

Yasir A. Quadri¹
University of Ilorin
Nigeria

Original scientific paper
UDC 323:2(669)

THE TIJĀNIYYAH SŪFĪ BROTHERHOOD AND THE NIGERIAN PARTY POLITICS IN RETROSPECT

Abstract

Religion appears to be one of the factors that determine the political situation of a country. It has played a significant role in shaping the form of Nigerian politics. The objective of this paper is to examine the participation of a religious body in the Nigerian party politics. The body is the Tijāniyyah, a *Sūfī* (mystical) brotherhood and one of the major Islamic mystical organisations in the country, the other being the Qādiriyyah. Historical and phenomenological methods were adopted for this purpose. The study revealed that the involvement of the members of the Tijaniyyah in politics was circumstantial and reactionary to the unfriendly attitude of the Qadiri-dominated Sokoto Council. It concluded that intolerance and suppression of a particular religious group could lead to political instability and social unrest, hence the need for the existing political parties and most especially the ruling party to accommodate others irrespective of their disparity.

Keywords: Tijāniyyah, Qādiriyyah, Politics, Nigeria, Religion, Sufism

Introduction

Religion has been playing significant roles in the political set-up of Nigeria. Indeed, it has been explored for political purposes particularly in the western region of the country. It could be said that the Action Group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo was not comfortable with the formation of the National Muslim League (NML) as a political party in the region, hence within a year of its existence, the NML was kicked against and the ruling government in the region manipulated its way to ensure the death of the party. This was so in view of the feeling of Chief Awolowo that the Muslims would massively vote against AG., his party, for deposing the then Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Adeniran Adeyemi II in 1956 and support a party of the Muslims. He therefore banned the activities of the Muslim party. The manipulation of the Muslims in the Western regional politics

1 Quadri Yasir Anjola is a Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. He was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* between 2011-2018 and Chairman Editorial Board, *Centrepoin Journal* (Humanities Edition), University of Ilorin, 2012-2018. He also served as the Chairman, Library and Publications Committee, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria between 2012-2018, and as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts between 1996-1998. Contact E-mail: yaquadri@unilorin.edu.ng

could also be felt in the formation of the United Muslim Council within the caucus of the Action Group purposely to convince Muslims that Awolowo was not anti-Islam. Prominent AG members like Alhaji D.S. Adegbenro, Alhaji S.O. Gbadamosi, and Alhaji Y.O. Ojikutu were chosen as leaders of the Council.² To convince other Muslims that Chief Awolowo was not against Islam, his Muslim supporters were said to have arranged for him a special visit to the Lagos Central Mosque where prayers were offered for him and his party. Jami'u observed some non-Muslim politicians who equally visited the Lagos Mosque for special prayers as a ploy for political achievements. Such included Sir Gilbert Carter, the Colonial Governor in 1894 and Herbert Marcoulay in 1931 with members of his Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP).³

Furthermore, in order to use religion to lure Muslims to vote for his party, Chief Awolowo appointed Alhaji Adegbenro as the new Premier as a result of political imbroglio between him and Chief S.L. Akintola who was not ready to succumb to the political machinations of Chief Awolowo. Other means through which advantage of Muslims' population was exploited for political achievements included donation of cash and materials for construction of mosques. This was true of Chief Awolowo who was said to have granted the request of the Muslims for land to build a mosque at the Oja Oba area of Ibadan when he was the Premier. Chief Awolowo was also regarded as the first Nigerian political leader in Nigeria to involve government in the affairs of pilgrimage to Makkah by establishing the Western Region Pilgrims Welfare Board in May 1958.⁴

The above are few scenes of manipulation of religion for political purposes in Nigeria. However, while the Muslims were generally treated and lured into politics, members of the Tijaniyyah *Sūfi* Order were initially indifferent to politics probably because of the nature of Sufism which emphasises more on spiritual development than other mundane activities. Consequently, they realised that their involvement in politics was also significant in the face of victimisation they experienced from their rivals in the sister brotherhood, the Qādiriyyah.

Involvement of Tijaniyyah *Sūfi* Brotherhood in Party Politics

The Tijāniyyah is primarily a *sūfi* order which is concerned with man's spiritual uplift and in fact, many Muslims in Nigeria belong to it for that purpose.⁵ Since the late 1820's when ʿUmar b. Saʿīd Tall Al-Fūtī (1794-1864) propagated the Tijāniyyah among the Hausa, the Fulani, and the Kanuri, people have accepted the

2 Sulaiman Jamiú, *Towards Diffusing Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam and Politics in Nigeria 1903 - 1983*, Lavgark Investment Ltd., Ilorin, Nigeria, 2012, p. 153.

3 Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1963, pp. 88-98.

4 Sulaiman Jamiú, *Towards Diffusing Religious Tension in the Polity*, p. 148.

5 For the detail about the Tijāniyyah, see: Jamil Abun-Nasr, *The Tijāniyyah: A Sufi Order in the modern world*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965. See also: Yasir Quadri, *The Tijāniyyah in Nigeria: A Case Study*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1981.

