

# Politics and Sufism in Nigeria: The *Salgawa* and the Political History of Kano State, Northern Nigeria 1950-2011<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study provides the first detailed discussion of the *Salgawa*'s role in the political history of Kano State stretching over more than a century, from the first half of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first. The *Salgawa* are an influential network of Tijani scholars based in Kano, but extending through the country as well as beyond its borders. Previous research on the political role of Sufi orders in Africa such as the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya in Nigeria, or the Khatmiyya in Sudan, has neglected the importance of the activities of competing networks within a particular Sufi order. The goal of this study is to correct that tendency by highlighting the role of the *Salgawa* network as a distinct movement within the wider Tijaniyya order in the politics of Kano State.

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## Introduction

*Salgawa* is a term used to refer to the network of scholars who have a direct or indirect relationship with Malam Muḥammad Salga (1869-1938).<sup>2</sup> Salga was the imam of the first *zāwiya* (Sufi devotional centre) of the Tijaniyya Sufi order in Kano and he was instrumental in the extension of the Tijani community throughout northern Nigeria. Born in Salga (present-day Ghana), the eponym of the group was able to set up a network of scholars throughout Hausaland, mainly by establishing Islamic schools and training a large number of *murīd*-s (Sufi aspirants). Today, the word *Salgawa* is used to refer to those who have a connection with Salga either by blood or by scholarship. The authority of most of the major Tijani scholars in Kano can, in some way, be traced to Malam Salga.

The paper examines the changing role of the *Salgawa* in the politics of Kano, in particular, and northern Nigeria in general. The major contention here is that at the early state of its evolution, especially during the life time of its eponym, the *Salgawa* network focused its attention mainly on scholarship and frowned upon any involvement in politics. This, as will be seen in due course, was the result of the colonial policies towards the followers of the Tijaniyya brotherhood. The colonial administration, in fact, suspected an alliance between the Tijanis and the Mahdists, and at the centre of this allegation was Salga, who was portrayed by colonial records as a radical scholar who was about to start a jihad against the colonial rule. The death of Malam Salga in 1938, and the subsequent allegiance of the latter's disciples to Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niase in the 1940s, gradually transformed the previous position of the *Salgawa* on politics and political participation. The fact that Niase came to Kano through the Kano palace, and his relationship with the political class throughout West Africa, accounted for the political re-orientation of the *Salgawa*. As we will see in the following sections of this paper,

2 For his full biography, see Sani Yakubu Adam, "The Life and Career of Malam Muhammadu Salga (1869-1938), a Pioneer of the Most Extensive Tijani Network in Northern Nigeria," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, 12/13, 2016, pp. 158-165.

from the 1950s onwards, the long-term political apathy of the Salgawa network gradually turned into political participation.

A number of studies have examined the complex nature of the relations between Sufism and politics in sub-Saharan Africa. One such work is John Paden's *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*,<sup>3</sup> which extensively discusses two aspects of the political culture in Kano, namely authority structure and community formation. The author identified some differences between the two predominant ethnic groups in Kano, Hausa and Fulani, with regard to their orientation towards community and authority. Unlike the Fulani system of authority which is centred on kinship relations, the Hausa concepts of authority are centred on emirate structure; the overall authority among the Hausa is vested in the *sarki* (Emir) who exercises enormous power.<sup>4</sup> The Hausa concept of community or *umma* (derived from Arabic), according to Paden, indicates "any primary group reference system on the spectrum from humanity to family." Hausa communal identity is centred on a number of variables, which include religion, birth place, ancestral home, clan or family, country, language, urban location and race.<sup>5</sup>

Paden specifically outlined the Salgawa doctrines of authority and community. Community membership is primarily through initiation. A *muqaddam* (Sufi authority) would not initiate a boy until he had memorized enough of the rituals to participate in a group worship. Salga enumerates the conditions of initiation and communication in his book, *al-Su'āl wa'l-jawāb*. The Salgawa's orientation with regard to authority is through their *silsila*-s (chains of authority) and through the living authorities. The Shaykh is the core of the authority system.

Broadly, Paden examined the pattern of community formation and authority structure in the two main Sufi brotherhoods in Kano: the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya. The former was associated with the Kano Emir's palace for many years. There was a kind of paradox in the relationship

3 John Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

4 See Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 35.

5 Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 36.

between the palace and Qadiriyya leaders in Kano because, ever since the end of World War I, almost all Kano emirs had been followers of the Tijaniyya. At the same time, however, the most prominent scholars identified with the Kano palace in the Council of Ulama<sup>6</sup> were leaders of the Qadiriyya order. This situation had existed for generations, from the time of Ibrahim Natsugune (d. 1941), to that of Nasiru Kabara (d. 1996) and of his son Qaribullah Nasiru (b. 1960). Despite being followers of the Tijaniyya, the Salgawa kept aloof from palace politics throughout the colonial period. In his work, Paden identified patterns of fragmentation within both the Tijaniyya and the Qadiriyya, stressing how the two orders were united through the activities of, respectively, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Nāṣir Kabara (Nasiru Kabara). In particular, Paden explored the complex relations between the Kano Emir's palace and the local followers of Ibrāhīm Niasse in Kano. Paden's main focus was on the authority structures within the Tijaniyya brotherhood. These were centred around pre-existing Tijaniyya groups that were largely based on ethnic communities. The community that developed after the advent of Ibrāhīm Niasse has a larger base, as it was an amalgamation of the previously autonomous networks, inserted into a broader international context. Paden was not concerned with the changing orientation of the Salgawa over time with regard to the question of political participation. Moreover, Paden's study covered only until the early 1970s: since then, many events with far-reaching consequences for the Salgawa have occurred.

In one of his studies, Roman Loimeier has argued that the relationship between politics and Sufism in sub-Saharan Africa can be better explained from a "spectral perspective" than on dichotomous terms.<sup>7</sup> His study rejects a widespread dichotomous representation of Islam that is based on such terms as "African" versus "Arab" Islam, or Sufi versus reformist

6 The Council of Ulama is a consultative body in the Kano Emir's palace comprising representatives of the Tijaniyya, Qadiriyya, Madabo and other Muslim groups in Kano. The members of the council advise the Emir on religious matters.

7 Roman Loimeier, "Sufism and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 2006, pp. 59-60.

Islam. According to Loimeier, these categories do not have analytical value. Rather, argues Loimeier, it is necessary to view “the different expressions of Islam within a large spectrum of relations of the basic laws and ethical concepts of Islam as represented in [a] multitude of schools of thought integrated into the everyday realities of diverse local contexts and historical settings and subject to constant renegotiation.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, one particular feature cannot be used to categorize a religious movement without seeing it in its context and in its relations with other groups. For example, the issue of reform is not restricted to the so-called “reformist” movements who usually criticise Sufism, but is a feature that is important in the history of both the Sufi movements and their adversaries. Cross-over of ideas is also a common occurrence in the history of Muslim religious groups. The three case studies of Senegal, northern Nigeria and Zanzibar/Tanganyika, are used by Loimeier to demonstrate the complexity of the articulations of Sufi Islam within various local contexts.

In a 2006 article, Rüdiger Seesemann has examined the relationship between the Islamist government and the Sufi orders in Sudan, with particular emphasis on the Tijaniyya.<sup>9</sup> The Islamists, who came into power in 1989 through a military coup, condemned some Sufi practices such as the veneration of saints. Unlike the Wahhabis, however, the Islamists in Sudan did not regard the Sufis as “unbelievers,” but categorized the members of the orders into those who follow “true Sufism” and the others, who allegedly deviate from Sufism’s true teachings. According to Seesemann, this categorization served two purposes. On the one hand, the Islamists were able to divide the Sufis by weakening their appeal to the masses. On the other hand, they opened a room for some Sufis to provide open support to the government.<sup>10</sup> While the Khatmiyya and the *Anṣār* remained the two Muslim groups that played the most dominant roles in Sudanese politics, some networks within the Tijaniyya were able

8 Loimeier, “Sufism and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa,” p. 60.

9 Rüdiger Seesemann, “Between Sufism and Islamism: The Tijaniyya and Islamist Rule in the Sudan,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 2006, pp. 23-57.

