

Islamic Intellectual Transformation and Revivalism in Northern Nigeria in the 20th Century: A Study of the Factor of the Kano Law School (aka Northern Provinces Law School/School of Arabic Studies)

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Abstract

The transformation in the intellectual tradition in northern Nigeria in the twentieth century was very significant in bringing the level of Islamic intellectual development to the international standards resembling the model of the modern Al-Azhar University in Egypt, the Deoband Schools in the Muslim India and many other Islamic centers in the world. Prior to this, there were only two levels of learning in northern Nigerian areas; the Qur'anic and the Ilmi Schools. The impact of the transformations not only included preserving the vast aspects of Islamic intellectual heritage, but eventually produced radical and reformist Islamic scholars and re-structured the schooling system along westernized school structure. In northern Nigeria, the establishment of the Kano Law School aka Northern Provincial Law School/School of Arabic Studies was a watershed in the Islamic transformation in the twentieth century. The important role of this modern institution needs a special examination which this paper has attempted. It is discovered that, the Kano Law School laid the foundations of contemporary Islamic revivalism in northern Nigeria

Introduction

Islamic intellectual tradition in northern Nigeria had experienced massive transformations in the twentieth century. The changes can be seen in terms of the institutional persistence and change in the entire system of Muslim scholarship, rise of reformist ideas, development of Islamic revivalist movements and even political Islamism. These phenomena were studied by scholars such as Umar, Yandaki and Bunza to mention but few. ¹ What these scholars agreed in their studies was that, these phenomena were the result of many factors that had their origins from within and outside the country. What this paper argues and put emphasis on is that, although, other factors were at work in the intellectual transformation, the prominence of the Kano Law

School established in 1934 at Kofar Mata in the Kano city seems to be neglected or given undue weight. This important institution needs to be studied even for the sake of understanding the roots of contemporary revivalist movements in northern Nigeria which for most part are traced to the graduates of this institution e.g. Izalism.²

The school had cultivated a new form of intellectualism characterized with an unknown vigor quite distinct to the traditional Muslim society. It had in many respects resembled some Islamic institutions; the madrasah system which evolved across the Islamic world in this modern time. The examples of such are the Deobandi which laid the foundation of modern/reformist oriented intellectualism since the nineteenth century in the Muslim India and as well, the reformed Azhar in Egypt from mid-twentieth century.³ These institutions had played key role in the socio-intellectual transformations of their societies in an unprecedented manner.

Prior to the introduction of modern Islamic institutions of learning, the Islamic educational pattern of Muslim Northern Nigeria was classical comprising two levels of schooling system i.e. the Qur'anic and the Ilmi schools. The Qur'anic school signifies lower level, while the Ilmi School implies the higher level. This system had since the era of the consolidation of Islam in the fifteenth century catered for the religious and moral development of the Muslims in Hausaland and Kanem Borno since the eleventh century. It equally gave rise to the formation and development of an intellectual tradition in these two geographical expanses that came to form the contemporary northern Nigeria. This region had gradually witnessed the growth of networks of school system with famous seats of learning, institution of the ulama which were distinguished by high sophistication in learning and a

literary culture which defined the worldview and value of the Muslim societies.⁴ The area was equally involved in the pre-colonial system of international intellectual exchange with outside Muslim world which eminent scholars frequented notably from the former Mali Empire, North Africa, and even Middle East.⁵ This background therefore, gives a picture of how Islamic civilization reached a greater level thereby dominating and presiding over the cultural norms and values of the region until the advent of colonialism⁶ which brought new trends of things in the entire normative arrangements and structures of the society.

