RELEVANCE OF QADIRIYYA SUFISM IN THE JIHAD AND ITS MODERATIVE EFFECT ON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SOKOTO CALIPHATE

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INTRODUCTION

Sokoto Caliphate, established by Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye, was one of the few caliphates established by *sufi* leaders, and by far one of the most organized and governed caliphates. Many factors helped in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. The most important among these factors were discontent among the common people, Islamic spirit and consciousness in the Sokoto *Jihad* leaders and *Qadirfvyah* solidarity. This paper intends to examine the last factor and bring out its role in the success of the *Jihad* that culminated into a durable caliphate that was unique in history. Also to be examined is the role played by the order in particular and sufism in general in shaping the qualities of leadership in the Sokoto *Jihad* leaders. However, as a prelude, the shift of Sufism from its passive political participation to active role in local political struggle in North Africa will be discussed. This will pave way for the clear understanding of the role played by *Qadiriyyah* Sufism in the execution of the *Jihad* and governance of the Caliphate.

FROM PASSIVE TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Sufism, which is popularly defined as *Ihsan*, ¹ came into existence with the advent of Islam as a moderator of public and private life of ardent *sufi* who sees his entire life as a struggle to please Allah. Early <u>Sufis</u> were called ascetics (*Zuhhad*) an appellation which requires a *sufi* to be god-fearing by way of being humble, and moderate in acquisition of material wealth and political power. Ideally an ascetic should be concerned more with uplifting of his spiritual life as against material wealth and power. He needs very little in terms of food to keep soul and body in harmony and generate enough energy to worship Allah. ² This is generally what informed the pattern of life lived by the *Sahaba* of the prophet (S.A.W.) in their private and public life. They shared the little they had with their less privileged members. Those who found themselves in the position of leadership treated the trust with caution such that some of them who were wealthy before their conversion to Islam died leaving

nothing for their offspring to inherit. ³ Despite the opportunities offered them by conquests, the early Muslim rulers lived a moderate life. It was only later when ascetics became a distinct group referred to as sufis that they kept themselves aloof from political leadership when *non-sufi* leaders continued to amass material wealth and misuse position of leadership to the detriment of the Muslim *Ummah*. ⁴

With the introduction of Islam into Africa, Sufism found itself in another environment where misadministration and misuse of power by rulers were rampant. Sufi leaders, therefore, had to fight these rulers thereby ignoring necessarily the notion that involvement by a *sufi* in political and leadership roles corrupts him and allows manipulation of his spiritual life by power. ⁵ What seems to draw the sufis into politics of their localities could be the crack which appeared in the political unity of the Muslims as a result of misadministration which could not be condoned by Islam.

This is a departure from the old practice of the tenth century. Of course, such a situation warranted the emergence of *sufi* influence through *sufi* leaders who wielded political influence within their communities in the Magharib around the middle of thirteenth century. ⁷ By the fourteenth century, *sufi* leaders were either leading political movements or supporting charismatic leaders. ⁷ By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was stiff resistance from the *sufi* leaders against both the constituted authorities and Christian missionaries. In Morocco, around the fifteenth century, the *sufi* leaders strongly resented the attitude of Wattanid rulers for having done nothing to check the encroachment of the Portuguese into Muslim lands. ⁸

A similar occurrence was repeated around the sixteenth century when the *sufi* leaders went on enlightenment campaign against the successful penetration of Christian powers in North Africa. ⁹ These and similar incidences had, probably, linked *sufi* leaders with the tribal structure of their communities as well as the political development of their areas. This could explain why

authorities through expulsion, repression and sometimes extermination persecuted sufi leaders. However, very influential sufi leaders were won over through marriage of convenience between the authorities and a particular sufi order. Sometimes stronger sufi orders were used against less powerful ones.

10 Therefore, most of the states like al-Maranid, 11 al-Muwahhidin 12 Sa'adid dynasty 13 and Sultanate of Morocco 13 persecuted, in various ways, sufi leaders in general and Nasiriyyah, Shadhiliyyah, Kittaniyyah and Darqawiyyah sufi orders in particular.