10 Seesemann, “Between Sufism and Islamism,” pp. 33-34.

to take advantage of this context by giving open support to the Islamist government.<sup>11</sup>

Seesemann's main contention is that despite the Islamists' claim of striving to ensure unity among the Muslims of Sudan, their religious policies resulted in the further fragmentation of the various Sufi brotherhoods, with some networks supporting and others opposing the government. Seesemann examines various instances in which the Tijaniyya leading figures supported the religious policies of Omar El-Bashir. Shaykh Ibrāhīm Ṣālīḥ, in particular, who is from Nigeria but has a huge following in Sudan, became "the most illustrious Tijani figure in the Sudanese political scene."<sup>12</sup> In 1995, the government of Sudan set up the *Assembly of Remembrance and Those who Remember*, an organization that supports and coordinates the activities of the Sufis. Muṣṭafā Khālīd (d. 2003), a Tijani scholar from the Central Sudan, emerged as the spokesman of the "People of Remembrance" within the Tijaniyya. He frequently served as the official representative of the Tijaniyya in various government functions.

The examples of Khālīd and other Tijanis of Sudan (such as al-Fātiḥ 'Abdūn and Mūsā 'Abdallāh Ḥusayn), who were visibly active in supporting the Islamist government, can be compared to the Salgawa's role in the politics of Kano State, especially after 1999 when the implementation of Sharia began in Kano. Various scholars of Salgawa extraction, in fact, served on various commissions and committees charged with the responsibility for Sharia implementation and they supported government policies. Both the Salgawa and the Tijanis of Sudan served state-created organs through which the government implemented some of its religious policies, using this as a justification for their increased political participation and their holding of political offices.

### **Sufis, Scholars and Traders: The Salgawa in the Colonial Period**

The most important commercial centre in the Sokoto Caliphate, Kano, had

11 For more details of how the Tijani network of the followers of the Nigerian Ibrāhīm Ṣālīḥ was able to raise government support by promoting itself as a representative of "true Sufism," see Seesemann, "Between Sufism and Islamism," pp. 39-40.

12 Seesemann, "Between Sufism and Islamism," p. 39.

been a point of convergence of both scholars and traders, for centuries. From the nineteenth century onwards, the popularity of Kano as a centre for the study of Islamic jurisprudence grew, because some prominent scholars who were experts in the field settled there. They included Malam Abubakar Dan Mai Farar Kasa,<sup>13</sup> from Katsina, and Malam Umaru Ba'ajume, from Danbatta.<sup>14</sup> Up to the twentieth century, Kano maintained its position as a centre of both scholarship and trade.

As a result of the prominent position of the Kano Emirate in the Caliphate, there were many efforts on the part of the Emirate to assert its independence vis-à-vis Sokoto. Following the conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903, the British established their colonial administration in northern Nigeria. This provided an opportunity for Kano to claim its autonomy within the Caliphate. The affiliation of the Emir of Kano, Abbas, to the Tijaniyya during the colonial time, can be interpreted as an effort to reclaim Kano's independence from Sokoto's Qadiri leadership. Emir Abbas, who had emerged as the new emir of Kano after the British conquest, affiliated to the Tijaniyya during the World War I. His affiliation was mediated by a North African visitor known as Sharif Ujdūd. Under the new dispensation, the Sultan of Sokoto could not sanction the Emir of Kano, because the two traditional rulers were now under the British administration, and although the colonial government considered the Sultan as the nominal leader of the Caliphate, the various emirs were *de facto* independent from him.

Despite the affiliation of Emir Abbas to the Tijaniyya, as well as his loyalty to the colonial administration, the British maintained an attitude of mistrust towards the Tijanis in the early colonial period. This was

- 13 Abubakar is said to have come from Hadejia, now in Jigawa state. He then went to Katsina, in the second half of the eighteenth century, where he taught Hadith before finally moving to Kano. While in Kano, he stayed at Darma ward where he taught different texts on the sciences of Hadith. Together with another Hadith scholar known as Malam Muwaddā, he was credited with the establishment of the discipline in Kano. See Muhammad Dahiru Fagge, *Literary Life in the Intellectual Tradition of the Ulama in Kano since 1804* (unpublished PhD thesis, Kano: Bayero University Kano, 1997), pp.110-111.
- 14 On Ba'ajume, see Suyuti Muhammad Hassan, *Madabo Jami'ar Musulunci, Kano Nigeria, vol. 2* (Kano: Triumph Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 113-115.

mainly the result of the support given to Sultan Attahiru I, the Sokoto ruler who had led the anti-colonial resistance, by a group of Tijani refugees originating from the area of today's Mali. The latter had migrated to northern Nigeria from the defunct state that had been established by the jihad of al-Hajj Umar Tall (d. 1864), after the French colonial expansion in the western Sudan.<sup>15</sup>

During the early part of his career as an Islamic scholar in the initial period of colonial administration in Kano, Muḥammad Salga lived in Mabuga Quarters. This neighbourhood was very close to Madabo, which had established itself as a famous centre for the study of Islamic jurisprudence. It was in Madabo that Salga attended the school of Malam Suyudī.<sup>16</sup> The *Madabawa* (scholars of Madabo) at that time were also followers of the Tijaniyya order. The fame of the Madabo as a centre of scholarship, however, dated back to a much earlier time, when the *Wangarawa* scholars<sup>17</sup> who introduced Islam to Kano, had established their first settlement in the area.

Malam Salga was considered to be one of the most prominent disciples of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī (Malam Suyudī; d. ca. 1910),<sup>18</sup> who was a specialist in Islamic (Maliki) jurisprudence; he trained some of the most prominent scholars of the early twentieth-century Kano.<sup>19</sup> In 1911, after

15 In the mid-nineteenth century, al-Hajj Umar Tall established a short-lived Islamic state, which was later conquered by the French army in 1890. The leaders of this state, along with their families, slaves and army, fled the French conquest and found their way to the Sokoto Caliphate. During the British war to conquer the Caliphate in 1903, these refugees supported the forces of Sultan Attahiru I.

16 For the history of Madabo, see Hassan, *Madabo Jami'ar Musulunci*.

17 For more information on the Wangarawa scholars, see Muhammad Al-Hajj, "A Seventeenth Century Chronicle on the Origins and Missionary Activities of the Wangarawa," *Kano Studies* 1, 4, 1968, pp. 7-16; Horatio Richmond Palmer, "The Kano Chronicle," in Horatio Richmond Palmer (ed.), *Sudanese Memoirs* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1967), pp. 97-132.

18 Malam Suyudī attracted many students from different parts of Hausaland. For more on him, see John Weir Chamberlin, *The Development of Islamic Education in Kano City, Nigeria, with Emphasis on Legal Education in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (unpublished PhD thesis, New York: Columbia University, 1975).

19 Some of the most prominent of Suyudī's students were Malam Abba of Madabo quarters and Malam Ibrahim Natsugune who was a popular scholar in the Emir's palace.



the death of Malam Suyudī, a heated debate emerged between Malam Salga and the Madabawa scholars. The disagreement started when Salga rejected the main stand of Madabo regarding the observation of some rituals associated with funerals; these included giving alms to the people on the third, seventh and fortieth day after the death of the deceased as a means of sending the rewards to the dead person. According to Salga, there was no canonical tradition to support such a custom. Salga and his disciples wrote several books criticising these rituals, while Malam Adamu Chindo, one of the sons of Suyudī, wrote responses in defense of the Madabo customs.<sup>20</sup> This debate deeply shaped the identity of the Salgawa scholars as they came to be identified with the rejection of the Madabo tradition.

The early colonial period also coincided with the ascendance of Malam Salga and his disciples as a distinct network within the Tijaniyya in northern Nigeria. The Salgawa were also associated closely with some prominent traders. Malam Salga belonged to a family of businessmen. His father, Malam Umaru, was an itinerant trader who travelled to different parts of West Africa for his trading mission. Some disciples of Malam Salga were also traders, while others were patronized by merchants.

For some scholarly families of Kano, it was an established tradition to associate with the palace, while others preferred to maintain a distance in order to preserve their independence and to earn more respect from their followers<sup>21</sup>. Being an Islamic state, the Caliphate and its various emirates required guidance from the ‘*ulamā*’ in discharging their duties. Offices were therefore created which were occupied by the ‘*ulamā*’, whose views were sought on important issues of administration. One such office was that of *Waziri* (vizier or chief minister) who was consulted by the emir on almost

20 Some works have already examined this debate quite extensively. It is therefore not necessary to reproduce this discussion here. See especially Fagge, *Literary Life in the Intellectual Tradition of the Ulama in Kano*; Auwalu Anwar, *Struggle for Influence and Identity: The Ulama in Kano 1937-1987* (unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Maiduguri: University of Maiduguri, 1989).

