

Sarkin Kano

Alu (Aliyu Babba) (1894-1903)

Aliyu Babba, popularly known as Alu, was born in 1853. He was named after his maternal grandfather Sarkin Musulmi Aliyu Babba. He started his early education under the guidance of his mother Saudatu who taught him the Holy Qur'an. His other teachers were Mallam Babba Na Kofar Kwaru and Malam Mustapha Naibi of Yolawa. He studied *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tafsir* (commentary of the Holy Qur'an) under the guidance of these scholars. He advanced his studies at Madabo School where he studied *Muktasar* of Sidi Khalil the most advanced book on jurisprudence. The Madabo School specialized in this subject. He studied *nahwu* (Arabic grammar) and *al-'Irab* (syntax) with Mallam Usman Dan Shamaki.

He was the *Waziri* and the closest associate of the leader of the *Yusufawa*, Yusuf Dan Abdullahi. When the later died the *Cucanawa* skillfully stage-managed the ascension of Aliyu to the leadership of the group. He was the most knowledgeable and charismatic of the surviving sons of Abdullahi Majekarofi. It was also believed that Yusuf recommended him as

his successor, because he was a grandson of Sarkin Musulmi Aliyu Babba Dan Muhammad Bello thus making it difficult for Sokoto to attack the Yusufawa (Last 1977: 135-136). The two contenders to the leadership of the Yusufawa, *Sarkin Dawakin Tsakar Gida* Abbas and *Dan Makwayo* Shehu had no option other than to pledge allegiance to their younger brother.

Alu triumphantly entered Kano on Wednesday Safar 16, 1312 AH (August 19, 1894) after the defeat of Sarkin Kano Tukur, who was forced into exile. Sarkin Musulmi Abdulrahman's effort to reinstate Tukur failed while Alu consolidated his position as the new Sarkin Kano. There were reprisals and violent suppression of dissidents and criminals as a result of the militarization of the society by the civil war. This necessitated new appointments. The most prominent was Ahmadu, the elder brother of Alu who was appointed *Waziri*, which was the highest title (East and Mani 1979: 52). He also appointed Mahmud, Kwairanga, Sulaiman, Hamza, Abdussalam as *Galadima*, *Madaki*, *Alkali*, *Makama* and *Sarkin Bai* respectively. Ismaila al-Khatib the father of *Walin Kano* Sulaiman was appointed the Imam. He made innovations in the sarauta by instituting new slave titles the most prominent of which was that of the *Shatima* Shekarau who was placed in charge of the famous weapon known as *sango* (Abba and Mohammed 2005: 128).

Alu was a brave and industrious warrior he invented the *sango* (explosive), which he used in his military engagements, he was nicknamed maisango. But other historians have suggested that he got this sango from Yoruba areas derived from the Yoruba god of thunder (*sango*) and that it was imported through Bida therefore it was not Alu's invention. Nevertheless he used it on his assault against the Tukurawa forces in Kano and on his subsequent enemies whom he fought as the Emir of Kano. Sango terrified horses and horsemen because it was new weapon with explosive sound (Abba and Mohammed 2005: 127).

The Damagarawa seriously threatened his authority. They invaded Kano twice in the first instance in 1313 AH (1896) they were heavily defeated but later in 1313 AH (1898) they retaliated and inflicted heavy





Gidan Sarkin Kano in Takai which was the main base of the Yusufawa during the Kano Civil War. It is now the residence of the District Head.



Garko Countryside it was one of the areas held by Yusufawa during the Kano Civil War

casualty and defeat on Kano. Eventually Kano was relieved of their nuisance in 1316 (1899) when the French imperialist subjugated them. Alu was also able to withstand Ningi's aggressiveness, the Ningawa were defeated several times during his reign. The other external threats to his reign were Maradi and Hadejia when they took the advantage of the uneasiness caused by the Kano civil war (Fika 1978: 75-76). While Alu was consolidating his rule, the British were gradually conquering the Emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. The first Emirates to be conquered were Ilorin and Bida in 1897. He was aware of these developments and British intentions and activities in various parts that later became Northern Nigeria (Saeed 2003: 56). He wrote a series of letters to the Sarkin Musulmi and the *Waziri* on the activities of the *Nasara* (Christians) as the British were known to Muslims. He canvassed for *hijra* (emigration) that they should leave the country all of them (Abba and Mohammed 2005: 129).