Tijjaniyyah Sufi Order, considered to be a political movement from its inception, had always been in confrontation with the Turks both before and after its Shaykh, Ahmad al-Tijani, was expelled from Abu Samghun on the orders of the Bey of Oran. Al-Tijani's resentment of the Turkish rule in Algeria was so strong that he preferred a non-Islamic government in place of that of the Turks. ¹⁵ What has so far been analysed above shows that *sufi* orders and *sufi* leaders had curved out for themselves a place in the local politics of their areas. It also shows that <u>sufi</u> leaders were compelled into joining local politics by misadministration and sometimes inability of rulers to check the activities of Christian missionaries and expansionists. ¹⁶ It was the former reason that brought *Qadiriyyah* leaders in Hausa land into confrontation with Muslim rulers in the area. We shall now see the role of *Qadiriyyah Sufism* in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate.

ROLE OF QADIRIYY A IN THE JIHAD

The roles played by the *Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order in the Sokoto *Jihad* did not receive serious attention from researchers. This makes a layman to assume that *Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order did not play any role in the organization and execution of the *Jihad* led by Shaykh Uthman. The influence of *Tasawwuf*. for example, in moulding the characters of the *Jihad* leaders and the roles of Shaykh Abdulkadir al-Jelani (the founder of *Qadiriyyah*) and Shaykh Mukhtar al-Kunti (leader of *Qadiriyyah* in Western Sudan) in shaping the outlook of the

Shaykh and directing the *Jihad* have been underrated by many people. There was also the moral support received by the Jihadists from the *Qadiri* Kunta scholars in Azwad under Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti and his successor and the leader of *Qadiriyyah* followers in Timbuctu, Ahmad al-Baka'i. The Tuareg, even though their support was not always predictable, were sometimes influenced by *Qadiriyyah* forces to support the <u>Jihad</u> leaders.

The influence of Tasawwuf and Qadiriyyah Sufi Order in shaping the outlook of the Jihad leaders can be traced in their writings. The three principal leaders in the Jihad, namely Shaykh Uthman, Shaykh Abdullahi and Muahmmad Bello were known to have been active Qadiriyyah followers and practitioners. Their life style, which was sufi biased, was moulded by Shaykh Jibril bn Umar, a Qadiri scholar and teacher of the Shaykh and Abdullah, among others. The Shaykh maintained strict adherence to sufi life as a Qadiri follower. During the course of his Wa'az and teaching, the Shaykh used to formally open his discussions with supplication in a way commonly identified with Shaykh Abdulkadir al-Jilani. 17 Similarly, when the Shaykh saw that his followers were in support of breaking away from the rule of Gobir and were ready to undertake Jihad he composed a Hausa poem in which he prayed to Allah through Abdulkadir al-Jilani. Among such things he prayed for included increase in faith and deeds, strict following of the Sunnah and obedience to Allah. He was passionate in his prayer to see the establishment of Islam as the religion of the majority in this land by the blessing of Abdulkadir. 18

When Shaykh Uthman was 36 years old, it was recorded that he witnessed the sublime presence of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), angels and saints including Shaykh Mukhtar al-Kunti. He was at that meeting commanded to wage *Jihad* and uplift Islam in this area after he was decorated by Mukhtar al-Kunti and was given the Sword of Truth. ¹⁹ These happenings in the life of the Shaykh in which he either prayed through Abdulkadir al-Jilani or met *Qadiri* Saints such as Abdulkadir himself and Mukhtar al-Kunti indicate that the

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Da'wa and Jihad of the Shaykh received the blessings of the Qadiriyyah saints.

The movements of Shaykh Uthman, before and after the break out of hostilities, were directed and coordinated by Shaykh Abdulkadir al-Jelani. One of such movements to have been coordinated by Shaykh Abdulkadir al-Jilani was the *Hijrah*. Shaykh Uthman intended to migrate from Degel to Iname when relationship between the *Jama'ah* and the Gobir establishment sored. Charastically of him, Shaykh Abdulkadir instructed Shaykh Uthman to halt the intended migration, as it was not yet time for it. Similarly when it was time for the Shaykh and his *Jama'a* to migrate Shaykh Abbdulkadir instructed him to migrate to Gudu. ²⁰

The composition of the *Mujahidun* also reflected the assumption that the *Jihad* was a *Qadiri* fought one. The leaders were Qadiris by affiliation so were the majority of the *Mujahidun*. Most of the flag bearers were either students of the Shaykh or were recommended to him by *Qadiri* Saints. According to a report:

Mallam Uthman Hausa and Sulayman Fulani who became flag bearers for the execution of the <u>Jihad</u> in Kano were connected with the Jihadists through Shaykh Nakabara.²¹

