

**UNIVERSITÄT  
BAYREUTH**



Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies

**The Izala Movement in Nigeria: Its Split,  
Relationship to Sufis and Perception of Sharī'a Re-  
Implementation**

A Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.) at BIGSAS

by

**Ramzi Ben Amara**

Research Area (A): Uncertainty, Innovation and the Quest for Order in Africa

Supervisor: **Dr. Franz Kogelmann**

*June 2011*

## *Table of Contents*

Table of Contents .....	2
Foreword .....	5
Technical Note .....	7
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1 The Study .....	13
2 Scope of literature .....	22
3 Methodology.....	40
4 Theoretical framework .....	45
4.1 Bourdieu applied to Izala .....	47
4.2 “Modes of Religiosity” theory.....	56
4.3 Religious Market Theory & Religious Movements .....	60
<b>Chapter Two: Religious Landscape in Nigeria.....</b>	<b>67</b>
1 Christianity in Nigeria.....	67
2 History of Islam in Nigeria .....	71
2.1 Sufi Brotherhoods .....	75
2.1.1 The Qādiriyya .....	75
2.1.2 The Tijāniyya .....	78
2.2 The Indirect Rule.....	81
2.3 English Law or Islamic Law .....	89
2.4 Islam in Nigeria during the postcolonial era .....	95
2.5 The conflict between the Sufi Brotherhoods .....	102
2.6 Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and his struggle against Sufism.....	109
2.6.1 Sheikh A. Gumi: his early life until 1972 .....	111
2.6.2 Sheikh A. Gumi: from al-‘aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa (1972) to the establishment of Izala (1978).....	118
<b>Chapter Three: Reform Islam versus Sufism.....</b>	<b>122</b>
1 What is reform in “Nigerian” Islam?.....	125
2 Shi’ites in Nigeria.....	136

3 The JTI in Nigeria .....	138
4 From Maitatsine to Boko Haram - a coincidence or a continuation?.....	141
5 Salafiyya oriented groups.....	147
<b>Chapter Four: The Izala movement between success and failure .....</b>	<b>150</b>
1 Sheikh Ismaila Idris and the Izala Question .....	150
2 The J.I.B.W.I.S.: Formation of Izala Organization in 1978.....	157
2.1 One constitution and two factions or many constitutions of the same organization? .....	165
2.2 Structure of the Organization .....	178
2.2.1 The Council of ‘ulamā’ .....	178
2.2.2 The Administration Council .....	179
2.2.3 First Aid Group (FAG) .....	180
2.2.4 Other Committees .....	181
2.3 Current leadership in Izala.....	185
2.3.1 The Jos branch of Izala .....	186
2.3.2 The Kaduna branch of Izala.....	190
3 Izala and Innovation.....	196
3.1 Definition(s) of bid‘a .....	196
3.2 The Discourse of Izala on bid‘a.....	215
4 Izala and Wahhabism .....	228
5 The Division of the Movement: One organization and two doctrines or two organizations and one doctrine? .....	242
5.1 Time of the division.....	243
5.2 Reasons of the Division .....	250
5.3 The Izala “War of words” between Kaduna and Jos: “Two open letters to Sheikh Jingir vs. answers from Jos” .....	268
5.4 Attempts at reconciliation.....	284
<b>Chapter Five: Sharī‘a Debate of 1999.....</b>	<b>291</b>
1 Who implemented Sharī‘a?.....	293
2 Proponents and opponents of the Sharī‘a-project.....	307
2.1 Proponents of Sharī‘a .....	310

2.2 Opponents of the re-implementation of Islamic Law .....	314
2.3 The Federal Government, the States, the <i>‘ulamā’</i> , and grassroots’ positions on <i>sharī’a</i> re-implementation .....	323
3 Izala’s contribution to the re-implementation: initiators? .....	331
4 Izala, Sufis, and Sharī’a-law: a chance for reconciliation?.....	339
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>344</b>
Bibliography .....	359
Abstract (English) .....	377
Abstract (German) .....	379

## ***Foreword***

I want to express my gratitude to all people who assisted me in my project at different stages and apologize to all those I did not mention here by name.

First of all, I am very thankful to Prof. Dr. Ulrich Berner who encouraged me during my undergraduate, graduate and during the process of writing my PhD-Thesis. In the field of Religious Studies I learnt a lot from Prof. Berner and I am really lucky and happy for studying under him and working under his supervision.

Without the assistance and unlimited patience of my supervisor Dr. Franz Kogelmann, this dissertation would not have been accomplished. I thank him for his kind support, critical readings and for sharing his knowledge about *shari'a* and Islam in Africa.

Prof. Dr. Roman Loimeier's lecture at Bayreuth University about Islam in Africa linked my attention to Nigeria and Izala. I am grateful to him for providing me with contacts and networks during my field research. I thank him for the discussions and valuable information he provided me on Izala at different stages of my PhD-project.

Through Prof. Dr. Kurt Beck I knew how to deal with Islam from an anthropological perspective. I enjoyed his seminars, lectures and discussions. I am thankful to him for his kind assistance in all directions.

Dr. Philip Ostien assisted me in Nigeria and there are no words to thank him enough for his kind support and assistance. Na Gode!

I am thankful to: Prof. Dr. Umar Danfulani (Jos) who assisted me in many directions: He did not only host me in his department, but linked me to many Nigerian scholars of religions.

I learnt a lot from Dr. Azonzeh Ukah and appreciated his comments, corrections and critical readings. I am very grateful to him for his kind assistance.

I thank Prof. Dr. Christoph Boehinger and Prof. Dr. Gabriele Cappai for their support and for discussing my work in their excellent methodology course:

Prof. Dr. Sani Umar, Prof. Dr. Abdukader Tayob, Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Seeseman shared their knowledge with me and provided me with ideas and theoretical orientation. I am thankful to all them for taking time to discuss my project with them.

Many thanks to Cathlene Dollar for her corrections, critical reading, and recommendations.

I thank all my interviewees in Nigeria for giving me time and sharing their ideas and for being patient to the many questions I raised.

In Nigeria, I am grateful to Prof. M. Yahya (Jos), Prof: Musa Gaiya (Jos), Dr. Gwamna (Jos), Dr. Yilpet (Jos), Ustaz Sani Modibbo (Jos), Ustaz Abdurrahman Lawal Adam (Jos), Mallam Kabiru (Jos), Ahmad Garba (Jos); Mallam Sani Abdurrazaq (Jos), Mallam Dawood Abubakar (Jos/Berlin), Rahina Muhd (Jos), Chikas Danfulani (Jos/Bayreuth), Yusuf Abdullahi Yusuf

(Jos/Katsina), Dr. Afe Adogame (Edinburgh/Lagos), Dr. Selome Kopunu (Lagos), Dr. Remi Brito (Lagos), Dr. Umar Adam (Kaduna), Babangida (Katsina), Mallam Bala (Zaria), Sheikh Mujahid (Zaria), Mallam Amino Kano (Kaduna/ Kano), Dr. Maren Milligen (USA), Mallam Khidr (Kano), Mallam Uthman (Kano), Saleh Ibrahim (Jos), Prof. Dr. Aljunnar (Sokoto), Dr. Kamal Babakr (Sokoto), Mallam Salisu Bala (Kaduna), Mallam Musa (Arewa House, Kaduna), Dr. Gwadebe (Arewa House, Kaduna), Dr. Haruna Wakili (Mambayya House, Kano), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Munkaila (Maiduguri), Dr. Balarbe Zulyadaiyni (Maiduguri) for their kind assistance.

My family in Tunisia and my friends in Germany (Aissa, Amr, Kamel, Abdou, Ronny, Oliver, Marcus, Eva, Silke, Tobi, Ahmad, Valerie, Salma and many others) helped me a lot during the last years and I am very grateful to all of them.

Meron Zeleke and Halkano Abdi corrected parts of this dissertation and provided me with critical remarks and corrections. Many thanks to both of them!

This study was financed by different institutions at different steps. I am grateful to the Tunisian Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, The Volkswagen Foundation, The International Office (University of Bayreuth), The International Club (University of Bayreuth), and to BIGSAS for the financial support throughout my doctoral thesis.

I am thankful to all members and staff of the Zentralbibliothek (University of Bayreuth), Permanent Site Library (University of Jos), Mambayaa House Library (Kano), Arewa House Library (Kaduna), Library of the Department of Islamic Studies (Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto).

### *Technical Note*

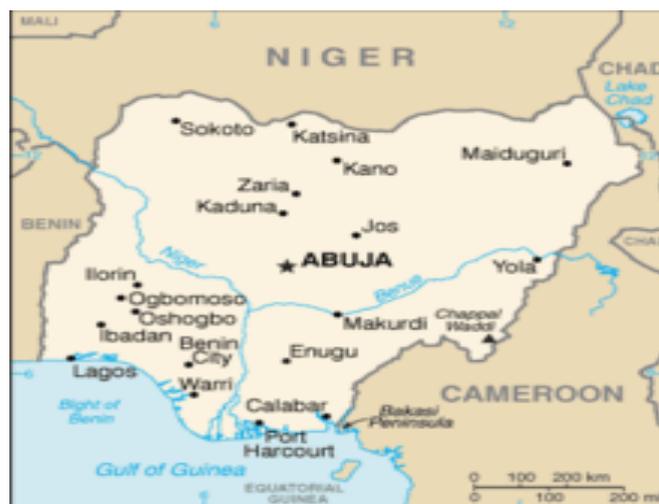
Non-English words are italicised; the transliteration of Arabic words follows that used in the International Journal of Middle East Studies. The meanings of non-English words are given in parentheses following their first appearance, e.g. *ribā* (in Arabic: interest).

All dates are cited according to the “Common Era” (c.e.), numerically equivalent to the Christian a.d.

To protect the identity of my interview partners, I have decided not to add a detailed list of interviewees as well as the different locations of the interviews. If for academic reasons more details are necessary please contact the author directly.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa. According to the 2006 census more than 140 Million inhabitants live in this West African country. Nigeria is ethnically, linguistically and religiously heterogeneous. Approximately over 500 languages<sup>1</sup> are spoken in the country. Hausa in the north, Ibo in the south east and Yoruba in the south west are considered to be among the most important languages and dominant ethnic groups. Nigeria borders Cameroon and Chad in the east, the Republic of Niger to the north, the Republic of Benin in the west and the Gulf of Guinea to the south.



(Wikipedia 2010)

Today, Nigeria is a federation of 36 states with Abuja, as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). In 1999 the Fourth Republic was declared after a democratic

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=NG](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=NG) speaks of 527 “individual languages” in Nigeria among which 512 are “living languages” and 11 have “no known speakers” (4/10/2010).

election. This was the fourth attempt by a civilian government in Nigeria after three failed attempts and a long experience with military dictatorship.<sup>2</sup>

Nigerians are considered to be among the happiest people in the world. This is based on an outcome of a study from the year 2003 comparing more than 65 countries.<sup>3</sup> Another study entitled “What the World thinks about God” dating from 2004 regards Nigerians as the most religious people worldwide.<sup>4</sup> A Global Corruption Report from 2009 published by Transparency International places Nigeria 121 among 180 countries.<sup>5</sup>

In the media, Nigeria is often known for oil, ethnic, and religious crises. In the Niger Delta area where many international oil companies operate, explosions related to leaking pipelines as well as kidnappings of Nigerians and foreign residents and workers of oil companies happen intermittently.<sup>6</sup> The situation in this area of Nigeria is a result of unequal distribution of oil income. Nigeria has been a member of the Oil

---

<sup>2</sup> Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in October 1960. The country was then ruled by the Military with attempts of a civilian government. The First Republic was between 1963 and 1966; The Second Republic was between 1979 and 1983; the Third Republic took place in 1993 when democratic elections were organized and annulled by the Military.

<sup>3</sup> According to the [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news) of 02/10/2003 the study was published by the New Scientist magazine in the UK. It is based on a survey conducted between 1999 and 2001. The study dealt with the level of happiness and satisfaction of people with their lives in the country they come from. (4/10/2010).

<sup>4</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news) (26/02/2004).

<sup>5</sup> Transparency International (2009): Global Corruption Report 2009. Corruption and Private Sector. Cambridge: University Press, pp. 200-203; In July 2010 the Nigerian Minister of Finances declares his dissatisfaction with the actual situation and stresses that one of the greatest concerns of the actual administration is fighting corruption, see [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) (15/07/2010).

<sup>6</sup> During the 1<sup>st</sup> October independence celebrations in 2010, a car bomb explosion in Abuja killed eight people and injured three. Rebels from the Niger Delta area seemed to be behind this action; see <http://english.aljazeera.net> for more details (2/10/2010).

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) since 1971 and yet it is considered by the World Bank as among the poorest countries in the world. The report of 1996 summarizes the situation of the country in the following: "Nigeria presents a paradox. The country is rich but the people are poor."<sup>7</sup> Indeed this paradox is confirmed by many Nigerians who see themselves as excluded from the wealth of their own federation.<sup>8</sup>

Muslims and Christians are the two major religious groups in the country. Adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR) are a minority. There are no reliable statistics at hand. Most Muslims live in the northern part of the country whereas the majority of Christians live in the south, however, in Nigeria, there are no clear cut religious borders. The three religions can be found everywhere in the country and they frequently coexist side by side. Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are often misunderstood in other countries and largely interpreted as purely religious ones. In fact, it is not easy to separate ethnicity from politics, religion, and economy in Nigeria. All these aspects are tied together in a complex way. Events documented by the media as "religious" conflicts between Muslims and Christians in many cases go deeper than this simplistic and often superficial explanation. The last events in Jos in 2001, 2004, 2009, and 2010 were in many cases interpreted as a religious struggle

---

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (1996): Report No. 14733-UNI Nigeria Poverty in the Midst of Plenty. The Challenge of Growth with Inclusion. A World Bank Poverty Assessment, May 31, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Informal communications with Nigerians during my field research 2006/2007 and 2008.

between Muslims and Christians. The issue is much more complex than it appears to be.<sup>9</sup> Of course there are many other examples of religious coloured conflicts.<sup>10</sup>

Nigeria has been a member of the British Commonwealth since 1960. In 1986, the then president of Nigeria, Ibrahim B. Babangida, registered his country with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). These two examples show that Nigerian politics is oriented more towards economic benefits rather than according to religion. The postcolonial era in Nigeria is characterised by political, social and religious instability. Since its independence from Britain in 1960 the country has passed through a tumultuous political experience. The civil war between 1967 and 1970 revealed that the country was far from being stable. This fact is confirmed by almost thirty years of military dictatorship and four attempts at democratic rule in the last fifty years of independent Nigeria.

The first constitutional debate of 1979 was the first significant event in the country where religious division became more visible. This has to do with controversy related to the constituent assembly and the resulting *sharī'a* debate. The discussions amongst Muslims and Christians to include *Sharia Courts of Appeal* in the Nigerian constitution led to a political turmoil. The same problem was raised again 1999 when Zamfara State's Governor Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru declared full re-

---

<sup>9</sup> For a background on Jos-conflict, see for e.g. Higazi, Adam (2007): Violence urbaine et politique à Jos (Nigeria), de la période coloniale aux élections de 2007, In: Politique Africaine 106, pp. 69-91.

Ostien, Philip (2009): Jonah Jang and the Jasawa: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria, in: Muslim-Christian Relations in Africa, pp. 1-44.

<sup>10</sup> See the example of the Kaduna 2000 riots and the Muslim-Christian controversy related to Sharī'a in: Danfulani, Umar H. D. (2005): The Sharī'a issue and Christian-Muslim relations in contemporary Nigeria, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksel International.

implementation of *shari'a* law in his state. After him eleven other northern states introduced Islamic criminal law. During that time, many observers began to doubt the new democratization process in the country. Debates were not only held in the media and amongst politicians, but also in academia. Scholars and researchers from different countries and disciplines<sup>11</sup> developed a keen interest in the *shari'a* issue. It became clear that this phenomenon was being debated in a broader African context, especially in multi-religious societies where religion and identity are adjunctive.

---

<sup>11</sup> A few conferences that have dealt with the recent debate are: “The Shari’a Debate and the Shaping of Muslim and Christian Identities in Northern Nigeria”, University of Bayreuth, Germany, July 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 2003; “Comparative Perspectives on Shari’a in Nigeria”, University of Jos, Nigeria, January 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> 2004 both founded by the VW-Foundation. A publication came out of it: Ostien, P., Nasir, Jamila M., and F. Kogelmann (ed.) (2005): Comparative perspectives on Shari’ah in Nigeria. Ibadan: Spectrum Books. Also a Multidisciplinary research project: “Shari’a Debates and Their Perception by Christians and Muslims in Selected African Countries” between 2006-2009 founded by the same foundation and hosted by different universities in Germany, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Sudan was a forum for scholars from different disciplines to deal with the Shari’a issue in different countries and contexts; see all details under <http://www.sharia-in-africa.net>.