In 1312 AH (January 29, 1903), the British imperial expeditionary force left Zaria for Kano. They crushed the brave oppositions mounted by various towns and villages along their way to Kano with all brutality and barbarism. For example, they burnt the bodies of Sarkin Bebeji Jibril and seven others after murdering them to show example to the resistant 'natives'. When they reached Kano on February 3, 1903, an unorganized but courageous resistance confronted them. Alu had gone to Sokoto but he was aware of the impending British imperialist invasion. One Inuwa son of Ma'aji Yahaya and brother of Rahmatu who attempted to resist the invasion by setting the armory on fire brought the news of the

conquest of Kano to him. He was angry with the messenger and he ordered him to be imprisoned but was persuaded by the *Waziri* to release him. The *sallama* arrived later the next day (Muffett 1971).

It has been suggested that Alu opted for *Hijra* (emigration) to avoid bloodshed (Yahya 1986: 3). His exodus was to east where he intended to perform the *Hajj* (Holy pilgrimage to Makkah). *Sallama* Jatau who was one of the leaders of the Kano forces that fought against the British invaders met him at Birnin Goga and informed him of the conquest of Kano. He also brought Kubura Alu's senior wife, the *sallama* later alleged that it was Kubura who made Alu to flee and he regretted that he had he known he would have killed her. Alu ordered his younger brother *Galadima* Mahmud to return his younger wife the daughter of the Sarkin Musulmi to her father. *Alkalin Kano* Sulaiman and the Magaji of Keffi (Muffett 1971) accompanied the *Galadima*. In another version, it was reported that *shamaki* Harisu led the contingent to Sokoto. Probably Harisu knew the route better than the Sarki's brother. They were perhaps the only people who knew that the Sarki was going to emigrate. It has also been reported that the Sarki consulted two other individuals Maikano Buzu and Alhaji Baba who according to the story "offered to guide the Emir to Istanbul [Turkey]" (Abba and Mohammed 2005: 130).

Alu left his forces at night. According to one of his slaves, Shehu Dan Jakadan Durmin Shura, three of them informed the *sallama* that the Sarki had fled. The *sallama* directed his horse holder to:

Go now and seek Dan Rimi, and at dawn tomorrow, just after first light,

bid him to cause the gong to be sounded as if the Emir were still with us, and you, Usman Mabude [the man in charge of the supplies of gunpowder], see to it that the signal gun for saddling-up is fired off also'. Then Salama went off to the Emir's lodgings and called upon the Majidadi to say where the Emir was. He said the Emir had fled in the night (Muffett 1971: 49).

In the morning the *sallama* addressed the warriors at Birnin Goga and informed them that the Emir had fled and that whoever wanted to rejoin his family in Kano should follow him and he told the *Waziri*, who was the next in hierarchy of the *sarauta* system after the Sarki, to take command but the later and insisted that the *sallama* should lead and that he would follow with the other *Hakimai*. The *Sallama* and the *Dan Rimi* were the greatest of the Sarki's slaves, according to Maitama Dan *Makaman* Dan Rimi who was an eyewitness "whenever the Emir rode with his army he was in front and then Dan Rimi and *Sallama* came behind. After them came the District Chiefs". The army moved and the *Sallama* "ordered the drums to beat with the Emir's drum roll so that it seemed still as if the Emir was there". When the people came forth thinking that the Sarki was present, the *Sallama* informed them again that: "The Emir has fled. What will you do? Whoever wishes to do so can go to Sokoto or anywhere else that he may desire.' And the people answered and said. 'We are going to Kano. Wherever you go, we will follow'" (Muffett 1971: 51).

The British invaders martyred *Waziri* Ahmadu and other prominent chiefs at Kotorkorshi and he

became known as *Mai Shahada* (the Martyr). At that encounter when they met the British invaders *Sallama* told the *Waziri* after the first scouts have been killed "what should we do?" The *Waziri* replied: "What should we do? Why?" He had earlier made a similar observation and the *Waziri* had replied him: "Haba Salama! There is nothing for us to do but fight them. If we do not win today then we go under. Shall we postpone what we have begun?" And the *dan rimi* also agreed with the *Waziri*. Shehu Dan Jakadan Durmin Shura reported the encounter in which prominent Kano leaders were martyred:

Thereupon the whole force charged towards the soldiers on other side of the streambed but before we got there the soldiers started shooting, and Allah denied us good fortune. Most of our leaders, amongst them the *Waziri*, Salama, Mabudi and Yamu, the son of the *Waziri* all died during this charge (Muffett 1971:58).

Alu who was on his way to the East with letters of introduction from the Sokoto authorities addressed to Sarkin Gobir at Tchibiri asking him to grant Alu "safe passage". Ironically the Sarkin Gobir had never made peace with the Caliphate therefor it was not surprising that he detained Alu and informed the French who notified the British in Sokoto and then handed him over to them "a week after the fall of Sokoto". Nagwamatse reported Alu's capture that he saw him "in a small procession in the market through the Kware gate". According to the story he "was led by a British officer, and in the middle, unbound but riding on a mare with no bridle, and haltered to a trooper's horse was the Emir Aliyu of Kano" (Abba and Mohammed 2005: 130). One of

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the British officers depicted Sarkin Kano after his capture and was paraded in Sokoto as “a silent, dejected tragic figure no doubt wondering what was going to happen next” (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966: 205).