21 At that time, the ‘*ulamā*’ who associated with the emirs were referred to as the “court scholars” (*malaman fada*), which often implied that they compromised with power. The people of Kano, on the contrary, accorded more respect to the scholars who kept a distance from the palace, which was regarded as a sign of one of the major Sufi virtues of asceticism (*zuhd*).

all issues affecting the state. The office of the Great Scholar of Madabo (*Babban Malami na Madabo*) was also created as the representative of the 'ulamā' in the palace. The social and economic forces of the early colonial period shaped the choices of some scholars either towards association with the palace or distance from it. The Islamic scholars who occupied the offices of *Waziri* and *Babban Malami* were *de facto* state officials and as such, were expected to render their services to the palace. The emirs also consulted the Sufi leaders of the Qadiriyya, especially Malam Natsugune and later, Malam Nasiru Kabara. This relationship continued for more than a century. Since the Kano palace had adopted the Tijaniyya from the period of Abbas, there was the need to maintain a balance between the various Sufi orders. Because most of the officials who served as either *Babban Malami* or *Waziri* were Tijanis, the palace also had to consult the representatives of the Qadiriyya to ensure an inclusive administration. In addition to these officials, the palace also consulted other Islamic scholars to seek their views on various matters of administration.

Many of the scholars who commanded large followings maintained their distance from the palace to exhibit their neutrality. The example of Malam Salga will illustrate how the social and political conditions of the early colonial period led to the decision of a network of scholars to abstain from palace matters despite the possible consequences of their action. The relationship of distance, if not direct hostility, between the Salgawa and the Kano palace needs to be understood in the light of the early colonial political context. Thus, at that time, all of Muhammad Salga's main disciples deliberately tried to keep themselves aloof from the colonial administrators, as well as from the traditional rulers (emirs), who were considered to be the collaborators of the colonialists.

One of the main reasons for the decision of the Salgawa to keep aloof from the palace of the emir, was the Sufi teachings that laid emphasis on the abstinence of the saints from worldly matters.<sup>22</sup> According to

22 The Sufi ideal of abstinence from politics is partly rooted in the bitter experiences that occurred in the early history of Islam. Thus, the Battle of the Camel and the Siffin confrontation, which paved the way for the emergence of the Umayyad dynasty, created a state of disillusion which pushed many

Seesemann, there has been an obvious gap between this doctrine and the actual practice.<sup>23</sup> Later developments, in fact, made it very difficult to invoke this noble doctrine since it is almost impossible for a Sufi leader with a large following to abstain completely from politics, because political decisions can affect them and their disciples. Wittingly or unwittingly, therefore, it was common for Sufi leaders actually to become the intermediaries between their adepts (*murīd*-s) and the state.

In the 1920s, there was a growing feeling of discontent with the alliance between the Emir and the colonial administration, and Malam Salga was at the forefront of this opposition. One of the grievances concerned the establishment of Sabon Gari, a new settlement reserved for migrants from southern Nigeria, most of whom were Christians. The establishment of Sabon Gari led to the emergence of a space where “new habits” that were considered to be against Islamic ethics, were cultivated in Kano.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, Malam Salga had encountered some bad personal experiences in his relationship with the colonial administration. Thus, in 1923, Malam Salga had become the closest associate of Sharif Muḥammad al-‘Alamī (d. 1969 in Casablanca), a Moroccan Tijani scholar who had come to Kano and initiated a number of people into the Tijaniyya. In 1925, in accordance with the advice of al-‘Alamī, a Tijani centre (*zāwiya*) was founded at Koki, which had soon become the main hub of Tijani activities in Kano. The jealousy created by the growing popularity of Salga, which perhaps led some of his adversaries to spread false information about him, coupled with the general attitude of suspicion of the British towards the Tijanis, created a bitter climate between the British Resident and the Kano scholar. As a result, Salga was accused of having a connection

pious scholars of the time towards abstaining from politics and concentrating on scholarship and worship, creating a *de facto* break between religion and politics. While some started to cultivate messianic ideas that would ultimately lead to the emergence of Shiite doctrines, others developed a more pragmatic distance (Andrea Brigaglia, discussion with the author, 24 October 2015).

23 Seeseman, “Between Sufism and Islamism,” p. 32.

24 See Ibrahim Tahir, *Scholars, Sufis, Saints and Capitalists in Kano, 1904-1974* (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1975), pp. 350-351.

with the Mahdists,<sup>25</sup> and of preparing for a jihad against the colonial administration.<sup>26</sup>

A first indication that the colonial government did not take any potential breach of security lightly came on 1 July 1929, when the Resident of Kano called a meeting of all the Ward Heads and warned them to be vigilant regarding the activities around their various wards. He seriously admonished them about the implications of their negligence upon the general security of the areas under their jurisdiction. As a follow-up to this meeting, he called another meeting with the religious scholars, during which he warned Malam Salga “on the basis of the information he got from some informants.”<sup>27</sup> Afterwards, Malam Salga’s house was searched thoroughly to find out whether he had concealed weapons. However, no weapon was found there. Salga reacted by resigning from the imamship of the Kōkī zāwīya, and during the following years, he cautiously kept a distance from the colonial administration and the emir’s palace, spending the rest of his life teaching and training *murīd*-s in his residence in the Mabuga quarter. His disciples also maintained the same attitude.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Salga was able to unite a large

25 The Mahdiyya movement is based on the claim of Muḥammad b. Sayyid ‘Abdallāh (d. 1885) of Sudan, that he was the awaited *mahdī* of Islam. The followers of the *mahdī* resisted the British occupation of Sudan. In Nigeria, Ḥayāt b. Sa’īd of Adamawa paid allegiance to the Sudanese *mahdī* and was responsible for the introduction of the movement into the country. The existence of a Mahdist history in Nigeria was the main reason for the British concern about Malam Salga. For more on the Mahdist movement in northern Nigeria, see Asma’u Garba Saeed, “Kano and the Mahdiyya: Leaders of the Mahdiyya Movement, the Emirs and the Ulama, 1946-2000,” in *Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies (Bayero University, Kano) Journal of Humanities*, 2, 1, 2002, pp. 196-219; Muhammad Al-Hajj, *Mahdist Tradition in Northern Nigeria* (unpublished PhD thesis, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, 1973); John Lavers, “Jibril Gaini: A Preliminary Account of the Career of the Mahdist Leader in North Eastern Nigeria,” *Research Bulletin Center for Arabic Documentation (RBCAD, Ibadan)*, 3, 1, 1967, pp. 16-40; Muhammad Al-Hajj, “The 13<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim Escatology: Mahdist Expectation in the Sokoto Caliphate,” *Research Bulletin Center for Arabic Documentation (RBCAD, Ibadan)*, 3, 2, 1967, pp. 100-115.

26 See Sani Yakubu Adam, *The Evolution and Activities of the Salgawa Group of the Tijaniyya Order in Kano 1923-2015* (unpublished MA Thesis, Kano: Bayero University Kano, 2015), p. 66.