## ***1 The Study***

In the year 2005<sup>12</sup> I undertook a pilot study in Nigeria where I built a network of contacts in Jos and in a few other states in the North.<sup>13</sup> At that time I was developing ideas about my PhD project. *Sharī'a*-re-implementation was a current topic at that time. Informal discussions with scholars at the University of Jos, with both Muslims and Christians about possibility of such a project as well as accessibility to Muslim communities in the North led my attention to my research-project. Previous studies of the Izala movement in Nigeria highlighted that this movement is one of the most successful reform movements in the West African country. According to my knowledge, since the studies of Umar, Loimeier and Kane no academic work has been published on new developments of the movement in Nigeria. My presence in Jos where Izala has its headquarters, some informal contacts first helped me to establish networks with members of the movement. The organization was founded in Jos and many of its leaders live in that city. My connection with the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Jos facilitated contacts with scholars of religion. Informal discussions (with experts of religion, students, and members of different religious groups like of Sufis and Izala) allowed collecting information about the field and the religious situation in general. It was also an occasion to collect names and

---

<sup>12</sup> I accomplished my Magisterarbeit (MA-thesis) entitled "Die Entwicklung der Šarī'a-Frage in Nigeria Ende der 1990er Jahre" in Religious Studies at the University of Bayreuth. The study deals with the historical development of the Sharī'a Question in Nigeria before, during and after the colonial time with a focus on Islamic Law and recent debate in northern Nigeria.

<sup>13</sup> Through the VW-Project on Sharī'a strong partnership were built between the Department of Religious Studies (Lehrstuhl für Religionswissenschaft) of the University of Bayreuth, Germany and the Department of Religious Studies of Jos University, Nigeria.

positions of future interview subjects. It became clear that Jos is the ideal place to conduct research on Izala. This first impression of Jos and Izala was complemented with a visit to other towns which are different to Jos and the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. I used the opportunity to conduct research in Lagos and to have informal discussions with Muslim scholars at Lagos State University (LASU) from the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. These discussions were more directed towards Islamic Law and the re-implementation of *sharī'a* than to Izala.

After this short visit to Nigeria, a proposal of the study was drafted. My plan was to look at Izala's recent developments and add two major aspects: the division of the movement into two main factions (Jos and Kaduna) and the re-implementation of *sharī'a* law that influenced (or is influenced by) Izala in one way or another. The *sharī'a*-factor in relationship to Izala has not been studied before. The contribution of the movement to the so called *sharī'a* project and especially its perception were not considered in academia.

Back in Bayreuth I joined the Volkswagen Foundation (VW) project "Sharī'a Debates and Their Perception by Christians and Muslims in Selected African Countries" (2006-2009). This project was an opportunity to deal with methodological skills and research tools (see methods below). Debates with colleagues and senior researchers from different disciplines (Religious Studies, Anthropology, Islamic Studies, Political Sciences, Sociology, Theology, etc.) and critical discussions of my research proposal challenged my project at different stages.

My first field work in Nigeria was conducted between December 2006 and March 2007. During this time I lived in Jos while regularly taking short trips to Kano, Kaduna, and Zaria. The strategy during this field research was to collect preliminary data, make contact with Izala leaders and Sufis without ignoring those who regard themselves as independent from both. The spectrum of interviewees included both insiders and outsiders of Izala in order to develop a clear and objective view on Izala and *Sharī'a*.

The interviews on Izala supplemented with literature research at different institutions in Jos, Kano, and Kaduna. At the University of Jos, I consulted and collected BA- and MA-Dissertations in Arabic, Islamic and Religious Studies. Relevant material from the library of Mambayya-House, Kano, and Arewa House, Kaduna, were copied and documented. These institutions provided me not only with written material and names of important personalities related to Izala and the re-implementation of *sharī'a*, but they also were starting points for extending my network of contacts and potential interview partners.

The objective was to interview representatives of the two basic factions of Izala: Jos and Kaduna, but also to speak to ex-members and outsiders. At the same time representatives of the two dominant Sufi brotherhoods of the Qādiriyya and the Tijāniyya were interviewed. The major goal for the first stage of field work was to identify figures of the movement, to create an overview of developments of the organization, to analyse its relationships to Sufis past and present and finally to identify the Izala contribution to the *sharī'a* project of 1999. The focus during this

initial field work was the *'ulamā'*, experts and religious leaders with the aim of extending these interview subjects at a grassroots level during future field research. The *'ulamā'* as well as many religious scholars are the ones who witnessed the establishment of Izala towards the end of the 1970s. They played a major role in the history of the movement. When it comes to doctrinal differences between Izala and groups outside of the movement, the leaders are the primary source of ideas and religious doctrines.

In 2008 the spectrum of the study was enlarged to include other parts of northern Nigeria and more case studies derived from different contexts were added. I conducted my field research between February and April 2008. During this period of the research eleven out of twelve northern states were visited. The only exception was Niger State. This was a result of my contacts in the field and the availability of interview subjects and by no means an exclusion of specific actors. The leaders of Izala in Jos and Kaduna were interviewed in different areas. Places like Maiduguri, Sokoto, Zamfara, Gombe, and Katsina – among others – were covered.<sup>14</sup>

Thematically three basic topics were explored. First, the establishment of Izala as an organization and its presence in different regions of the north, its division into two major groups and the attempts of reconciliation constitute the first part of the interviews. The issue of leadership, money, and structure were also part of these discussions.

---

<sup>14</sup> I am thankful to Dr. Philip Ostien for assisting with travelling in northern Nigeria. He was conducting research on Sharī'a Courts in the twelve Sharī'a States. Joining him in 2008 allowed me to move in many places and conduct interviews with several Izala and non-Izala people in different states of the north.

The second topic is the relationship between Izala and Sufi brotherhoods past and present. In order to analyse this relationship between the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s studies published by Roman Loimeier<sup>15</sup>, Sani Umar<sup>16</sup> and Ousmane Kane<sup>17</sup> were used. Through interviews with Sufi and Izala representatives and ordinary members this relationship is analysed from the perspective of today's leaders. Important here is the discourse of both groups as well the change in that relationship.

The third and last topic of the interviews was the re-implementation of *sharī'a* law in northern Nigeria and its impact on Izala and the Sufis. On several occasions Izala leaders claimed that the movement was the initiator of *sharī'a* in the north. The expectations from the *sharī'a* project were high. The re-implementation started at the top (by single governor) and was accomplished by the masses (*sharī'a* re-implementation in other states was forced at the grassroots level). The re-implementation itself presents for Muslims of the north a "success". All Muslim groups in northern Nigeria with the exception of the Shi'ites (known among Nigerian Muslims as Yan Shia; calls itself Islamic Movement in Nigeria) under the leadership of Ibraheem Zakzaky<sup>18</sup> accepted and appealed for the re-implementation. Through

---

<sup>15</sup> Loimeier, Roman (1997): Islamic reform and political change in Nigeria. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Umar, M. Sani (1983): Islamic Revivalism Today. The Example of Jama'atu Izaltul Bid'ah Wa Iqamitis Sunnah, BA-Thesis, Jos University; Umar, M. Sani (1988): Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Nigeria, MA-Thesis, University of Kano.

<sup>17</sup> Kane, Ousmane (2003): Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A study of the Society for Removal of Innovation and reinstatement of Tradition. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

<sup>18</sup> For his biography and the Shi'ism question see Suleimann, Galadima I. (2005): Mallam Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and the Question of Shi'ism; BA-dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

this pressure to implement Islamic Law a new situation developed: a situation in which all Muslim groups needed unity. According to Ousmane Kane “Any outbreak of major conflict between Christians and Muslims caused Muslims factions to unite and forget, at least temporarily, their doctrinal divisions to fight the common enemy.”<sup>19</sup> The *sharī'a* issue was a major contention between Muslims and Christians. Izala as well as Sufis had no option but to come together.

There are some claims within the Izala that the movement was the initiator of *sharī'a* and that Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru is a member of the movement. There is no definitive answer as to how he became a member and how he was influenced by Izala. Sufis also claim that they were behind the re-implementation of *sharī'a* in northern Nigeria.

If we take the re-implementation itself, then it can be considered as the realization of a “dream” of many Muslims to re-establish what has been removed during colonial times. It is a matter of identity related to the situation in the legal field that existed during the time of the Sokoto caliphate which was forbidden by the British colonial administration. Northern Nigerians are emotionally attached to the Sokoto Caliphate and its history. For them, Izala and *sharī'a* go side by side. Izala doctrine feeds into the *sharī'a* project and *sharī'a* can be regarded as a realization of Izala doctrine: Islamization of the society (not to be confused with an Islamic State project) - as some scholars describe it.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Kane, Ousmane (2003), p. 211.

<sup>20</sup> Informal discussion with Prof. Musa Gaiya from the University of Jos 2006; the scholar of religion sees the Izala project in no way as an attempt to Islamize the state. Furthermore, it is an Islamization

During the field research, ordinary members and ex-members of Izala were interviewed in order to gain grassroots perspective on the movement. Although many members (especially young people) could not tell much about the history of Izala through biographical sketches they provided insights of Izala from a different perspective. The environment in which they grew up is an additional source of information on Izala. The interviews were supplemented with visits to Izala institutions in Jos and other towns. Mainly mosques and schools of Izala were visited. In Gombe, I had a unique opportunity to visit an Izala hospital.

The first chapter is an introductory one. After dealing with what has been published/written on the Izala movement in Nigeria so far and its development in and outside of the West African country, the methodology throughout the dissertation is clarified. Then the theoretical framework is introduced. The second chapter is a historical one. It serves as a historical background for the next chapters. The history of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria with an emphasis given to the Sokoto Caliphate period as well as an outline of other Islamic groups in the country will be given. The Sufi brotherhoods played an especially important role in spreading of Islam in the country. The British introduced so-called “indirect rule” in Nigeria. This strategy as well as the development of Islam during the British colonial and post-colonial periods will be analysed. The struggle between Sufis and reform-oriented Islamic groups in the 1970s are taken in consideration. This is shown through the struggle of Sheikh Gumi and Sufi Brotherhoods.

---

of the society by insisting on several societal aspects such as Islamic education, dressing code, education of women, ban of alcohol, etc.

Izala has a reform project in Nigeria, but it is not the only Islamic group with such a plan. In chapter three this notion of “reform” is discussed in the Nigerian context. The examples of the Shi‘ite movement, the Jamā‘at Tajdīd al-Islām (JTI), Maitatsine, Boko Haram, or Salafiyya groups are different manifestations of the same phenomenon. Some of these groups were established at the same time of the Izala foundation, others, such as Boko Haram, are contemporary ones.

Chapter four deals with the establishment of Izala. It gives an overview about the life and contribution of Sheikh Idris to the movement. It serves to clarify issues related to Izala like the discussion on innovation (Arabic: *bid‘a*), and the relationship between Izala and Wahhabism. In this chapter the development of Izala from the beginning of the 1990s is outlined. In particular, the division of the movement into two major groups is analysed. The division of Izala which was mostly unclear to non-Muslims in northern Nigeria, was a big event within the movement. The doctrinal differences and attempts of reconciliation as well as the amendment of the Izala constitution are important parts of the movement’s history. Doctrinal controversies and internal debates are in many cases hidden to outsiders. This chapter is an attempt to clarify some aspects of internal differences within Izala. The discourse(s) within the movement and the rationale of leaders regarding the division is analysed and reflected through interviews and writings from within the Izala.

One cannot deal with Izala without dealing with its relationship to Sufis. In chapter five this relationship is elucidated. Especially in the context of the re-implementation of Islamic law, the Izala-Sufi struggle took another dimension. The

controversy surrounding the re-implementation of *sharī'a* in northern Nigeria was huge. This event was perceived differently. Some speak of a project of Islamization of Nigeria and see in *sharī'a* a danger to the democratization process for the federation during the Fourth Republic. For many Muslims, *sharī'a* was constitutionally adapted. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in the constitution of the West African country and what happened was an adaptation of an Islamic Law that existed in northern Nigeria for hundreds of years. In this chapter, the discussion goes beyond the Muslim community of Nigeria. The *sharī'a* controversy in the country is a national dilemma. This chapter deals with the intra-Muslim discourse on *sharī'a* especially Izala-Sufi debate(s). In addition, the discourse between Muslims and Christians is illustrated. The concluding chapter serves as a summary of the results and findings carried out in this study.

The objective of this dissertation is to go beyond the studies of Roman Loimeier, Sani Umar, Ousmane Kane, and to some extent Andrea Brigaglia. Apart from dealing with the current Izala movement in Nigeria and its leadership and structure and updating the work of the previous scholars, a central objective will be to examine the Izala-Sufi relationship today within the *sharī'a* project. *Sharī'a* re-implementation in Nigeria brought all Muslim groups irrespective of their doctrinal differences together. Apart from the Shi'ites under their leader Ibraheem Zakzaky all Muslim groups and individuals welcomed the re-implementation. How different Islamic groups dealt with their differences within the context of *sharī'a* will be a

central question in this study. The study attempts to answer the following questions: How did Islamic groups (Izala or Sufis) legitimize their initiation of the *sharī'a* project with the Umma (Muslim community) in northern Nigeria? What kind of discussions related to *sharī'a* took place? What was the role of other Muslim groups within this project?

## ***2 Scope of literature***

In academia, the works of Sani Umar, Roman Loimeier, and Ousmane Kane are among the most well-known on Izala in Nigeria. There are also cases dealing with the situation in the Republic of Niger (Masquelier's study on Muslim women in Dogondoutchi town, Grégoire on Maradi town; Alidou on Muslim Women). Literature on Izala in other contexts like Ghana, Chad and Cameroon is limited. These other contexts could be a subject of investigation in the future. The material collected in Nigeria at different universities shows that much research on Izala can be seen as case studies. They were dealing with local developments of the movement in a particular place or town. Some of them deal with one aspect related to Izala (education, mosques, etc.). The founder of Izala and current leaders of the movement were also often subject of studies. The studies listed below are in no way complete and they are only samples of academic research related to Izala done by Nigerian and other scholars.

The Izala movement attracted the attention of a few scholars from both western and Islamic countries. Intensive work on Izala was done by a Nigerian Muslim from the north, Sani Umar, who looked at the relationship between Sufism

and anti-Sufism in his country. The author is a Nigerian and a native speaker of Hausa originally from Jos where he had access to the movement and conducted his field research during a very important period of the organization's development. His BA-Dissertation was submitted at Jos University in 1983 and his MA at Kano University. Sani Umar is considered to be the first scholar who dealt with Izala in an academic way.<sup>21</sup> Sani Umar traces the changes of Islamic identity from Sufism to anti-Sufism in the postcolonial period.<sup>22</sup> Umar takes note of a "popularization" of Sufism in Nigeria during the 1940s. He relates the growth of anti-Sufism in the 1950s to anti-colonial tendencies in Kano, Sokoto and Katsina. The revival of Islam started according to Umar with Sa'ad Zungur (1915-1958) and Abubakar Gumi (1922-1992). This trend continued during the 1970s with the popularization of Sheikh Gumi's views by the media. Through the establishment of Izala in 1978 as an organized entity, the struggle between the movement and Sufi brotherhoods became more visible. The author concludes that anti-Sufism is a form of "protest" and "reorientation" within the Islamic religious field in Nigeria.

The studies of Roman Loimeier and Ousmane Kane are two different analyses of reform Islam in Nigeria. The former is a western scholar of Islam (Islamwissenschaftler) and the latter is a Senegalese political scientist coming from a Sufi background. Both researchers conducted field work at the end of the 1980s. Both took Kano as starting point for their studies. Loimeier looks at the development

---

<sup>21</sup> Umar, M. Sani (1983), (1988).

<sup>22</sup> See Umar, M. Sani (1993): Changing Muslim identity in Nigeria from the 1960s to the 1980s: from Sufism to Anti-Sufism, in: Brenner, Louis (ed.): Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 154-178.

of the Sufi brotherhoods in Nigeria (the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya) and their struggle for power and for followers. The doctrinal differences between both brotherhoods especially during the 1950s and 1960s are well documented. The advent of Sheikh Gumi as a pioneer of reform in Nigeria led to a shift of the religious landscape in the north. The struggle began between him and the “unified” Sufi Brotherhoods. The dispute between both exceeded the intellectual dispute. In the early 1970s Gumi and several Sufi leaders exchanged attacks via their writings. The doctrinal differences and disputes led to physical attacks. Loimeier’s work can be considered as fundamental background-study of the Nigerian religious and political landscape after independence. Sheikh Gumi played a central role during this period. Gumi and his reform program are analysed by Loimeier in other publications<sup>23</sup> as well as in a general overview on Islamic reform in Nigeria in comparison to other African contexts<sup>24</sup>

It was no surprise that an organization that shared Sheikh Gumi’s stance vis-à-vis the Sufi-brotherhoods was founded. This idea of establishing an organization was realized by Ismaila Idris through the establishment of Izala. Kane regards the establishment of Izala as a project of modernity. The organization is an interesting

---

<sup>23</sup> Die radikale islamische Opposition in Nordnigeria, In: *Afrika Spectrum*, 32, 1, 5-23; see also Loimeier’ publication of the same year: *Islamic Reform and Political Change: The Example of Abubakar Gumi and the 'Yan Izala Movement in Northern Nigeria*, in: David Westerlund (ed.). *African Islam and Islam in Africa. Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*, London, 286-307; Loimeier, Roman (2003): *Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa*, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 33, 3, 237-62.