Colonial Factor in the Establishment of Kano Law School in 1934

With the turn of the twentieth century, the society of northern Nigeria experienced massive transformations almost in all its normative arrangements and structures. In the first instance, colonial encounter and subsequently colonial administration, though did not bring to the total end of all Islamic values in region, had set in motion new trends of change which embodied new and then hard challenges to the Muslims and Islamic institutions. One of the most noticeable is that, Islamic intellectual history of the region began to be written in another form full of changes from what it used to be during the previous centuries. The most immediate incidences to have posed lasting challenge to Islamic intellectual tradition were the British military assaults and subsequent imposition of colonial rule on the area. These had undoubtedly created a kind of intellectual crisis which began with the war of conquest that led to the dismemberment of the Sokoto caliphate. Not only that, the Battle of Burmi which was the last face-off between the British and the collective forces of the Muslims had claimed the life of the caliph and resulted into the massacre and flight of large number of scholars who were in his company. Apart from those killed, many others had continued their journey to the east as planned.⁷ The entire military action had consequently devastated the Islamic institutions and culminated into a state of unprecedented brain-drain of Islamic scholars from the area.

With the consolidation of British rule, colonial schemes had further aggravated the decline of the tradition of Islamic scholarship leading to the loss of its glory and its place in the society was given to new forms of knowledge and institutions under the so-called colonial western education. Also, the colonial arrangements had not only posed new challenges to the authority, influence and efficacy of the local mallams, but had even subjected them to modern illiteracy with the introduction of roman scripts under the colonial system of education. Of course, colonialism did not displace completely Islamic education and Arabic literacy, but

these were systematically neglected through colonial education and language policies.⁸ Lugard had at the very beginning of colonial rule made it clear that, all local mallams as a matter of necessity had to learn roman scripts in a special school established at Sokoto in 1905 under Colonial officer John Burdon.⁹ The new administration continued to check the power of the mallams and undermine their ideological roles as religious authorities and moral guardians of the Islamic community.¹⁰ As Dahiru Yahya puts it:

Colonialism significantly altered the intellectual status of the mallams. While the mallam who attempted to be the guardian of integrity was further pushed to the background, the work of the rationalist mallam was channeled to the service of secular and shifting political authority.¹¹

In response to the above conditions, Sufism through the brotherhoods offered a convenient shade for private withdrawal to some disgruntled mallams who had given up activism in response to colonial dangers.¹² Nonetheless, some mallams were bureaucratized and co-opted into colonial service as in administration, judicial and educational domains. Others were recruited as local historians, interpreters and translators working with colonial officers who were compiling anthropological reports and local history of their districts. These were considered by their counterparts as conformists who agreed to go with an un-Islamic regime, the nasara (Christians).¹³ But a number of mallams who chose to remain completely outside colonial affairs as a form of protest were looked at by the British as irreconcilable elements and agents of fanatical uprising.¹⁴ But the general fact is that as pointed by Okene and Ishak, whether co-opted or not, most of the ulama in Northern Nigeria held that, colonialism was a decadent and had posed threat to Islam, its norms, practices and worldview and was deficient socio-morally and religiously.¹⁵

Despite the above, events during the 1920s had necessitated change in British attitude toward Islamic education. The expediencies of the regime had therefore led to the establishment of new Islamic institutions of learning for the following reasons. First, the British wanted to deal with the secret resistance of the irreconcilable mallams and curtail their influence on the society by producing a new class of the ulama. The new scholars were to receive training in both Islamic and secular education to supplant the traditionally trained mallams who for most part belittled colonial interests. It was sought that, through the new ulama class a new understanding about colonial regime could be promoted and to minimize

the dangers of fanatical outbreak among local scholars.¹⁶ Therefore, curtailing and curbing the influence of the traditional mallams who refused to serve the colonial regime in the interest of the British was among the reasons behind the establishment of the two Islamic institutions to be discussed below. Not only curtailing the influence of traditional scholars in the society was much central in the colonial intent of producing a new set of ulama who will receive both Islamic and secular (western) education, but the curriculum of the traditional Islamic schools was not compatible with colonial demands.¹⁷

It needs to be remembered that, the British had taken various steps to deal with Muslims who displayed dissident behaviours to colonialism since the outbreak of the Satiru Revolt in 1906.¹⁸ This was done through crackdown of the suspected Mahdists and utmost surveillance on individual scholars. The British even shared intelligence information with other colonial powers in West Africa on the activities and movements of scholars. Periodical reports on religious groups in provinces with larger Muslims used to be sent to Colonial Office in London by all residents. Even the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca was over-watched and reported and returning pilgrims were searched to ensure no one brought unwanted literature so that nothing harm colonial rule.¹⁹ Under such measures, the British ensured that, the instance of the Satiru did not happen again and the mistakes they made in Egypt and the Sudan were not repeated, through allowing native schools and languages to dominate colonial rule. Hence, modern schools were established.