27 Kano State History and Culture Bureau, Archival File, LGC 9/1929, Confidential, Subject: Malam Salga (Kano).

section of the trading community under his leadership. This community comprised largely of the Hausa and *Barebari* (Hausa term for Kanuri) scholars who were also engaged with trading. The community he built had a multi-centred leadership. Among the major Salgawa scholars were his son and immediate successor Abdullahi Salga; Abubakar Mijinyawa (d. 1946); Umaru Falke (d. 1962); Tijani Usman Zangon Barebari (d. 1970); Shehu Maihula (d. 1980); Abubakar Atiku (d. 1974); Hassan Kafinga (d. 1980); Muhammad Dangwaggo. The group was joined later by Faruq Salga and Mudi Salga (who inherited the leadership of Malam Salga's school after Abdullahi Salga).<sup>28</sup> The Salgawa, therefore, emerged in the 1930s as a dynamic group of Hausa and Kanuri traders and scholars who were adamant in asserting their independence from the Kano palace. The grievances of this network included the growing westernization of the youth, the collaboration of the emir with the colonialists, and the palpable signs of moral decay in colonial Kano.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, the Emir, Abdullahi Bayero, retaliated by supporting the rivals of the Salgawa, the Madabawa scholars, during the conflict that followed the death of one Malam Abba,<sup>30</sup> a Madabo scholar. Immediately after Malam Abba's death in the 1930s, a controversy arose about how his funeral prayer would be observed. Malam Umaru, the Great Scholar of Madabo (*Babban Malami na Madabo*) insisted that the prayers were to be observed in accordance with the Madabo tradition since the deceased was the student of Umar's father, Suyudi and was a scholar of Madabo. However, Malam Uwais, the son of the deceased was a disciple of Malam Salga and therefore insisted that the Salgawa tradition would

28 See Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997, p. 31).

29 See Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change*, pp. 31-32.

30 Malam Abba was a close friend of Salga. The two studied Islamic jurisprudence under Malam Suyudi of Madabo. Abba specialized in Arabic grammar. Therefore, Salga urged his disciples to study Arabic under him. The latter sent his son, Uwais, to study Islamic jurisprudence in the school of Salga. Malam Umaru, who emerged as the *Babban Malami* after the death of his father, Suyudi, in 1911, was also a colleague of both Salga and Abba.

be maintained.<sup>31</sup> This led to skirmishes between the two parties. The situation was reported to Emir Abdullahi Bayero by the *Babban Malami* who was a member of the Emir's Council. A judgment was passed in favour of the *Madabawa* and three of the Salga's students, Malam Barde, Malam Barnoma, Mai Musa-Musai and Bila, were imprisoned. A meeting of the Emir's Council followed, in which some members of the council suggested that Salga should be exiled, but the majority expressed their opposition, since the latter was a prominent scholar with a large number of disciples.<sup>32</sup> Later, the Emir was apparently cautioned by his mother to keep away from a conflict of the '*ulamā*'.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the Salgawa supported Turaki Muhammad who was the main rival of Abdullahi Bayero in the Kano palace.

### **The Salgawa, the Kano Emirate and Party Politics, 1945-1960**

The change in the orientation of the Salgawa was caused by the emergence of Niasse as their new spiritual authority. In 1938, when Malam Salga died, his son Abdullahi Salga succeeded him as the *khalifa* (successor) of his father. However, Shaykh Abubakar Mijinyawa remained the main spiritual authority of the Salgawa. The year 1937 is very significant in the history of Islam in Nigeria. It was then that the Emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero, met the Senegalese Sufi scholar Ibrahim Niasse in Medina, during the Emir's first pilgrimage. Ibrahim Niasse<sup>34</sup> was to emerge as one of the

31 A recorded video interview of National Television Authority (NTA) with Shaykh Sani Kafinga, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1987. According to Malam Abdullahi Uwais Madabo, the conflict was over who would lead the funeral prayers. While the *Madabawa* insisted that Malam Umaru was the one to lead the prayers, the *Salgawa* opposed the *Madabawa*.

32 A recorded video interview of National Television Authority (NTA) with Shaykh Sani Kafinga, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1987

33 Interview with Abdullahi Uwais. The Emir's mother cautioned her son because of the general belief in Hausa society that Islamic scholars have spiritual powers that can harm those who oppose them.

34 For a detailed biography of Niasse, see Rüdiger Seesemann, *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth Century Sufi Revival* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011); Muhammad T. Maigari, *Al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niyās al-Sinighālī* (M.A. dissertation, Kano: Bayero University Kano, 1981); Mervyn Hiskett, "The Community of Grace, and its Opponents, 'the Rejecters', A Debate about Theology and Mysticism in Muslim West Africa with Special Reference to its Hausa Expression," *African Language Studies*, 17, 1981, pp. 99-140.

most renowned Muslim leaders in twentieth-century Africa with millions of followers throughout the continent and beyond.<sup>35</sup> In 1936, Niasse had decided to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. On his way, he passed through Fez in Morocco to renew his *ṭarīqa* certificates of authority. During his visit to Morocco, he came to believe that he had been chosen for the overall leadership of the Tjaniyya.<sup>36</sup> Niasse continued with his journey to Saudi Arabia where he met the Kano delegation: namely Emir Abdullahi Bayero, Wali Sulaiman, and the Galadima. According to his own account, Niasse met Abdullahi Bayero and Wali Sulaiman in the Prophet's mosque in Medina before the start of his pilgrimage. Niasse adds that he fulfilled the Emir's and the Wali's requests to renew their affiliations to the Tjaniyya and appointed them as deputies.<sup>37</sup>

Bayero invited Niasse to come to Kano. Although Paden argues that Niasse made his first visit the following year, 1938, recent sources have indicated that the visit did not occur until 1945.<sup>38</sup> The Salgawa scholars were among the first set of *'ulamā'* to visit him when he came to Kano. Those first Salgawa included Shaykh Sani Kafinga and Limamin Jalli (imam of the Jalli mosque in Yakasai ward), followed by Shaykh Abubakar Atiḳu and Shaykh Maihula. However, Malam Tijani Usman did not meet Niasse during this first visit. During Niasse's stay in Kano, Kafinga obtained a copy of Niasse's book, *Kāshif al-Ilbās* (The Removal of Confusion), in which Niasse made his claim of being the *ṣāhib al-fayḍa* (the repository of the Divine flood). According to Kafinga, he took the book to Mijinyawa who rejected this claim after his first reading of the book. It was only after Kafinga had clarified that the claim was not made up by Niasse, but by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī,<sup>39</sup> that Mijinyawa urged his disciples to pay allegiance to Niasse, and promised that he would personally submit to

35 Zachary Wright, "Sheikh Hassan Cisse (1945-2008), Imam of the *fayḍa* Tjaniyya," *ARIA: Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, 11, 2012.

36 See Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, pp. 97-98.

37 See Seesemann, *The Divine Flood*, p. 174.

38 See Seesemann, *The Divine Flood*, pp. 188-189; Hiskett, "The Community of Grace," p. 103 fn 5.

39 Video Interview of NTA (National Television Authority) with Shaykh Sani Kafinga, 2 November 1987, at his residence in Kafinga ward.

the Senegalese during his next visit.<sup>40</sup> This account of how the Salgawa accepted the spiritual authority of Niasse, with slight variations in some versions, is very popular among the Tijanis in Kano. Although it sounds hagiographical, it can be seen as the rationalization of the Salgawa's allegiance to Niasse authenticated by the endorsement of Mijinyawa as the direct successor of Salga's spiritual authority. The narration is concluded by stressing that Mijinyawa died before the return of Niasse to Nigeria and thus did not have an opportunity to pay allegiance to him personally.<sup>41</sup>

In 1947, the Salgawa Sani Kafinga and Tijani Usman went to Kaolack to undergo *tarbiya* (spiritual training) at the hands of Ibrāhīm Niasse. Contrary to the claim of Paden and Loimeier, Umar Falke was not among those who made this trip.<sup>42</sup> Rather, the two Salgawa scholars went to Kaolack with one Malam Mazadu who was a disciple of Malam Tijani Usman and who served as their guide during the journey.<sup>43</sup> After their return, they started to train people and encouraged others to travel to Kaolack for the same purpose.<sup>44</sup>

The apparent change of political orientation of the Salgawa started

40 With this development, Niasse became the main authority of the Salgawa, eclipsing the former identification of the Salgawa with Malam Muhammadu Salga. Although the Salgawa still considered Salga to be their teacher and one of the sources of their *ṭariqa* affiliation, in the following years they came to be identified with Niasse rather than with Salga. Today, most of the Salgawa believe that if Salga was alive at the period of the advent of Niasse, the former would have recommended the latter as the overall spiritual authority.

41 Malam Zubayr Jibril Madigawa, interview with author, 29 May 2013. Paden claims that the vacuum in leadership of the Salgawa as a result of the death of Malam Salga was the main reason for their allegiance to Niasse (Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 99.). This seems to be inaccurate, since after the death of Salga, the Salgawa considered Mijinyawa to be their new Shaykh and the latter proved to be a competent leader.

42 In his interview with the NTA, Kafinga gave an account of their first journey to Kaolack but did not mention Umar Falke as being one of the people on the trip. Kafinga's account is very detailed and mentions the names of all the people whom he met during the trip and those who helped them on their way to Kaolack. If Falke had been on this trip, then there is no way Kafinga would complete his narration without mentioning his name.