<sup>24</sup> Loimeier, Roman (2005): *De la dynamique locale des réformismes musulmans. Études biographiques (Sénégal, Nigeria et Afrique de l’Est)*, in: M. Gomez-Perez (ed.). *L'Islam politique au sud du Sahara. Identités, discours et enjeux*. Karthala, Paris, 29-48.

phenomenon in the history of Islam in Nigeria. The movement calls people to Islam based on the Qur'ān and the *sunna*. Izala invited followers to the old tradition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* (pious predecessors; the first generations after the death of the Prophet), but at the same time Izala established schools and asked for women to be educated. The movement recruited '*ulamā*' as well as young people at an early stage of its establishment. It then developed into an officially registered organization in Nigeria. Izala adapted itself to the needs of people and concentrated on several aspects of social life to propagate its doctrine. Islamic education played an important role in Izala. From Kane's study, it is possible to identify several main figures of the movement and its development in Kano state. Although Kane's book was published in 2003, it was based on the materials he collected for his PhD dissertation<sup>25</sup> at Bordeaux University in 1993. This valuable study on Izala started with the rise of the movement and ended with its "domestication" – to use Kane's concept. In other publications<sup>26</sup> Kane analyzes the main figures and the social environment in which Izala came out and relates it to economic and political changes in and outside of Nigeria (Sheikh Gumi's influence, the Saudi factor, etc). Kane<sup>27</sup> sees in Izala a project of "modernization" of Islam and links up it with several other reform movements in West Africa, for instance, in Mali or Senegal. Studying abroad and

---

<sup>25</sup> Kane, Ousmane (1993): Les mouvements islamiques et le champ politique au nord du Nigeria: le cas du mouvement Izala à Kano, thèse de doctorat, IEP, Paris.

<sup>26</sup> Kane, Ousmane (1994): Izala: The rise of Muslim reformism in Northern Nigeria, in: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Accounting for fundamentalisms: The dynamic character of movements, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 490-512.

<sup>27</sup> Kane, Ousmane (1999): La polémique contre le soufisme et les ordres soufis en Afrique de l'Ouest post-coloniale, in: Frederick de Jong & Bernd Radtke (ed.) Islamic mysticism contested: thirteen centuries of controversies and polemics. Leiden: E.J. Brill. pp. 324-40.

establishing Islamic schools mainly sponsored by Islamic countries like Libya or Saudi Arabia led to questioning the old tradition of Sufism and the legitimacy of its doctrine.

These three studies on Izala are considered to date to be a basic source of information on the movement and its development. The three mentioned scholars conducted field research on Izala during the 1980s. Sheikh Gumi played a central role in the three works. Apart from the PhD-dissertation of Andrea Brigaglia<sup>28</sup> which was more on the *'ulamā'* of Nigeria and only partially deals with Izala; there has been no work on the movement during the past few years. In other PhD-dissertations written by Nigerian scholars, Izala is presented among many other Muslim groups or in the context of Sufi and anti-Sufi opposition.

Sheikh Abubakar Gumi<sup>29</sup> with the help of Ismail Tsiga published his own autobiography in 1992. Surprisingly the prominent Islamic scholar did not say much about Izala. Apart from mentioning his agreement with the movement, its ideas, and supporting its ideology, the Sheikh clarifies that he never belonged to Izala. He indicates how his student and Izala founder, Sheikh Ismaila Idris, used his book to criticise Sufism. When discussing the movement, he qualifies members of Izala as enthusiastic young people who joined the movement and contributed to its spread. The book deals more with important events in the life of Sheikh Gumi himself such as

---

<sup>28</sup> Brigaglia, Andrea (2004): Testo, tradizione e conflitto esegetico: gli *'ulamā'* contemporanei e gli sviluppi dell'esegesi coranica nella società nord-nigeriana (Kano e Kaduna), 1960-2002, 2004, Ph.D-dissertation, Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale.

<sup>29</sup> Gumi, Abubakar and Ismail I. Tsiga (1992): *where I stand*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.

his education, teaching, politics and visits abroad. The preaching and his confrontation with Sufi leaders are also mentioned in this book.

The book by Tanimu Aliyu<sup>30</sup> written in the Hausa language about Izala is considered by many Izala members in Jos to be a main source of information when it comes to the history of the movement and the biography of Sheikh Idris. It is a biographical sketch of the Izala founder's life. It also documents the major events of the movement throughout its history. The book traces the early history of the movement when the founder started his preaching. Not only does it document the important events and meetings, but it also lists the main figures who joined or assisted Sheikh Idris. In addition to that, the formation of some Izala institutions is reflected. Part of the publication is concerned with problems within the Izala movement, as well as opposition to the leader, yet still illustrating the success of the group while following the path of the Sheikh.

The PhD-thesis of Abdulfattah O. A. Olayiwola<sup>31</sup> is a study on Islam and Muslims in Nigeria. Apart from dealing with the history of Islam in the West African country, the study focuses on the rivalries between Sufis and anti-Sufis (Izala). The author places both tendencies at the same period of time. Olayiwola sums up Izala's criticism of Sufism in three main points: Sufism in general, the Qādiriyya Sufi-brotherhood, and the Tijāniyya Sufi-brotherhood. The movement underwent a period

---

<sup>30</sup> Aliyu, Tanimu (n.d.): *Ignantaccen Tarihin Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Wa'lkamatis Sunnah*, Jos: Abdulazeez Printing Co.

<sup>31</sup> Olayiwola, Abdulfattah O. A. (1997): *The polytomy of Islam in Nigeria- Emanation, implication, and possible rectification*, PhD-thesis at the School of Postgraduate Studies, Islamic Studies, Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria; especially pp. 109-160 deal with Sufi-Izala relationship. The author gives a good analysis of the doctrinal difference between the two groups.

of formation and propagation of its ideas which led to the consolidation by its founder, Sheikh Ismaila Idris. This period can be considered a time of success for the movement. Finally, Olayiwola concludes that Izala reached a stage of “disintegration”. He adds that internal problems such as the division of the Society, the style of leadership, and the approach to Islamic *da'wa* all contributed to the movement's disintegration.

In Nigerian universities and especially in departments of Islamic and Arabic Studies, there are several dissertations dealing with Islam, Muslims and Islamic organizations. In a number of BA- and MA-dissertations it is not difficult to ascertain the affiliation of the author and whether he or she is an Izala or a Sufi. These projects are valuable to provide the reader with insight into the movement at the local level. It is also a source of information about names and key figures of Izala.

The MA-dissertation of Isyaku Yandaki<sup>32</sup> is a valuable documentation of the Izala development from a historical point of view. After dealing with revivalism in Hausaland that led to the establishment of Izala, the historian gives his point of view on the development of the movement. He identifies three basic periods in the history of Izala: formative (1978-82); consolidation (1983-1988); and Izala as a reality (1988-1990). Yandaki operates with the notion of “Tajdeed” (revivalism) and considers the rise of Izala within this framework. In his analysis, he deals with Izala in relationship to Salafism and Wahhabism before he looks at the movement's relationship with the

---

<sup>32</sup> Yandaki, A. Isyaku (1990): A history of the Izalah movement in Northern Nigeria up to 1989, MA-Dissertation, University of Sokoto.

state, and especially with the Muslim community in northern Nigeria. This study is based on elaborate field research and interviews with Izala leaders.

Abdurrahman Lawal Adam<sup>33</sup> was an Izala member before he left the movement in the mid-1980s. Today he acts as a *murshid* (advisor) in Jos, in the JNI (Jamā'at Naṣr al-Islām, Arabic: Society for the Victory of Islam, established 1962 and largely considered an umbrella organization of all Muslim organizations in Nigeria). His dissertation was written in Arabic, in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, at Jos University. It gives insight into Islamic organizations in the city of Jos like JNI, Sufi-groups, and of course Izala. The study clarifies understandings of concepts such as *shirk* (Arabic: polytheism), *bid'a* (among others) within these groups. The study is comparative, and explains concepts and doctrines of Sufis and Izala from different perspectives before it ends with suggestions for solving these problems in the concluding chapter.

The MA-dissertation of Muhammad Nuhu Gurama<sup>34</sup> delves deeply into the Izala division and the reasons for the split in the movement, as well the attempts at reconciliation and the failure to bring the two major Izala groups together. This work goes beyond analysing the Izala-Sufi relationship, and discusses leadership struggles in an Islamic organization. The author appears to be a sympathiser of Sheikh Idris as well as the Kaduna faction of Izala although he tries to present issues

---

<sup>33</sup> Lawal Adam, Abdurrahman (1992): the Conflict between the Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Waiqamatis Sunnah (JIBWIS) and the Sufi Orders in Jos and the stand of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (J.N.I.), MA-Dissertation, University of Jos. (in Arabic)

<sup>34</sup> Gurama, Muhammad Nuhu (2000): Leadership tussles in an Islamic organization: A case Study pf the Jama'at Izala Al-Bid'ah Wa Iqamat Al-Sunnah (J.I.B.W.I.S), MA-Dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria. (in Arabic)

from different angles. He deals with the split between “Ismailism” and “Maiganduism” (concepts named after Sheikh Idris and Alhaji Mai Gandu). The author always relies on history to make comparisons between what happened within Izala and what happened during the time of the Prophet. He goes even further when he suggests an “ideal” structure for the organization; the *‘ulamā’* will be at the top, and all other departments will be under the Council of *‘ulamā’*. His solutions for bringing Izala factions together are summarized in three major points: mutual toleration, avoiding fanaticism, and learning lessons from the history of Islam.

Ismaila Idris is the founder of Izala. Dealing with his biography is interesting not only for Izala members, but also for outsiders of the movement as well as scholars. The BA-dissertation of Muhammed Sadis Muhammed<sup>35</sup> deals with this topic. It is not only a documentation of Sheikh Idris’ life in different places (Bauchi, Kano, Jos, etc.), but also a good source of information on the *fatwās* (in Arabic: legal opinions) issued by the Izala founder on different topics such as *jinn* (in Arabic: spirit), *Ahl al-Kitāb* (in Arabic: people of the book; Christians and Jews), polytheism, etc. Sheikh Idris is the main source of legal opinion for the Izala faction in Jos. This study clarifies the stance of the Sheikh on a number of theological issues such as his opposition to freeing individuals from *jinn* possession, and his attack on the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday as an innovation. The Sheikh also opposes

---

<sup>35</sup> Muhammed Sadis Muhammed (2001): Late Sheikh Ismaila Idris Bin Zakariyya- His contribution to the development of Jama’atu Izalatil Bid’a Wa Iqamatis Sunnah (J.I.B.W.I.S.) in Nigeria, BA-dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

eating animals slaughtered by Sufis and Christians, and providing his argument for this through *fatwās*.

Jamila Adam<sup>36</sup> focuses on the Izala contribution to Islam and Arabic Studies in Jos. Part of her work is about the rise of Izala and its founder, but she also focuses on different types of schools belonging to Izala. This can be considered a comparative study on the contributions of schools to Islam and Arabic in Jos. She gives a short history of each school, its number of students, and their curriculum and contributions. In addition to that, few actual Izala Jos leaders were interviewed, which is common among many studies which deal with the movement.

Muhammed Safiyyu Abdulkadir's<sup>37</sup> MA-dissertation on Bauchi state is a case study of another Nigerian state dealing with a specific topic related to Izala. The author gives an overview on the establishment of Izala in Bauchi indicating that the movement was initiated in 1979 by people who attended the general meeting in Jos in 1978. The initiative started by establishing a mosque belonging to the Izala and performing the Jumu'a (Friday) prayer in it. The first Imam in this mosque was Umar Getato. As in many cases, this was interpreted as a provocation and a danger to the unity of the Umma. After the Imam was arrested several times, the court allowed him to perform Jumu'a prayer in the mosque beginning in 1980. As in many other states, the Izala in Bauchi was affected by the division. This split happened in 1987. The reasons are summarized by the author in eight points, including money, leadership,

---

<sup>36</sup> Adam, Jamila (2005): The role of J.I.B.W.I.S in the development of Arabic and Islamic culture in Jos; BA-dissertation in Arabic Studies, university of Jos, Nigeria. (in Arabic)

<sup>37</sup> Abdulkadir, Muhammed Safiyyu Abdulkadir (2006): A literary survey of Arabic Sermons of J.I.B.W.I.S. in Bauchi Metropolis. Bauchi State, MA-dissertation in Arabic, University of Jos. (in Arabic)

issues related to *fiqh* (in Arabic: jurisprudence) such as marriage, definition of *Ahl al-Kitāb*, attachment to the Mālikī School of law, etc. Izala preaching in Bauchi is the main subject of this study. Preaching is central and *khutba* (the Arabic for “Friday sermon”) are under the supervision of the ‘*ulamā*’ Council of the movement. The first part is an introduction related to a definition of the concept of *khutba* and focusing on its meaning in a religious context. According to the author, preaching by Izala members in Bauchi goes beyond a religious context and extends to social and political aspects of the community. These three aspects sum up the content of Izala preaching. In addition to that, Abdulkadir adds what he calls “*khutba tashjī'iyya*” (supportive preaching) through which Izala invites its followers to continue following the path of the movement. This kind of preaching is also directed at other people in order to inform them of the organization’s ideas. The Izala preaching is within the framework of the Mālikī School of Law as understood by the founder, Sheikh Idris. Abdulkadir stresses the weaknesses of Izala preaching in Bauchi criticising the competence of Imams in terms of language and experience. He comes to the conclusion that this situation will not change since the organization restricts itself to the teachings of Sheikh Idris.

The work of Idris Abdullahi Alhassan<sup>38</sup> deals with one of the important institutions of the Izala faction in Jos. Namely, the Higher Islamic School, Sarkin Mangu, where the headquarters of the organization are also situated. Like many

---

<sup>38</sup> Alhassan, Idris A. (2003): The role of School of Higher Islamic Studies Sarkin Mangu Jos in advancing the spread of Islamic culture, and Arabic language for the year 1989 to the year 2001, BA-dissertation in Arabic Studies, University of Jos. (in Arabic)

projects, the study starts by giving an overview on the city of Jos and Islamic education in the city before the author deals with the history of Izala and its main figures, both past and present. This institution was founded in 1985 in Sarkin Mangu, Jos. In 1985, it obtained approval from the Ministry of Education in Plateau State as well from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1989. The curriculum of the School is divided into two phases: preparatory (3 years) and secondary (3 years) in order to achieve a Secondary Level Certificate. In addition to highlighting the structure of the school and its institutional framework, the author also concentrates on the contribution of three important figures in the improvement of education in this institution. Five major subjects are taught in this school, namely Islamic Education (Qur'ān, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, etc.); education (methodology, psychology), as well as Arabic; English, and Hausa. In addition to that there are other three subjects; the History of Islam, General Knowledge, and Household Training. The author accentuates the objectives of the schools: mastering the Arabic language and Islamic education, and preparing students for university. The author gives a variety of statistics and tables in his study which illustrate the contributions of former school students in spreading Islamic education. A number of issues are seen by the author as obstacle, such as lack of books and finances, and low levels of Arabic and English competency.

Bawa D. Muhammad Anka<sup>39</sup> presents a case study from Zamfara State where Izala was established on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1978. Similar to other contexts, Izala attracted young people more than any other population. This resulted in social conflicts within

---

<sup>39</sup> Bawa D. Muhammad Anka (2002): *Izalah-Tariqah relationship in Zamfara: A Study in perspective*, MA-Dissertation in Islamic Studies, Usman Dan Fodio University Sokoto.

families and between Izala and other Islamic groups. Izala in Zamfara State are generally more peaceful than those states of the north. Also the division of the movement into two groups happened in Zamfara State and as a result two main factions emerged. This division, Izala's changing of methodology, political participation, and *shari'a* re-implementation are seen by Muhammad Anka as reasons for rapprochement between Izala and Sufi brotherhoods in Zamfara State. In addition, the author highlights the impact of Izala on education (Islamic knowledge, establishing schools, etc.) and on social life (the changing of existing practices) in Zamfara State. This research is different from other studies on Izala since it gives examples of cooperation between the movement and Sufi-Brotherhoods. The author sees the re-implementation of Islamic law behind this rapprochement.

The studies mentioned above are samples of works written on Izala. The spectrum is wider and depends on the context and department in which the project was fulfilled. Personal observations of BA and MA projects in the department of Islamic Studies, at Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, show that most projects are more closely related to Sufism and to the history of the Sokoto Caliphate. Only a few projects deal with the Izala movement. This can be explained by the fact that Sokoto has been a centre of Sufism since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The development of Izala seems to be similar in many northern states of Nigeria. The relationship to Sufis and also the division of the organization into two major groups can be compared in different contexts. The headquarters in Jos and later in Kaduna played a role in guiding the doctrinal lines of the movement.

Izala is a transnational movement. It spread not only to most Nigerian states but also from Nigeria to neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroon and the Republic of Niger. The case study of Masquelier<sup>40</sup> on the town of Dogondoutchi, in the Republic of Niger, is a documentation of Izala development outside of Nigeria. From an anthropological perspective she shows the social conflicts that emerged after the coming of Izala. The new “mode of life” introduced by Izala created social conflicts in the town. Izala emerged during a time of economic weakness and it especially attracted young people. According to the author, it offers a discourse of “morality” in a time of dissatisfaction. Izala are categorized by Masquelier as reformist and conservative in comparison to mainstream Islam or to traditional Muslim clerics. Izala’s advent created several problems in families and between Muslim groups. The discourse analyzed by the author reflected the type of on-going discussions and debates among reform oriented Muslims (Izala) and *ṭarīqa* (Sufis) on the meaning of Islam. Antagonism is depicted through attacks on one group by the other, and destroying each group’s social image. For instance, name-calling often occurs between the groups, using terms as “donkey, dogs,” which illustrates “the animalized other” – as shown by the author.

---

<sup>40</sup> Masquelier, Adeline M. (1996): Identity, alterity and ambiguity in a Nigerien community: Competing definitions of 'true' Islam, in: Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (ed.), Postcolonial identities in Africa, London, Zed Books, pp. 222-244.