The report went further to show that even though Mallam Nakabara (a *Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order leader in Kano) did not physically participate in the *Jihad*, he helped by recruiting supporters for the Jihadists on the platform of *Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order ²². It was also reported that, a group of scholars from Bornu, probably <u>Qadiris</u> by affiliation who settled in Zazzau at Unguwar Kona, influenced Sarkin Zazzau Jatau to support the *Jihad* of Shaykh Uthman. ²³ The Tuareg proved to be unpredictable tribe who sometime allied with Hausa rulers and at the other time with the *Mujahidun*. Their leader, the Sultan of Ahir, Muhammad Baqir, visited the Shakyh and received his blessings (*Qadiriyyah?*). Baqir pledged, according to Bello, to support the *Jihad* of the Shaykh ²⁴. The result of his visit to the Shaykh was the effort he made in soliciting for support for the Shaykh from the neighbouring state of Ahir. He

wrote letters to rulers of these states informing them of the *Jihad* and soliciting for their support for the reform movement. It is on record that the Sultan of Morocco sent through a Toat messenger two letters the contents of which revealed the recognition of the *Jihad* movement by the Sultan. ²⁵

The roles played by Kunta scholars, who were *Qadiriyyah* adherents, in soliciting for help for the movement of the Shaykh have been recorded in many sources. According to Abdullahi bn Foduye news of the efforts of the *Jihad* leaders in reforming Islam in Hausa land had reached Kunta scholars before the historic *Hijrah* to Gudu. From all indications, the Kunta scholars had not only supported this struggle but had gone further to encourage their followers to give Jihad leaders a helping hand. ²⁶ There is a report by Lewis, indicating that Shaykh Mukhtar al-Kunti sent Qadiri army all the way from Futa Toro to help the *Jihad* leaders. ²⁷ Since there is no reference to *Jihad* leaders receiving this kind of help from the Kuntas in their writings, one can only say that the report with us confirmed the concern shown by the Kuntas for the success of the *Jihad*.

There is no doubt that the Jihad leaders were pleased with the moral support they received from Shaykh Mukhtar al-Kunti. All the three leaders of the *Jihad* had, at one time or the other, composed poetry in praise of the Kunta scholar. Shaykh Abdullahi seemed to be requesting al-Mukhtar, in his *Tazyin al-Waraqat*, to support them at least morally since they shared the same religion (and sufi order?). ²⁸ As for Muhammad Bello he requested from the Kunta Shaykh the prayer that would assist Shaykh Uthman and his *Jama'ah* to accomplish their desire in reforming Islam in Hausaland. ²⁹ After the death of Shaykh Utman, the moral support was extended to his successor, Muhammad Bello, by Ahmad al-Bakka'i, another Kunta scholar based in Timbuctu. Al-Bakka'i extolled the virtues of Sultan Bello and recognized the legitimacy of his Sultanate. He also described Bello as *Imam* and *Amir al-Mu'minin in* whose custody was placed the temporal and religious leadership of Hausaland. ³⁰ By recognising Bello's leadership in all facets of life, al-Bakka'i was expressing

the respect the Kuntas had for the *Jihad* and the Caliphate established by Shaykh Uthman. In addition to this, the Kuntas supported the demand of Bello for recognition and <u>Bay'a</u> from Shaykh Ahmad Labbo who had started *Jihad* in Masina. Some reports indicate that Ahmad Labbo received permission from Shaykh Uthman before he embarked on the <u>Jihad</u>.

What has so far been said above show clear relationship between the *Jihad* of Shaykh Uthman and *Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order. At any moment in the course of the *Jihad Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order was found to have played one role or the other towards the success of the *Jihad*. These from all indications, support the claim that the *Jihad* was *Qadiri* conceived and prosecuted one. The *Mujahidun* were synonymous with *Qadiri* followers who were addressed as Qadirawa. The next section examines effect of *sufi* way of life on the leadership of the *Jihad*..

