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Moniker As Metonymy In Banditry

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ABSTRACT

The northwest region of Nigeria comprising Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Niger, Katsina and Kaduna States is one area in Nigeria where banditry has become most prevalent. In the last eight (8) years, a number of local areas and towns in these states have repeatedly come under significant banditry activities and captivities. Today, the preponderance of these activities is such that there is no state in this area that is not affected. Banditry in the north-western region of Nigeria has risen to an alarming proportion and the perpetrators are locals who are well-known within their communities and states. Their names have elicited terror, gruesome killings, rape, ransom, destruction and rustling. This paper seeks to expose the connection between these popular terrorists via their names in relation to their acts of criminality.

Keywords: Banditry, Kachallas, Metonymy, Moniker

INTRODUCTION

An Insight Into Banditry

Most local areas and major towns in the north-west region of Nigeria – Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Niger, Katsina and Kaduna are currently under the captivity of bandits. In the last eight (8) years, there is no any sector of livelihood of the people of these states that has not been affected negatively (Adetayo, 2023) by the nefarious activities of these bandits with their leaders known as “Kachallas” (commanders). These brutal activities have affected education, economic stability, governance and regional security (Amnesty International, 2022).

One of the greatest consequences of these criminal acts is displacement. Over 70,000 people were displaced across the region between 2020 and 2023 (UNHCR, 2023).

It might be right to assert that, the activities of some of these terrorist are intertwined with their names – the gruesome murders, rapes, destruction, arson, ambush and cattle rustling attributed to Turji, Muhindinge, Kutika, Rugga, Arushe, Sububu and many more are as dreadful as their names suggests.

The psychological effect of banditry on the victims is unimaginable. experiences of rape, torture, hunger and abuse have left the victims with post-traumatic effect, depression and anxiety that would probably linger in their memory forever, (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

LITERATURE REPORT

Banditry in North-West Nigeria

Search Lab A.I (2023) defines banditry as a type of organized crime that involves violence and stealing. It can also refer to the activities of bandits, who are outlaws who commit crimes like robbery, kidnapping and murder.

A bandit is a person who engages in banditry as an outlaw typically using threat or violence (Wikipedia, 2023). Banditry in Northern Nigeria has become an unending crisis claiming many lives on daily bases in

Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Niger and Kaduna States. The vulnerability of this heinous crime has had profound effect on the lives of millions (Adetayo, 2023). Kidnappings, cattle rustling, village raids, highway robbery have left a devastating impact on the ways of life, trade, economy, education and safety and security of the region (Amnesty International, 2023).

According to ‘answers to peoples’ questions’ on Google, there are an estimated 30,000 bandits spread across North-West Nigeria, ranging in sizes from 10 to 1,000 fighters. As of December, 2022, 1,087,875 individuals have been displayed in rural communities by bandits.

Although the recruitment of people into banditry might be extended beyond states affected, most of the leaders (also known as “Kachallas” or commanders are from the north-west). It might also be correct to observe that most of these leaders started these crimes within their domains or states of origin and later spreading the mayhem and brutality to other neighboring states on the pretext of vengeance or retaliation in the fall-out with the government or the herder-farmer clashes.

Moniker

Is a nick name or pet name for a person (often a shortened version of a person’s given name) (Vocabulary.com, 2025).

Merriam Webster dictionary (2025) defines Moniker as an informal word used for a name or nick name.

Metonymy

Is regarded as the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant (Vocabulary.com.2023).

Merriam-Webster dictionary. 2025 defined it as “a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated.”

Assertively, Monikers such as Turji, Arushe, Rugga, Sububu Dan Karami, Duru etc. are associated with terror, cruelty, inhumanity, destruction, highway robbery, village raids and kidnappings which have left devastating effects on the ways of life of many towns and villages, destroyed kinship and economic activities.

According to (Amnesty International, 2022), “the devastating impact of these activities transcends the immediate victims, affecting education, economic stability, governance and regional security.”