In another publication<sup>41</sup> the struggle for mosque space was a starting point in the history of Izala in the Republic of Niger. After that the movement changed its strategy to insist on the issue of “knowledge” and necessity of education, and especially the education of women. The movement questioned the existing religious authorities (*Malamai*; Hausa: traditional Islamic scholars) in order to establish its own system of values and norms, such as the way of dressing, the type of education, etc. Masquelier’s in-depth study on the same town is reflected in her book on “Women and Islamic revival”.<sup>42</sup> This publication focuses on one charismatic scholar of the town who represents a Sufi answer to reform Islam, and particularly to Izala. The well respected Islamic scholar, Malam Awal, came to Dogondoutchi with a program to “purify” the town from Izala and establish his vision of “being a Muslim”. In this program women play an essential role in such a way that they gain more and more social prestige. If the Izala puts restrictions on marriage (i.e. quick marriage, law costs, etc.), the new order gives women space for “self-determination” (bride wealth, material needs, fashion etc.). Masquelier highlights that “women’s strategic efforts to defend their interests and agendas (...) centered on the redefinition of Islamic orthodoxy”.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Masquelier, Adeline M. (1999): Debating Muslims, disputed practices: Struggles for the realization of an alternative moral order in Niger, In: Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (ed.), *Civil society and the political imagination in Africa: Critical perspectives*, 1999, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 219-250.

<sup>42</sup> Masquelier, Adeline M. (2009): *Women and Islamic revival in a West African town*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; in the same direction see the study of Husseina D. Alidou: (2005): *Engaging modernity: Muslim women and the politics of agency in postcolonial Niger*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

<sup>43</sup> Masquelier (2009), p. 277.

The study of Emmanuel Grégoire <sup>44</sup> examines the relationship between trade and Islam in the town of Maradi in the Republic of Niger. To be merchant and using the title *Alhaji* (pilgrim) is a prestigious social position in that town. This prestige developed recently by joining Izala as a kind of identity marker. Being an Izala in this context is a kind of rebellion against the existing Sufi authorities of Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya as well a rebellion against social rules. These merchants wanted to establish new societal regulations. Instead of establishing mosques they tended to build schools for education. A new affiliation dictates new social behaviour towards others and towards the old, established tradition. Grégoire makes an interesting remark when he compares the Izala ideology of the Islamic Brotherhoods with the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism in a Christian context.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the Izala movement seems to combine religion and business.

Abdoulaye Sounaye's<sup>46</sup> study deals with Izala in the Republic of Niger, particularly in an urban centre (Niamey). The movement reached the country during the mid-1980s and developed into a socio-religious authority. The Izala movement often uses different strategies to propagate its doctrine. Through the *wā'zin casa* (in Hausa: national preaching), the *markaz* (in Hausa and Arabic: centre of social interaction), and the mosque, the movement's discourse changed from being "marginal and périphérique" to a "plutôt accepté" discourse – as Sounaye points out.

---

<sup>44</sup> Grégoire, Emmanuel (1993): Islam and identity of merchants in Maradi (Niger), in: Louis Brenner (ed.), Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1993, London, Hurst, pp. 106-115.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 114.

<sup>46</sup> Sounaya, Abdoulaye (2009): Izala au Niger: une alternative de communauté religieuse, in: L. Fourchard, O. Goerg and M. Gomez-Perez (ed.), Les lieux de sociabilité urbaine dans la longue durée en Afrique, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 481-500.

The *wa'zin casa* is an occasion for international preaching, wherein preachers from outside the Republic of Niger come to preach. During these few days topics related to the situation of the *Umma* are discussed. This event is also an occasion to collect money for the movement and mobilize people of different ages to join Izala and assist. This can be compared to the *maulid* celebration of Sufis but, with different objectives and organization. The *markaz* is the place of “sociability” and appears as a place of continuous education. With a library and a weekly sermon every Thursday, this place attracts merchants, young people and other categories of people. The *markaz* is a place for building social networks. It can be compared with the *Zāwiya* in the Sufi context. The third place is in the mosque. It is a place of building the “communauté Izala” and for “mediation” among its members. Sounaye sees the mosque as a place for building the sense of “collectivity” in Izala. The author indicates three institutions that are used by Izala as “tools” to propagate its doctrine. This strategy aims to bring religious, economic and social aspects together. It allows Izala to dominate the “religious field” in which it operates. Finally, the author raises an important question related to the institutionalization and normalization of Izala. To what extent is it possible to talk the dynamism of its reform project in the future?

Robert B. Charlick,<sup>47</sup> a political scientist, thinks that Izala (as the defender of Islamic morals) is an “Islamist movement” which confronted the Nigerian state several times on different occasions since the 1990s. The author explains that the movement has been looking for an “autonomous identity” which opposes the existing

---

<sup>47</sup> Charlick, Robert B. (2004): Islamism in West Africa: Niger, In: African Studies Review 47 (2), pp. 97-107.

traditional Hausa social rules. He adds that Izala attracted youth, merchants, and “urban unemployed” and it offers a particular system of values. Charlick concludes that Izala is “used in part to permit a form of capitalist economic modernization (...) without an acceptance of the western Beliefs...”

Olivier Meunier,<sup>48</sup> anthropologist and sociologist who has published extensively on Islam in the Republic Niger, describes a phenomenon of unification of Sufi brotherhoods against Izala in the town Maradi that seems to be similar to what Roman Loimeier described in northern Nigeria. Meunier documents that the founder of Izala in the Republic Niger, Malam Chaibou, studied in Katsina (Nigeria) and was a student of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi in Kaduna, Nigeria before he returned to Maradi and founded the movement in early 1980s. His preaching was even recorded and transmitted on the radio. Meunier views in Izala a Wahhābī movement that crossed the Nigerian border to the town of Maradi. He relates the development of Izala to external influences, especially Saudi Arabia. The rise of the movement took place during a time of economic crisis (1980). Izala attracted many unsatisfied people and established itself as a movement against Sufism and the syncretistic practices of Marabouts. In his book<sup>49</sup> on Islam in Niger, the author differentiates between three major groups in Maradi: traditionalists (Sufis), rationalists (those who call themselves Mālikīs without any affiliation to Sufism or to reform Islam), and reformists (Izala).

---

<sup>48</sup> Meunier, Oliver (1998): Marabouts et courants religieux en pays hawsa: dynamique de l'islamisation de la ville de Maradi à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et durant le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, In: *Revue Canadienne d'Études Africaines* 32 (3), pp.521-557.

<sup>49</sup> Meunier, Olivier (1998): *Les voies de l'islam au Niger dans le Katsina independant du XIX<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris: Publications Scientifiques du Museum.

### ***3 Methodology***

The Study of Religion offers different approaches for dealing with the phenomenon of religion. The historical-philological and the empirical-sociological methods are well-established, scholarly methods which are often applied. Many other academic approaches are also accepted, i.e. the anthropological, philosophical, psychological and even feminist approaches.<sup>50</sup> In this study, I am not defining the concept of “religion” either in substantial or in a functional ways as it is the case in many publications in Religious Studies. I am going far beyond the problem of definition of the concept of “religion”, and the debate behind it. I am aware of the importance of this debate to my project. I think instead of defining “religion” myself I am looking at this notion from the angle of the Izala and Sufis.

This study combines a historical and empirical approach. The history of Izala in Nigeria and its relationship to Sufis has been documented and analysed in this study. There is a lack of literature concerning recent developments, current leaders, and especially on-going discourses within the movement. The objective is to attempt to fill this gap in academia and especially to consider how Izala’s contemporary central figures reconstruct the history of the movement. Izala’s history from the perspective of its current members, ex-members and non-Izala seems to be

---

<sup>50</sup> Literature on methods and approaches in the Study of Religion is diverse; for an overview on different perspectives dealing with this topic see for e.g. Connolly, Peter (1999) (ed.): *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London and New York: Cassell; also Whaling, Frank (1995) (ed.): *Theory and methods in Religious Studies. Contemporary approaches to the Study of Religion*, Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

consistent with what has been already written on the history of this movement. The empirical approach consists of dealing with actors from different religious backgrounds and affiliations (within Islam) and analyzing the actual discourse(s) and the doctrinal orientation of the movement.

My field research in Nigeria took place between December 2006 and March 2007 and again from February to April 2008. The aim of the first experience in the field was to build networks and connections to the Izala movement in Nigeria and to explore the “religious field” of the city of Jos. This endeavour was facilitated by the department of Religious Studies at the University of Jos.<sup>51</sup> The first period of research was restricted to identifying central religious figures and leaders in Jos and to exploring the relationship between the movement and Sufism. It did not take much time to identify Izala leaders linked to the founder, Sheikh Ismaila Idris and within the Jos faction and finally, others linked to the second group: the Kaduna group which split from the Jos faction. The Izala was established in Jos and its headquarters are still in Jos. Today, followers of Sheikh Ismaila Idris have their national office at Sarkin Mangu, Jos. The Kaduna faction and its leaders are based in the same town, as well in Kaduna. The leaders of Izala can also be found in other northern states.

Being affiliated with Izala as a movement or as a religious organization doesn't require any initiation, ritual, official forms or membership fees. The organization requires the acceptance of its doctrine and rejection of Sufism as basic elements of

---

<sup>51</sup> I am thankful to the Head of the Department of Religious Studies, Prof. U. Danfulani who hosted me and introduced me to his colleagues but also for his assistance in all directions; I am also thankful to all staff of the department. Through Mallam Dawood Abubakar I had my first contacts with Sufi Sheikhs and Izala members in Jos. I really appreciate his valuable support and patience.

association. The same is true if a member decides to leave Izala. There are no requirements or restrictions. Affiliation or membership of ordinary people among Muslims in more than one Islamic group or organization is socially accepted and widely practised in Nigeria. Very often I have heard statements like “when I was affiliated with the Tijāniyya” or, “when I left the Qādiriyya” or, “I am a member of the Izala Jos faction”. In most cases this kind of membership or affiliation has to do with the social environment of the person being interviewed. If a person grew up in a Sufi community, then it is plausible that he or she became a Sufi and the same thing is true if most family members are Izala adherents.

#### Interviews and discussions:

During the first field research (2006 and 2007) I conducted thirty-five interviews and five informal discussions with experts of Islam and other religions in northern Nigeria. At the very early stage in my research I restricted myself to interviews with experts. I spoke to leaders from the Izala affiliated with the Jos or the Kaduna branches (sixteen interviews). I also interviewed seven Sufi leaders (two from Qādiriyya and five from the Tijāniyya). In addition, twelve subjects were interviewed from different groups and religious orientations in order to understand their points of view on Izala, Sufis and *sharī'a*. Part of this group provided outsider perspectives as former Izala members or religious leaders who are related neither to Izala nor to Sufis. The most important thing during this field work was to identify the actual leaders of Izala and interview them about the history of the movement as well

their relationship to other Islamic groups, past and present. Their views are complemented by the views of Sufis as well as by ex-members of Izala, but also by leaders from different doctrinal orientations (Salafi, neutral, *sharī'a* expert, etc.). All subjects were male. Concerning the five informal discussions they were conducted at the University of Jos with scholars (Muslims and Christians) from the departments of Islamic, religious, and historical studies.<sup>52</sup>

During the second stay in the field thirty-eight interviews were conducted (thirty-two with male subjects and six conducted by a female research assistant with six women in Jos). During this period of time, the viewpoints of ordinary Izala members in Jos were added to further interviews with Islamic scholars. Biographical interviews with members of the Jos faction of Izala (eight in Jos, one in Dutse) were conducted in addition to expert interviews in different local contexts of northern Nigeria (Gombe, Gashua, Maiduguri, Dutse, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Gusau).

The interviews were conducted in English and Arabic. Only in two cases were interviews conducted in Hausa with simultaneous translation. Arabic interviews were transcribed and translated into English. During the first field research a voice recorder was used during the interviews. In many cases, my interview subjects were sceptical about recording the interview and I decided to take notes only.

During the analysis of the interviews many statements (like the history of Izala, reasons for the split, its relationship to Sufism, *sharī'a*-contribution, etc.) were repeated several times by different interviewees. That is the reason why not all

---

<sup>52</sup> Discussion with Dr. Gwamna (Religious Studies), Dr. Yilpet (Theology), Prof. Dahiru Yahya (Islamic Studies), Prof. Sati Fwatshak (History)

interviews were considered in my work. My selection was related to the importance of the information and the position of the interview subject in relation to Izala or other relevant groups.

**Observation(s):**

During my stay in Nigeria I visited several mosques and institutions belonging to both Izala and Sufi-brotherhoods. These visits were not related to interviews or any academic work, but rather to build networks as well to develop a personal view about the religious field in northern Nigeria. Performing prayers was always an opportunity to meet people and to think about the views and differences reflected during the interviews by the different interview subjects. In some cases I interviewed Sheikhs in the mosque and during the interviews believers came to perform their *ṣalāt* (in Arabic: prayer) or practice their congregational obligation (Arabic: *wazīfa*) for e.g. Besides mosques, I visited classes of the School for Higher Islamic Studies in Jos and a primary school in Kano (both belong to the Jos faction of Izala). In Gombe, I also visited the Izala headquarters linked to the Jos faction and had a unique opportunity to visit a hospital belonging to the organization.

**Material collected:**

Besides the interviews, additional materials and sources of information were collected. I used the opportunity and the networks with Nigerian scholars to access the libraries of religious studies, history and Islamic studies departments. These libraries were a treasure of unpublished material on Islam in northern Nigeria. They provided information on Izala, Sufis and other Islamic groups in the local context.

Some BA-, MA-, and PhD-dissertations relevant to my topic and found in Jos, Sokoto, and Kano were also consulted and collected.

I also collected publications mainly from the Izala branch in Jos. There are pamphlets, books, booklets, and publications of leaders, such as published transcripts of Friday-sermons. Izala Izala faction in Jos has a shop in which all material related to the movement (sermons, seminars, meetings) are VHS-recorded and sold to their members as well as to the public. CDs and audio-cassettes of Izala-leaders (and others) circulate in the market. I have collected samples of this material as well material from libraries and bookshops in Jos and other towns in the North.

#### ***4 Theoretical framework***

The rapid growth of Izala in northern Nigeria was outstanding and has attracted the attention of scholars from different academic disciplines.<sup>53</sup> The explanations for this development vary. An analysis of the whole situation in Nigeria in the 1970s proposes that political, economic and social disorder and uncertainty lead to the rise of new religious movements like Izala. Such a development does not occur only in the Muslim context.<sup>54</sup> The role of charismatic figures like Sheikh Gumi or Sheikh Idris and their call to reform Islam in Nigeria also played a crucial role in

---

<sup>53</sup> See above my literature review.

<sup>54</sup> New religious movements regularly appear and disappear in Christian and other religious contexts; for a good summary on religious movements in Africa in both Christian and Muslim contexts see Hackett, Rosalind (2011): *Millennial and Apocalyptic Movements in Africa. From Neo-Traditional to Neo-Pentecostals*, in: Wessinger, Catherine (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 616-674.

transforming the Izala into a mass-movement. On the one hand nobody can claim that Izala is the most influential Islamic organization today since we lack reliable statistical figures. On the other hand we cannot deny that Izala developed into a significant actor on the Islamic landscape alongside the influential and diverse communities of Nigerian Sufi-brotherhoods. Both Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya are historically the two major actors in “Nigerian” Islam. Even today, places like Maiduguri, Kano, and Sokoto are Sufi centres par excellence. However, we are not in the position to offer a final overview about the different groups and orientations of Nigerian Muslims.

In my project, I do not try to develop a theory of religious organizations although I am dealing with a religious group from a sociological perspective. I am also not discussing whether Izala is a religious “organization” and/or a religious “movement”.<sup>55</sup> I believe that Izala fulfils the requirements of both: it started as a movement of a single charismatic person and developed into a modern organization. Thus, I am using both terms interchangeably. Furthermore, I am looking at Izala’s recent development(s) and aspects that have not been studied in academia or within a new religious field of *sharīʿa* re-implementation.

The tools of my analysis are the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Harvey Whitehouse and Rodney Stark. Why these three approaches? There is something the three have in common: they are not defining religion or restricting their theories to

---

<sup>55</sup> I am thankful to Prof. Dr. Achim von Open who directed my attention to this point during the BIGSAS Advanced Work in Progress Colloquium, Iwalewa Haus, University of Bayreuth, Germany, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010.

a particular group or religious tradition. The theories can be applied to various religions. In addition, none of these three theorists use data derived from an Islamic context. All three seem to offer a model for a better understanding of religious groups in general. I will implicitly use these theories to analyse and interpret the development of Izala in the conclusion. I think that Bourdieu's terminology for instance offers an excellent tool not only for describing the Izala movement, but also the change(s) that occurred within it.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks of Whitehouse and Stark generate new insights into the dynamics of Izala as a religious phenomenon. In the following these theories are introduced.

#### **4.1 Bourdieu applied to Izala<sup>57</sup>**

Steven Engler emphasizes that the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has recently been (re)discovered by scholars of religion and he expects a further growth of this tendency. According to his observations, a number of scholars, especially in the field of sociology of religion, are attracted by Bourdieu's theory and his terminology.<sup>58</sup> This surprisingly late interest in Bourdieu's concepts by scholars of religion might be explained by the fact that he undertook research on religion only to

---

<sup>56</sup> Ousmane Kane (2003) uses Bourdieu's theory in dealing with the Izala movement. It is interesting to show the changes in the religious and political "field" of Izala he has described. Big events in the history of the movement like the division and later on the Sharī'a re-implementation are new elements in the history of Izala.