Furthermore, there was the colonial interest of maintaining indirect rule system as well as changing the focus of legal education and practices in the establishment of the modern Islamic institutions. The need for training the native court judges; the alkalai in order to improve their standard to make them fit well into colonial rule was thus among the paramount reasons. That was why, the school intakes were largely sons of imams and court judges.

From the middle of the 1920s, judicial reforms were underway in Northern Nigeria, and there was the need for more qualified alkalai. Besides, there were reasons behind the ongoing British reorganization project of the judiciary in northern Nigeria. One of them was the result of many questions raised by the colonialists about the adequacy of traditional legal education in the region. There were indeed concerns about the quality of legal training based on the rote-learning of the texts as practiced in the traditional Ilmi schools and the general low level of Arabic literacy of the judicial staff resulting from this. These were considered the

limitations that made many judges and legal advisers overtly rigid and inexperienced in their services.²⁰ Consequent upon these reasons, the Shahuci Judicial School was founded as a kind of experiment in 1928 and the Kano Law School in 1934. But before going into discussion, a brief survey of the development of modern schooling system is given below.

The Development of Modern Schooling System in Northern Nigeria

Christian missionary societies pioneered establishing western education which embodies the modern schooling system when they opened schools in Southern Nigeria areas around the mid-Nineteenth century. This was later extended to northern Nigeria by Dr. Walter Miller of the Church Missionary Society in Zaria in 1907. Besides, a non-mission school was earlier opened at Sokoto in 1905 by John Burdon, Resident of Sokoto Province purposely to train local mallams in roman scripts and the school was entirely secular as the result of colonial expediency.²¹ Later on, Hans Vischer founded a government school at Nasarawa in Kano just in the way Gordon College in Khartoum was run. The Vischer School as it was called was established to educate and train the sons of the traditional ruling class for the purpose of staffing the Native Administration system.²²

Two provincial schools were then established in Sokoto and Katsina provinces respectively in 1913 and correspondingly in Borno Province. The famous Katsina Training College which was first of its kind in post-primary level in the whole Northern Nigeria started to run in 1926 in Katsina.²³ These schools and their types were the earliest modern schools introduced by colonial regime and were secular. After World War II, Christian missions with the encouragement of the colonial government invested in education and created more secular schools in northern Nigeria. Notable among them were the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Britain which established primary schools. There was the Roman Catholic Mission which built many secondary schools, including the famous Saint John's College in the city of Kaduna. These schools had become the training grounds for intellectuals, civil servants and nationalists of northern Nigeria during decolonization and post-independence eras²⁴.

It is significant to note that, in the established colonial schools which were initially secular altogether; lessons in Islam and Arabic were introduced due to pressure from some emirs, notably, Emir of Kano Abdullahi Bayero.²⁵ However, the instructions were inadequate in anyway compared to what is expected of a Muslim to learn about his religion. Another limitation of these lessons was that, graduates of the secular schools could not serve

in any capacity as judges of Native Courts, the major space in which local mallams were employed under colonial regime.²⁶ This was because such a duty requires deep knowledge of Islamic shari'a. The colonial regime was equally at discord with graduates of traditional Islamic schools who were employed in that position who were also considered deficient. Hence, the colonial need for more qualified mallams to be appointed as judges in the native courts must be satisfied through other means. This gave birth to the idea of establishing the Shahuci Judicial School in Kano, the first modern Islamic school in northwestern Nigeria.