Tijāniyyah as a supererogatory function that will draw them closer to Allah. It has to be mentioned that at the time of ʿUmar Al-Fūṭī's visit, he has not assumed his political role, neither has he launched his *Jihād*. This may explain why the members of the Tijāniyyah in Nigeria were apolitical and unmilitant unlike ʿUmar Al-Fūṭī who did not only call for the Muslim rule in the French West Africa Sub-region but also carried out a physical *Jihad* to enable him materialise his political ambition.⁶

However, the apolitical attitude of the members of the Tijāniyyah in Nigeria did not remain permanent. They came out of it and became active politically since independence. It is pertinent at this juncture to mention that there were two factions of the Tijāniyyah in Nigeria. The first faction is the one led by ʿUmar Al-Fūṭī. It has been described by Paden as the Traditional Tijānīs.⁷ The other faction which is given the epithet of Reformed Tijānīs also by Paden⁸ comprises those who were initiated by another Shaykh into the Tijāniyyah. He was Shaykh Ibrahim Niass (d.1975) of Kaolack, Senegal who first came to Nigeria in 1937 and popularised the *tariqah* (the Tijaniyyah) in the late 1940's and the early 1950's through his numerous visits. His followers are known as *Yan Wazifah*⁹ in Northern Nigeria. It is this latter group that became politically conscious out of circumstance. Henceforth, the word Tijānīs (members of the Tijāniyyah) in this work shall refer to this group unless otherwise stated.

Political consciousness is not a tenet of the Tijāniyyah. It is neither aroused in the members (*murīdūn*) nor inculcated in them. This probably explains why all the members of the Tijāniyyah in Nigeria were not actively involved in party politics. A section of them, however, joined a political party out of circumstance. In 1956, the Tijānīs in eastern Sokoto a town in the North-western Nigeria and the seat of the caliphate founded by ʿUthman b. Fūdī in the nineteenth century, established a link with the then Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). This link later extended to other places such as Gombe and Adamawa.¹⁰ The link, however, was not formal. This informal association between the Tijānīs and NEPU grew out of circumstance as we have mentioned earlier. The Tijānīs in eastern Sokoto adopted it as a measure to express their dissatisfaction with the Sultan of Sokoto, Sir Abubakar Siddiq III, whom they perceived as a patron of another political party, the Northern People Congress (NPC). They would not like to be in the same political party with him.

6 ʿUmar b. Saʿīd Tall al-Fūṭī was a great Tijāniyyah leader who travelled widely to spread the *tariqah* especially in West Africa. He also carried out *Jihad* in Guinea, Senegal, and Mali. See: Martin B., *Muslim Brotherhood in Nineteenth-century Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 69-98.

7 See: John Paden, *Religions and Political Culture in Kano*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, p. 69.

8 Ibidem.

9 "Yan Wazifah" means "people of Wazifah". *Wazifah* is one of the daily prayers in the Tijāniyyah. For details about the *Wazifah*, see: Yasir Quadri, Some Rites of the Tijāniyyah Examined, *Al-Fikr*, The Journal of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Vol. IV, No.1, 1983, pp. 52-60.

10 See: Sylvester Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition, Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946-1966*, Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 397.

The relationship between the Tijānīs and the Sultan which became strained was caused by the attitude of the latter to the former because the Sultan prevented the Tijāniyyah from flourishing. It has to be stated that he inherited the problem right from the time when it was claimed that Muhammad Bello (d.1837), a son of Shaykh ʿUthman b.Fūdī, who was also the immediate successor to the Shaykh, was initiated into the Tijāniyyah by ʿUmar Al-Fūtī. Gidado b.Lima, the *Wazīr* (prime minister) of Muhammad Bello was swift in refuting the claim, and asserted that Muhammad Bello remained a Qādirī (a member of the Qādiriyyah Sūfī brotherhood) throughout his life.¹¹ He even went further to threaten anybody from Sokoto who ventured to abandon the Qādiriyyah for the Tijāniyyah.¹² Since that time, it has been the policy of Sokoto to protect the Qādiriyyah and prevent the Tijāniyyah from consolidating its gains.

In the light of the above, the Sultan adopted some measures to suppress the Tijāniyyah. For example, the Tijānīs were not allowed to build *Zāwiyyah*, their spiritual centre. When one was eventually constructed, the Sultan ordered its demolition by the Tijānīs themselves.¹³ In addition to this, they were prevented from holding any congregational rites such as the *Wazīfah*, a daily prayer in the *taṭīqah*. The Sultan considered such a religious exercise noisy and disturbing to neighbours. He sentenced some of the Tijānīs who defaulted to prison. For example, in Gusau, some twenty-eight people were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging between two and three months. This particular case happened when the Sultan paid a visit to Gusau and found the Tijānīs there holding the *Wazīfah* in a private building. He ordered that they should be arrested and sent to Sokoto for trial.¹⁴

It was not only in Gusau that the offending Tijānīs were arrested and tried, it occurred in other places within the Sokoto Province. For example, in Eastern Sokoto, it occurred on a higher magnitude, which was considered disturbing by the Colonial Resident of the province who said:

I must emphasize that we must not interfere in this matter being purely a religious one. Between August 24th and September 5th this year, there were about seventy to eighty arrests in Eastern Sokoto of Yan Wazifah, mainly for doing noisy worship in their houses. These arrests were disturbing to the Regional Government but Sokoto N.A. (Native Authority) felt justified in making them.¹⁵

11 See: Lima B. Gidado, *al-Kashf wa 'l-bayān 'alā 'ahwāl al-Sayyid Muhammad Bello*, (University of Ibadan Library (82/179), Folio 2. See also: Last Murray, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Longman, London, 1967, pp. 215-216.