<sup>57</sup> Some aspects of my theoretical framework were presented at BIGSAS-Colloquium "Advanced Works in Progress", 4-5 February 2010, Iwalewa Haus, University of Bayreuth, Germany as well during the Workshop "Continuity and Change in the Religious Field: Perspectives from Africa, 12-16 July, 2010, Chair of the Study of Religion 1/BIGSAS of the same institution. I am thankful to all participants of both events for their comments and recommendations.

<sup>58</sup> Engler, Steven (2003): Modern Time: religion, consecration and the state in Bourdieu, In: Cultural Studies 17(3/4), pp. 445-446.

a limited extent as David Swartz observes. Bourdieu only published a study on French Catholic Bishops in 1982 and two articles on sociology of religion in 1987 and 1991.<sup>59</sup> Some key concepts of Bourdieu's theory are *capital*, *habitus*, *field*, and *symbolic power*. They are compatible with more than one academic discipline. They are applicable to culture but can also be used in the context of economy, religion or philosophy.

Bourdieu's notion of *capital*<sup>60</sup> is manifold. The most important are: *economic capital*, which can be converted into money and is institutionalized in property rights; *cultural capital* which is under certain circumstances related to *economic capital* and its institutionalization manifested in educational qualifications; and finally *social capital* based on social obligations and institutionalized in titles of nobility.

For my project the concepts of *cultural* and *social capital* appear important and appropriate. Thus, I want to explain both concepts in more detail. Concerning the *cultural capital*, Bourdieu differentiates between *embodied*, *objectified*, and *institutionalized* forms.

By *embodied* he means the notion of culture, cultivation, or "Bildung". This capital can be converted into *habitus* and "cannot be transmitted instantaneously" like money or property. It is acquired and it depends on time, society and social class. It is unequally distributed and needs power in order to be imposed and transmitted.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Swartz, David (1996): Bridging the study of culture and religion: Pierre Bourdieu's political economy of Symbolic power, In: *Sociology of Religion* 57 (1), p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1986): The Forms of capital, In: Richardson, John (eds.): *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

The *objectified* state of *cultural capital* is related to the first type (embodied) and is “objectified in material objects and media, such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc.” It is transmitted materially but also symbolically.<sup>62</sup> The last state of *cultural capital*, the *institutionalized*, is more related to academic qualifications that gives its holder a kind of “certificate of cultural competence”. These qualifications are differentiated between people in a particular society and establish a system of values.<sup>63</sup>

If the *cultural capital* is more or less related to the individual, the *social capital* is related to groups of people. Bourdieu also calls it “collectively-owned capital”. Its volume depends on the networks of an individual and on his or her capital. It is based on the principle of “solidarity” and “durable obligations”. A kind of “symbolic constitution” emerges from these and “recognition” (in the group) takes place. Production of *social capital* requires – according to Bourdieu – “an unceasing of sociability” and “a series of exchanges” in which recognition is “affirmed and reaffirmed”. A group regulates its own rules internally and appoints a representative as a leader who enjoys *symbolic power*.<sup>64</sup>

The described forms of capital and people’s *habitus* are to be found in every *field* of the society (politics, religion, education, art, etc.). These various fields are not isolated from each other, and are based on *symbolic power*. In all fields a struggle for

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 246-247.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 247-248.

<sup>64</sup> For more details on the “cultural capital” see *ibid.*, pp. 248-253.

this symbolic power takes place. These dynamics and the interactions between the fields constitute the *habitus* of a particular society. Bourdieu defines that notion as:

“The *habitus* is the source of these series of moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being a product of a genuine strategic intention – which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies.”<sup>65</sup>

Actors produce and reproduce “objective meaning”. Important for Bourdieu is the “orchestration” of the different meanings to produce a “common-sense world” on the basis of common practices. These actors come across as “similar” or “identical” experiences. The common *habitus* of these actors is then perceived as “immediately intelligible and foreseeable” and “hence taken for granted”.<sup>66</sup>

The production of *habitus* requires “mobilizers” (prophets, leaders) who master common codes and who can undertake “corrections” and “adjustments”.<sup>67</sup> The reproduction of *habitus* can take place as a result of an “inculturation” and “appropriation” through which “objective structures like language or economy can reproduce themselves”.<sup>68</sup>

In the course of the development of a common *habitus* a new form of capital emerges: the so-called symbolic capital. This type is characterised by Bourdieu as “*the most valuable form of accumulation*” and has to do with acknowledgment and

---

<sup>65</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1977): Outline of a theory of practice, Cambridge: University Press, p. 73.

<sup>66</sup> Bourdieu (1977), pp. 79-80.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

prestige.<sup>69</sup> This capital is better called “symbolic violence” and is necessary because it is the “only way in which relations of domination can be set up, maintained, or restored”.<sup>70</sup> This “invisible” form – as qualified by Bourdieu – is “neither officially declared nor institutionally guaranteed”<sup>71</sup>. This power cannot be acquired by a distribution of economic capital. It is based on what Bourdieu calls “virtue”.<sup>72</sup>

The different types of capital as well as the construction and regeneration of *habitus* and the *symbolic violence* require an abstract setting. Bourdieu suggests the notion of *field*, characterised by its dynamics and based on particular rules, mechanisms and structures. The concept of *field* is located in many places of the society. It can be a “field” of art, of economy, politics, or religion. Magnus Echter,<sup>73</sup> anthropologist and scholar of religious studies from Bayreuth, offers a good description of what the notion of *field* means in Bourdieu’s terminology. The metaphor of *game* summarizes the whole situation. In every game there are players playing and developing their skills to master the rules. The example given by Bourdieu is that of roulette. Playing the game means accepting its rules and regulations. This metaphor reflects a more important game which is *social game*. This type is a long-term one and has implicit regulations in a particular field and depends on players and their positions. This *social game* differs from roulette as formulated by Echter: “But unlike roulette, where the result of the game is determined by chance, social games

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 193

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>73</sup> Echter, Magnus (2008): Changing rituals - The New Year’s festival in Makunduchi, Zanzibar, since colonial times, PhD thesis, University of Bayreuth.

are always rigged: the actors who accumulate the highest amount in the right combination of capitalia will usually succeed.”<sup>74</sup>

According to Bourdieu, a game requires a strategy that he defines as “(...) the product of a practical sense, of a particular social game”.<sup>75</sup> Players differ in their capacity to play by using effective strategies and by adapting to new and/or different conditions in particular. As Bourdieu formulates it:

“The good player, who is as it were the embodiment of the *game*, is continually doing what needs to be done, what the *game* demands and requires. This presupposes a constant invention, an improvisation that is absolutely necessary in order for one to adapt to situations that are infinitely varied. This cannot be achieved by mechanical obedience to explicit, codified rules (when they exist).”<sup>76</sup>

According to Echtler, Bourdieu develops his notion of *habitus* or his theory of practice respectively as an answer to “objective and subjective theories”. According to his theory the *habitus* of people is based on the experience of people in a way that it can be produced and reproduced.<sup>77</sup> The concepts of field, capital, and practice are interrelated. Echtler formulates it accurately: “All practices are strategic in the sense that interested actors compete with each other, make use of the capitalia at the disposal in order to enlarge their capital or improve their position within the field of

---

<sup>74</sup> Echtler (2008), p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> Pierre Lamaison and Pierre Bourdieu (1986): From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu, p. 112.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-113.

<sup>77</sup> Echtler (2008), p. 25

practice.”<sup>78</sup> *Habitus* is dynamic and is based on actors’ “unlimited capacities” to generate it.<sup>79</sup>

Since the re-implementation of *sharī'a* in northern Nigeria in 1999, the relationship between Sufi-Brotherhoods and Islamic reform movements like Izala has been affected in a very profound way. It changed from violent confrontations to peaceful co-existence. These two groups reduced their long on-going struggle over doctrinal questions. To elucidate this phenomenon and to put it into a theoretical framework I will use Pierre Bourdieu’s notions of *field*, *capital*, *habitus* and *symbolic power*. Kane<sup>80</sup> uses Bourdieu’s theory to describe the *religious field* in Nigeria and particularly the field in which Izala was established. Kane agrees with Bourdieu’s understanding of the notion of *capital* that *symbolic capital* in a particular field is more important than *economic capital* and identifies “accumulation” and “conservation” of capital as key concepts of that theory.<sup>81</sup>

For the “religious field” of northern Nigeria Kane proposes the following five categories of capital. 1) Non-formally certified cultural capital (exoteric knowledge and esoteric science - Sufism), 2) formally certified cultural capital or exoteric knowledge like a university certificate or mastery of Qur’ān, 3) economic capital (material wealth), 4) symbolic capital (fighters for the cause of Islam) and 5) social capital (supporters, clients, disciples, etc...)<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>80</sup> See Kane (1993) and (2003)

<sup>81</sup> See Kane (2003), pp. 20-23.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

The applicability of the Bourdieu's theory by Kane in the context of the Izala movement is summarized in the following:

“An assumption of Bourdieu's field theory is that, in each field, one finds a struggle between the “newcomers” and the “established dominant actors.” The strategy of each category of players (or their game) is determined by the quantity and the types of capital they possess (e.g., money, followers, prestige, knowledge, etc.). In all fields, established dominant actors controlling diverse sorts and substantial volumes of capital will tend to be very conservative in order to preserve the structure of the field – understood as “the state of power relations among the agents and institutions engaged in the struggle [...] to defend the monopoly and keep out competition”.<sup>83</sup>

The category of “newcomers” is very important when it comes to the start-up of Izala. This group is represented by the youth, women, and a new generation of entrepreneurs who supported Izala from the beginning. Through biographies of some actors of Izala Kane shows how *capital* was obtained and how it was converted within the Izala *religious field* into other forms, for instance: *economic capital* to a *social* or *symbolic* one. This change offers the movement an opportunity to set up its own ideology against the traditional religious institution.<sup>84</sup>

Kane uses Bourdieu's theory to explain the Izala phenomenon. An important question arises here: what is the relevance of using the same approach with the same movement again? The answer is: since Ousmane Kane's research the

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>84</sup> For a brief summary on the application of Bourdieu's theory of field on Izala see Kane (2003), pp. 228-233.

*religious field* is entirely re-defined. Izala has new leaders, the movement is divided into two major factions, and the discourse is different to the 1980s and 1990s. Even more important is the whole new setting: re-implementation of *sharī'a* by the northern states. These new challenges affected Izala politically, economically and religiously.

The Izala of today is faced with many challenges. The new religious and more precisely the Islamic religious field is different from the past. The Izala of today is divided between the Jos and Kaduna factions and both are contending for acknowledgement among their adherents. The Izala is also part of the Muslim community as a whole at a national level as the *sharī'a* issue shows.

The *religious field* in which Izala is acting nowadays is different from how Kane described it. The setting he illustrated and in which Izala evolved has changed. During the time of Sheikh Idris, the establishment of a strong mass-movement with many followers was at the top of his agenda. The category of “newcomers” (youth, women, etc.) as well of those who possessed an *economic capital* (merchants for e.g.) played an important role in the start-up phase of Izala. Islamic preachers (Arabic: *du'āt*, sing. *dā'i*) who joined the Izala-founder came with their *cultural capital* and assisted in the process of recruitment. The founder enjoyed loyalty and respect and Izala was mainly focused on fighting Sufis and Sufism and attracting new adherents and followers.

Today the movement is affected by internal strife and friction. The *religious field* is re-defined. The Jos-faction's leader, Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir, a former student of the Izala founder and current leader of the Izala faction in Jos, is attached

to the tradition of Sheikh Idris and defines all aspects of “being-an-Izala” in relation to the tradition originally established by him [Idris]. In Kaduna group, the two distinguished Sheikhs are Sheikh Yusuf Sambo and Sheikh Rabi'u Daura.<sup>85</sup> The Izala religious field in Kaduna is different from what the founder of the movement established. Defining Izala-identity internally and acting as a dynamic movement within the Muslim community of Nigeria are the new challenges that Izala are facing today. These challenges are elaborated in the coming chapters.<sup>86</sup>

#### **4.2 “Modes of Religiosity” theory**

The “modes of religiosity theory”<sup>87</sup> of Harvey Whitehouse can also be a model for explaining the Izala development. This type of cognitive approach is new in religious studies and has not been applied to any Islamic context. In his theory, Whitehouse is interested in religious experience and in explaining cognitive mechanisms in the transmission of religion or any religious ritual.

This theory recognises remembering and motivation as crucial elements for any particular religion or ritual that wants to survive. Religious beliefs and rituals should be repeated and easily accessible to people. They must be meaningful for believers in order to be transferred from one generation to the next.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Both Sheikhs Yusuf Sambo and Rabi'u Daura are the leaders of the Kaduna faction of Izala that split from the founder Sheikh Idris.

<sup>86</sup> See chapter “Reform Islam vs. Sufism.”

<sup>87</sup> This approach is elaborated by the author in several of his publications and especially in his book Whitehouse, Harvey (2004): *Modes of Religiosity: A cognitive theory of religious transmission*, Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

<sup>88</sup> Whitehouse (2004), p. 64.

Based on literature in psychology, Whitehouse analyses the notion of memory and divides it into two types: an implicit and an explicit one. By “implicit memory” he means “those things that we know without being aware of”. For the explicit memory – which is more important for us – he distinguishes a short-term from a long-term memory.<sup>89</sup>

The long-term memory is also sub-divided into semantic and episodic. The semantic type reflects “knowledge about the world” and the individual is unable to remember the point in time of its adoption. The episodic type deals with particular events in life (death, war, etc.). According to Whitehouse, these types of memory are activated differently in what he calls “doctrinal” and “imagistic” modes of religiosity.<sup>90</sup>

These two modes occur separately or together in a single religious tradition. For the doctrinal modes, frequent repetition of religious rituals, a long-term-episodic memory, religious leaders, hierarchy, and orthodoxy are important for a doctrine to survive. The imagistic mode of religiosity is characterised by its low frequency (initiation for e.g.) and its high emotional arousal. It doesn’t need orthodoxy, it is hard to spread, and it appeals episodic memory.<sup>91</sup>

In the case of Izala the doctrinal mode appears more applicable. Why? We might get the impression that Izala tends to the doctrinal mode of religiosity while

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p 65

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> The two modes are explained in detail in Whitehouse (2004), pp. 65-85; Whitehouse (2002): ‘Modes of Religiosity: a cognitive explanation of the sociopolitical dynamics of religion’, In: *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 14 , 2002, pp. 293-315;

Sufism is the imagistic one. This superficial assumption can not explain a complex religious field like northern Nigeria.

Since the establishment of Izala in Nigeria a conflict emerged between the movement and the Sufis. Applying Whitehouse's theory, the conflict was a matter of doctrine, or a matter of doctrinal mode of religiosity to be more precise. The Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya Brotherhoods have a long tradition in northern Nigeria and are well-established. These two brotherhoods dominate Sufism in northern Nigeria. They offer two different methods for drawing closer to God. Their differences are doctrinal in nature. Through the intermediaries of sheikhs/saints both of them construct a *silsila*, or a chain of knowledge going back to the Prophet and from him to God. Sufis keep the basic tenets of Islam. In addition, they have their own practices generally established by the founder. In most cases, the founder of the order is identified with miracles. Adherents of the Tijāniyya for example claim that the founding Sheikh Aḥmad al-Tijānī saw the Prophet in daylight. Qādiris also associate many miraculous events with 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, their master. Tijāniyya and Qādiriyya followers believe in *baraka*, or benediction of the saint. Both seek for *tarbiyat al-nafs*, or guiding of the soul. Unlike Qādiri, Tijānī followers reject asceticism, *zuhd*.

Tijānīs cannot be affiliated with another Sufi order. When they are initiated by a *muqaddim* (in Arabic: introducer, initiator) they are asked to recite the daily litany, and participate in special Tijānī congregational prayers. The *ḥadra* (in Arabic: séance in congregation) on Friday is central to the doctrine of the Tijānī. Qādiriyya have also their special prayers. They celebrate *mawlid*, the birthday of the Prophet. They

commemorate their sheikhs, visit tombs, organize naming ceremonies for new-born babies, and participate in *walīma* (in Arabic: gatherings for things like death, marriage or birth).

Izala has questioned the relevance of Sufism and expressed doubt about its theological sources. For Izala, Islam is only based on the Qur'ān, the *sunna* of the Prophet, and the tradition of “al-*Salaf* al-ṣāliḥ” – the pious predecessors. The movement does not believe in sainthood, miracles, or any existing intermediary between God and human beings. Izala preaches *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) and sees the message of the Prophet as the last revealed one. The movement was mainly established to fight *bid'a* and to “purify” Islam from all aspects of *shirk* and *kufr* (Arabic: non-belief).

The elements described by Whitehouse can be identified in these different religious groups. The presence of religious charismatic leaders is assured. The doctrines are preserved through repetition, and rituals are memorised by adherents and followers.

The imagistic and doctrinal modes of religiosity are related to each other and a deeper analysis of this theory may give us an opportunity to better comprehend what is happening between Muslim groups in northern Nigeria. Historically a doctrinal struggle among Sufi brotherhoods took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To what extent this theory is applicable to Sufi groups as well to Izala will be shown in the coming chapters.

### 4.3 Religious Market Theory & Religious Movements

The history of Izala has been characterized by a perpetual struggle against Sufis and Sufism. Through this conflict the Izala emerges as a conservative organization looking for its own identity among many other Islamic groups in northern Nigeria. When it was established, the Izala “changed” its course and concentrated more on education and *da'wa*-activities than on attacking Sufism.