43 See Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 106; Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and the Political Change*, p. 41.

44 Quadri, "The Tijjaniyya in Nigeria," p. 198.



after they paid allegiance to Niasse. The latter had come to Nigeria through the Emir, prompting a change in the relations between the Emir and the Salgawa from hostility to ambivalence. The Salgawa, in fact, were careful to establish their link to Niasse directly, and not through the Emir. A permanent liaison, Sani Yakubu of Sanka ward, was based in Kaolack to keep the Salgawa abreast of the new developments in Senegal and to introduce new Nigerian visitors to Niasse.

The Salgawa scholars managed to sidestep the Emir to some degree and they became the main leaders of the *fayḍa* in Kano. However, the new spiritual authority of the Salgawa was personally very close to the Emir and his attitude towards the traditional ruling class was not hostile. This factor changed the attitude of the Salgawa towards the political establishment of Kano from hostility to some degree of tolerance. This can be better understood by taking into consideration the political orientation of the Shaykh. Evidence from the colonial records and oral sources collected by Zachary Wright indicate that Niasse enjoined to his followers the respect of the constituted authority (even the colonial one), provided that it allowed his community to practice its rituals without any hindrance. This can be seen from the following statement of Niasse, culled from a colonial report:

I have always preached calm and obedience to authority. I am French and my love for my country, France, is known. Moreover, it is only in peace that men can practice their religion, work to feed their children, their wives and, finally, to love. France guarantees this peace.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of the constant surveillance of his activities, Niasse would present himself, together with his disciples, to the French officials wherever he travelled. He even invited the French officials to attend his annual *mawlid* celebrations, especially after the Second World War (1939-1945). According to Wright, this apparent support and cordial attitude towards colonialism

45 Zachary Valentine Wright, "Islam and Decolonization in Africa: The Political Engagement of a West African Muslim Community," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 46, 2, 2013, p. 210.

should be seen within the context of political realism. Despite this attitude, in fact, the Shaykh often prayed against the colonial administration and portrayed the colonial officials as oppressors. The following prayer which was subtly referring to the French colonialists supports this contention:

(Oh God) Drive the locusts away from our land, and do not provide them any nourishment from our earnings ... and make our cultivation a provision for us and for our loved ones, and do not make it a provision for the oppressors and the sinful disbelievers.<sup>46</sup>

The same attitude was reproduced in the post-colonial period. Niasse and his disciples, in fact, adapted to the reality of the new emerging secular African states, while seeking a compromise that would enable them to keep the autonomy of clerical communities and the survival of Muslim identity. The Shaykh encouraged his followers to become involved in politics but cautioned them: “But the politics of the Muslims reside in what will raise up Islam, by word or deed.”

Taking into consideration the background described above, it was not surprising that after visiting Nigeria, Niasse associated closely with the Emir and his palace. During most of his visits to Kano, Niasse was the guest of the Emir. In his poetry, he described the courtesy and respect given to him by the Emir, as captured by Paden, quoting Niasse’s account of one of his journeys:

I was well met at Kano. The successor-designate of the emir called the Chiroma (Sanusi), received me seriously. The NA (Native Authority) police cared for me ... The Chiroma went with me to his large house in order to have me safeguarded. I spent the night there and couldn’t come out because of the great gathering outside. May God bless the emir and his family and his successor the Chiroma, the respected one. May God guard him against his enemies.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Wright, “Islam and Decolonization in Africa,” p. 214.

<sup>47</sup> Ibrāhīm Niasse, *al-Rihla al-Hijāziyya wa’l-Rihla al-Kanawiyya*, Kano: Native Authority Press (quoted in Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 110).

The cordial relationship between Niasse and the Kano palace became even stronger when *Ciroma* Sanusi (b. 1900) became the Emir of Kano in December 1953. Even before his appointment as the Emir, Sanusi had emerged as one of the main disciples and supporters of Shaykh Niasse. According to Paden, “Sanusi accompanied Niasse almost every year from 1951 to 1962 and became the most powerful supporter of Niasse in West Africa.”<sup>48</sup> The period of Sanusi’s emirship was very crucial for the consolidation of the *ḥayḍa* in Kano. Political participation, which was seen during Salga’s time as a deviation from the teachings of Sufism, was redefined by a new generation of Tijanis aligned to Niasse. The prestige and popularity of the Shaykh not only among the masses, but also among the ruling class, was interpreted as being evidence of his great achievement as a spiritual master.

As the British started to prepare the ground for Nigeria’s independence, two main political parties emerged in northern Nigeria: the Northern Elements’ Progressive Union (NEPU) and the Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC), established in 1950 and 1951 respectively. Nigeria attained independence on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960, and the NPC, which entered into alliances with other political parties, emerged as the leader of the coalition government. Thus, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a strong pillar of the NPC, became Nigeria’s first Prime Minister while Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, became the Premier of the Northern Region. The leadership of NEPU, the Northern opposition party, was based in Kano and the party enjoyed overwhelming support from the masses because of its criticism of the traditional *Sarauta* (aristocratic) system and the colonial administration of the Native Authority, which were supported by the NPC. It was quite natural for the dominant religious groups in Northern Nigeria to be drawn in the competition between the two political parties.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the first manifestation of the pervasive nature of party

48 Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 113.

49 For more on the politics of the First Republic in Nigeria, see Jonathan T. Reynolds, *The Times of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa)* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001).

politics in the First Republic can be seen within the context of the struggle and conflict between the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya in the Sokoto Province. The conflict had started in 1949, when the Sultan of Sokoto had demolished a number of Tijani mosques, leading Abubakar Atiku of the Kano Salgawa to react with an invective poem.<sup>50</sup> In 1956, riots broke out in the Isa and Zurmi districts of Sokoto. These conflicts were traced to some Tijani groups who tried to prevent the Qadiris from performing their evening prayers.<sup>51</sup> The conflicts can also be interpreted to be NPC/NEPU clashes because the two districts were strongholds of NEPU in the mainly NPC-aligned Province of Sokoto. A newspaper report described the disturbances thus:

Four persons have been killed, and a number injured, one gravely –as the result of disturbances which took place at Sokoto last week. Fights broke out between members of two religious organizations, the most serious of them in the Isa and Zurmi districts of Sokoto. They were between Tijani and Khadiriya followers. It was in the first incident at Gidan Maizard that the four persons were killed... The outbreaks were... due in some cases to the Tijani group trying to prevent the Khadiriya from performing their evening prayers, and their Sallah ceremony. A number of persons have been arrested.<sup>52</sup>

As a result of that clash, many Tijanis were arrested and detained. Aminu Kano, the leader of NEPU, wrote a letter to the Acting Governor of the Northern Region, calling on him to investigate the circumstances surrounding the killing of four people at Zurmi and the arrest as well as the subsequent imprisonment of 240 people whom he regarded as

50 For a partial translation of Atiku's poem of 1949, see Andrea Brigaglia, "The Outburst of Rage and The Divine Dagger: Invective Poetry and Inter-Ṭariqa Conflict in Northern Nigeria, 1949," in the present issue of the *Journal for Islamic Studies*.

51 Quadri, "The Tijaniyya in Nigeria" p. 378. For a different interpretation of the causes of these riots, see Brigaglia "The Outburst of Rage and The Divine Dagger."

52 *Nigerian Citizen*, 16 May 1956, p. 1, quoted in Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, p. 198.

innocent, attributing their arrest to their affiliation with either NEPU or the Tijaniyya.<sup>53</sup> The use of the phrase “either NEPU or Tijaniyya” indicates the closeness between the Tijaniyya and NEPU in Northern Nigeria during the First Republic. Although some of the Salgawa scholars allegedly supported the ruling party, the NPC, there is a strong indication that most Tijanis actually supported NEPU.<sup>54</sup> Quadri argues that in 1956, Shaykh Tijani Usman used the occasion of his public *tafsīr* session to advise his disciples against joining NEPU, which was considered by most Kano people as the party of the masses. After his statement, his *tafsīr* session was apparently deserted by a number of his disciples.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, Shaykh Tijani Usman had supported one Umar Ingai who contested for the council seat for *Zangon Barebari* on the platform of the NPC. *Zangon Barebari* was the area of residence of Tijani Usman and the base of his religious support. NEPU, for its part, adopted its messenger, Malam Uba, who was initially a petty trader before giving up his business to engage fully in politics,<sup>56</sup> as the flagbearer of the party in the same area. When the election was eventually conducted, the Shaykh’s candidate was defeated. This event shows the disposition of many northern Nigerians to restrict the influence of their *ṭarīqa* leaders to religious lives, while using their discretion to make decisions affecting their temporal lives. The people of Kano, in particular, seem to have considered NEPU to be a closer expression of the values of Hausa culture and Islam. Its leader Aminu Kano was fondly called *Malam*, symbolizing a quasi-spiritual position, despite his role as the leader of a secular political party. His talks during campaign rallies often had a religious colour, with quotes from verses of the Quran or traditions of the Prophet.