12 Gidado, *al-Kashf wa 'l-bayān*. . .

13 This is contained in a letter from the Acting Colonial Resident Sokoto Province dated 16th August, 1949 to the District Officers of the Gwandu and Argungu informing them of the Sultan's decision on Tijānīs mosques. See, "Tijāniyya file" (No. 2/17/124) History Bureau, Sokoto.

14 "Tijāniyyah file" Report 1956/57 on the Tijāniyya dated 25th August, 1957

15 Ibidem.

All the above mentioned measures taken by the Sultan against the Tijānis did not improve relations between him and the Tijānis, instead, things continued to worsen on a wider dimension. The Tijānis embarked on a new approach; they went on the offensive. The result of such an attitude was, for example, a public disorder in 1956 which left four people dead. Riots occurred in Isa and Zurmi districts of Sokoto Province which were traced to some Tijāni groups which tried to prevent the Qādirīs from performing their evening prayers and the *ʿId* prayers.¹⁶ Consequently, many Tijānis were arrested and imprisoned. Mallam Aminu Kano, the leader of the NEPU, came in apparently because of the link between his party and the Tijānis. Mallam Aminu Kano wrote to the Acting Governor of the Northern Region requesting him to set up a commission of enquiry into the circumstances that led to the death of four people and the consequence arrest and punishment of two hundred and forty people whom he regarded as innocent and whom he claimed, were either NEPU supporters or Tijānis. The request expectedly was turned down by the Acting Governor.¹⁷

The Northern People's Congress seemed to have realised the potential danger which the 'alliance' between the Tijānis and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) might constitute. Hence, it made some attempts to weaken it. For example, a meeting was held in the Sokoto Colonial Residence on the 30th September, 1957 which was attended by the Sultan of Sokoto, Waziri of Sokoto, Alkalin Alkalai (chief judge) of Sokoto and the Premier of the Northern Region among others. In the meeting, the Premier, Al-hajj Ahmadu Bello (d. 1966), commented on the situation and said:

...the alliance in Eastern Sokoto between the Tijāniyya and NEPU was fortuitous and unnatural because Shaykh Ibrahim and the other Principal Tijāniyya leaders were no friends of NEPU... every effort should be made to break the unnatural and potentially dangerous alliance in Eastern Sokoto between Tijāniyya and NEPU.¹⁸

The fears of the Premier were shared by others in the meeting and they sought solutions to the danger posed by the alliance to the continued dominance of the NPC in Eastern Sokoto. The meeting later made the following decisions among others:

Leading Tijāni personalities should be asked to state that the extremist Tijāni practices were not essential to the Tijāniyya form of worship,

16 See: Bryan Sharwood, *Recollections of British Administrations in Cameroon and Northern Nigeria 1921-1957*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1969, pp. 329-333. See also, *Nigerian Citizen*, May 16, 1956, p. 1.

17 See: "The Tijāniyyah files." Aminu Kano letter was dated 10th October, 1956, while the Acting Governor's reply was 16th of the same month.

18 See the minutes of the meeting held in the Residency, Sokoto on 30th September, 1957 contained in "The Tijāniyyah file", No, 2/17/124, History Bureau, Sokoto.

and that such practices were associated with NEPU and were banned in Sokoto Emirate because they would lead to a breach of the peace. Every effort should be made to separate religion from politics and in particular Tijānism (sic) from NEPU.¹⁹

It is pertinent to examine this decision especially the idea of separating religion from politics. There is no doubt that this decision was made out of exigency; it was made to weaken the alliance between the Tijānis and the NEPU. The decision was not based on the tenets of Islam. A look at the composition of those who made the decision reveals that it was predominantly Muslims who were not the ordinary men in the society but the important and the influencing ones. Furthermore, it was a decision of a Council which is significant in the history of Islam in Nigeria because Sokoto was the headquarters of the Islamic government established by the Sokoto Jihadists in the nineteenth century.²⁰ In view of all these, an uninquiring mind may easily conclude that Islam and politics are incompatible. Contrary to that, the history of Islam invalidates the view of the Council because such a view is not the postulate of the religion.

