



Relationship Between the *Alkalawa* Authorities and the Muslim Scholars Before the 1804 Sokoto Jihad

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Abstract

Gobir Kingdom was one of the seven traditional kingdoms of Hausaland, tracing its origin back to the 11th century. The seat of the kingdom was at Alkalawa, in north-western part of Hausaland. The Shaykh grew up in Degel one of the towns of the kingdom. His revivalist activities were initiated in it. Relationship between the Shaykh and Gobir administration was initially cordial which encouraged literacy and scholarship for both men and women throughout the territory, this was during the reign of Bawa Jangwarzo up to the reign of Yaqub. Later, during the reign of Yunfa the relationship degenerated into hostilities and a full of blown war ensued as a result of the growing popularity of the movement which the Gobir rulers saw as a threat to their authority.

Keywords: *Alkalawa, Muslim, Scholars, Degel Hausaland, Sokoto Jihad.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the principal themes in the history of Gobir Kingdom is the question of the relations between Alkalawa Authorities and the Muslim Scholars. A theory of such relations is not very difficult to construct because the history of Gobir at various levels was a matter of great concern to the classical Muslim writers. For example, Sultan Muhammad Bello The author of *infaq al-mansur fi tarikh Bilad al-tukurur* and *sard al-Kalam fi majara baini wabaina abd al-Salam* and Shykh Abd al-Allah b. Foduye the author of *Tazin al waraqat*. However, realities could be very different from ideals. The purpose of this paper is to examine the pattern of relationship that existed between the Alkalawa Authorities and Muslim scholars before the Jihad of Shaykh b. Foduye in 1804 C/E.

The researcher will examine how successfully these relations fulfil the most important required goals. In view of achieving this goal the paper is going to discuss the Emergence of Alkalawa (Capital of Gobir) and the religion of their people. Eventually, the paper is going to discuss about the rulers of Alkalawa and the roles they played to the development of 'the country and the resultant effects for the collapse of their Kingdom. The paper will also show the categories of scholars that lived with Alkalawa Authorities and how they participated in the movement, whether positive or negative. Then later the paper will examine the relationship between the Muslim Scholars of Gobir and their rulers by casting a glance on the two periods: the first part falls in the early eighteen century which was characterized by teaching and preaching. The second part had started in 1874, was characterized by teaching, writing, preaching, reforming and renovating which was related to the migration of the Shaykh. Then more importantly to consider what lessons we may gain for the Nigerians today for the future of the upbringing and then recommendation and conclusion.

The relationship between *Alkalawa* Authorities and the Muslim Scholars in the then period was cordial, there was no interference between the authority and the scholars. In spite of this stand matters increased in magnitude, the scholars occupied an influential position in the society, they were courteous to authorities, visiting them and demonstrating cordial relationship with them. Eventually, things had changed drastically, and later generated into hostilities and a full-blown war erupted as a result of the growing popularity and the movement which resulted in bringing the kingdom of Gobir to an end and the new Caliphate was established which was Sokoto Caliphate.

Before the researcher begin with the topic of this paper, it is necessary to know the emergence of Alkalawa Authorities and the religion of their people that may shade light in understanding the topic of this research.

The Emergence of the Alkalawa (Capital of Gobir) Before the Jihad of Danfodiyo and the Religion of Its People

The capital of Gobir was Alkalawa on the bank of Gulbin Rima. The name Alkalawa originated from the farmland of Alkalin Zamfara that was given to the Gobirawa immigrants by the Sarkin Zamfara, Malu. The original home of Gobirawa was Agadasn and the oasis of Asbin. From this they were driven South by the tuaregs to the country still known as Gobir Tudu, about 120 miles north and north-east of Sokoto. This movement continued to the time when they reached and settled in the country of Zamfara. Babari was the first king of Gobir to make war on Zamfara and finally destroyed the power of Zamfara and sacked its capital Birnin Zamfara, in 1762 and put Sarkin Zamfara to flight. With the collapse of their capital. Babari built a nascent capital of Gobir at Alkalawa, on the farmlands of Alkalin Zainfara from where it gets its name¹.