### **The Making of Kano State: the Salgawa in Independent Nigeria**

The change of orientation of the Salgawa vis-à-vis political engagement

53 Quadri, “The Tijaniyya in Nigeria,” p. 378

54 According to Loimeier, the Salgawa leaders Umar Falke, Sani Kafinga and Tijani Usman were “followers of NPC” (Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change*, p. 42).

55 Quadri, “The Tijaniyya in Nigeria,” p. 356.

56 Tanko Yakasai, *Tanko Yakasai: The Story of a Humble Life, vol 1* (Kano: Naprint Services, 2004), pp. 138-139.

became clear in the 1960s, during the First Republic.<sup>57</sup> This can be attributed to decisions taken by the Northern Regional Government, which directly affected the Salgawa. In 1963, the Emir of Kano, Sarki Sanusi was forced to resign by the Northern Regional Government under Ahmadu Bello, and was exiled to Azare. Loimeier claims that the Salgawa Sani Kafinga, Tijani Usman and Uba Ringim,<sup>58</sup> supported the downfall of Sanusi. This claim is not credible, as most oral sources in Kano indicate otherwise. Moreover, the Salgawa were generally against the policies of the Sardauna, especially regarding his attempt to revive the prominence of the Qadiriyya brotherhood.

On 14 April 1963, the supporters of Sanusi formed the Kano People's Party (KPP), to agitate for the restoration of the Emir to his throne or the appointment of his son, Ado Sanusi as the new Emir. A few weeks after its formation, the KPP had about thirty-six thousand members,<sup>59</sup> immediately becoming a serious threat to the NPC in Kano. The Salgawa scholars supported the party, mainly because of widespread Tijani hostility against the Sardauna, who was seen as the champion of the Qadiriyya order. Moreover, it is believed that the Nigerian Government, under the influence of the Sardauna, had banned Niasse from visiting Nigeria. One of the closest associates of the Sardauna was Shaykh Abubakar Gumi,<sup>60</sup> who was starting to emerge as a critic of the doctrines of the Sufi orders.

57 Nigeria's First Republic existed between 1960 and 1966, when the first civilian administration was established. In 1966, a section of the Nigerian army organized a bloody coup leading to the killing of the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, of the Premier of the Northern Region, Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, and other important personalities mostly from the north. For more on the First Republic, see Stanley Diamond, "The End of the First Republic," *Africa Today*, 13, 2, 1966, pp. 5-9; Larry R. Jackson, "Nigeria: The Politics of the First Republic," *Journal of Black Studies*, 2, 3, 1972, pp. 277-302; Stephen Bamiduro, "Press and politics in Nigeria's First Republic," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 11, 3/4, 1982-1983, pp. 107-129.

58 Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change*, p. 119.

59 Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change*, p. 119.

60 For details on Gumi's life and career as a scholar, see Mukhtar Umar Bunza, *Social and Religious Contributions of Islamic Scholars in Northern Nigeria: The Life History of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi* (B.A. dissertation, Sokoto: University of Sokoto, 1988); Sanusi Gumbi, *Tarihin Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi* (Kaduna: Gumbi Enterprises, 1986); Abubakar Gumi (with Ismaila A. Tsiga), *Where I Stand* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 1992).

Most Tijanis believed that Niasse was banned from visiting Nigeria simply because of Gumi's influence on him. Niasse, who had appointed Sanusi as his representative in Nigeria after his deposition, did not visit Nigeria again until after 1966, after the Sardauna was killed in a coup.

In the same year (1963), an alliance was made between the KPP, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the Northern Youth Movement (which recruited mainly from young dissidents of the NPC in Kano and members of trade unions). The result of this broad alliance was the formation of the Northern Progressive Front (NPF).<sup>61</sup> Finally, in January 1964, the NPF merged with NEPU. To strengthen this alliance, in September 1964, the leader of NEPU, Aminu Kano, travelled to Kaolack for consultations with Shaykh Niasse. The Sardauna did not take this alliance lightly, as he had made efforts to sabotage the merger.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, in 1963 the Kaduna Council of Ulama was formed as a body of *Jama'atu Nasril Islam*, an umbrella of Muslim scholars. The first meeting of the council took place in Kaduna between 23 and 25 August 1963. The council was to serve an advisory function to the Northern Regional Government. It had forty-six members who were drawn from diverse religious groups. Its first chairman was the Waziri (chief minister) of Sokoto, Junaidu. Salgawa scholars who became members of the council included Tijani Usman and Sani Kafinga. Other members of the council were Nasiru Kabara (Qadiriyya), Sa'id b. Hayatu (Mahdiyya) and Shehu Galadanci (non affiliated). The council finally became obsolete in 1965 in the context of the *qabḍ* vs *sadl* controversy.<sup>63</sup> The relationship between the Salgawa and the Northern Nigerian Regional Government, in fact, had deteriorated further in 1965, when their opponents in the Kaduna Council of Ulama managed to pass a resolution that banned all imams from crossing arms during prayer (*qabḍ*).<sup>64</sup>

61 Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and the Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, p. 119.

62 Paden, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 182; Auwalu Anwar, *Tasirin Siyasa a Addini* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1992), pp 20-21.

63 Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change*, p. 138.

64 The resolution was passed as a result of a riot in Argungu (Sokoto Province) that had left eleven policemen dead. After the strife, the Sultan proclaimed that the disturbances were caused by *Yan Wazifa* which was a sobriquet of the followers of Tijaniyya.

The 1966 coup opened a new chapter in Nigerian history, as the military administration provided very limited opportunity for political participation. As a result, the Salgawa and other religious networks that had been politically active during the First Republic, were forced to withdraw once again into “a-political” religion. The creation of Kano State along with eleven other new states in 1967 resulted in the protracted civil war in Nigeria, which lasted for thirty months. The civil war started as a result of the failure of a reconciliation meeting held in Ghana and aimed at resolving the misunderstanding between the Nigerian Military Head of State Yakubu Gowon, and the military administrator of the Eastern Region, Odumegu Ojukwu. The meeting resolved that Nigeria should introduce a confederal system of government, in which the four regions would be given autonomy. Apparently, Gowon only understood the implications of the agreement after coming back from Ghana, and instead of implementing the outcome of the accord, he created twelve states from the former four regions. Thus, the Eastern Region which consisted originally of one political entity, was divided into four administrative units, implying that the powers of Ojukwu were drastically curtailed and “Ibo unity” in the southeast disrupted. In view of his dissatisfaction over the creation of new states, Ojukwu declared the secession of the Eastern Region from Nigeria, leading to the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war. The military administration continued up to 1979, when power was handed over to Shehu Shagari, who emerged as the democratically elected president of Nigeria’s Second Republic.