The above scenario was also the case in the Western Region of Nigeria where Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the then Western region vehemently kicked against the establishment of the National Muslim League as a political party which he saw as a threat to his political authority. He therefore insisted on enacting a law which would make it a punishable offence to use religion against any opponent during electioneering campaigns. He also vowed to make it an agenda in the 1957 constitution conference so that it would be constitutionally backed up to avoid the experience of India where the emergence of the Indian Muslim League led to the partition of the subcontinent and which eventually gave birth to the State of Pakistan in 1947. This forced the Muslims to immediately change the name of the party to National Emancipation Party.²¹

Islam cannot be separated from politics, nor is it possible to separate politics from Islam. An attempt to create a barrier between the two in the life of a Muslim will cripple the religion and restrict its grip on the Muslims. The religion will be unable to function properly. In fact, it will create a dichotomy between the spiritual and mundane life of a Muslim which, strictly speaking, is not possible in Islam. It is because Islam achieves in the harmony of religion and politics that it advocates theocracy which was put into practice by the Prophet Muhammad, while he was in Medina, and his successors, too, followed his example. Watt wrote in his *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*:

19 Ibidem.

20 For a detail about the Jihad see, Martin, B. *Muslim Brotherhood in Nineteenth Century Africa*, pp. 13-36, and Last Murray, *The Sokoto Caliphate*.

21 Saheed Rufai, The Interplay of Power and Religion in Nigeria from Colonization to Democratization, *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2011, p. 170.

Islam provided an economic, social and political system, the Pax-Islamica... The Arabs of that day almost certainly thought of the system as a whole, and were incapable of distinguishing in thought its economic, political and religious aspects. The supreme question for them was whether to enter the system or to remain outside. They could not have the economic and political benefits of membership without the religious profession of belief in God and His messenger; and a profession of belief of this kind made no sense unless a man was a member of Muhammad's community, which was political as well as religious.²²

It was not only during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors that Islamic government was adopted by the Muslims. This has happened in various countries including a part of the present-day Nigeria. Shaykh ʿUthman b. Fūdī and his co-Jihadists fought for the establishment of an Islamic government, and in fact, it was established by them in 1804. The Jihad leaders did not only establish an Islamic government; they also wrote on the need for Islamic government as well as how the Muslims should govern themselves. For example ʿAbdullah b. Fūdī wrote *Diyāʾ al-Siyāsah*²³ ("Light on Politics"). He also wrote *Diyāʾ al-hukkām*²⁴ ("Light for rulers"). The first work is an exposition on the art of politics while the second work deals with statecraft.

We have gone to this extent in discussing this matter in order to correct the wrong impression which the decision of the Sokoto Council on religion and politics might create in the minds of the people. Another aspect of the decision reached which was quoted in the preceding paragraphs is that: "leading Tijāni personalities should be asked to state that the extremist Tijāni practices were not essential to the Tijāniyya form of worship". This decision was executed by the Premier of the Northern Nigeria. In doing this, he dispatched an emissary to Shaykh Ibrahim Niass and promised "to continue to seek his support for moderate as opposed to extreme Tijānism."²⁵ The Premier also visited Eastern Sokoto from the 22nd to 25th October, 1957 with the main objective of meeting the Tijāniyyah leaders. For example, on the 23rd of the month, he met the leading members of the *tarīqah* in Gusau among whom was Malam Balarabe Gusau the most prominent leader of the Tijāniyyah in the area. The Premier discussed with them and appealed to them to separate politics from the Tijāniyyah.

22 William Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p. 225.

23 A Copy of this manuscript is available at the Sokoto Divisional Library, the Sokoto Town Council Library, and the National Archives, Kaduna, Nigeria.

24 The manuscript has been published. See: ʿAbd Allah Ibn Muhammad, *Diyāʾ ul-hukkām*, Maktab Nūlā, 1956, pp. 1-134. The manuscript has also been studied at doctoral level. See: ʿAbdul Mutallib Ahmad Muhammad, *Diyāʾ ul-hukkām fimā lahum wa ʿalayhim minal ʾahkām, lish-shaykh*; ʿAbdullah fūdī: *Dirāṭun wa taḥqīqun*, Ph.D. Thesis, *Kuliyatu Sharīʿah wa dirāsātul-islāyiyah, Jāmiʿatu ifriqiyyā al-ʿālamīyyah, Khurtūm, Sudan, 2003*.

25 See the Minutes of the meeting held in the Colonial Residency, Sokoto on the 30th September, 1957, "Tijāniyyah file".

Effects of the Tijānīs' involvement in Politics

The Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) did not underestimate the seemingly political influence of the Tijānīs and NEPU. The Sokoto Council relaxed a decision which was taken in 1956 whereby the Tijānīs were prohibited from holding any "noisy" religious rite in the *Zāwiyah*. This decision, we would recall, had earlier earned some Tijānīs jail terms. The new decision now states:

Tijānīs can now worship in their own way in private houses or in *Zawiyah* attached to their houses. In the past any undue noise within a compound where a *wazifah* service was being held was treated as an act likely to lead to a breach of peace by disturbing the neighbours but, in view of the improvement in relations, the meeting agreed that such action should no longer be taken.²⁶

The measures adopted by the Premier and Sokoto Council seem to have produced some positive results because the Tijānīs changed their unfriendly attitude to the political party in power, the NPC, by not campaigning against it.²⁷ The change in relation was due to the religious freedom granted to the *Sūfi* group.