The Shahuci Judicial School, Kano; a Glimpse into a Colonial Experiment

The Shahuci Judicial School was the first attempt at running Islamic education, specifically legal education along modern style, founded in 1928 for the advanced study of shari'a in Kano. It was at the instance of the British plan to change the judicial structure of the colony and to produce new Muslim scholars who would suit colonial interest. Some students were selected from the traditional Ilmi schools in Kano to be trained in order to serve on their graduation in the reformed judicial system and to upgrade legal education from rote traditional level.²⁷

The school was organized according to modern classes and based on students' time of entry. Students for the first time were taught Islamic lessons under western model collectively contrary to the traditional setting where each student took his lessons individually. It was first headed by Malam Sulaiman b. Ismail b. Abubakar, an erudite scholar with a wide range of knowledge in

Islamic sciences. He was able to teach all the subjects in the school curriculum which was a varied one containing fiqh, Qur'anic recitation, Arabic language and literature as well as theology. The popular texts for fiqh were al-Risalah of Abu Muhammad and Tuhfat al-Hukkam of Abi Bakr b. Muhammad. The students studied jurisprudence according Maliki School of Law which dominated the legal tradition of the area since the period of the development of Islam in Kano. They were taught in addition to Islamic sciences, Hausa in Roman scripts, some instructions on arithmetic and English language as well. But the schools had some limitations which hindered its development, though it continued to exist after the establishment of the Kano Law School.²⁸ The students lacked significant quality in the field of jurisprudence, exposure to modern trends of things and as well a good command of Arabic grammar which is the key to understanding of Arabic texts. Consequently, their impact on the

ongoing judicial reform was seriously doubted. These reasons were significant in the British consideration of establishing the Kano Law School when the idea was brought forward.

The Establishment of the Kano Law School

The most successful modern Islamic school to have impacted on the society of northern Nigeria after the Shahuci Judicial School experiment was the Kano Law School. It was founded in 1934 as the Northern Provinces Law School. The college was indeed a watershed and had left indelible marks on the intellectual landscape of northern Nigeria. Sheikh Abubakar Gumi relates that, the institution was just the brainchild of Wazirin Kano, Alhaji Muhammadu Gidado, who first mooted the idea of its establishment to Emir of Kano Abdullahi Bayero (1926-1953) following his visit to the Sudan on his way to Saudi Arabia for Hajj at the beginning of the 1930s. The Waziri was a very learned man and principal adviser to the Emir of Kano on religious matters. In the Sudan, he keenly observed their educational institutions and realized a very useful idea that he could bring back to Nigeria. He had equally visited the Gordon College which later became University of Khartoum and became highly fascinated by its Islamic Law section.²⁹

When he returned home, he informed the Emir of Kano about it and advised that similar institution needed to be established. The emir welcomed the idea instantly and forwarded a bid to the colonial authorities for consideration. Eventually, the proposal was favourably received and a ten-man committee was set up to look into the possibility of putting the plan into action. The committee positively recommended the bid and in addition suggested that, the school should serve the whole Northern Provinces not only Kano and the teachers should be recruited from the Sudan. Besides, the site of the school was debated between Kano and Katsina but the former was selected as its home over the latter. Before the opening of the school, the Nigerian government requested from the Sudanese counterparts graduates of Islamic Law who had completed their studies at Gordon College.³⁰

The wisdom in recruiting the Sudanese included; first, the Sudanese teachers were considered highly trained and experienced in Islamic Law and had relied on the Maliki School of Law in interpreting Islamic Law just like their northern Nigerian counterparts.³¹ The Sudan as a country had also much in common with northern Nigeria. Their recruitment was similarly intended to promote fluency in the Arabic language which was considered very important in understanding Islamic shari'a and already the traditional schools had turned deficient in that regard. Not only that, the British endorsed the recruitment of the Sudanese as

teachers in the school cautiously to avoid appointing people with undesirable ideas which may be introduced into the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. Already in the Sudan, the British were able to have gradually subdued religious and radical nationalist politics. Thus, the colony was not much violent to colonial rule. It was at then in peaceful atmosphere which even made the British to allow it to be a constant route for travelers from West Africa going to hajj and as educational exchange platform.³² In short, the Sudan was more moderate and less radical in terms of religious extremism and anti-European feelings which were too common as at then among other Arab nations, notably Egypt which the British at then regarded as revolutionary. Of course, in Egypt, the British mandate system was seriously opposed and Cairo was seen as the center of Arab dissidents, unrest and anti-European sentiments.³³ Al-Azhar University was equally viewed as the breeding ground of young Muslim militants of the Arab world. Its influence had significantly denied English language to take any meaningful dominance on the Egyptian society.³⁴ That was why the British tried to avoid what they termed as 'the mistake of Egypt' in northern Nigeria by not allowing native languages to have position in the colonial administration in the region.

