author and I serve on the Board of the Society for Corporate Governance Nigeria. With mutual respect and admiration, nothing impairs my independence of thought in the academic review of the book

A glimpse at the house in Kano got my review nearly derailed as I remembered my early days at Bompai GRA, St Louis, Ungwar Uku, Kundila, No Man's Land, Kofa Mata, Masallaci Muritala, Gwamaga, Tudu Wada, Sabon Gida, Sabon Gari, Hadejia, Wudil, Tiga Dam, Bagauda Lake, Kano Central, etc. Enough – back the book review!

Chapters 6 and 7 take the reader into the author's entry into law practice and his experiences at Kano through Port Harcourt and back. The chapters tell the story of this young man's growth from Bukuru, Jos and share knowledge in various other aspects of life. The book shares the author's personal experience and thoughts on different subjects such as patriotism, history, culture, religion, friendship and family.

A Journey in Leadership outlines in details the various stages of Tijjani M. Borodo's development as a child, scholar and legal professional of repute. The diverse phases of the author's development are outlined in a smooth, systematic, simple, but comprehensive manner that engulfs the reader's attention. The book employs the author's reflections and story to paint a picturesque tale that provides a vivid recount of Nigeria's as a country in the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s. This wide spectrum of subject and theme makes 'A Journey in Leadership' a veritable read for the young, the old and those in between.

The book outlines Alh Borodo's nascent days as a child in a traditional and pleasant Hausa Fulani home in Bukuru, in Jos' hinterlands, where the strong patriarch, Mallam Muhammadu Borodo, firmly established the crux of the author's Western and Arabic education. This foundation in Arabic school would later be significant in his spiritual journey and appointment as Chairman of the Bureau of Islamic Education.

His all-encompassing education embodied the extracurricular activities he engaged in. The author was playful and talented on the football pitch, where he was all starring centre back captain of his school team. He was also a reliable assistant to his father at different periods – assisting him in operating a booming business. These experiences would later serve as a springboard for the author's journey in leadership.

The book highlights the author's stellar progression in the formal education system from his days as a pupil of the Government Secondary School, Kuru, where he would graduate to enrol for A' levels at the North East College of Arts and Science, which is now known as the University of Maiduguri. After that, the Learned author would attend the famous Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to study the *primus inter pares* course that is Law.

We learn that at ABU Zaria, Tijjani M. Borodo showed his social leadership trait when he co-founded the Spirotex social club. The club was a beehive of activities ranging from the entrepreneurial, when it organised cinematic screening for a fee, to the political

when the club sponsored individual students for elections. Readers would discover that despite experiencing challenging health difficulties resulting from a serious motorcycle accident, Tijjani M. Borodo would graduate from ABU, Zaria and immediately enrol for his professional qualification at the Nigerian Law School, Lagos.

Upon graduation, Tijjani M. Borodo being a man of the pen, would travel beyond Nigeria to further slake his thirst for further knowledge by attending postgraduate study at the University of Essex, England.

As a professional, the book outlines for those unfamiliar with Tijjani M. Borodo's resume how he has performed with distinction in both the public and private sectors of the economy. In the public sector, Borodo was a state counsel in the Kano State Ministry of Justice. He rose to the premier position of Director of Public Prosecution. Additionally, we learn of his service as a chairman of the rent tribunal and the local government election tribunal in Kano State. These quasi-judicial positions requiring strong leadership acumen were balanced by Tijjani M. Borodo and his works at the Ministry of Justice in Kano State.

Borodo is a great name in the premier first-generation bank, First Bank, regarding his private sector performance. He joined the Bank as a Regional Legal Manager that oversaw the largest geographical sector in Nigeria. He was responsible for all legal issues affecting the Bank in its Northwest and Northeast geographical locations. From being a Regional Legal Manager, Tijjani M. Borodo would later proceed to occupy the elevated position of Company Secretary of the Bank.

As the Company Secretary in charge of the secretariat of an institution such as First Bank, Tijjani M. Borodo was responsible for diverse duties and function, including the Annual General Meeting organisation. However, like all leadership positions placed before him previously, he performed with merit, and the rest is history as he accumulated over 35 years of dedicated service to the Bank.

Readers would find interesting the delicate handling of his duties in the transition from a government-appointed bank chairman (Alh Attah) to private investors driven chairmen like Alh Mutallab and Mr Oba Otudeko). The author was guided by the law and governance principles. He understood what capitalist democracy entailed.

A Journey in Leadership is a thought-provoking book that recounts the voyage of self-discovery. The book is replete with funny anecdotes such as the "The man who does not understand Hausa" scenario when the author served as the Chairman of the Rent Tribunal in Kano State and had before him a case involving his uncle, Alhaji Audu Musa. Likewise, there are culture shock occasions like the author's first-ever experience of a "white Christmas" in London during his postgraduate studies.

The reader peeps into moments of personal grief and reflections from the author, such as the loss of his mother at the tender age of 60 and the incident of his attempted bribery whilst he was the Director of Public Prosecution in Kano State by unknown visitors who had a gun. Readers will be able to glimpse the author's high esteem in family, friendship and work and how all three are intertwined. This can be seen by the multiple human connections and relationships described, and the "baby" at Mayondaga village whilst Tijjani M. Borodo was the Regional Manager of First Bank Plc.

The book "A Journey in Leadership" is an important recount of an important individual's steps. Those that fortune has not afforded the pleasure of being closely acquainted with Tijjani M. Borodo would be wise to pick up a copy of the book to enable them to retrace the steps of Tijjani M. Borodo. Whilst those that have been sufficiently favoured to be associated with Tijjani M. Borodo and can retrace his steps without the help of a book will also be advised to pick a copy to enable them to appreciate the depth of each step taken by such a fantastic individual in his equally fantastic journey so far.

In all, the book is well-written in PEL, Plain English Language. It is easy to read. There is, however, ambiguity on the Publisher – Dr Udu Yakubu and May University Press Ltd. I did not see a bibliography, but that could be based on the book's high originality. The book was published in 2019, yet the author and publishers kept the book unveiled till 2021. We can also understand that the Covid19 pandemic took the most for the year 2020 and beyond.

In all, I must end with Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim's words in the Foreword to the book: - *A Journey in Leadership* recommends itself to understand and appreciate some of the dimensions of professional, business and social leadership. It is also a social narrative that should inspire a sense of responsibility and the desire for success.

The book is rich in content and meaning. I recommend it to all and congratulate the Author, Alh Tijjani M. Borodo.

---

**Professor Fabian Ajogwu, SAN**

Lagos Business School

March 31, 2021