It is pertinent to observe that the Tijānīs went into politics because the interest of their *tariqah* was jeopardised and they wanted to gain religious freedom. On the other hand, if the religious interest of a Tijānī is not at stake, his loyalty tends to be more with his political party than the *tariqah* and at this stage the *Muqaddam* (a spiritual leader in the Tijāniyyah) may not have any political influence on his followers. An attempt on the part of such a *Muqaddam* to influence his followers politically may have a negative effect on him. An example of such a case happened in Kano in 1956 when Shaykh Tijāni Usman (1916-1975) who was a leading Tijānī *Muqaddam* not only in Kano but in some other parts of Northern Nigeria used the occasion of a public *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān) session to forbid his disciples from joining the NEPU because his interest was said to be in the NPC. Consequently, according to I.A. Tahir, the *tafsīr* session of Shaykh Tijāni Usman was deserted and his NEPU supporting students threw effluent from gutters into his house.²⁸

The incident described above does not mean that the Tijānīs in Kano will not defend the course of their *tariqah* if it is considered threatened. The reaction of the Tijānīs in Kano to the deposition of an Emir of Kano in person of Al-hajj Mu-

26 This is contained in a letter sent to the District Officer, Gwandu Division, Birnin Kebbi, from Sokoto. It is dated 21st October, 1957. See: "Tijaniyyah File".

27 Shaykh Balarabe Gusau, the head of the Reformed Tijāniyyah, informed me of this development in his *Zāwiyah* in Gusau, on the 20th of December 1979.

28 Ibrahim Tahir, *Scholars, sufis, saints and capitalists in Kano 1904-1974: the pattern of bourgeois revolution in an Islamic society*, Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge University, 1977, p. 483.

hammad Sanusi is a classical example. The Emir like many other traditional rulers in the Northern Nigeria was not only a member of the NPC, he also made efforts in getting his people to support the political party. The reason for this action is obvious. The party, for instance, believed in the institution of traditional rulers and the Premier of the Northern Nigeria, Al-hajj Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto once said:

...As long as the party (NPC) remained in power, it shall ensure that the chiefs were well represented in the Regional Executive Council, and the House of Chiefs would continue to be part of the legislature.²⁹

The NEPU ideological orientation on the other hand aimed at imposing a new type of structure upon the society which would transfer power to the masses rather than leaving it in the hands of the traditional rulers. Commenting on NEPU and traditional system, Whitaker says:

Since NEPU's devotion to modernism was essentially unqualified by any desire to retain a traditional system, which the party regarded as archaic and unjust, its positions on Nigerian and African issues were free of regional or national particularism.³⁰

Al-hajj Sanusi was no doubt a friend of the Sardauna. He was also an old active member of the NPC before he succeeded his father as the Emir. In 1954, Sanusi was appointed by the Sardauna to his cabinet as a Minister without Portfolio (an office he held until his deposition). In spite of the friendly atmosphere that existed between Al-hajj Sanusi and the Sardauna, the two of them eventually fell apart. Many views have been expressed to explain the causes of the conflict.³¹ The Tijānis in Kano in their own view saw the deposition of Al-hajj Sanusi as a product of conflict of personality and culmination of the conflict between the Tijāniyyah and the Qādiriyyah in Sokoto. It is apt to mention that Al-hajj Sanusi was appointed *Khalīfah* (representative) in Nigeria by Shaykh Ibrahim Niass Kacolack, Senegal. Al-hajj Sanusi used to accompany Shaykh Ibrahim on pilgrimage to Makkah. In addition, Al-hajj Sanusi regarded the Shaykh as his spiritual mentor while he popularised his fame not only in Kano but also in many other parts of Northern Nigeria.

The Sardauna was said to have not taken kindly to Sanusi's actions in relation to Shaykh Ibrahim. Sardauna felt that such actions tended to undermine the religious authority of Sokoto and that people's attention had started to be shifting from his great grand-father, Shaykh Uthman b. Fūdī to Shaykh Ibrahim Niass. The relationship between the Sardauna and Al-hajj Sanusi became worse

29 Umar M., *Politico-Religious Power Struggle in a Northern Emirate: The Case of the Amir Sanusi of Kano*, Long Essay, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1973, p. 44.

30 Sylvester Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition* . . . p. 407.

31 *Ibidem*, p. 68. See also: John Paden, *Religions and Political Culture* . . . p. 267.

due to some political allegations leveled against Shaykh Ibrahim. While informing all Colonial Residents in the Northern Region, the Premier's office, Kaduna, in February, 1962 said, *inter alia*:

... to bring to your notice the existing allegations against the activities of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass and the Tijāni Mallams, who could under the guise of religion bring political confusion and division into the North. Shaykh Ibrahim's activities as head of the Tijāni sect are alleged by some sources to be guided by political aspirations. ...informed sources support the contention that given the opportunity, political opportunists such as Shaykh Ibrahim would not hesitate to interfere in the political and religious affairs of a country.. both Shaykh Ibrahim and the extremist members of the Tijāniyyah should be carefully reported on.³²