The British invaders decided to banish Alu to a distant location after his capture but it took them a year and two months before they decided to settle him at Yola, Adamawa Emirate and there is no available information on where he was kept for over year but it has been suggested that he “was perhaps kept at some British camps and forts including Wushishi where” Sarkin Zazzau Kwasau was also detained. Both Alu and Kwasau were exiled to Yola, which was under the Emirship of unpopular Bobbo Ahmadu. Sarkin Kano Alu and about 300 of his followers gained the sympathy of the populace who regarded him as hero for resisting the British. He lived like a second Emir. According to one narration when the Mosque was a state of disrepair he spoke to the Emir who was unable to organize volunteers and Alu quickly ordered his followers many of whom were big men and they repaired the Mosque.

The popularity of the exiled Sarkin Kano, his sympathy for those considered dissidents and his call for looking out for the promised Mahdi

attracted the attention of the colonial authorities, including the High Commissioner Lugard who considered Alu's correspondences as intrigues, and even warned that he will exile him to a non-Muslim territory. Both the Resident and the Emir of Adamawa were not comfortable with his continued presence in Yola and in September 1904 he was moved from Yola to Lokoja on the Niger-Benue confluence (Sulaiman 1999: 5). While he was leaving Yola and bidding farewell he was reported to have told Lamido Bobbo Ahmadu “until you come”. Five years later the Lamido was also exiled to Lokoja and then to Zaria and he lived for seven years in exile until his son Lamido Abba pleaded with the British and he was returned to Adamawa where he died in Yola in 1916 (Abba and Mohammed 2005: 133).

At Lokoja the exiled Sarkin Kano Alu was virtually kept under house arrest and he was denied the freedom to see other exiled Emirs. Even his interaction was restricted for example Said bin Hayat the leader of the Mahdiyya was not allowed to visit him despite the fact that he was allowed to meet other exiled Emirs. Alu was thus considered a threat to the British colonial administration. But they did not prevent Sarkin Tijaniyya from interacting with him perhaps they did not consider

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the brotherhood as dangerous to their domination as the Mahdiyya. This was despite the fact that Bashir had fought at Burmi along with Sarkin Musulmi Attahiru. Aminu, the son of Alu, married Zainabu the only daughter of Bashir. Both Alu and Bashir were maternal descendants of Sarkin Musulmi Mohammad Bello. Alu also gave his daughter in marriage to the Maigari of Lokoja (Chief of Lokoja). He died in Lokoja in 1926.

Sarkin Kano Alu was an excellent military commander and the most knowledgeable pre-colonial Sarkin Kano. He was well versed in Islamic Jurisprudence he also had a profound understanding of the advanced science of *Tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism). His book, *Rad al-Jahla* is a clear testimony of his intellectual disposition (Paden 1973).

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Ciroma Abdulkadir Majeli

He was the eldest son of Sarkin Kano Alu who was also his first teacher of Islamic subjects. After the European conquest he studied under Mallam Abubakar Na Gado da Masu. Abdulkadir was very learned like his father and he was very proficient in many subjects especially astrology he also wrote *Irshad al-salik* which was a literary account of how he broke his leg and how he was healed. Some of his predictions based on his knowledge of this science materialized for example he predicted the ascension of Sarkin Kano Sanusi and his entry into *Gidan Kano* before his formal installation as Sarkin Kano and also the prominence of Mallam Aminu.

Abdulkadir Majeli was appointed Ciroman Kano by his father Sarkin Kano Alu who built for him the house of Ciroma at Ciranci he was thus the first to occupy that house. After the European conquest and his deposition from the title of Ciroma he was given another house at Sudawa quarters where he continued the life of scholarship. Among his friends at Sudawa were scholars especially Mallam Yusuf the father of Mallam Aminu. Abdulkadir Majeli was also engaged in commodities trading he used to buy groundnuts from Gwarzo, which he supplied to the European exporters. He died in 1949.

Dan Majen Kano Ahmadu Gwadabe

Sarkin Kano Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero appointed him Dan Maje in 1948. He had earlier appointed him as the first *Wakilin Waje* in 1940 when the sub-district was created. He was posted to Minjibir as the District Head where he remained until 1957 when he was transferred to Kumbotso he was later returned to Minjibir in 1963 where he also remained until he was retired in 1975.



Dallatun Kano
ALH. BASHIR MAHE