The following chapters summarize the achievement(s) of the Izala over the course of its more than thirty years of history. This period of time is characterized by success and failure at different levels: internally and externally. The limits of these accomplishments are shown by the Izala itself. A crucial question is whether we can speak of success or failure of a religious movement that has been divided into two major factions? Furthermore, whether or not, and how the movement achieved its goals? In order to understand the limits of the success or failure of Izala, the Religious Market Theory is applied since it offers a model of understanding of growth and decline applicable to any religious movement.

In the religious context, the Religious Market Theory/Religious Economy was developed by the sociologists of religion Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge in the mid-1980s. This approach to explain the phenomenon of religion with a terminology usually used in economics is discussed extensively and controversially. The so-called “religious economy” is a religious activity that can be found in any

society – according to Stark and Finke.<sup>92</sup> In a “religious market” there are “potential adherents, a set of one or more organizations seeking to attract or maintain adherents and the religious culture offered by the organization.”<sup>93</sup> Religious organizations are compared to “firms” competing for members. These firms are differently organised and have various regulations and logics. Lay people are seen as consumers following their demands and have the choice between several offers. Religious leaders are the “religious producers” who produce religious goods for the needs of their clientele. They make efforts to satisfy the needs of their followers, advertise their products and compete with others in order to protect their adherents and gain new-comers. The religious market needs to be pluralistic and all “religious firms” have the opportunity for marketing their ideas. This plurality depends on the number of “firms” existing in a particular religious market. This market generally consists of “niches“, which are “market segment of potential adherents sharing particular religious preferences (needs, tastes, and expectations).”<sup>94</sup>

Stark conducted his field research in the U.S.-American society and most of his studies are generally located within a Christian context - he published extensively on the notion of “God” and on “monotheism” - just to mention some. His theory could be applied universally to any religious movement. He defines religious movements

---

<sup>92</sup> Stark, R. and R. Finke (2000): *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>93</sup> Stark and Finke (2000), p. 203.

<sup>94</sup> Stark and Fink (2000), p. 284.

as: “social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain and supply religion to some set of individuals.”<sup>95</sup>

According to Stark, if a religious movement wants to achieve a certain level of success certain requirements must be fulfilled. He summarizes them in the following ten points.

1. New religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that they retain cultural continuity with the conventional faith(s) of the societies in which they seek converts.
2. New religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that their doctrines are non-empirical.
3. New religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that they maintain medium levels of tension with their surrounding environment – they are strict, but not too strict.
4. New religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that they have legitimate leaders with adequate authority to be effective:
  - i. Adequate authority requires clear doctrinal justifications for an effective and legitimate leadership;
  - ii. Authority is regarded as more legitimate and gains in effectiveness to the degree that members perceive themselves as participants in the system of authority.

---

<sup>95</sup> Stark, Rodney (1996): Why Religious movements succeed or fail: a revised general model, in: Journal of Contemporary Religion, Vol. 11 (2), p. 134.

5. Religious movements will grow to the extent that they can generate a highly motivated, volunteer, religious labour force, including many willing to proselytize.
6. Religious movements must maintain a level of fertility sufficient to at least offset member mortality.
7. New religious movements will prosper to the extent that they compete against weak, local conventional religious organisations within a relatively unregulated religious economy.
8. New religious movements will succeed to the extent that they sustain strong internal attachments, while remaining an open social network, able to maintain and form ties to outsiders.
9. Religious movements will continue to grow only to the extent that they maintain sufficient tension with their environment i.e. they have to remain sufficiently strict.
10. Religious movements must sufficiently socialize to young people so as to minimize both defection and the appeal of reduced strictness.<sup>96</sup>

Stark regards religious movements as things that appear and disappear depending on the conditions of any given society. They evolve either from an old religious tradition or can be initiated through a person who invents them. These movements share one feature: all of them bear the risk of failure:

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 136-144.

“This year, hundreds of new religious movements will appear on earth. Some will be formed by disgruntled members who withdrew from older religious bodies. Others will be born because someone created or discovered new religious culture and convinced others of its authenticity. However, whatever their origins, virtually every new group will have one thing in common: eventual failure.”<sup>97</sup>

The approach of Stark goes further and applies the so-called “rational choice theory” to religion. This theory is well-known in economics and to some extent in sociology and a few other disciplines. From an economic point of view, individuals try to maximize benefits on the one hand, and on the other to minimize their expenses. Economists observe that market mechanisms depend on daily decisions made by “consumers and producers (who) rationally calculate profit and loss”<sup>98</sup> In the context of religion the theory of rational choice combines market behavior with individual religious action.<sup>99</sup>

As mentioned above, religious institutions are considered “firms” offering different products and compete against each other for a monopoly within the market. Consumers (or adherents) have the choice to define their needs and calculate their benefits.

When it comes to Islam, the Religious Market Theory seems to draw the attention of scholars. The sociologist of religion, Massimo Introvigne, applied it to Islam in Turkey

---

<sup>97</sup> Stark (1996), p. 133.

<sup>98</sup> Spickard, James V. (1998): Rethinking religious social action: What is „rational“ about rational choice theory?, in: *Sociology of Religion*. Vol. 59 (2), pp. 99-115.

<sup>99</sup> Spickard (1998), p. 99.

and few other Muslim societies.<sup>100</sup> He focuses on the concept of “niches” – developed by Stark – and its relationship to “strictness”. Religion is often perceived to be stricter when its symbolic costs are higher and when its members are expected to believe and behave in more traditional and conservative ways than society at large.”<sup>101</sup> He developed a model where he classified Islamic groups into five categories:

- ultrastrict (Al-Qā’ida for e.g.);
- strict (like Brotherhoods, Wahhabism);
- moderate-conservative (Naqshabandiyya Sufi brotherhood);
- liberal (Ba’ath Party);
- ultraliberal (Islam-Marxism).

Following this categorization he designed a “Model of the Turkish Religious Market” and proved that Stark’s theory can be validated empirically in an Islamic context.

Introvigne’s insight generates the question of the applicability of the Religious Market Theory vis-a-vis the Izala movement in northern Nigeria. Does it help to understand the enormous growth of Izala during its first two decades of existence? Does it also explain a potential failure of the movement?

If we apply the “Religious Market Theory” in the north Nigerian context we can state that the “religious market” in which the Izala operates is “pluralistic”. In addition to Muslims, Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religions are part of the

---

<sup>100</sup> Introvigne, Massimo (2005): Niches in the Islamic Religious Market and Fundamentalism: Examples from Turkey and Other Countries", *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*: Vol. 1(1), Article 3, pp. 1-23.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

general religious landscape of Nigeria, and there are sub-categories in each of these communities. Among Muslims, the two Sufi-brotherhoods (Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya) had a quasi-monopoly because of their well-established tradition in northern Nigeria. Loimeier<sup>102</sup> elaborates on the struggle between them during the 1950s and 1960s. Sufi Brotherhoods made big efforts to win new affiliated members in their *ṭuruq* (Arabic: brotherhoods). The theological and to some extent political debates came to an end with the appearance of the Izala movement at end of the 1970s.

---

<sup>102</sup> See Loimeier, Roman (1997): "Islamic reform and political ...", especially chapter two "The development of Sufi Brotherhoods in Nigeria", pp. 19-104.

## Chapter Two: Religious Landscape in Nigeria

This chapter serves as a historical background to the current development in the country. It gives an overview on the spread of both Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. The focus here is the religion of Islam. In this context, these chapters highlight the establishment of the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya Sufi brotherhoods, give insights into the British colonial policy of “indirect rule”, and finally document the rise of anti-Sufism during the post-colonial period.

### *1 Christianity in Nigeria*

Unlike Islam, Christianity found its way to Africa’s most populous country through missionaries. The first “sporadic” activities of Christian missionaries in the southern part of Nigeria took place in 1515. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, a few Christian missionaries like Gregorio Lourenço and Afonso Anes were in Nigeria but without much success.<sup>103</sup> The following attempts to Christianize Nigeria suffered from the same set-back. The historian Toyin Falola explains this fact in three basic elements: slavery and trade of slaves at that time, lack of missionaries who were able to undertake proselytization, and lack of finances. The activities of missionaries were intensified by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the south of the country. Christian organizations (esp. Protestant and Catholic ones) from Europe and North America were interested in a “great missionary expansion”. Some introduced Christianity as

---

<sup>103</sup> Isichei, Elisabeth (1983): A History of Nigeria. New York: Longman Group Limited, p. 318.

an alternative to slave trading and found a way to enter the West African country.<sup>104</sup>

To some extent, this mission can be interpreted as an answer to the presence of Islam that has a long tradition in the country.

The Christian missionaries opted to spread Christianity amongst Africans themselves. This strategy is known as “native agency”. It reduces costs, protects non-Africans from diseases, and especially mobilizes Africans to propagate Christianity in their local regions.<sup>105</sup>

After Slavery was abolished many former slaves from Sierra Leone, Cuba, and Brazil returned to Nigeria after 1830. They were considered by Europeans to be potential missionaries who could expand Christianity. Furthermore they were essential elements needed in the education and health sectors.

In 1840 a British expedition, *The Niger Mission*, came to the Niger River area. This organization had a religious background, but tried through trade activities to come in contact with local leaders. This can be considered one of the most successful activities of the *Church Missionary Society* (C.M.S.) and led to the conversion of many people in Nigeria.<sup>106</sup>

The C.M.S. was successful especially among the Yoruba in the south (Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan und Ilesa), and in the Delta Region. In that area Methodist and

---

<sup>104</sup> Falola, Toyin (1999): *The History of Nigeria*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, p. 40.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>106</sup> Falola points out the success of this mission through the activities of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a former slave known as the „hero of the Niger Mission“. This man is the first African Bishop of the C.M.S., see Ibid., p. 41.

Catholic Churches were established. Catholicism spread among the *Yoruba* and the *Ibo*.

The success of Christian missionaries in Southern Nigeria can be explained by the fact that *Yoruba*-leaders expected that “the missionaries would help them win their wars and procure arms and missionaries.”<sup>107</sup>

Concerning the Delta Region there were more economic interests behind the success of the missions. Local traders were interested in contacts with Europeans. This explains why leaders in those areas allowed the establishment of Christian schools in their territories.

The spread of Christianity in southern Nigeria is due to the fact that people associated reforms with Christianity. For the local leaders of that time Christian missions offered solutions to their problems. Missionaries were involved in local politics and played the role of intermediaries, for instance, missionaries were responsible for putting an end to the *Yoruba* confrontations. This kind of role brought missionaries more respect and confidence from local rulers, but also amongst common people. In addition, missionary schools played a crucial role in converting people: “in many places, the church and the school went together”<sup>108</sup> – as Falola points it.

When Christianity in Nigeria gained a foothold, African religions were increasingly characterized as symbols of “paganism”. Traditional deities, priests and

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 42-43.

temples were rejected. Traditional values were not respected and were largely replaced by new Christian norms and values.<sup>109</sup>

Christianity in Nigeria came through the southern region before it spread to other parts of the country. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and through the activities of the *Sudan Interior Mission* (SIM) and *Sudan United Mission* (SUM) several Christian missions were initiated in the Middle belt region and spread from there to the north. This enterprise was interrupted by the coming of the British who restricted missionary activities in the north. The “Nigerian Christianity” – as Klaus Hock connotes it – became more fastened (“befestigt”) through the independence. From that time Christian missions became more intensified in the north. Klaus Hock calls it the “strategic counter-invasion” (“strategische Gegeneroberung”) of Islam. In addition to the SIM, the SUM intensified their missions, as well as the Catholic Church, the Methodist, the Church of Brethren Mission (CBM), the Qua Ibo Mission, and the United Missionary Mission (UMS) undertook the same project.<sup>110</sup> Klaus Hock observes that the Christian Churches in northern Nigeria had no split like what happened in the south of the country with the establishment of African Independent Churches.<sup>111</sup>

Christian missions played a central role in spreading Christianity. Through the structure of the missions and especially their concentration on education led to their

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.44; also Isichei (1983) confirms that both the Catholic and Protestant Mission condemned aspects of traditional religions, p. 326.

<sup>110</sup> Hock (1996), p. 46.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 48; the absence of such a split does not mean that African Independent Churches are not to be found in northern Nigeria. Churches like *Celestial Church of Christ* and *Aladura* are well established in especially in big towns of the north, see Ibid., p. 49.

success among the African population of Nigeria. Christian missions started in the south of the country and succeeded in recruiting African missionaries familiar with their local communities. At a later stage, European missionaries themselves intensified their activities in all directions. Concerning northern Nigeria missionary activity was restrained by the policy of “Indirect Rule” of the British before entering in the post-colonial period, and a new and more successful era.

## ***2 History of Islam in Nigeria<sup>112</sup>***

The territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and its political borders is a product of the colonial era. Nigeria as a state did not exist before the coming of the British. The first contact between the population of what is today known as Nigeria and Islam happened during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries through trading caravans <sup>113</sup> coming from North Africa. The German scholar of religion and theologian, Klaus Hock describes this period as “superficial Islamization” (“oberflächliche Islamisierung”). This first contact took place especially in the north-western part of the territory. Concerning the north-eastern area located near Lake Chad known as Kanem-Bornu, Islam came during the 11<sup>th</sup> century with traders from Egypt and Fezzan (Libya). Islam especially attracted people elite members of the society and remained for a long time

---

<sup>112</sup> This chapter is based on my unpublished M.A.-Dissertation (2005) “Die Entwicklung der Šarī'a-Frage in Nigeria...”.

<sup>113</sup> The majority of these traders were Ibadites belonging to Charijite-Islam. This group of people were pushed back as well in West Africa as in North Africa. Instead of this version of Islam, Sunni Islam became dominant; for more details see Hock, Klaus (1996): Der Islam Komplex. Hamburg: Lit Verlag, p. 14.

as such. After a period of weakness during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Islam became a “religion of the masses” in that area.<sup>114</sup>

In the Hausa states, the Algerian Islamic scholar and reformer ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī played a crucial role in the process of Islamizing the region. Islam was spread by this scholar at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was adopted by Hausa kings from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Al-Maghīlī’s influenced the masses as well the Hausa kings who adopted his ideas and suggestions for reform.<sup>115</sup>

The history of Islam in Nigeria remains incomplete if the Sokoto Caliphate of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the *jihād* movement of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio are not mentioned. The Sokoto Caliphate was one of the important kingdoms in West Africa. It spread beyond the current borders of Nigeria. Sheikh Dan Fodio was from the

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 15; Klaus Hock mentions the establishment of the Kingdom of Kanem-Bornu in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the Lake Chad area as a “stabilizing factor” of the region at that time. This stability explains the spread of Islam to the masses. Hock compares the Islamization of Kanem-Bornu with a model of Islamization in West Africa suggested by Forstner, M. (1987): *Der Islam in der westafrikanischen Sahel-Zone. Erscheinungsbild- Geschichte-Wirkung.* In: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 71. This Islamization model consists of a period of “Islam as religion of minority”(9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries), “Islam as religion of the elites” (12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries), “Islam on the way of being the religion of the majority” (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries), and finally the period of “Ĝihād-movement” (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries). According to Klaus Hock, this model is applicable to Kanem-Bornu but only to its third level “Islam on the way...”.

<sup>115</sup> For detailed information on the life and influence of al-Maghīlī in Nigeria see Batran, Abd al-Aziz Abd-Allah (1973): *A contribution of the biography of Sheikh Muhammad (‘Umar-Amar) al-Maghīlī al-Tilimsāni*, in: *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14. p. 381-394; Hunwick, John O. (1974): *Al- Maghili’s replies to the questions of Askia Al-Hajj Muġammad* ed. and transl. with an introduction on the history of Islam in the Niger Bend to 1500, Brit. Thesis Service, Betchworth. - London, Univ., Diss.; for the expansion of Islam in Hausa land see Meunier, Olivier (1997): *Les Routes de L’Islam. Anthropologie politique de l’islamisation de l’Afrique de l’Ouest en général et du pays hawsa en particulier du 8<sup>ème</sup> au 19<sup>ème</sup> Siècle.* Paris: Editions L’Hartmann; according to Klaus Hock the Islamization of Hausa land took place later than Kanem Bornu. Islam came to Kano through traders from Mali during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries; see Hock (1996), p. 16.

ethnic group known as the *Fulani*. He was born in Gobir in 1754. He received a traditional Islamic education and at the age of 20 he was already a student, teacher, and preacher.<sup>116</sup> Sheikh Dan Fodio moved from place to place throughout Hausaland and attracted many followers along the way. He criticised prevalent practices in that area and considered them to be un-Islamic innovations (*bida*). This attitude was also supported by his adherents. The well-known *jihād* of Usman Dan Fodio started 1804 and was interpreted differently. Some scholars interpret it as “holy war” as well as Islamization of north Nigeria and neighbouring areas. The historian Jamil Abun-Nasr considers it as a “militant answer” vis-à-vis the leadership of that time. According to Abun-Nasr, the *jihād* started when the King of Gobir’s soldiers attacked the community of ‘Abd al-Salām, a former student of Dan Fodio, and captured some of his people.<sup>117</sup>

The struggle against ‘Abd al-Salām’s community and the liberation of prisoners from among his community were interpreted by the Hausa king as an offensive against his authority. As a result he ordered Dan Fodio to leave that area. The answer was an “Islamic revolution” - as Abun-Nasr describes it. Dan Fodio called his allied people from among the *Hausa*, *Tuareg* and *Fulani* and mobilized them for war. This is how the *jihād* started and spread in different directions. As a result, the Sokoto Caliphate was established and became the dominant authority in that region

---

<sup>116</sup> For the life of Sheikh Dan Fodio see: El-Masri, F.H. (1963): The life of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio before the *jihād*, In: Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria 2 (4), pp. 435-448.