From another perspective, the British deliberately allowed the recruitment of the Sudanese because they had the belief that their scholars were more exposed to secularization and they already had the control of Islamic education in that country. Sudan was among the early societies in Africa to have contact with western civilization and had made significant adaptations to that in its economic, political, intellectual and social spheres of life through Egypt.³⁵ Significantly, Egypt had played crystal role in the educational making of modern Sudan since the era of Muhammad Ali Pasha.³⁶ The British were similarly successful in integrating Islamic and western education in the Sudan. Not only that, the Sudanese were much better in organizing their rural schools into administrative frameworks and transforming the city-based schools into various institutions (Ma'ahids) along modern style.³⁷ Because of this rigorous blending of Islamic and western education in the country, it was therefore considered safe and exemplary to northern Nigeria at the time.

Three teachers were sent in response to the Nigeria's request. They were Sheikh Bashir Rayyan, Sheikh Muhammad Salih and Sheikh Nur. These had remained in the school until during the 1950s.³⁸ Using new methods and techniques of teaching, these scholars promoted Islamic learning in the school. They were indeed the intellectual force in the development of the school, preserving the Muslims' intellectual heritage and even the

application of shari'a in the court of law system and its relevance on modern Muslims in northern Nigeria. Sheikh Muhammad Awad was the pioneer Grand Khadi of northern Nigeria manning the highest shari'a appeal court in Kaduna on the eve of independence. Apart from the Sudanese teachers, there were Europeans employed. For instance, there was C.E.J Whitting and Marvin Hiskett both had served as vice principals of the school respectively.³⁹ The fact that this Islamic institution was headed during the 1940s by a European had puzzled some emirs. The Emir of Katsina, Usman Nagogo had once raised this issue at the House of Chiefs in 1948 quarrying the need in putting a European in charge of a school meant for teaching and learning Arabic and Islamic Law. The colonial officials in turn responded that, there were non-Islamic subjects that could only be taught by a European.⁴⁰ The idea of putting a European in charge of the school however, was not just based on the simple reason that, there were non-Arabic and secular courses. It was a tactical move to prevent and over-watch the introduction of ideas that could jeopardize colonial ambitions in northern Nigeria.

The Structure of the School

The structure of the Kano Law School was a very formal one the organization of which was made according to western model just in the way and manner the Gordon College was run. Its task was training native court officials and teachers in Arabic and Islamic studies. As pointed by Galadanci, the Kano Law School was made to serve as secondary school offering further training to students that completed their courses in the junior schools then available. The prospective candidates must have background in western education in addition to solid foundation Islamic subjects.⁴¹ In fact, most of the admitted students were serving alkalai (native court judges) or children of imams or judges. It usually began all working days at 7:00am and closed at 2:00 pm. All aspects of Islamic Law were taught in the institute. There were other subjects like Geography, History, Teaching and General Knowledge to broaden the horizon of its students. Equally, the works of the Sokoto jihadists were given special attention. The course duration was initially four years but from 1937, it was reduced to two.

At the time it was established, the school was intended to perform for Northern Nigeria what Gordon College did to the Sudan. Indeed, the college was one of its kinds in the whole West Africa.⁴² Full sponsorship in kind was provided to all students by their respective Native Authorities. Accommodation was equally available, and each province had

a quota reserved for its students. However, each province had to make all forms of reservation for its students during admission exercise.⁴³

In 1945, the provincial headquarters in Kaduna decided to change the academic focus of the institution into a School of Higher Arabic Studies. By this change, it was made to abandon its inclusive legal orientation in favor of a general scholarly culture based on the traditional Muslim literary disciplines. But the Law courses were still maintained as part of a composite legal program. In 1948, it was renamed the School of Arabic Studies (SAS) and a two years Higher Elementary Training Course in Arabic, which was an advanced general certificate training in Arabic language and Islamic studies with a bias for teachers was introduced. The change of focus of the college had further stimulated its academic excellence.⁴⁴ The college was equally affiliated to the University College, Ibadan the first university in the whole country founded in 1948. It was initially established with a more sophisticated curriculum and specified textbooks than the former and had a well-defined structure. Thus, a formal and modern school for the study of Islam came into being. The graduates especially after its reform in 1948 were graduating with certificates for teaching. They were equally employed like those who attended secular schools.⁴⁵

