

# Sarkin Kano

## Muhammadu Bello (1882-1893)

**S**arkin Musulmi Umar Dan Aliyu appointed Bello, the third son of Sarkin Kano Ibrahim Dabo as Sarkin Kano in Dhi al-Qa'da 1299 AH (September 1882) to succeed his elder brother. Bello was very pious and generous scholar and he wrote *Kitab fi dhikr ba'd al-alamat al-sa'a* (Hunwick 1995: 259). But when he became the Sarki he implemented very unpopular policies, which culminated in the devastating Kano civil war (Paden 1973: 261-264).

When Bello assumed the Emirship he decided to alter the status quo established by his predecessor who had appointed his sons, in-laws and clients in powerful political offices. This was in pursuance of his determination to make his eldest son Tukur to succeed him, which could not be possible with chiefs loyal to Majekarofi's descendants. He dismissed *Galadima* Ibrahim Bazazagi a loyalist of his predecessor and appointed his eldest son Tukur as the *Galadima*. And his *Waziri* who supervised the affairs of the Emirate was his close friend *Sarkin Fada* Nagytum (Paden 1973: 261-264). He deposed Qadi Sulaiman Bajobe who was a favorite of his predecessor and appointed his own loyalist

Baffa Bagyane (Fika 1978: 54 and Palmer 1928: 131).

Sarkin Kano Bello deprived the successful Dan Waire of his title of *Sarkin Yaki*, and exiled him because according to some sources he was jealous of Dan Waire's military exploits. The Sarkin Musulmi requested Sarkin Katsina to appoint Dan Waire Sarkin Ruma. Sarkin Gwaram Ado and Sarkin Tudun Wada Aliyu, both *Manyan Dagatai* and *Salama* Barka, *Jakadan Garko* Dankumatu and *Lifidi* Yiga-Allah who were the prominent *cucanawa* were either deposed or killed for various reasons (Fika 1978: 57).

Bello ordered all the Emirate titleholders marrying the daughters of his predecessor to divorce them, or relinquish their titles. Prominent among them were *Madakin Makama* Hamza, *Sarkin Rano* Jibril, *Sarkin Dutse* Irema and *Sarkin Fulanin Jahun* Modibo. Sarkin Rano Jibril and Sarkin Dutse Irema divorced their wives. *Sarkin Fulanin Jahun* Modibo refused to divorce his wife, Rabi and maintained his title because of the strategic importance of his town (Fika 1978: 52 and Jahun

Soron Bello

1986: 9-12). While *Madakin Makama* Hamza relinquished his title rather than divorce his wife Daje, mother of Muhammad Dahiru who later became *Makaman* Kano and the great grandmother of the present *Makaman* Kano Abdullahi Sarki Ibrahim.

Sarkin Kano Bello was able to curtail the incursions of the Ningawa and their allies despite these unpopular policies largely because Sarkin Kano Abdullahi Maje Karofi (1855-1892) had weakened. He rebuilt the fortress town of Tudun Wada that was destroyed by the Ningawa in the 1870's (Fika 1978: 55 and Dantiye 1985). He also defeated Dan Yaya of Ningi at a battle near Kachako. One of his bravest military commanders *Sarkin Gaya* Abubakar also defeated Gajigi son of the notorious Dan Maje.

Bello was very generous to his loyalists as expected of any wise ruler Mallam Muhammad Amin and Alkali Baffa Bagyane were among the major beneficiaries of this generosity (Paden 1978: 262). He supported many clerics who prayed for his son to succeed him. He employed divide and rule strategy to main control of his

territorial chiefs. He was reported to have even promised to Sarkin Abubakar that he would hand over Rano to him if he entered the town but he was unable (Adamu 2007d: 26-27). This was one of Bello's many unpopular policies designed to ensure the perpetuation of his descendants and it affected the administration of the territories.

One of the most serious dissensions was that of the people of Kila. This extensive territory extended to the borders of Kano with Katagum and Jama'are. The ruling house of Kila belonged to the Alibawa Fulani who migrated from Kaura Namoda and settled in the area. They were put under the supervision of Sarkin Dutse. The relationship between the Kila ruling house and Dutse deteriorated. *Madakin* Kila Ahamdu had become powerful as a major bulwark against Ningi and was closely associated with Sarkin Kano Abdullahi Majekarofi (1855-1893). Sarkin Kano Bello decided to reconcile Dutse with Kila. He sent a delegation headed by Sarkin Jahun Modibo, Sarkin Gaya Garba Mai Juni-Juni, Sarkin Aujara Abdu, Sarkin Kudu Yakubu and Sarkin Miga Isa along with Sarkin Dutse Abdulkadir.



Sarkin Jahun Modibo sent to Madakin Kila that they directed by Sarkin Kano to reconcile him and his overlord Sarkin Dutse. Madakin Kila replied that he accepted the instructions of Sarkin Kano but they should allow him to engage Sarkin Gaya who had been boasting that he was going to teach Kila lesson. On hearing this contingent headed to Kila. There was serious battle as Kila with support of Ningi ambushed the contingent and there was a rout in which Sarkin Jahun pushed his way and escaped northwards with major losses and several injuries.

When Sarkin Kano Bello learnt of the defeat of his contingent he was angry with Sarkin Jahun and since then their relationship deteriorated thereby losing another important commander. He sent his son Galadima Tukur to inform the people of Kila that it was never his intention to punish them. He constructed a residence for Sarkin Kano in the town as well as the Juma'at Mosque, which has since remained a major landmark. However despite these entreaties both Madakin Kila and Sarkin Jahun Modibo never visited Kano through out Bello's reign. During the Civil War they were major supporters of the Yusufawa.



He morally and materially supported many Islamic schools and scholars being a scholar himself. His generosity was not limited to Kano because he made more contributions to Sokoto than his predecessors. He was also more submissive to the Sokoto central government. He even consulted them on trivial issues. He was subservient to Sokoto because of his desire to be succeeded by his eldest son *Galadima Tukur* (Ubah 1979: 309).

Bello died on Saturday Jumada 16, Awwal 1311 AH (November 25, 1893) (Last 1966) in Kano and was buried at the cemetery of *Gidan Rumfa* where his father, Ibrahim Dabo, was also buried.