<sup>117</sup> Abun-Nasr, Jamil (1993): Muslime im Nationalstaat Nigeria, in: Abun-Nasr, Jamil (Hg.): Muslime in Nigeria: Religion und Gesellschaft im politischen Wandel seit den 50er Jahren. Münster, Hamburg: Lit-Verlag, p. 3.

especially at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>118</sup> After the death of Usman Dan Fodio in 1817, Muhammed Bello, his son, took over as Caliph until 1837.<sup>119</sup>

The Sokoto Caliphate developed into one of the strongest empires in West Africa. The *jihād* resulted in victory over the Hausa-states, but also to the Islamization of new areas. Klaus Hock mentions that the borders of the Caliphate in the year 1840 extended from north Cameroon in the east, Illo in the west, far as Adrar in the north and Yorubaland in the south.<sup>120</sup>

As a summary of the spread of Islam in Nigeria one can say that the first contact happened through trade caravans from North Africa. After that Islam began in the region as the “religion of rulers” before became the “religion of the masses”. Al-Maghīlī’s influence during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as basic elements in the spread of Islam in northern Nigeria as well as in West Africa generally.

The Sokoto Caliphate started as a reform movement led by Sheikh Dan Fodio and lasted for about one hundred years and affected not only northern Nigeria, but the whole region. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Caliphate entered a period of weakness, eventually lead to its decline. The coming of the British put an end to the hegemony of the Sokoto Caliphate. In the year 1900 northern Nigeria was declared a British protectorate. The policy of “Indirect Rule” and a project of reforming Islamic

---

<sup>118</sup> For a detailed description of establishing, spread, and structure of the Sokoto-Caliphate see the valuable publication of Last, Murray (1967): *The Sokoto Caliphate*. London: Longman Group Limited.

<sup>119</sup> Abun-Nasr (1993), p. 3-4.

<sup>120</sup> Hock (1996), p. 18.

law were both part of the British strategy to control the north until 1960, when Nigeria gained its independence.

## 2.1 Sufi Brotherhoods

The landscape of Muslim groups and orientations in Nigeria is complex. In this chapter only a few of them are introduced. The Qādiriyya is one of the oldest Islamic Sufi brotherhoods in West Africa and it played (as did the Tijāniyya) a crucial role in spreading Islam in that area. It is known that Sheikh Dan Fodio was a follower of the Qādiriyya. The Tijāniyya came later to Nigeria and established itself as anti-pole to the well-established Qādiriyya. Especially in the pre-independence period affiliation to one of these orders had political implication – as shown by Loimeier.

### 2.1.1 The Qādiriyya

Studying the Qādiriyya (or any other Sufi order), its founder or sheikhs, writings, doctrines, or its development in a particular context deserves more than one book. The brotherhood is still powerful in matter of followers and influence on the northern Nigerian religious landscape and even in the politics of the country.

According to Abun-Nasr<sup>121</sup> the origins of the Qādiriyya date back to the thirteenth century. This *ṭarīqa* is named after Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077-1166). The Sheikh established himself in Bagdad as a preacher and a scholar of Sufism. He was influenced by Hanbalī teachers and by the Hanbalī School of law, but at the same time by Sufi Sheikhs. The *madrassa* (in Arabic: school), in which ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī acted as Sheikh continued to exist as an Islamic centre for teaching

---

<sup>121</sup> Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. (2007): Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life, London: Hurst & Company.

even after his death. He is even buried there. Abun-Nasr speaks of three basic writings of the Sheikh: the first one entitled “Futūḥ al-Ghayb” (in Arabic: The Revelation of the Unseen) where his views on Islam and Sufism are reflected; the second book “al-Fatḥ al-Rabbāni” (in Arabic: The Sublime Revelation) is a collection of some of his preaching from the year 1151 where he called his followers to “trust God” and obey his “commands”; and the third one “Al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibi Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq” (in Arabic: Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth) which largely deals with jurisprudence, explanation of the names of God, and mysticism. Abun-Nasr summarizes the important points in ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’s writings in the following topics: fighting against the self, the idea of *wilāya* (in Arabic: sainthood) and its difference from prophet-hood, and the Sufi Sheikh as a guide for his followers.<sup>122</sup>

The *silsila* (in Arabic: chain) of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī can be traced back from both maternal and paternal sites through Hassan and Hussein, then the Prophet’s daughter Fatima, and finally to the Prophet himself. This affiliation gives Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī the position of being a *quṭb* (in Arabic: pole, axis). Believing in the Sheikh as *ghawth* (in Arabic: savior) and reciting his poem (*al-Ghawthiyya*) eleven times daily is considered to be beneficial for any Qādiriyya adherent. Those who trust the Qādiriyya founder do not have to fear “divine punishment”. The “spiritual” connection of the Sheikh is added to his *karāmāt* (in Arabic: miraculous acts), which confirm his position as *quṭb al-awliya* (in Arabic: pole

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-91.

of all saints). Legends attributed to Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī such as fasting when he was a small child are narrated by Qādiriyya hagiographers.

The Qādiriyya doctrine spread throughout many countries in the Arab world and beyond during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the same period it reached both East and West Africa. The Sufi order built a network of branches in many places associated with different Sheikhs. The Sufi order does not have any “centralized spiritual leadership” or fixed guidelines – as Abun-Nasr describes it. *Dhikr* (in Arabic: remembrance) is part of its practices but is not fixed according to specific rules. In addition to that there are prayers for praising God attributed to Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. Their selection and frequency are left to the Qādiriyya-Sheikh.<sup>123</sup>

In the case of Nigeria, the Qādiriyya came to Borno, in the north east of the country, through the Sahara trade during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>124</sup> The order contributed to the expansion of Islam in that area, as was the case in West Africa as a whole. Sheikh Dan Fodio was affiliated with the Qādiriyya or “was not devoid of mystical experience” - as Qadri emphasizes.<sup>125</sup> The Qādiriyya affiliation may have helped the Jihadist around Sheikh Dan Fodio in their war. Dan Fodio himself introduced many followers to the *ṭarīqa*. Thematically Sheikh Dan Fodio wrote on Sufism and Sufi topics. After his death, many miracles were attributed to Sheikh Dan Fodio himself. Also Abdullahi, Dan Fodio’s brother, as well Muhammad Bello, his

---

<sup>123</sup> Abun-Nasr (2007), pp. 92-96; the author provides a good summary of the Qādiriyya doctrine and practices. The son of the Qādiriyya founder, Abdurrazaq, seems to play an important role in compiling his father’s ideas and writings. The legends of the Sheikh are described by other Qādiriyya writers.

<sup>124</sup> Qadri (1981): *The Tijānīyah in Nigeria: A case Study*, University of Ibadan. p. 52.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

son, were members of the Qādiriyya. “The leaders of the Sokoto *jihād* were not only Sufis but Shuyukh (pl. of sheikh) of Qādiriyya who encouraged their followers to lead a pious life and endeavour to seek communion with God.”<sup>126</sup>

### 2.1.2 The Tijāniyya<sup>127</sup>

The Tijāniyya Sufi brotherhood is named after Sheikh Aḥmad al-Tijānī (1737-1815), a Sufi from Ain Madhi, in Algeria. The founder of the order traced his *silsila* of ancestors through Hassan, who was the son of the Prophet’s cousin Ali, to the Prophet. Sheikh Aḥmad al-Tijānī studied among others in Fez, Morocco, and was affiliated with different Sufi orders. He was even affiliated with the Qādiriyya. He lived for a while in Tunis, moved to Cairo and then to Mecca. He spent the last stage of his life from 1785 until his death in Fez. In 1800 he initiated the building of his *zāwiya* (in Arabic: Sufi lodge) in Hawmat al-Blida.<sup>128</sup> Apart from North Africa, the presence of the Tijānī *ṭarīqa* in West Africa nowadays, and particularly in Senegal and in northern Nigeria, cannot be ignored.

Sheikh Tijānī did not leave a book or manuscript in which his doctrine or world views are documented. This gap was filled by his companions ‘Alī Ḥarāzīm who wrote

---

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p. 63; for more details on the Qādiriyya in Nigeria see *ibid.* pp. 53-63.

<sup>127</sup> There are a lot of publications on the Tijāniyya Sufi order like: Triaud, Jean-Louis and David Robinson (ed.) 2000: *La Tijāniyya. Une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l’Afrique*. Paris: Karthala; Tal, Madina L. (1991): *Un Islam militant en Afrique de l’Ouest au XIXe siècle: La Tijāniyya de Saïku Umar Futiyu contre les pouvoirs traditionnels et la puissance coloniale*; For the Tijāniyya Niassiyya branch as well for the life of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse see the work of Seesemann, Rüdiger (2004): *Nach der “Flut” Ibrāhīm Niasse (1900 - 1975), Sufik und Gesellschaft in Westafrika*; University of Bayreuth, Habilitation; as a general overview I rely on the standard publication of Abun-Nasr, J. M (1965): *The Tijāniyya a Sufi order in the modern world*, London: Oxford Univ. Press; for the Nigerian case on the PhD work of Quadri, Yasir A. (1981)

<sup>128</sup> Abun-Nasr (1965), pp. 15-22.

*Jawāhir al-Ma‘ānī* [...] (in Arabic: Gems of Indications and Attainment of Aspirations in the Overflowings of Sīdī Abil ‘Abbās Tijānī), Ibn al-Mushrī who authored *Kitāb al-Jāmi‘ li-l’Ulūm* [...] (in Arabic: The Absolute in What Has Separated from the Sciences) and finally Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib al-Sufyānī who wrote *Kitāb al-ifāda al-Aḥmadiyya* (in Arabic: Profit to the Seeker of Eternal Felicity).<sup>129</sup>

The Tijāniyya founder considered himself the “pole of the poles” and the “seal of the Muhammadan saints”. He was influenced by Ibn al-‘Arabī, a very important Andalusian Sufi scholar and Philosopher of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. He enjoyed a luxurious life and this explains the Tijānī stance on wealth and asceticism. The Sheikh claims direct communication with the Prophet and to have received the teachings of the order from him. This connection confirms the authenticity of the order and the origin of the teaching of the Tijāniyya. Followers of this brotherhood are not allowed to join other Sufi orders or visit tombs of other non-Tijānī saints.<sup>130</sup> Being affiliated with the Tijāniyya also means the recitation of the *wird* (in Arabic: litanies of the order), practising the so-called *wazīfa* (in Arabic: office) at a particular time, and participating in the *ḥaḍra*.<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, pp.28-49.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51; a Tijānī-*wird* is practiced twice every day and it consists of repeating “astaghfiru Allah” (asking Allah for forgiveness) one hundred times, pronouncing the so called *Ṣalāt al Fātiḥ* one hundred times, and reciting the *hailala* (there is no God, but Allah); The so called *Ṣalāt al Fātiḥ* is controversial and its recitation is equivalent to 6000 times of a Qur’ān-recitation. When it comes to *wazīfa* which is practiced at least one time daily in congregation, it consists of repeating the formula “astaghfiru Allah al-‘Azīm la Ilaha illa huwa al hay al Qayyūm” thirty times, performing *Ṣalāt al Fātiḥ* fifty times, repeating the *hailala* one hundred times, and finally the so-called *Jawharat al kamāl* (a Tijānī formula) twelve times.

The Tijāniyya was initiated in West Africa through Mauritania by Sheikh Muḥammed al-Ḥāfiz (1759-1830). From there it spread to Senegal through al-Hajj Umar Tall (1794-1864). He was not only the Caliph of Aḥmad al-Tijānī, but also an Islamic scholar and political leader. He visited Nigeria in 1826 on his way to Mecca and married a daughter of Muhammad Bello, the son of Sheikh Dan Fodio. From 1831 al-Hajj Umar Tall stayed in Sokoto for six years. During that time the Tijāniyya expanded throughout what is now Nigeria and beyond. The Tijāniyya became an influential Sufi order in West Africa especially after the *jihād*-movement of al-Hajj Umar against the French colonial expansion in the mid-1850s.<sup>132</sup>

In Nigeria, the advent of the Tijāniyya is throughout to be related to al-Hajj Umar's visit to the country, although some views confirmed the presence of this Sufi order in Kano and Borno as early as the time of Aḥmad al-Tijānī, the founder. Umar Tall contributed to the spread of the brotherhood as he initiated many people to it.<sup>133</sup> During his stay in Sokoto, he seems to have initiated Muhammad Bello to the Tijāniyya. This claim is still controversial.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, the initiation of many people to the Tijāniyya in different parts of the north (especially in Zaria, Kano, Borno, and Sokoto) contributed to its spread. This resulted in a struggle for hegemony

---

<sup>132</sup> Quadri (1981), pp. 39-51.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-66.

<sup>134</sup> The debate whether Muhammad Bello was a Tijānī or not was debated by many scholars in and outside Nigeria. One cannot deny the influence of Sheikh Umar Tall on Dan Fodio's son. Muhammad Bello was also inspired by the Tijāniyya in some of his writings; see Qadri (1981), pp. 66-72.

between it and the well-established Qādiriyya particularly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and even during the colonial era.<sup>135</sup>

## 2.2 The Indirect Rule<sup>136</sup>

The colonial occupation of Nigeria started in the south during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lagos and its hinterland became a British protectorate in 1867. The expansion to the north occurred during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after a period of weakness of the Sokoto Caliphate at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Klaus Hock, Muslims reacted to the British in three different ways: some Muslims reacted with a kind of *hijra* (emigration) according to the example of the Prophet who migrated from Mecca to Medina; some *‘ulamā’* in Sokoto seemingly accepted the presence of the British but in fact practiced an “inner-emigration”; and the third group of Muslims preferred military confrontation.<sup>137</sup>

The British administration was aware of the fact that invading such a vast territory like modern-day Nigeria would be very difficult. The obstacles seemed insurmountable, especially in light of the absence of an appropriate number of British officers, adequate finances, and necessary military capacities.<sup>138</sup> Thus, they divided

---

<sup>135</sup> See more details on the Tijāniyya-Qādiriyya struggle as well on the attitude of the British to the Tijāniyya, in Qadri (1981), pp. 81-106.

<sup>136</sup> This policy of Indirect Rule practiced in British colonies was developed by Lord Lugard, former Governor in Nigeria and high-ranking colonial officer in other British colonies. The theoretical dimensions as well the applicability of this approach are explained in detail in Lord Lugard, Frederick D. (1965): *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London.

<sup>137</sup> Hock (1996), p. 22.

<sup>138</sup> Isichei (1983) mentions that the British administration lacked officers, soldiers and especially monetary resources to be able to control the Nigerian territory. Their strategies consisted then of using African soldiers to fulfill this task; see p. 380.

the country into northern and southern regions. They designed their approach of “indirect rule”. This policy was especially formulated for the northern region. The British learned from the history of Islam in northern Nigeria that intervention in Islamic affairs is risky. Because of that they guaranteed Muslims that they could keep their old structures of authority. The first British Governor in Nigeria, Lord Frederick Lugard, promised Muslim rulers that they could keep their system of education and their Islamic courts. Furthermore, he prohibited Christian missionary activities in the north without prior agreement of northern rulers.<sup>139</sup>

The British implemented “indirect rule” in Nigeria as their way of colonial domination. For Michael Crowder the way Britain ruled in Nigeria became exemplary for other British colonies.<sup>140</sup> The policy stipulates that British officers serve as advisors for native rulers and allowed them to interfere in local decisions. Local governments based on “single executive authority” or a “council of elders” were supported by the British to continue acting as such. Lord Lugard acted until 1906 as first High Commissioner of the Protectorate of northern Nigeria, between 1912 and 1914 as the Governor of the two Nigerian protectorates and finally from 1914 to 1919 as the Governor of the amalgamated Colony of Nigeria, which relied in northern Nigeria on the emirs’ authority to govern this vast region. As part of his plan he

---

<sup>139</sup> Hock (1996), p. 23.

<sup>140</sup> Crowder, Michael (1964): Indirect Rule: French and British Style, in: Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 34 (3), pp.197-205.

suggested changing the system of taxation as well as modernizing the administration in general.<sup>141</sup>

These reforms changed the status of the emirs within the political power structure. They were originally allies of the Sultan of Sokoto. After the establishment of indirect rule they came under the supervision of the British administration and had to collect taxes in its name. They retained up to seventy percent of money collected from taxes to finance their own native administration.<sup>142</sup> “Indirect rule” was applied in the north and succeeded because of the pre-existing political structure of authority. In other parts of Nigeria, like the east, it was hardly applicable. British political officers stayed for a long time in their position and worked as advisors to the local chieftaincy. They also adapted to the needs of their administration; for example, those who learned languages were often promoted.<sup>143</sup>

This “indirect rule” policy was a necessity for the British administration because only a few officers (thirty one to be exact) were sent from London to the protectorate in Nigeria.<sup>144</sup> The British took advantage of the ethnic factor in the north

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 198; Crowder mentions that Sir Donald Cameron, who served in Tanzania as governor was inspired by Lugard’s policy in Nigeria. When he came to Nigeria (Sir Cameron), where he took the same position between 1931 and 1935 he was surprised by the level of independence of the northern Emirates that developed a kind of “Indian-style native states”.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Crowder (1964) distinguishes here between the French and the British in dealing with their former colonies. The French choose a policy of “assimilation” and the British that of “indirect rule”, pp. 203-205.