Up till the 1950s, there were the Sudanese teachers in the college. The first principal Sheikh Bashir had left and was replaced by Sheikh Awad Muhammad Ahmad who became the first Grand Khadi of northern Nigeria.⁴⁶ Agitations for reform in the Islamic educational system had made the government to open a new section for Higher Islamic in the institution.⁴⁷ By this, the School allowed students who had no background in western education to get admitted so as to improve their knowledge in Islamic sciences and to enable them become exposed to modern scholarship. This was really a significant change in the tradition of Islamic scholarship in northern Nigeria.

The Kano Law School: a Success in Promoting New Islamic Resurgence and Intellectual Spirit

The Kano Law School from its inception was entirely meant to upgrade legal education higher. This was because, the training of high quality judicial personnel required more than what Shahuji Judicial School could give, where the level of Arabic fluency was too inadequate.⁴⁸ The Kano Law School played significant role in raising the level of the study of Arabic language and Islamic Law to the higher level, and provided advanced religious education. The standard of education in the institution, in human and intellectual

terms, was higher and its graduates were learned in most Islamic disciplines. They were steadfast in the faith and courteous and principled in their daily lives, in the words of Marvin Hiskett.⁴⁹ Its learning excellence was initially dependent on the three Sudanese teachers and few Nigerian counterparts. Another good side of the school was that a close contact between the classical and modern sides of education was created in harmony. It in fact helped in bridging the inability of the modern side of education to cope with Arabic and Islamic studies and therefore, saved western education from the reproach of being a purely secular. It was therefore, a good experiment in combining Islamic and western education together.

The intellectual tradition of the college was very unique. It did much good in enforcing its students' background in the language whose understanding is crucial to any credible competence in Islamic scholarship. This is on account of the fact that Arabic is the original language of the fundamental sources of Islamic Law.⁵⁰ Already, the colonialists had contributed in the decline of Arabic language and literacy in northern Nigeria. This was in their attempt in changing the Islamic religious identity which characterized the region for centuries into Hausa; that is, changing the religious identity of the people into a language one. In other words, the British succeeded in reducing the current Arabic literacy through promoting the uniqueness of native language as an identity trait. The decline of Arabic literacy had hindered the proper understanding of Islamic texts by many even among the students of traditional Ilmi Schools. Books were encouraged to be authored in Hausa and others to be translated into Hausa. This was the reason for the establishment of the Bureau of Translation in 1930s.

To justify this contribution of the Kano Law School of promoting Arabic language, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi describes how students of the school were seen in the society of Sokoto as at 1942 which among other things guided his decision in choosing the college instead of Kaduna College, which was the dream of most of his mates, that:

There were a few who attended the school from Sokoto and much to our admiration, all came back during the holidays speaking impeccable Arabic.⁵¹

The reason why the school was initially for study of law cannot be far from the fact that, legal study had virtually dominated and become the major epitome of Islamic learning in northern Nigeria since the days of al-Maghili.⁵² Similarly, events during colonial era had

pushed other Islamic disciplines second place to jurisprudence. This was because, the colonial rulers only employed scholars learned in jurisprudence according to Maliki School of Law as *alkalai*. More so, in the tradition of legal studies, higher concentration was given to the study of *Mukhtasar* by even the major traditional schools. This was because, the book was considered the highest and more encompassing with regards to thoughts of the Maliki School of Law.⁵³