The above mentioned allegations against Shaykh Ibrahim are indeed very serious but one would need further corroboration from neutral sources before accepting them. However, the only event which the present writer can point to as lending some credence to these allegations is the unfavourable reaction of the Shaykh to the outcome of a commission of inquiry, which we shall discuss soon. Nevertheless, it appears that the allegations were probably designed to aggravate the existing severed relationship between the Premier and the ex-Emir of Kano, Al-hajj Sanusi because none of our informants agreed that the Shaykh had any political motive in Nigeria.³³ Also, there is no indication in all the files at our disposal to confirm the allegations. In fact, our Tijāni informants saw the Shaykh as their religious leader who never discussed the Nigerian political affairs with them except during the Nigerian civil war (1967 – 1970) when he urged them to support the Federal Government in the name of peace and integrity of the country. We would recall that the Premier mentioned that he sent an emissary to Shaykh Ibrahim to interfere in the politico-religious imbroglio in Eastern Sokoto in 1956. Although the Tijānis maintain that the Shaykh did not send any message to them. The Premier, Sardauna might not believe this, he seems to have thought that the Shaykh's intervention was one of the factors that formalised relations between his political party, NPC and the Tijānis.

We shall now examine the outcome of a commission of inquiry (Muffet Commission) which was instituted by the then Northern Government in September 1962, to look into the deteriorating financial position of the former Kano Native Authority. By late September, certain Kano officials, who were notable supporters of Sanusi were suspended from offices and were restricted to outside Kano. On December 13, Emir Sanusi appeared before the Commission to testify

32 See: "The Tijāniyyah file". The letter was dated 6th February, 1962.

33 Many leading Tijānis in the Northern Region were interviewed. They include Shaykh Balarabe Gusau, Alhaji Mudi Salga of Kano, Shaykh Tahir Usman Bauchi and Malam Umaru Yahuza of Zaria. They were interviewed in their respective *Zāwiyyah* February 1980.

on the allegations which were brought against his administration. Umar has this report on the inquiry:

The Commission of Inquiry found that grave state of maladministration and financial mismanagement existed throughout the whole fabric of the Native Authority... Allocation of plots has been grossly misused. There were serious cases of fraud in some departments.³⁴

Umar went further in his report. He said:

.. to make way for reforms to be implemented for the improvement of the Native Authority, on the 28th of March, 1963, Sir Muhammad Sanusi, K.B.E., C.M.G., tendered his resignation from the office of the Emir (amir) of Kano.³⁵

A government statement also adds this:

It was necessary for Alhaji Sir Muhammad Sanusi to take this step in order to make the way clear for reforms which the government intends to carry out in Kano Emirate, following considerations of the report of the recent Commission of Inquiry.³⁶

Even though Al-hajj Sanusi abdicated his post as a result of the Muffet Commission of Inquiry, very many Tijānis in Kano saw the Inquiry as a calculated attempt by the Premier to cut the growing religious power of the Emir who was also the *Khalifah* of Shaykh Ibrahim in Nigeria. Consequently, the Shaykh himself refused to visit Nigeria until after the 1966 Military coup in which the Premier was killed. This action of the Shaykh can be viewed from two perspectives. In the first place, one can see it as a sign of sympathy for his *Khalifah* in Nigeria. Secondly, it can be seen as a sign of support for Al-hajj Sanusi which indirectly means an opposition to the Regional government and in effect it tended to suggest that the political allegations made against the Shaykh may be true.

The supporters of the deposed Emir adopted a political strategy; they formed a political party, the Kano Peoples Party (KPP) to express their dissatisfaction to the Premier and manifest their support for Sanusi. This new party was largely supported by the Tijānis who sought the reinstatement of the Emir.³⁷ In order to be more effective, KPP later merged with the opposition party, the NEPU in January, 1964. Mallam Aminu Kano (d.1983), the leader of NEPU seized the opportunity to strengthen his political stand. In September 1964 he flew to Kaolack, Senegal, for consultation with Shaykh Ibrahim. Paden's report on this trip is very relevant. He says:

This was widely interpreted as an attempt to consolidate Kano

34 Umar M., *Politico-Religious Power Struggle in a Northern Emirate*, p. 30.

35 Ibidem, p. 58.

36 *Daily Mail*, March 29, 1963, p. 4, Kano, Nigeria.

37 See: John Paden, *Religions and Political Culture*... p. 182; See also Umar, *Politico-Religious Power*... p. 17.

opposition to the Sardauna. In the December elections, only one of the Kano *Muqaddams* of Reformed Tijāniyyah supported the Sardauna.³⁸

In the meantime, the ex-Emir went into exile at Azare now in Bauchi State. Many people visited him to give him a moral support, and pray *salāt al-jumu'ah* with him. The Tijānīs in particular used to go there regularly and perform the *tariqah's* rites such as *wazifah* and *Dhikr al-jumu'ah* with him.