Having known that Alkalawa was the capital city of Gobir and it lived in the area of Hausaland. The acceptance of Islam by the ruling class traces the origin in the fourteen century, though they accepted Islam outwardly, many of them still considered themselves as custodians of pagan practices which abounded in the area. They involved the worship of various spirits of natural phenomena and were as especially connected with the agriculture pastorals, fishing, hunting and the protection of settlement Among others². Rulers, therefore, were undoubtedly unbelievers, though they may profess the religion of Islam because they practice polytheistic rituals and turn people away from the path of Allah and raise the flag of a disbelievers above the banner of Islam.³

The Rulers of Alkalawa and He Roles They Played to the Development of the Country and the Reasons for the Collapse of Their Kingdom

1. Ibrahim Babari The Founder Of Alkalawa, (1764-1771A.H)

During his reign Gobir mounted many expeditions against Kano, katsina, kiyawa and such distance places like shira In Borno, each with varying degree of success. He was the founder of Alkalawa, the capital of Gobir. He led the armies to found their new capital at Akalawa after building its walls; that Gobirawa were able to settled and consolidated their kingdom. Gobirawa were first attacked in their new capital by the Tuaregs but they drove their enemies away at the battle of Dangude. Ibrahim Babari expanded the kingdom by threatening and sacking Birnin Zamfara, capital of Zamfara. These wars lasted for 15 years. Although they suffered some defeats in some few wars.

Gobirawa gave Gobir the control of the whole territory between Katslna in the East and kabbi in the West to the south the Frontier were pushed up to Bakura and the remnants of Zamfara. Wars have become part of their culture and today they are simply identified through the facial markings of 6 and 7 on their cheeks⁴.

Babari concentrated on tackling external problems on who opposed authorities, neglecting the internal one, (the Zamfarawa who had not liked the destruction of their state and those who were outside their control)⁵

2. Bawa Jangwarzo (1771-1789A.H)

Bawa Jangwarzo, the son of Babari, the spiritual leader of the Gobirawa who become one of the famous kings did not only make the history of Gobir but Africa⁶

After the establishment of its capital at Alkalawa, serious opposition against the Gobir state started to build up during the reign of Bawa, the internal and external problems arose. Internally was the need to consolidate its power within the region of Zamfara which had come under its control and the area where the new capital was established and was one of

¹ H. M. Maishanu, Sokoto Caliphate in the eyes of Historians' A Shifting Sand of Interpretation,, University Press, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, pp. 2-3., see also, S. Yusuf, A History of Islam, Scholarship and Revivalism in Western Sudan, Being an annotated Translation with Introduction of Infaq al-Maisur'fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrur of Sultan Muhammadu Bello bin Fodio, Tamaza Publishing Company, Zaria, p. 81

² H.M Maishanu, Sokoto Caliphate in the eyes of Historians, Pp, 2-3

³ S. U. Danfodiyo, Tanbih Al-Ikhwan, Dan-ige, Sokoto, P, 9

⁴ Danfodiyo, Tanbih Al-Ikhwan, P, 9

⁵ A.R Augi, Beyond shadow, Opcit, p. 3

⁶ Augi, Beyond shadow, P...400

the most important areas economically⁷. Externally, in an attempt of consolidate its power; it fell into a conflict with Zamfarawa who remained outside its control, then the Kingdom of Katsina and the Sultanate of Azbin⁸

The opposition of some Zamfarawa who had not liked the destruction of their state and the migration of more Gobirawa into their area had become task for the Gobir authority to achieve the integration and the consolidation of its power. The rulers of Gobir made the external problems their major pre-occupation and neglected the problem of internal consolidation. Consequently therefore, their failure to solve these external problems also meant their failure at home⁹