The SAS had really brought into the Nigerian society a new intellectual mood and a new form of teacher-student relation contrary to the earlier tradition known to the people.⁵⁴ It had moulded and produced a group of conscious men or intellectuals that greatly contributed to the development of Islam and Islamic ideas in contemporary Nigerian society. Most of them served in the fields of education as teachers and educationists who formulated educational ideas. Large number of them had served in the judiciary as specialists in Islamic *shari'a*, some of which had risen to the upper echelon in that field. Notable among them are Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, Sheikh Halliru Binji, Sheikh Ahmad Lemo, and the Late Grand Khadi of Katsina State Alhaji Usman Muhammad Daura, etc. these were product of an increased literacy through mass educational system. This mass literacy was akin to what was obtained in the Deoband Schools in the Muslim India and in the modernized Al-Azhar University, Egypt which according to Rahemtulla, had sparked a significant transformation in the very nature of reading, enabling easy access and interpretation of the sacred Islamic texts.⁵⁵ The Deoband Schools were new madrasa established along the Lancaster frame of an English school as effective and superior to the traditional Muslim system of learning. These schools embody significant innovation in systems of Islamic learning and certification of one as a scholar.⁵⁶

Many graduates of the Kano Law School had rendered contributions towards national governance, security, reconciliations and dialogue at different times of security challenges in the country. They were equally renowned Islamic scholars and advocates of religious change or reformism, social justice and Muslims' participation in modern state. They indeed led an intellectual re-awakening and formulated ideas that helped in the systematization and improvement of education in the country through ideas of bridging the gap between Islamic and western education. They put focus on the need for reviving the standard and relevance of Islamic knowledge, safeguarding its values and developing it through the available new methods and techniques. They strongly supported women enlightenment in modern Nigeria,

which led to the transformation of the womenfolk through women associations like the Muslim Student Organizational (MSO) and Federation of Muslim Women

Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN).⁵⁷ They had quantifiable influence on the contemporary advance in Islamic education and propagation (da'awa). The training they acquired in the school had offered them opportunities of coming into contacts with intellectuals outside Nigeria, especially Sheikh Abubakar Gumi. One of their impacts was that, their rise had cost the traditional mallams to suffer losses in the legal and educational spheres in the society. Not only that, most of the old great religious institutions lost their former influence with the establishment of such modern schools.

The Kano Law School had injected into its students an intellectual exposure oriented toward religious revivalism devoid of violence and social justice. That was why prominent among its graduates illuminated a reforming light or modern tajdeed in Islam from 1960s onwards. This had enabled them to become agents of religious and social change in the society, with their emphasis put on un-Islamic beliefs and practices which prevailed within the Muslim society. They categorically became unflavored with traditionalism and traditional Islamic schooling system which to them, shifting practices which characterized the twentieth century rendered or turned it inefficient and problematic. In the case of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, he had become the most outspoken critique of Sufism in Nigeria among those who graduated from SAS.⁵⁸ According to Bunza:

Sheikh Abubakar Gumi was another such example of a mujaddid (reformer) of his time as a result of his objections of certain deeply rooted social practices, his utter refusal to be induced or corrupted by successive Nigerian governments and his ascetic life style. And, most importantly, he always remained on the side of the masses in his comments and actions.⁵⁹

That for most was the result of the intellectual tradition which the Kano Law School brought in the society which was unique as Sheikh Gumi himself acknowledged how the school transformed him and left a special mark on his career as a scholar.⁶⁰ The new intellectual mood which the school brought into the society, in the view of Yandaki, characterized by critical openness in religious education which ushered the rise of modern Islamic movements and groups, was first cultivated there. This critical openness resulted into

the resurfacing of rigorous intellectual renaissance and critical examination of both religious and secular activities in the light of religious convictions. This intellectual zeal metamorphosed into a kind of religious revivalism of far-reaching consequences akin to the one of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Hausaland.⁶¹ This spirit of openness laid the solid foundation of contemporary anti-Sufism in Nigeria and specifically the rise of the Izala Movement. Of course, there other factors at work in the emergence of the Izala, but the role of the Kano Law School cannot be overemphasized. Also, the impacts of the Sudanese teachers must not be forgotten in this regard. Yandaki believes that, the fact that the pioneer Sudanese teacher of the school had gotten entangled with anti-Sufism, the intellectual enlightenments and ideas of the Wahabiyya Movements in the Middle East cannot be ruled out.⁶²