The immediate consequence of these crimes is the destruction of the settlement towns and villages of the perpetrators - as it is a fact that, majority of these criminals are from this region (i.e. north-west). Specifically, the most notorious of these bandits are said to be from Sokoto and Zamfara States from where these heinous crimes began all in the name of “Vengeance” against the government cum security forces who were alleged to have connived against the Fulani herdsmen.

It might also be true that, all of these bandits have proper names given to them at birth (which are hardly known to people), but it is their Monikers that instills fears, fright, horror, alarm and panic in the minds of their victims and rival gangs.

One of the most notorious of these bandits leaders who has defied arrest and punishment by the government is Bello Turji – probably the most feared and organized in perpetrating banditry and killings (including security personnel) in large numbers.

BANDITRY AND METONYMY

- (1) **Bello Turji:** - Born in Zamfara, in Shinkafi Local Government in 1994 only 31 years, but he is the most dreaded. He operates mostly in Sokoto, Zamfara and Niger States. Turji, literarily meaning “Resilience”, sends chills and shivers through the spine of his victims considering his escapades. In terms of atrocities, he is probably the most dangerous, most feared and said to have killed more people than any other bandit leader. His Moniker “Turji” (resilience) is probably befitting of him considering his daring escapades and resilience to arrest.
- (2) **Dogo gidado – “gide” (The loved one):** - “Gide” is believed to be the shortened form of his Fulani pet name, “Gidado” Literarily translated as “the loved one”. He is also from Zamfara State and is a vicious terror kingpin involved in much abduction in Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger and Kebbi States. He was recently killed in an ambush by security forces. While Monikers can also be positive, his Moniker contributes to negativity and feelings of shame, bullying and even a sense of humiliation.

- (3) **Halilu Sububu:-** A person referred to as “Sububu” in Hausa palance is referred to as a clown – This name (Sububu) could also refer to the name of the bandit’s village. The name could mean a dense forest. He was in Shikafi Local Government of Zamfara state. He was said to be a petty thief as a child who specializes in stealing chickens. As a bandit leader, he was said to control over 1,000 men and several warlords. He is also a notorious arms supplier who had raided villages and killed an unspecified number of people including security personnel. His atrocities extend to Niger State. He met his waterloo on 12th, September, 2024, via an ambush by the military. It is ironic that a child considered to be a clown grew up to be one of the most dreaded armed leaders in Nigeria.
- (4) **Dan Karami – (Smallish):** - Is another bandit terror kingpin who is dreaded for his mercilessness. He operates within Zamfara, Katsina and Kaduna States and is believed to specialize in rival-gang war and was said to have killed other bandit leaders like Kachalla Danchaki. Despite his name, his notoriety is wide and terrifying.
- (5) **Arushe – (To Destroy):** - Not popular with any other name, Arushe is a ruthless bandit leader who enjoys destruction (as the name suggest) rustling and killings. Going by his name, he is one of the dreaded bandits in the north-west.
- (6) **Bello “Rugga” (settlement or Hamlet):** - Another bandit commander who is notorious for attacking villages and towns around Zamfara State. He has destroyed many settlements and is notorious for rustling and kidnappings. He was arrested in Gummi Local Government in October, 2021.
- (7) **Sani Mohindige:** - A feared bandit leader known for leading deadly attacks, abductions and sexual violence in Northern Zamfara State. He was killed in Zamfara in September, 2024.
- (8) **Surajo Mamman (Kutaku):** - A 50 year old bandit kingpin who is the second in command to “Kachalla” Mohindige and who has lost count of the number of persons he has killed while making millions of naira as proceeds from ransom. He was busted, arrested and charged to court by the police in September, 2021.

CONCLUSION

There could be many more “Kachallas” – bandit leaders with Monikers or names that serve as metonymy, but who are hidden or unknown. But the above mentioned bandit kingpins are so popular that their atrocities are scary and never before witnessed in the history of Northern Nigeria.

Many of these metonymical names could be attributed to the background of these dare-devil bandits -- as most localities in Northern Nigeria name their children based on cultural norms, situations in which the children were born, locations, etc.

Although, these local names were given to children with good intent initially, the names later turned out to be an irony to the individuals, their parents and siblings, communities and the society at large.

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