Bawa developed close commercial relations with Nupeland from where he was said to have received considerable amount of cowries (200 million cowries) and many slaves in exchange of horses and other items. He also promoted trade in salt with both Azbin and Borno and was said to have accumulated substantial stocks of this commodity in Alkalawa. Bawa was said to have eighty camel loads of cola nuts when he was making preparation to attack Maradi¹⁰

In dealing between both internal and external conflicts he adopted the arm tactics. During his reign citizens were burdened with taxation and other levies in an effort to Sustain the state and prosecute its wars. His opponents were imprisoned or subjected to any other form of punishment and forced conscription at the army became widespread¹¹

He died a year after the Magami encounter. in the year 1789 C. E, and was succeeded by Yaqub

3. Sarkin Gobir Yaqub

Bawa's successor followed the footsteps of his predecessors. He was said to have died after a short reign of three years. Yaqub was said to have been more oppressive than Bawa himself. With his wealth and absence of practicing proper religion were to be the factors which generated greater crisis in the state and particular, promoted the fortunes of the Jihad leaders¹²

4. Bunu Nafata (1796-1802)

One of the major acts associated with the reign of Nafata was killing one of the Alibawa leaders by Ali al-Faris (one among his generals). He was the one who lighted the gun power of the jihad by introducing very harsh regulations in an attempt to curb the growth of reviewed Islamic influence. The regulations included; nobody except Shaykh Uthman himself alone should preach islam, all converts should revert to their original faith, no man should become a Muslim unless he had Muslim parents, men should no longer wear the turban, and women should no more use veil themselves¹³

Nafata was eager to crush the rising influence of Shykh, but their power was declining Zamfara had been in revolt¹⁴

5. Sarkin Gobir Yunfa

In 1802, Yunfa the ruler of Gobir and one of Shykh Uthman dan Foduye's students, turned against him, revoking Degel's autonomy and attempting to assassinate Shykh Uthman and his followers fled into the western grasslands of Gudu where they turned for help to the local Fulani nomads. The major factor that laid to the decline of Gobir was the underrating showed by Yunfa on the weight of the influence of the community, who turned for aid to the other leaders of the Hausa states, warning them that dan Fodio could trigger a widespread jihad¹⁵

We can observe from the aforementioned discussion on the rulers of Gobir, we can understand that Gobir Kingdom experienced a lot of crisis and conflicts within and outside their territories which, had caused the decline of their state. The religious uprising which had precipitated a religious war was one of the major factors that had put their kingdom to an end.

Let us now see the types of scholars of Gobir Kingdom before we see their relationship with the rulers.

⁷ Augi Beyond shadow, P...400

⁸ A.R Augi, Beyond the shadow to the substance; the legacy of Gobir in the Sokoto Caliphate, peper presented at the staff seminar of the department of history, University of Sokoto, Thursday, 7th June, 1985, P. 14

⁹ A.M Kani, *et al.*, State and society in Sokoto Caliphate, Usman Danfodiyo University Sokoto, P. 15

¹⁰ A.M Kani (ph.D Thesis), Gobir factor in social and political history of the Rima besin 1650-1808, 1984, P. 422

¹¹ Augi, Beyond shadow, P... 17

¹² Augi, Beyond shadow, Pp...423-430

¹³ Kani *et al.*, *opcit*, P...24

¹⁴ Bayan Wujub al-hijrah, P...11

¹⁵ Bayan Wujub al-hijrah, P...11

Scholars Of The 18th Century and First Quarter of the 19th Century in Gobir

The scholars occupy the special position of influencing both the ruling class and the general public towards a remarkable degree of conformity in the relevant spheres of life.