During the campaign for the 1979 elections, the Peoples’ Redemption Party (PRP), under the leadership of Malam Aminu Kano, promised to release the ex-Emir Sanusi from exile, and to allow him to settle wherever he desired. Many in northern Nigeria, including non-Tijanis, supported the PRP. Sanusi had become a hero after his 1963 deposition, and was considered by many as a symbol of Kano pride, and by the Tijanis in particular, as a saintly figure. About two months after the PRP came into power, Aminu Kano’s promise was fulfilled, and Sanusi was allowed to return to Kano. The Emir of Kano at that time, his younger brother Ado Bayero, offered him his official residence at Wudil to settle permanently.<sup>65</sup>

65 Quadri, “The Tijaniyyah in Nigeria,” pp. 362-263.



After the collapse of the Second Republic in 1983, military rule continued uninterrupted (apart from an unsuccessful attempt to create a short-lived Third Republic in 1992-93) up to 1999, when the Fourth Republic emerged. During the military era, the Salgawa enjoyed cordial relationship with the military administrators of Kano. Some of the Salgawa used this relationship to secure land for the construction of Islamic schools. For example, during the administration of Muhammad Ndatsu Umar (1987-1988) as the Military Governor of Kano State, an application was made for the allocation of land to establish the Shehu Maihula schools, and the land was eventually allocated to the family of Shehu Maihula.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, during the administration of Military Governor, Colonel Idris Garba (1988-1992), a piece of land was allocated for the purpose of establishing the Shaykh Sani Hassan Kafinga Islamic Senior Secondary School.<sup>67</sup>

Some of the scholars connected to the Salgawa network, however, maintained the old Salgawa attitude of distance from political power; one interesting example was Shaykh Aliyu Harazimi (1919-2013).<sup>68</sup> In his study of the career of Harazimi as an ascetic Sufi scholar, and as an unusually austere one in the context of Nigerian Islam, Auwal Muhammad Hassan examined the hagiographical traditions that demonstrate this aspect of his personality; or at least, of this aspect of the way in which he was perceived by his followers. In one such narrative, in 1987 Shaykh Harazimi visited the Nigerian Military Head of State Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida through the mediation of Alhaji Uba Lida, a disciple of Harazimi who was also a famous businessman. The President is said to have requested the Shaykh to pray for him and to have given him a huge amount of money, which the Shaykh did not take, calling instead upon the Head of State to fear God. After coming back to Kano, Harazimi apparently burst into tears for having met a politician, and ever since then, he refrained from associating with politicians again. In 1993, the

66 Author's interview with Khalifa Sani Shehu Maihula, 27 June 2013.

67 Author's interview with Khalifa Faruq Sani Kafinga, 16 June 2013.

68 Shaykh Aliyu Harazimi is connected to the Salgawa through his teacher Shaykh Abubakar Atiku who was one of the main disciples of Malam Salga.

Shaykh was involved in a ghastly motor accident in which his hand was fractured but he refused to treat the injury, interpreting the accident as expiation for having associated with the Nigerian Head of State.<sup>69</sup> The examples of Shaykh Harazimi and other Salgawa scholars with the same inclination, indicate that, despite decades of political engagement, there is still a tension between the old ideal of withdrawal from the world nurtured by the Salgawa of the first generation, and the more politically receptive practices preferred in certain conditions.

### **The Politics of Sharia in Kano: The Salgawa in the Fourth Republic**

The year 1999 was celebrated in Nigeria as the time of the transition to civilian administration after a long period of military rule. In 1998, the ban on party politics was lifted, leading to the local government elections in December of the same year. In 1999, three political parties contested the presidential and gubernatorial elections: the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP); All Peoples' Party (APP); and Alliance for Democracy (AD). The PDP emerged as the ruling party and formed a government at the federal level. At the state level, the PDP won the elections in twenty-three states, while the APP won seven states, and the AD six.<sup>70</sup> It was in the Fourth Republic that *fuller* Sharia codes were implemented in many Muslim-majority northern states. The reintroduction of Sharia in Nigeria is a very special case, in the sense that in the reintroduction process, Islamic criminal law was introduced in the framework of a secular constitution.<sup>71</sup>

69 See Muhammad Auwal Hassan, "Sufi Asceticism in Contemporary Nigeria: Shaykh Aliyu Harazimi, (Kano, 1919-2012), *ARIA: Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, 12/13, 2013/2014.

70 Salahu Lawal and Aminu Wushishi, "Politics and Political Parties in the Fourth Republic: Reflections on the Peoples Democratic Party" in Talla Ngarka Sunday and Terhamba Wuam (eds.), *Parties and Politics in Nigeria 1999-2009* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2010), p. 115

71 Gunner Weimann, *Islamic Criminal Law in Northern Nigeria: Politics, Religion and Judicial Practice* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p. 15. Islamic law has a long history in Nigeria. In the Sokoto Caliphate, Islamic law was applied in both criminal and personal matters. This judicial system was only interrupted by the colonial administration at the beginning of the twentieth century. The British retained the basic structures of Islamic law, only curtailing its application in areas defined as "repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience." In 1959, a new code was enacted in the

The movement for the implementation of Sharia provoked debate among Islamic scholars representing various groups. While most Sufis and Salafis supported the implementation of the new codes, Shaykh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, the leader of the largest Shia movement in Nigeria, opposed it on the ground that Islamic law could not be implemented effectively under a secular constitution. The prominent Tijani scholar Ibrahim Saleh al-Husayni, from the northeastern city of Maiduguri, welcomed the introduction of the new system but expressed some reservations. According to him, for all aspects of Sharia to be implemented, Nigeria must be an Islamic country fully prepared to work with all the rules of Islam. For the proper implementation of Sharia, he argued, there must be a gradual amendment of the constitution. Reforms must be carried out in the existing courts. The judges must be knowledgeable in the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence in order to tackle, effectively, those cases where one of the schools has not provided a proper solution to a particular modern problem.<sup>72</sup>

In Kano many Sufis, including the Salgawa scholars, were appointed to serve on the committees established to help the state government to implement Sharia. The participation of the Salgawa on the Sharia committees can be seen as the climax of their gradual change of political orientation. This can also be compared to the involvement of the Tijanis in Sudanese politics observed by Seesemann.<sup>73</sup> As noted earlier, many Tijani scholars supported the government of al-Bashir by encouraging their disciples to participate in the war with the south, and some of them became very active in the Assembly of Remembrance. In both Nigeria and Sudan, many Tijanis have served as government officials working in government institutions.

Northern Nigeria region. This code was based mainly on British common law, but included dispensations based on Islamic family law and commercial law, to accommodate the needs of both the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of the North. This code became an integral part of the judicial system in the post-colonial period, until the reform of the early twenty-first century restored the traditional *hadd* offences and their respective punishments as defined by the Islamic traditional law regarding homicide, sexual offences and bodily harm (see Weimann, *Islamic Criminal Law*, pp. 15-18).

72 Borno State Government, "Report of the Committee on the Application of Shariah in Borno State," April 2000, pp. 25-26.

73 Seesemann, "Between Sufism and Islamism."

Already in the First Republic, some of the Salgawa had served as members of the Council of Ulama created by Ahmadu Bello. However, the Council of Ulama was only a consultative forum whose advice could be accepted or rejected by the government. In the Fourth Republic, however, some of the Salgawa have served as members of the executive organs of government with full portfolios. This change can be explained by taking into consideration the new circumstances of the time, especially the new atmosphere of competition not only within the Sufi orders, but also, more importantly, between the Sufis and the Salafis.

Salafism started to be popularized in Nigeria after the establishment, in 1978, of an organization known as *Jama'at Izalatul Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunna* (Society for the Removal of Innovation and the Reinstatement of Tradition), also known simply as *Izala*. *Izala* led a mass campaign of criticism of the Sufi orders, which affected the entire country. In Kano, there were continuous but intermittent clashes between the two religious groups, mostly related to the struggle for the control of the sacred space of the mosques. The return of party politics provided an opportunity for the politicians of the various political parties to take advantage of the competition between rival religious networks.

Although the Salafis were the most vocal actors in the Sharia campaigns, these reforms often empowered the Sufis, who eventually occupied most of the offices created by the Kano State government for the implementation of Sharia. The agitation actually showed the political class that Salafi groups were bound to be less-trusted partners, because of their tendency towards voicing excessive criticism of the government. The Sufis, on the contrary, were seen as more moderate in their views, and as more likely to be submissive when appointed into political posts. Another factor that contributed towards creating mistrust between the government and the *Izala* group was *Izala's* call for equality among its followers irrespective of each one's position within the movement; this equality is embodied in the way ordinary followers could shake hands with their Shaykhs, as opposed to the Sufis' emphasis on the veneration of religious leaders. *Izala*, in fact, was often perceived in the public sphere of Kano as having "rebellious" tendencies that the political class could

not tolerate. Nevertheless, Izala has a large number of followers and so the politicians know well that it would be suicidal to exclude them from political participation. Consequently, some Salafi scholars have been made part and parcel of the various administrations since 1999.