During the 1979 electioneering campaigns a new political party named People's Redemption Party (PRP) under the leadership of Mallam Aminu Kano promised to release the ex-Emir from exile and to allow him to settle wherever he desired. The party won the elections in Kano and Kaduna States and formed governments in the states.³⁹ About two months after the Party came to power, it fulfilled its promise and the ex-Emir returned to his family house at Wudil near Kano.⁴⁰

With the failure of the Action Group to win the 1959 General Election, there was every probability that Chief Awolowo attempted to explore the religio-political imbroglio in Sokoto and Kano to penetrate the north. It was said that while he was on a visit to Ghana in 1961, Chief Awolowo met Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass of Kaolakh, Senegal, through one of his party stalwarts, Alhaji Ibrahim Imam who impressed him that through the Shaykh, he could influence members of the Tijaniyyah brotherhood in the Northern Region to embrace the Action Group. This step however did not materialise as Shaykh Ibrahim was said to have earlier written a letter to Sir Ahmadu Bello, the then Premier of the Northern Region "urging him to remain in power so that he could continue his religious reforms as his great grand-father Usman Dan Fodio did."⁴¹

Without any iota of doubt, The Tijāniyyah had become a dominant group to reckon with by the 1960s especially in Kano and its suburbs. However, the incessant conflicts between the Reformed Tijaniyyah and the Qādiriyyah during the 1950s and 1960s had their devastating consequences on the practice of Sufism generally. As such, the value of the *Sūfī* tradition became a matter of public debates by the late 1970s when Shaykh Ismaila Idris founded the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition, popularly called *Jamā'at Izalatil-Bid'ah wa Iqamat as-Sunnah* (the *Izala*). This group considered the inherited traditions of the *Sufi* orders as *bida'* (innovations) and thus called for a return to the original teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The association of a one-time Grand Khadi (*Qādī*) of the Northern Region during the premier-

38 Ibidem, p. 182. The Reformed Tijaniyyah is the group of the disciples of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass which have been referred to in this work as the Tijānīs.

39 The Northern Region was divided into ten states in 1975 of which Kano is one.

40 See *New Nigeria*, Kaduna, (Nigeria) Monday 24th December, 1979 front page.

41 Sulaiman Jamiú, *Towards Diffusing Religious Tension in the Polity*... p. 157.

ship of Ahmadu Bello and a former protégé of the northern post-independence leader, Shaykh Abubakar Gumi with the *Izala* popularised it in the north. The rapid rate at which the *Izala* was operating and spreading was amazing and this forced the Tijaniyyah and the Qādiriyyah to re-assess their relationship with each other in order to create a united front against their common enemy, the *Izala*. Paden observed that there were incessant violent clashes between the *Izala* and the *Sufi* orders especially the Tijaniyyah in Kano.⁴²

The above notwithstanding, the re-introduction of Shari'ah by Zamfara State Governor, Ahmad Sani Yerima Bakura seemed to have neutralised the conflicts between the *Izala* and the *ahl al-tariqah*, as the two were unanimous while supporting the step. The institutionalisation of Shari'ah in some states in the Northern Nigeria was perceived by Ali Ahmad as a kind of safety net to "the unprecedented proselytization, televangelism and deployment of massive foreign religious personnel and fund into Nigeria" by the Christians.⁴³ Not minding numerous critiques by its antagonists, the initial success of the move as well as its acceptance by some other northern states made Muslims regardless of their affiliation associated with the step. Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji wrote thus on this:

Such concerns may have played a role, but it is unlikely that the introduction of Islamic law was a well-planned political move by the aggrieved political elite of northern Nigeria: the Sultan of Sokoto did not attend the inauguration ceremony. Only when enthusiastic reactions proved that Bakura had touched on widely held sentiments, and when he was even hailed as mujaddidi or renewer, a term usually reserved for Uthman dan Fodio, shari'a quickly became part of the political programme in several northern Nigerian states.⁴⁴

In addition to the above, Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji acknowledged active involvement of important scholars of *Sūfi* orders as well as members of the *Izala* in the Shari'ah implementation of some states in the north. Such personalities featured in some states' Shura Committee, Shari'ah Commission, the Hisbah Board, and the Zakat Commission. They therefore concluded that:

The wide appeal of these policies to Muslims of different backgrounds suggests that the stereotypical interpretation of African Islam as divided between 'tolerant' Sufis and 'radical' reformers only captures local debates and struggles at a very superficial level ... that the introduction of shari'a has also succeeded in the creation of structures for the

42 John Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC., 2005, pp. 60-62. See also: Yasir Quadri, The Qādiriyyah and the Tijaniyyah relations in Nigeria in the 20th century, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, 1984, pp. 15-30.

43 Ali Ahmad, Extension of Shari'ah in Northern Nigeria: Human Rights Implications for Non-Muslim Minorities, *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2005, p. 3.