Scholars of these period were classified into, the *Sunni* Scholars and *venereal* Scholars. The Sunni Scholars were of two types, the specialized Professors, those concentrated on teachings and preaching both elementary and advanced studies, these are the teachers of Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye and his lieutenants, they include, Abd al-Rahman b. Hammadah, Shehu's maternal uncle, Uthman Binduri whom the Shaykh took as example in words and deeds, he accompanied him for two years and molded himself to his pattern of piety in enjoining right and forbidding evil. Muhammadu Sambo, Muhammad b. Rajab and Jibril b. Umar, who influenced the Shaykh through his teaching and preaching. This type of Scholars only concentrated with personal instruction without the broader concern with social and political question, They abandon the courts of their rulers because of the vices they perceived to be practiced in and around them. Then the second category of Sunnah Scholars were those who combined teachings, preaching and writings, they were, Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye who gradually shifted the emphasis of his teachings and writings from personal instruction to a broader concern with social and political question. Under the venereal Scholars, they have also divided into two, those who were rigid and blind adherence to 'a particular school of jurisprudence, they also abandon the reviving the faith and adhered to custom that are contrary to Islam. The second category on innovators among the Scholars were, those supported the authorities and protected their vested interest and tolerated all kinds of corruption. The Sunnah scholars received from them persecution and scandalous attacks¹⁶.

The prominent Scholars of Gobir was the Shaykh Jibril b. Umar who had influenced the Shaykh for the primary duty, then Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye, his brother Abd al-Allah and the noble son Muhammadu Bello were historically the bed rock and the backbone of the development of Islam in the totality of the Ummah living within the Gobir and beyond which expanded to Yoruba land and others.

1. Shykh Jibril B. Umar

Shykh Jibril b. Umar was a North African Muslim scholar who initiated the unsuccessful Jihad in his home area of Ahir for which he was expelled by the Tuaregs. He attempted to bring about reform of religious practices in Gobir and failed, because Allah had reserved the task for Dan foduye. When he moved to Hausa land he continued teaching his reform ideas. By his uncompromising attitude and attacks on local practices, he prepared the way for the Shaykh. Danfodiyo used his influence to secure approval for creating a religious community in his home town of Degel. He went to Makkah, on his return settled near to the water-course (Gebe) of Kundula or Kudi at the present village. The Shaykh came to visit him and then sleep at Ruggar fage, near the present willage of Mullela and coming each morning to Kodi to talk with Jibril¹⁷

He was not dealing with the rulers but concentrated on a common people. Cordial relations continued during the preaching campaign of Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye. Let us see briefly.

2. Shaykh Uthman B. Foduye

Shykh thsman was born at Maratta in the land of Galmi in the year (1754-1 817 CE) later moved to Degel was in the city state of Gobir where he started his activities. The inhabitants of the area lived in darkness of ignorance about Islam. He started preaching and teaching in his home town Degel, when he was 20 years old, from where he later travelled out within and outside Gobir on preaching tours. The tours took him to Kebbi, Zamfara, Faru, Daura, Illo across the River Niger and to Zauma. The tours took place at different times with Degel as the base. He stayed in Zamfara for about five years during which he had the most fertile ground for his missionary activities¹⁸.

He was distinguished with these methods among other scholars of Hausa land who had earlier before him intended to Islamize their societies but failed due to the lack of systematic methods in teaching and preaching, Shykh Uthman Danfoduye charged his disciples to base their lives in accordance to Islamic Shariah, where Quran and Sunnah are the main sources of reference. His objective was to propagate Islam and to condemn alien practices ranging from simple un-islamic ethics such as entering other people's houses without permission, to polytheism, such as making sacrifices to trees and stones.

Later his field of preaching widened as a result of the intellectual development of the community and political development in Hausaland. Both in his preaching and writing, Shykh Usman Dan Foduyue devoted his time to

¹⁶ S.M Bello, Infaq al-mansur, opcit, p. 200 and see also, Tazyin al-waraqat, A. Foduye P...150

¹⁷ A.R. Augi Beyond the shadow, p.7, see also, D. Hamqni, Adar, the tuaregs. P. 14, Relation of Sokoto with the Hausa and tuaregs durin the 19th Century studies in the history of Sokoto Caliphate, the Sokoto seminar papers, P...393

¹⁸ P. H Al-Misri, Introduction, Translation roles of *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah al-ibad*, sokoto: Islamic Academy, pp. 1-5

campaigning against deviations from Sunni belief and practice. He has his regular students with whom he discussed and advanced theology and Sufism and on their return to their homelands; they advocated his ideas and enhanced his prestige.