It is in this context of competition between Salafis and Sufis that the decision of the Salgawa to hold executive positions can be better understood. Thus, any rejection of the posts offered to them would have resulted in those posts being given to the Salafis, who would have then used their power to introduce policies that would have negatively affected the practice of Sufism. Moreover, since all the positions offered to the Salgawa were connected with Sharia implementation and not with politics proper, they could frame their acceptance as a service to use the secular politics of the state to further the cause of Islam. In general, the creation of institutions for the implementation of Sharia has drastically reduced the tension between Sufis and Salafis in the public space. The fact that scholars from the two groups were forced to work together, created a context that favoured the moderation of the tones of their previous rhetoric.

The Kano State government which came to power in 1999 under the platform of PDP and with Governor Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, declared its Sharia implementation programme on 1 June 2000. The committee of religious scholars constituted to prepare the Sharia document included Khalifa Isma'il Ibrahim (d. 2017), who was a representative of the Salgawa network in his position as the successor of Shaykh Tijani Usman *Zangon Barebari* (d. 1970); Malam Umar Kabo and Qaribullah Nasiru Kabara.<sup>74</sup> Khalifa Isma'il played a vital role on the committee, as he wrote the final draft of the document in 2001.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, the successor of Shaykh Abubakar Ati'ku, Khalifa Tuhami, played a vital role in the implementation of Sharia, especially in 2001, when he was part of the Zakkat committee led by the late Waziri of Kano, Isa Waziri. The committee visited various states that had implemented Sharia reforms, such as Zamfara and observed how they managed the collection and distribution of Zakkat. At the end of the exercise, they

74 Author's interview with Khalifa Tuhami, 5 June 2013.

75 Author's interview with Malam Musbahu, 23 March 2014.

prepared a report with their own recommendations to the Kano State Government.<sup>76</sup>

During the preparations for a new gubernatorial election in 2003, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso emerged as the candidate of PDP seeking re-election, while Ibrahim Shekarau, unknown to most people until then, emerged as the candidate of the All Nigerian Peoples' Party (ANPP). The outcome of the election was in favour of the latter. Most of Shekarau's campaign was based on accusing Kwankwaso of being too sluggish in the implementation of Sharia and on promising a fuller implementation of Sharia under his mandate. His use of the Sharia rhetoric, coupled with his endorsement by former military Head of State, Muhammadu Buhari,<sup>77</sup> who was then the presidential candidate of ANPP for 2003, helped Shekarau emerge victorious in the election. Immediately after his election, Shekarau declared that "One of the major tasks ahead of this government [...] is to satisfy the yearning of the people of Kano, to truly run their affairs on the basis of *Shar'iah*."<sup>78</sup>

One of Shekarau's first actions was to establish three important new institutions for the improved implementation of the Sharia: the Shari'ah Commission; the Zakkat and Hubusi Commission; and the Hisbah Board. The first had to provide general guidelines, the second was in charge of financial aspects of Sharia, and the third was tasked with enforcing compliance with Sharia norms in public life.<sup>79</sup> Although Shekarau was considered to be very close to Izala, and received much support from Salafi groups during his campaign, he continued, once in power, with the policy of his predecessor of relying on Sufi groups. The Salgawa, in particular, played a significant role in some of these commissions throughout the Shekarau administration (2003-2007). For example,

76 Author's interview with Khalifa Tuhami, 5 June 2013.

77 Buhari had served as a military head of state in Nigeria between 1983 and 1985. He has a large amount of support in the north and especially in Kano. Today, Buhari is the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

78 Ibrahim Ado Kurawa, "Shariah Implementation in Kano State Under the leadership of Malam Ibrahim Shekarau," available online at [www.gamji.com/article4000/NEWS4887.htm](http://www.gamji.com/article4000/NEWS4887.htm).

79 Mamman Lawal Yusufari, "Shari'ah Implementation in Kano State," available online at [www.gamji.com](http://www.gamji.com).

Ibrahim Shehu Maihula (son of Salga's student Shehu Maihula) was appointed as one of the two commissioners of the Shari'ah Commission. The other commissioner was Shaykh Umar Sani Fagge (also a Tijani), with Shaykh Umar Kabo as chairman and Alhaji Sani Tofa as director-general.<sup>80</sup> During Shekarau's second tenure (2007-2011), Maihula was appointed as a commissioner of the Zakkat and Hubusi Commission.<sup>81</sup>

In the 2011 gubernatorial election campaign, Shekarau supported the candidature of Salihu Sagir Takai, the flag-bearer of ANPP. Takai was generally considered by the Tijanis as a member of Izala. While there is no direct evidence to support this claim, it is certainly true that Takai was supported during his campaign by the leadership of Izala, and in particular by Abdallah Saleh Pakistan, a senior Izala leader in Kano who was very close to Shekarau's administration. When Shekarau presented Takai as the ANPP candidate to the son of Malam Muhammad Saga, Mudi Salga (d. 2012) and solicited the latter's prayer, Salga declined the request based on the candidate's presumed Salafi inclination.<sup>82</sup> Perceiving the new candidate as being too close to Izala, the Salgawa supported the PDP candidate Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, who was considered to be more neutral in terms of doctrinal affiliation.<sup>83</sup> Thanks also to the support of the Sufi networks, Kwankwaso eventually won the 2011 election.

Perhaps in consideration of the role played by Khalifa Isma'il Ibrahim in preparing the Sharia document of 2001, Kwankwaso appointed him as the new chairman of the Sharia Commission. Because of his old age and poor health, however, he relinquished that position and requested that the position of commissioner be given to Sayyadi Bashir Tijani Usman, the oldest son of his teacher, Shaykh Tijani Usman *Zangon Barebari*.<sup>84</sup> Since then, the position has been held by Bashir Tijani Usman, showing how the Salgawa have managed to keep control of the Sharia administration in Kano State.

80 Kurawa, "Shari'ah Implementation."

81 Author's interview with Malam Zubair Jibril Madigawa, 23 August 2013.

82 Author's interview with Malam Abdullahi Mahmud Salga, 13 June 2013.

83 Author's interview with Malam Abdullahi Mahmud Salga, 13 June 2013.

84 Author's interview with Khalifa Tuhami, 5 June 2014.

## Conclusion

This paper has discussed the role of a specific Tijani network, the Salgawa, in the political history of Kano, as an example of the complex and ever-changing dynamics that regulate the political orientation of Kano *'ulamā'*. Throughout the history of Islam in Hausaland, Muslim scholars have exhibited various attitudes regarding politics. Some scholars rendered their services to the palace, while others kept their distance from it, primarily to maintain a state of neutrality and earn the respect of their followers. These divergent attitudes did not result mechanically from the doctrines professed by the groups, but were the result of complex considerations that depended on the social and political contexts at various periods in the history of Islam in northern Nigeria. In the early colonial period, the scholars who associated closely with the palace were employed by the emirs to render their services. In the Native Authority system, the emirs were vassals of the British crown. Therefore, many scholars who mistrusted colonial rule also kept their distance from the Emir's palace, which explains Malam Salga's latent conflict with Emir Abdullahi Bayero. The suspicious, and at the times openly hostile attitude of the colonial government to the Tijanis in general, also contributed to shape Salga's withdrawal.

After the Second World War, a gradual transformation took place regarding the attitude of the Salgawa to politics. This development shows that the political culture of a religious group is not static, but is constantly shaped by changing circumstances. The transformation of the Salgawa's attitude to politics was the direct outcome of the allegiance paid by the Salgawa to Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse. As Niasse had visited Kano through the invitation of Emir Abdullahi Bayero, their allegiance to the Senegalese led them to establish a more cordial relationship with the palace. Niasse's teachings also emphasized respect for established authority. This attitude was maintained not only during colonial times (with regard to the French or British authorities) but also afterwards, with the governments of the various post-colonial African states.

Nigeria's Fourth Republic began in 1999 and was marked by the politics of Sharia, which provided an opportunity for unprecedented



political participation by the Salgawa in Kano. With the creation of many commissions for the implementation of Sharia in its various facets, the city's Muslim scholars, most of whom were Sufis, were appointed to serve in various positions. Since 2003, the Salgawa scholars have been active in virtually all these committees. The participation of the Salgawa in the Sharia politics of Nigeria's twenty-first century can be seen from two angles: on one side, it is the continuation of Niasse's attitude which encourages full participation of the Tijanis in the public life of their societies; on the other side, it is also to be understood in light of the competition with the Salafis that has been so central to the religious sphere of northern Nigeria in the last four decades.

Seen through a century of political development, the example of the Salgawa demonstrates the ability of Islamic religious networks to adapt their political culture to changing circumstances.