It was not only Yandaki who linked to the development of anti-Sufism to the SAS. Umar also puts some weights on the new intellectual tradition established at the school to the rise of the Izala movement. He upholds that, the curriculum of the institution was wider in scope and as such it was responsible in exposing the students to more than one orientation within the Islamic intellectual tradition. The new tradition of the school was contrary to the earlier attitude in northern Nigerian traditional intellectualism. Not only that, Umar points out that;

The system of Islamic learning hitherto in Nigeria has been very traditional under which the pupil was not exposed to disagree with his teacher, much less to challenge his scholarship laid down by the Kano Law School.⁶³

To support this, the above views, the experience of Sheikh Gumi at Kano Law School and how it shaped his career as a scholar is worth alluding and to justify the opinions:

The Law School had an intellectual tradition which made it unique among all the schools I attended. Students had a lot of freedom in matters pertaining to their lessons. Very often we were encouraged to assert our own independence and initiative rather than blind obedience to the views of teachers. We challenged them frequently if we thought their understanding was faulty. I never saw them get angry and in our turn, we

never took it that we were out to discredit them...The whole experience has left a deep impression on my mind and today there is nothing I love better than to be challenged about my views. Also my deepest respect is just reserved for the person who easily admits his mistakes or ignorance⁶⁴.

One consequence of this development was the rise of a new class of mallams who were the products of the new schooling system and who joined the service of colonial and post-colonial administrations. The new mallams came to lose their respect as scholars and their role as transmitters of cumulative knowledge and overseers of the spirituality of the Muslim society and were seen to have become conformists, implicitly agreeing with the British concept of justice. This was due to the competition which was created between them and the traditional ulama. Generally, the students and graduates of these modern Islamic schools were called Anikallah,⁶⁵ a word derived from Arabic phrase a'anakallahu, but mockingly. They were considered as disoriented students who were not sufficiently taught the elements of Islamic knowledge in a more coherent way and step by step manner laid down by the tradition.

The establishment and styles of both the Shahuci Judicial School and the Kano Law School were criticized by the larger society especially the traditional circle of the ulama as not persuasive and were founded to serve different purposes from that of the traditional Ilmi School. They were attended by mallams whose purpose was not to acquire in-depth knowledge but to get certificates that would earn them service with colonial bureaucracy. Equally, it was a tool through which the British would have control of the native court judges. The whole development was a measure taken to make Islamic Law subservient to English Law both in context and procedure. Above all, the curriculum fell short of what a scholar or judge should know about Islamic sciences compared to a traditionally drilled mallam. Because they gave the students pre-selected curriculum taught by pre-selected instructors.⁶⁶ Hence the respect accorded to the graduates was too minimal.⁶⁷ Despite these criticisms, the Kano Law School which later became SAS with regard to Islamic education, was an important development and reflects the changing nature of Islamic scholarship in northern Nigeria. It was the major institution in the north for training in Arabic and Islamic studies throughout 1950s. Virtually, the entire modern sector Arabists and Islamic legal experts in the north at that period were graduates from SAS.⁶⁸ The Kano Law School Had indeed,

transformed the Islamic intellectual landscape of northern Nigeria in the twentieth century and its impacts are still seen on the society in the twenty first century.

Conclusion

So far, this paper has demonstrated the impacts which the Kano Law School rendered on the Islamic intellectual landscape of northern Nigeria. It was intended initially to work for the promotion of colonial interests but it went ahead to laid foundations of contemporary Islamic revivalism which characterized the Nigerian society from the era of independence. Without doubt, the development of modernism and modern history of the contemporary ulama are directly or indirectly linked to this institution. A number of graduates of the Kano Law School were influential actors in the change within the social, political and intellectual life of the Muslims in northern Nigeria in the twentieth century. The caliber of these scholars, contrary to the bidding of the colonialists, came to be disinclined to colonial interests. Instead, they joined the ranks of other nationalists and social activists to articulate anti-colonial feelings and even attacked its legacies. Some of them were able to circumvent all odds to acquire higher certificates overseas. At least, the paper has contributed in exploring the role of one of the major factors in the contemporary Islamic resurgence and intellectual transformation in northern Nigerian Muslims society.

Endnotes

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