3. Shaykh Abd Al-Allah B. Foduye

Shaykh Abd al-Allah was born in a village called Magami in the year (1766 C/E). Historians differ on the year of his birth, but according to Gidado b. Laima, the Shaykh was born in the year 1754 C/E, and Abd al-Allah a younger brother to him who was born in the year 1766 C/E¹⁹. This was also confirmed by Abd al-Allah where he mentioned what was between him and Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye was twelve-year-old²⁰.

Abd al-Allah came from a long line of scholars and commenced his religious education at an early age. At the age of thirteen he was put in the hand of his brother the Shaykh through who he studied Ishriniyyah of Alfazazi, the seven Islamic Poets and Tawhid from the work of Sanusi al- Burhan. From the Shaykh that he learned syntax, A-Ajrumiyyah, Mulhat al l'rab, Qatr al-Nada wa bal al-s ada and other works. From him he studied Sufism, Law, Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith²¹

4. Sultan Muhammadu Bello (1781-1837)

Bello was a son born in a learned family. His grandfather, grandmother, father and uncle were all learned and renowned scholars. He received his elementary education from them. When he was matured enough to receive the advance knowledge, his father Shaykh Uthman taught him, Tafsir, *Usul al-Hadith* and the book titled, *Insan al-Haqiqah*. He also acquired different fields of knowledge from his Father²². He studied Tafsir of Albaidawi by Albagwi and *Lubab al-Ta'wil* and in hadith he studied Kutub al-Sitta, from his uncle he received Arabic language and its sciences as well as the principles of Usul.²³

Relations Between Alkalawa Authorities with the Islamic Scholars Before the Jihad in 1804 C/E

The scholars occupied the special position of influencing both the ruling class and the general public towards a remarkable degree of conformity in the relevant spheres of life.

During the sojourn of Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye in the state of Zamfara, he spent a year in Daura around 1787-1788 C/E, and four years in Faru. While the Shaykh was at Faru, many people flocked to his preaching assemblies in Zamfara, including both male and female. Sarkin Gobir, Bawa summoned the Shaykh and other scholars to celebrate the Id al-Kabir with him at his court at Magani. During the celebration he presented the gifts to the Ulama and the Shaykh also. All the Ulama except Shaykh Uthman received the presents; instead, the Shaykh demanded and got five concessions as follows; that he should be allowed to call people to Islam, anyone who responded to his call should not be stopped, any man wearing a turban or a woman wearing a veil should be respected, all prisoners should be released and finally the subjects should not be burdened with a heavy tax and finally Bawa accepted the demands. This indicated to us the level Shaykh in the sight of Bawa. The feeling he had on Shaykh as menace in his authority, as a result of this he paid respect and sought his favour when he visits the Shaykh at Degel. Lastly, what served as an indication to us that the relation was cordial was that, the two of his children were taken to the school of the Shaykh, they were Yaqub and Yunfa. These served as an indication that the Shaykh lived in peace with Sultan Bawa. After the death of Bawa, Yaqub succeed him; the relationship was somehow weak, only that Yaqub did not stay long during his reign²⁴.

During the reign of Nafata when he observed that the followership of Danfoduye had become large enough, Shaykh started giving thought to the possibility of breaking any relations whatsoever with the power that be. Unfortunately, Nafata decreed sanctions against the Shaykh reversing the concessions which the Shaykh had previously gained from Bawa. He proclaimed that; Nobody except Shaykh Uthman himself alone should preach Islam, all converts should revert to their original faith, no man should become a Muslim unless he had Muslim parents, men should no longer wear the turban, and women should no more use veil themselves.

In an attempt to worsen the relationship between the authority of Alkalawa, Yunfa tried to assassinate Shaykh without success.