EFFECT OF SUFI WAY OF LIFE ON THE CALIPHATE LEADERSHIP Sufism, as indicated at the beginning of this paper, aims at moderating the life style of its adherents in all facets of life. Its main aim is to make the adherent to worship Allah as if he sees Him in his socio-economic and political pursuits among others. There is no distinction, in this respect, between ritual prayers in the mosque and decision-making and its execution in the office or supervision of transactions in the market. Therefore, sufi affiliation played a central role in the determination of the form of leadership to be adopted by the leaders. Unlike the leaders they toppled, Jihad leaders fought the battles and established the Caliphate not for the sake of power in itself but to demonstrate the pure Islamic form of leadership that was lacking in Hausaland because of the absence of "Ihsan" in the leadership practice of Islam. Therefore, call for modesty regarding worldly power is manifest in their writings and was also reflected in their attitude towards power. They considered love for power as a blameworthy attribute and a means by which spiritual and ethical life could be destroyed as was evidenced in the Habe of Hausaland 31

Jihad leaders indicate that association with world-minded-rulers, like Habe kings, is a source of corruption of faith that affects spiritual and ethical elevation. This, according to Abdullahi, was the source of corruption in the venal scholars who opposed the Jihad of Shaykh Uthman by allying with Habe kings. This could therefore explain why both the rulers and venal scholars lost the sympathy of the common people. ³² Unlike in the case of Habe rulers, Jihad leaders were against showing of meekness in the presence of rulers especially if they are worldly-minded. This they hinged on a saying "Whoever humbles himself in front of a king from among the worldly kings has lost three quarters of his religion". ³³ It is from this point of view that the Jihad leaders preached against showing any form of meekness by the common people in their courts. This made their courts not only accessible to common people but also a place where a common man maintained his dignity while in the presence of the ruler since the leaders did not want anyone to loose "three quarters of his religion".

In addition, *Jihad* leaders refrained from perpetrating the atrocities perpetrated by the *Habe* rulers such as enslavement of innocent people and handing down of judgments according to their whims and caprices. Instead *Jihad* leaders moderated their life-style in conformity with Prophet Muhammad's modesty that described himself as a human servant-messenger who sat on the ground and shared his meals with his servants. ³³

As earlier indicated, *Jihad* leaders' misgiving and attack on worldly-power are not only found in what they wrote but could also be glimpsed from their own attitudes towards the worldly minded- rulers of their time. This could have influenced their leadership roles in the Caliphate and might have impacted on the immediate rulers of the Caliphate. It has been recorded that some extremist sufis refused to take any public appointment in the Caliphate established by the Shaykh for fear of spiritual and ethical corruption. Muhammad Sambo bn Shaykh Uthman refused to accept any state appointment. He also criticized those who canvassed for it. ³⁵ This may

probably indicate that even those who participated in the governance must have acted with strict caution to avoid corrupting their spiritual and ethical life. Abdullahi Ibn Foduye had also demonstrated caution when he left the *Jama'ah* and travelled eastward because of the inclination of some from among the *Jama'ah* toward worldly power. According to him, many people were turning against the aims of the *Jihad* and were being overtaken by pleasure and power seeking as against which the *Jihad* was being waged. His resolve was, therefore, to withdraw from the *Jama'ah*, hence his journey eastward. ³⁶

Earlier Shaykh Uthman had advised against association with worldly-minded rulers and had similarly practically demonstrated it. It is therefore, not surprising to find the Shaykh keeping himself away from such rulers and avoiding their gifts. This could be seen from his attitude to rulers at the initial stage of his itinerant preaching tours during which he avoided meeting the rulers. He was also reported to have turned down the gift offered him by king Bawa Jan Gwarzo that was happily accepted by other scholars. ³⁷ It should, however, be realized that the type of power condemned by the *Jihad* leaders is the one in which the *Shariah* in its totality does not find a place in the business of governance. Where the *Shari'ah* receives adequate attention in the formulation and execution of state policies and the rulers are not oppressive, arrogant and pleasure-seeking leaders, power in such a state cannot be condemn.

There were also other aspects of Sufism that enhanced good leadership in the Sokoto Caliphate. In addition to leaders' condemnation of worldly power that distracts a ruler from the teachings of Islam. Some of these aspects included renunciation of the world and materialism, eschatology in form of remembrance of death and its consequences, *Radd al-Mazalim* that facilitates good governance and the belief in eating from one's lawful earning.

Jihad leader believed that good and responsible leadership could only be realised when leaders shun materialism. According to them, due to the love of the material world spiritual and ethical norms in all facets of life including

leadership are thrown overboard. In this situation the gates of mischief and evil are widely open especially for rulers who would enjoy oppressing and exploiting their people. This will then result into self-glorification by the ruler and exceeding the bounds set by Allah. ³⁸ It is therefore; clear that when the bounds set by Allah are exceeded, misadministration will occur in a state.