44 Inas Nolte, et. al., *Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, International Development Department, University of Birmingham, Religions and Research Programme Working paper 39, 2009, p. 36.

debate and resolution of differences between Sufis and their most important critics, thus creating a powerful alliance of local – albeit only Muslim – religious groups.⁴⁵

The above notwithstanding, there are still conflicts between different groups, not only between the *Sūfīs* and the Izala but also between the Qādiriyyah and the Tijāniyyah orders themselves. For instance, Paden submitted that there were protests in Kano in 2003 and 2004 by representatives of the Qadiriyya, who felt that Shekarau the then Governor of Kano State, had discriminated against them in the appointment of the Shari‘ah Commission.⁴⁶

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has been reiterated that Islam and politics are compatible. No line of demarcation should be drawn between the two. The decision made in Sokoto in 1956 whereby Islam was to be insulated from politics is misleading as it has no basis in Islam. The political alliance between the Tijāniyyah and the Northern Elements Progressive Union, NEPU, was a product of circumstances which emanated as a reaction to the unfriendly attitude of the Qādiri-dominated Sokoto Council. No doubt, lack of religious freedom forced the members of the Tijāniyyah into politics not only to seek solace but also to embarrass the party in power, the Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC). Intolerance and lack of religious freedom in a country like Nigeria can lead to political instability and social unrest. No government at any level should show its interest in a particular religious body at the expense of others if it desires to enjoy the cooperation and allegiance of the populace. Likewise, no religious body should be prevented from surviving and flourishing as long as the tenets of such a body do not go against the general interest of the state.

45 Ibidem, p. 37.

46 John Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution*, p. 188.

References

- Abun-Nasr Jamil, *The Tijāniyyah: A Sufi Order in the modern world*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965.
- Ahmad Ali, Extension of Shari'ah in Northern Nigeria: Human Rights Implications for Non-Muslim Minorities, *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2005.
- ʿAbd Allah Ibn Muhammad, *Diyā'ul-hukkām*, Maktab Nūlā, 1956.
- ʿAbdul Mutallib Ahmad Muhammad, *Diyā'ul-hukkām fimā lahum wa ʿalayhim minal 'ahkām, lish-shaykh ʿAbdullah fūdī: Dirātun wa tahqīqun*, Ph.D. Thesis, *Kuliyatu Shari'ah wa dirāsātul-islāyyah, Jāmi'atu ifriqiyā al-ʿālamīyyah, Khurtūm, Sudan, 2003.*
- Daily Mail*, March 29, 1963, Kano, Nigeria.
- Gidado b. Lima, *al-Kashf wa 'l-bayān ʿalā 'ahwāl al-Sayyid Muhammad Bello*, University of Ibadan Library (82/179), Folio 2.
- Jamiú Sulaiman, *Towards Diffusing Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam and Politics in Nigeria 1903-1983*, Lavgark Investment Ltd., Ilorin, Nigeria, 2012.
- Last Murray, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Longman, London, 1967.
- Martin B.G., *Muslim Brotherhood in Nineteenth-century Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- New Nigeria*, Kaduna, Nigeria.
- Nigerian Citizen*, May 16, 1956.
- Nolte Insa, Nathaniel Danjibo and Abubakar Oladeji, *Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, International Development Department, University of Birmingham, Religions and Research Programme Working paper 39, 2009.
- Paden John, *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC. 2005.
- Paden John, *Religions and Political Culture in Kano*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973.
- Quadri Yasir Anjola, Some Rites of the Tijjaniyyah Examined, *Al-Fikr*, The Journal of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, Vol. IV, No.1, 1983.
- Quadri Yasir Anjola, The Qādiriyyah and the Tijjaniyyah relations in Nigeria in the 20th century, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, 1984.
- Quadri Yasir Anjola, *The Tijāniyyah in Nigeria: A Case Study*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1981.
- Rufai Saheed, The Interplay of Power and Religion in Nigeria from Colonization to Democratization, *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, Vol. 1 No. 3, 2011.
- Sharwood Bryan, *Recollections of British Administrations in Cameroon and Northern Nigeria 1921-1957*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1969.

Sklar Richard, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1963.

Tahir Ibrahim, *Scholars, sufis, saints and capitalists in Kano 1904-1974: the pattern of bourgeois revolution in an Islamic society*, Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge University, 1977.

The Tijāniyyah File, No, 2/17/124, History Bureau, Sokoto, Nigeria.

Umar M., *Politico-Religious Power Struggle in a Northern Emirate*, The Case of the Amir Sanusi of Kano, Long Essay, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1973.

Watt William, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961.

Whitaker Sylvester, *The Politics of Tradition, Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946-1966*, Princeton University Press, 1970.

Јасир А. Кадри

СУФИСТИЧКО ТИЏАНИЈА БРАТСТВО И НИГЕРИЈСКА ПОЛИТИКА У РЕТРОПЕКСТИВИ

Сажетак

Изгледа да је религија важан фактор који одређује политичку ситуацију у земљи. Она битно утиче на обликовање нигеријске политике. Циљ овог рада јесте да истражи поделе унутар верске заједнице у нигеријској партијског политици. Бавимо се Таџинија суфистичком заједницом, која је једна од највећих мистичних организација у земљи, поред Кадирија заједнице. Користимо историјске и феноменолошке методе. Студија открива да је активно учествовање припадника Таџинија заједнице реакција за непријатељске ставове Сокото савета, у којем доминира Кадирија. Закључак рада јесте да интолеранција и притисак на посебне верске групе може водити до политичке и друштвене нестабилности, стога је потреба да се постојеће политичке партије и нарочито владајуће партије прилагоде верским различитостима у земљи.

Кључне речи: Таџинија, Кадирија, политика, Нигерија, религија, суфизам

Примљен: 24.01.2019.

Прихваћен: 4.06.2019.