¹⁹ M. Hisket (ed), Tazyin, al-Waraqat Ibadan University Press, Nigeria, p. 6

²⁰ A. Foduye *Tazyin al-waraqat* P...8

²¹ Tazyin, (ed), opcit, p. 5-6, see also, J: Boyd et-al, The collected works of Nana Asma'u, daughter of Shaykh Uthman b. FODIO) Sam Bookman Publishers, ibadan,Nigeria, p.21

²² S. Yusuf, A History of Islamic, p...14

²³ Yusuf, A History of Islamic, p...15

²⁴ Tazyin, (ed), p...34, see also, The collected works of Nana, Asma'u, p...40

Resulting from Nafata's proclamation Yunfa attacked a section of the Muslim Community under one Abd al-Salam who moved from Degel in Gobir to Gimbana, a province in Kebbi. Yunfa ordered them to return but they refused. Consequently, Gimbana was attacked and Abd al-Salam followers were taken as prisoners Danfoduye had a distinctive method in teaching and preaching towards Islamizing the citizens of the area.

Lessons for the Contemporary Nigerians and Unborn Generation

1. Peace and Tranquillity prevailed due to observance of the teaching of Islam
2. Scholars should not confine themselves to teaching and preaching alone, because that may not suffice, until they act as an instrument of fighting injustice and tyranny
3. Obeying a tyrant ruler is compulsory unless if he called to the disobedience to Allah and his messenger.
4. Abandoning the rulers courts and denying their wealth would buy respect for the scholar, as what had happened between the Shaykh and the Alkalawa authorities.
5. A scholar with a sound belief is the one who wish to see the supremacy of the religion.
6. It is essential for the revivalist to ensure that the obligatory duties were observed and assure that people abandon any form of shirk and practicing a pure faith in Islam.

Recommendations

1. This research recommends that contemporary Muslim scholars should try to employ systematic methods in teaching people to understand the pure Islamic religion, which forbids associating any partner with Allah
2. They should also have to have a bravery, tolerance and sincerity like that of Danfoduye in discharging their missionary activities.
3. It is good for the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria to make effort to re-instate Islamic political system in Nigeria and revive the legacies of the old Sokoto Caliphate's wisdom and legacies that may be fully resuscitated.

Conclusion

The relationship between the Alkalawa authorities and Muslim scholars before the 1804 Sokoto Jihad was marked by increasing conflict and opposition, reflecting deeper struggles over religious authority, legitimacy, and governance. Initially, the Muslim scholars, including Usman dan Fodio, operated within the existing political structures of the Gobir Kingdom, centered in Alkalawa. They sought to promote Islamic values, education, and justice, engaging with the rulers to encourage more consistent adherence to Islamic principles.

However, over time, the relationship began to deteriorate. The Alkalawa authorities were often resistant to the stricter interpretations of Islam advocated by the scholars, as they balanced Islamic practices with indigenous traditions and political interests. This resistance created friction, as the scholars criticized what they saw as moral corruption, unjust governance, and the persistence of practices contrary to Islamic teachings. These critiques were not only religious but also social and political, challenging the legitimacy of the ruling elite.

The tension escalated as the Alkalawa authorities attempted to curb the influence of reformist scholars, including imposing restrictions on their preaching and movements. This led to a sense of alienation among the scholars, who saw themselves as protectors of true Islamic values in the face of an unresponsive and, at times, oppressive leadership. The increasing divergence between the rulers and scholars eventually polarized the Muslim community, as many began to side with the reformist vision of the scholars over the traditionalist stance of the Alkalawa authorities.

In conclusion, the relationship between the Alkalawa authorities and Muslim scholars before the 1804 Sokoto Jihad evolved from a cooperative but strained coexistence to open ideological and political conflict. This growing divide highlighted the struggle for religious and political legitimacy, ultimately paving the way for the 1804 Jihad. The Jihad not only represented a rejection of the existing order but also a movement to establish a new Islamic state based on principles of justice, purity, and adherence to Islamic law, leading to the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate and a significant reorganization of power in the region.

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