Jihad leaders had pointed out the evil of being engulfed by the love of the world on a ruler. It adversely affects both the spiritual and ethical life of the ruler and by implication his leadership role in the society. They, therefore, provided what they felt are helpful for balancing the spiritual and ethical life on one hand and the love of the world and materialism on the other. *Zuhd* (asceticism) according to them moderates between his spiritual and material life. *Jihad* leaders made it clear that it is obligatory for one to seek for what can keep one's body and soul together to facilitate *Ibadah*, including execution of leadership roles. Similarly, it is lawful for one to acquire minimum requirements needed for one's sustenance like clothing, marriage and shelter ³⁹ and should by all means avoid elegancy and extravagancy in respect of food and beverages and take that which could keep him sound both in mind and body ⁴⁰.

Belief in *Radd al-Mazalim* (restoration of inequity) keeps a leader away from cheating and exploiting his subjects. He will always have, at the back of his mind, the principle whenever he attempts to cheat or exploit a subject knowing fully well that any inequity that remains un redeemed in this world would be enquire into by Allah on the Day of Judgment. *Jihad* leaders were guided by this principle in their dealing with their subjects. Muhammad Tukur, a contemporary of Shaykh Uthman and a critique of rulers observes that a believer should return inequities to people he wronged. ⁴¹

Another *sufi* aspect of life that has relationship with restoration of inequity is belief in eschatology. This aspect involves belief in death, reckoning and final abode. The *Jihad* leaders used these eschatological provisions to stimulate spiritual and ethical upliftment among the Muslims, including leaders. Belief in

death, which can occur without notice, is a deterrent against misadministration; it kills wishful hope and ardent love for accumulation of wealth and quest for power. Therefore rulers and entire believers should constantly remember death and its attendant consequences. 42 it is therefore assumed that the leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate did not only preach this important eschatological teaching in relation of leadership without, themselves, observing it. This could be applied to other eschatological teachings since the main aim is to make believers observe "Ihsan' in all that they do, leadership inclusive.

Self-reliance and sustenance on lawful acquisition are two important sufi concepts. It is against Sufism for someone to rely on others for his basic needs. Rather he is expected to strive towards making himself self-ufficient. In addition, what he sustains on should be from his lawful acquisition. Therefore, Jihad leaders used this concept effectively in order to dissuade believers from relying on others for their sustenance. They believed that the search for wealth for self-sufficiency and for safeguarding oneself against want is not only lawful but also obligatory. They went further to show that it is one of the greatest sacrifices since it is in support of someone's religious belief. 43 This position has support both in the Qur'an 44 and in the Sunnah. 45 It is this concept that informed the attitude the Jihad leaders adopted in the acquisition of the means of sustenance. They relied on their efforts to fend for themselves and their family. According to narrations, Sultans of the caliphate up to late Abubakar Sadig III used proceeds from rope making they engaged in to feed on⁴⁶ Thus, common people associate Sultanate in the Sokoto Caliphate with moderation as against sophistication.

CONCLUSION

The paper has surveyed the position of *sufi* leaders vis-a-vis the politics of their times in North Africa to show that Sufism had shifted from its former position of isolationism to that of participation in the public life of the *Ummah*.

This trend came to Western Sudan along with Sufism where *sufi* personalities participated effectively in the politics of their localities. Notable among them were the *Jihad* leaders who were <u>Qadiris</u> by affiliation. *Qadiriyyah Sufi* Order therefore, played a major role in the establishment of the Caliphate founded by the *Jihad* leaders. Similarly *Qadiriyahh* Sufism also dominated the thought and actions of the leadership of the Caliphate so much so that the early leadership represented sufi-political class that had no parallel in history.

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- 38. Abdullah Ibn Foduye, Tahzib al-Insan Min Khisal al-Shaitan, f.14a.
- 39. Abdullahi Ibn Foduye, Alamat al-Muttabi'in, p.3
- 40. Muhammad Tukur: *Tanbih al-Khusama' Wa al-Zalama*. F.1. 41. Muhammad Bello, *Jala' al-Sudur*, pp: 8-9
- 42. J. M. Kaura, Ethics and Sufism in the Sokoto Caliphate, M. A. Dissertation, 1985, p. 74
- 43. See Qur'an 2/198, 73/20
- 44. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as well as his Sahaba (AS) engaged themselves in trade to support themselves and their families.
- 45. This is a common belief among the common people in and around Sokoto.