<sup>144</sup> Ikime, Obaro (1970): The establishment of Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, in: *Tarikh* (Indirect Rule in British Africa), Historical Society of Nigeria, pp. 8; the author speaks of forty-two officers approved by the British government in London, but only thirty-one were appointed in Nigeria. In fact,

and at the same time recognized the attachment of the population to the emirs. From a historical perspective, Obaro Ikime speaks of two reasons which led to the establishment of “indirect rule”: on the one hand Lord Lugard legitimated the British occupation over the Fulani and Hausa emirs as similar to the Fulani occupation over the Hausa during the *jihād* of Dan Fodio. On the other hand those emirs who died or fled their territories were replaced by new ones appointed by the British. Their appointment took into consideration their acceptance within the local communities as well as their intention to cooperate with British officers who represented the British High Commissioner and the Governor, respectively. As exchange for their loyalty which manifested itself in collecting taxes, building roads and establishing “good governance”, the British promised not to intervene in religious affairs.<sup>145</sup>

In 1914 the amalgamation of Nigeria was declared and indirect rule was extended to the south of the country. This situation was not an easy task. The southern parts of the colony lacked clear structures of “traditional rulers” which was not the case in the north.<sup>146</sup> The reason for the centralization of the protectorates was economic in nature. It happened under the governorship of Lugard. The well-established direct taxation system that worked well in the north failed in the southern part of the country. Falola and Heaton explain the British economic interest in three main points: first of all expanding Nigerian commerce, second introducing an

---

many of them were not able to work because of diseases. Because of that the cooperation with the Northern emirs was more than a necessity.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>146</sup> See more details in Falola, T. & M. M. Heaton (2008): History of Nigeria, Cambridge: University Press, pp. 112-116.

economy based on UK currency, and third, to force Nigerians to work in this direction.<sup>147</sup> Both authors conclude the efficiency of indirect rule in the following:

“In the period before the 1930 the British colonial regime developed and implemented its program for imperial dominance in Nigeria. Indirect rule became the cheapest, easiest, and most ideologically attractive way to justify the colonial presence. Indirect rule theoretically preserved indigenous political institutions, but the nature of these institutions was significantly altered by the colonial presence.”<sup>148</sup>

The transformation of the Nigerian economy and society soon became visible. Indirect rule contributed to that change. Britain benefited from Nigeria and exploited its mineral and human resources. Additionally, the colony became a market for British industrial products. Nigeria on the other hand benefited from imported European goods, and the construction of railways and roads. Prior to the 1930s a Nigerian national identity was not yet constructed: “Prior to the 1930s Nigerians by large did not see themselves as ‘Nigerians’ at all”.<sup>149</sup> This explains the rise of national movements after that period of time. Better educational facilities in Nigeria and in Europe educated Nigerian intellectuals contributed to the formation of a sort of national consciousness which was deeply rooted in the region.<sup>150</sup> The formation of associations and the intensification of political activism were basic elements for

---

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 119; see also pp. 116-118 for the amalgamation of Nigeria.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p 134.

<sup>149</sup> Falola & Heaton (2008), p. 137.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-139; the authors mentions the increase of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria between 1912 and 1937. In addition to that the number of students and western educated Nigerians increased as well.

politically oriented organizations. These institutions were the result of personal initiatives of Nigerian activists. That is why Nigerians used to be very regionally and ethnically oriented. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was founded in 1944 in the south east of the country. In 1943, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was established in the North. The Action Group (AG) was set up in the south west region.<sup>151</sup>

We return our focus to Islam and British policy during the colonial period – the title of Jonathan Reynold's publication on "indirect rule" in Nigeria summarizes the British policy on Islam in Nigeria up to the 1930s, in which the categorization of "good and bad Muslims" is made.<sup>152</sup> The author points out that the British kept the structure of governance established by Dan Fodio in the Sokoto Caliphate intact. Centralization of power and affiliation to the Qādiriyya were basic elements of the system.

The British explicitly declared respect for the Islamic faith and allowed Muslims continue practicing their religion without disturbance. The experiences in India and Egypt compelled the British administration to change its strategy and to avoid confrontation with Islam. The colonial administration made efforts to keep its "image" towards Islam and Muslims as neutral – as Reynolds confirms it.<sup>153</sup> This policy was perceived even by the different Muslim groups in the north as tolerant, and they

---

<sup>151</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 140-154 for more details on political activism and initiation of ethnic- and regional-based organizations/parties.

<sup>152</sup> Reynolds, Jonathan (2001): God and bad Muslims. Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, In: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 3/4 ( 3), 601-618.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 601.

readily accepted imposed categorizations of “good” and “bad” Muslims according to their affiliation, resistance to the British, and readiness to cooperate.<sup>154</sup>

The Qādiriyya Sufi brotherhood, the largest Sufi order in the north, was positively perceived by the colonial authority. The British characterized it as a “peaceful sect”, “state friendly”, a “non-fanatical branch of Islam”, and “the tarika of the region”.<sup>155</sup> Its previously established structures were maintained and integrated in the *indirect rule* guidelines. No doubt that this understanding was good for both the Qādiriyya and the British; the Qādiriyya kept its hegemony over the northern region and the British relied on a strong partner.

A good example of the success of this partnership was the appearance of a Mahdist movement in the northwest in 1906. This movement revolted against British presence and rallied people to revolt against Christians and not to cooperate with them. Collaboration between the Sokoto army and the British forces succeeded in putting an end to this upheaval. This served in enhancing the Qādiriyya image. Furthermore, the order was for the British more or less isolated from external influences since they did not want the whole northern region to be exposed to “Islamic thought” from outside.<sup>156</sup>

The Qādiriyya were classified among “good Muslims”. Other Sufi groups like the Tijāniyya, the Sanūsiyya, and Mahdist oriented Muslims were considered by the British to be among the “bad” ones. Reynolds indicates that the British neither made

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 602-3.

<sup>155</sup> Reynolds (2001), p. 605.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., pp. 606-8.

clear differentiations between Muslim groups nor between their doctrinal differences. Realistically, British colonialists tended to avoid any possible resistance, especially from those groups with ties to other parts of Africa where there was resistance to French colonialism i.e. that resistance from Mahdis or Tijānī's in a different context could take place in northern Nigeria. When Nigerian Muslims passed by several other Muslim communities on pilgrimage routes to Mecca and came in contact with other Muslim communities, they were at risk of exposure to ideas of resistance.<sup>157</sup> The Tijāniyya was largely suspected by the British because of its relation to other centres in Africa like Senegal, Algeria, and Morocco. Its exclusiveness means that Tijānī's cannot join another order and cannot pray behind another *ṭarīqa*-imam. This was a source of suspicion for the British.<sup>158</sup> Reynolds revisits the strategy behind the British indirect rule and its relationship to the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya as well to other groups as follows:

“(...) British rulers of northern Nigeria were instead evaluating orders such as the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya according to a complex set of assumptions about Islam. Chief among these was the association of Islamic education and piety with "fanaticism," but other important issues included the structural relationship of each group to the system of Indirect Rule and their spiritual linkages beyond the region of northern Nigeria.”<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., pp. 609-111.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 613; also p. 616.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 618.

In addition to this policy of understanding the religious landscape of northern Nigeria the British planned on reforming Islamic law and reducing its validity. All judgements which were not compliant with the British law tradition were to be revised and corrected.

### 2.3 English Law or Islamic Law

The juridical aspects of “indirect rule” were implemented in three different proclamations: the first one was the Native Courts Proclamation of 1900 and consisted of the institutionalizing of native courts at four different levels (A, B, C, and D). The first level A, headed by the Grand Qadi and the emirs, was able to impose the death penalty (with approval by the High Commissioner). At a later stage judgements defined by the British as “inhuman” were revealed and abolished. The second proclamation known as the Native Revenue Proclamation of 1906 consisted of implementing a direct taxation, assisting the emirs in fixing the level of taxes and at the same time to give them the opportunity to keep a considerable part of the revenue to manage their territories. The last proclamation of 1907, called, the Native Authority Proclamation, legally recognized local chiefs even outside of the emirs’ jurisdiction. It fixed the duties of district heads, as well as their salaries within the emirates or native authorities.<sup>160</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup> Ikime (1970), pp. 8-12; see also Reynolds, Jonathan T. (1999): *The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa). Islam and the politics of legitimacy in Northern Nigeria 1950-1966*, San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, pp. 60-61.

Islamic Law was categorized under “native customary law”. The existing *Alkalai* (Hausa: judges) as well as the *Sharia Courts* kept their jurisdiction. In addition, English law was implemented. The so-called “residents” controlled the application of Islamic Law. Through this measure, *Sharia Courts* were placed under a British tradition of law. The Emirs protested against such measures insisting that Islamic Law should not be revised by the British. The establishment of the *Supreme Court* signalled the end of all speculations and hopes of Muslims. British Law became superior to Islamic law.<sup>161</sup>

The juridical landscape in northern Nigeria in the 1950s and 1960s was characterised by the presence of two different law traditions: British Common Law and Islamic Law, which was based on the Mālikī School of law. The classification of the cases according to the four grades (A, B, C, and D) mentioned above allowed for the handling of court cases according to their importance and the competence of the judges (*Alkala*). In the late 1950s the so-called *Moslem Court of Appeal* and *Sharia Court of Appeal* were instituted to deal with Islamic matters. The general structure was initiated by the British within their indirect rule policy. The British gave the impression that they were not intervening in Islamic law affairs. In fact they were interested in increasing the legitimacy and the significance of traditional rulers in the north. The supreme authorities of the judicial system were British Magistrates

---

<sup>161</sup> Sodiq, Yushau (1992): A History of Islamic law in Nigeria: Past and Present, in: Islamic Studies, 31 (1), pp. 85-108; the author narrates an example of a Christian woman who was banned from inheritance she was to receive from her Muslim father by an Islamic Qadi. The woman appealed the case to the *Supreme Court* which gave her the right of inheritance. The judgement of the Islamic Court was then invalidated; see pp. 97-98.

assigned to deal with cases involving British citizens and appeals from *Alkali Courts* grade A. <sup>162</sup>

The British attempted to restrict Islamic Law to personal, family, and inheritance matters. Criminal law with corporal punishments such as stoning or amputations was not applied. Interestingly, the recognition of Islamic Law was strategic. The British recognized Islamic jurisprudence but put it under strict supervision. The important changes of Islamic law in northern Nigeria under the British occupation are summarized by Oba in three stages: “accommodation phase”, “domination and control phase”, and “the living under the shadow phase”.<sup>163</sup>

Islamic Law was classified as customary law in Nigeria, as was the case in all British colonies. According to Oba this classification was advantageous for the colonial authority because it “retards the growth” of Islamic law and “allows the British to impose their values and customs” over Muslims, and gives common law judges an opportunity to “adjudicate on Islamic law matters”.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, this classification restricts Islamic law and avoids any possible conflict with other laws, especially on a religious basis. Being a Muslim was not the only criteria for handling cases of legal conflicts amongst Muslim parties. The identification with Islamic law is decisive to its

---

<sup>162</sup> Reynolds (1999), p. 60-63; the author indicates that most cases of appeals from *Alkali Courts* to British Magistrate were “cases of political nature”.

<sup>163</sup> See Oba, A. A. (2002): Islamic Law as customary Law: the Changing Perspective in Nigeria, in: International and Comparative Law Quarterly, Vol. 51 (4), p. 825; the author took this classification from: Yadudu, A. H. (1988): “We Need a New Legal System”, in: Ibrahim Suleiman and Siraj Abdulkarim (ed.), On the Future of Nigeria (Zaria: Hudahuda Publishing Co, 1988), pp. 4-5.

<sup>164</sup> See more details in Oba (2002), p. 827.

applicability.<sup>165</sup> This classification allowed the judges trained in customary law to deal with cases of Islamic law and at the same time allowed Muslims to escape Islamic law.<sup>166</sup>

According to Abun-Nasr, Islamic Law was classified under *native law and custom* of Muslims until the year 1956, when a *Muslim Court of Appeal* was established. This means that Islamic law was a matter of *Native Courts* (proclamation of 1900) whose jurisdiction was limited by a “repugnancy clause” defined by the British authority and allowing them to repeal any judgement.<sup>167</sup>

The emirs were given the authority to impose punishments like the death penalty after 1906. These kinds of sentences could only be enforced by the governor of Nigeria. The death sentence could be replaced by imprisonment. The strategy of the British consisted of reducing the Emirs’ judgements to *ta’zīr* (in Arabic: discretionary penalty of judge) and avoiding the *ḥudūd*-punishments (in Arabic: one of the four categories of Islamic penal law, mostly associated with corporal punishment)<sup>168</sup>. These expectations were confronted by an internal judicial struggle between the Emirs and Islamic judges.<sup>169</sup> *Chief Alkali Courts and Judicial Councils*

---

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 828.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 829.

<sup>167</sup> Abun-Nasr, Jamil (1993): *Islamisches Recht im nigerianischen Rechtssystem*, in: Abun-Nasr, Jamil (Hg.): *Muslims in Nigeria: Religion und Gesellschaft im politischen Wandel seit den 50er Jahren*. Münster, Hamburg: Lit-Verlag, p. 204; the repugnancy clause consists of stopping any judgement of the Native Courts when it is not conform to “natural justice, equity, and good conscience”.

<sup>168</sup> See Ibid., p. 206; for more details on the Islamic criminal law see my MA-Dissertation (2005): “Die Entwicklung der Šarī’a-Frage...”; esp. chapter 5 “Die Šarī’a-Rechtsprechung”.

<sup>169</sup> Abun-Nasr (1993) mentions a judicial struggle that lasted until 1906 between the Emirs and the *Chief Alkali*. The Idea of Lugard was to restrict the jurisdiction of the Emirs Court to *siyasa* (political

(under the supervision of the Emirs) existed side by side in the north and was categorized under grade A of Jurisdiction until the judiciary reform of 1933. Abun-Nasr counted 19 *Chief Alkali Courts* and 22 *Judicial Councils* that existed at the time. The goal of the British to make homicide cases a duty of *Alkalai* failed and the colonial authority attempted to change its strategy of improving *Alkali Courts* over the Emirs' authority.<sup>170</sup>

The fact that the *Alkalai* cooperated in many cases with the Emirs more than with the British when it came to homicide decisions confirms that the old judicial structure continued to exist. The new tactics of the colonial authority consisted of translating standard books of Islamic law used by Nigerian Islamic jurists. This approach should have given British officers some knowledge of Islamic law and at the same time the ability to monitor judgements made by Islamic courts. In 1933 the so-called *Native Courts Ordinance* was established. An English court existed on top of this institution. It was the last court of appeal (High Court, in Kaduna) to which cases from *Alkalai Courts* and *Judicial Councils* were directed.<sup>171</sup>

Abun-Nasr observes that the clash between Islamic and English law took place especially when the colonial authorities tried to change the penalty designated for homicide. According to the Mālikī School of Law followed in northern Nigeria, the intention in homicide cases is decisive in defining the penalty. If the crime took place with intention to kill then the penalty is death. If it is not the case, then *diyya* (in Arabic:

---

decisions) and to allow *Alkali-Courts* to decide over homicide cases. This vision was not easily manageable, see p. 207.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 208-9.

blood money) could be paid to the victim's family. The British preferred not to apply capital punishment whose applicability was a marker of Islamic law and the identity of the Emirs. The colonial administration avoided declaring the Emirs' decision as invalid and put it in the hands of the governor. The governor was in the position to change the penalty according to the "right of pardon" ("Begnadigungsrecht" – to use Abun Nasr' word) or even annul it if they deviated from English law.<sup>172</sup>

The applicability of Islamic law including Islamic criminal law through the Emirs is part of the Muslim identity. The British insisted that by including Islamic law in customary law that it can be applied to the entire country. Muslims were never happy with such a policy and they called for the establishment of the independent *Islamic Courts of Appeal* and for the application of Islamic law in all its aspects.<sup>173</sup> The situation changed before the independence of Nigeria through the partition of the country into three major regions and the drafting of the constitution of 1954. This constitution aimed to establish a *Muslim Court of Appeal* in the north. At the same time a *Penal Code* which was inspired by British India and Sudan was set up, as well a *Criminal Procedure Code*. Even though this *Penal Code* retained some aspects of *Islamic Criminal Law* (such as lashes for adultery or drinking alcohol), it put an end to Islamic Law as a whole.<sup>174</sup> This fundamental change of Islamic law was the result of political compromise and has served the interests of northern politicians as well as the British colonial administration. Islamic Law was then limited to personal law and

---

<sup>172</sup> Abun-Nasr (1993), pp. 209-210.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>174</sup> See Ibid., p. 213.

the *Sharia Court of Appeal* replaced the *Muslim Court of Appeal*.<sup>175</sup> With the independence of Nigeria in 1960 the debate on *Islamic Law* in the federation took a new direction. How Nigerians deal with Islam and Islamic law and what kind of debate(s) took place will be discussed in the next chapter. Certainly, Islamic law which was reduced to personal law by the British will be a subject of debate not only in the north, but in the entire country.

## 2.4 Islam in Nigeria during the postcolonial era

Nigeria's independence and the formation of the modern state in 1960 was a challenge for Muslims, Christians, and adherents of African Traditional Religions. The preparation for independence started several years earlier with the constitution of 1946 (*Richards Constitution*), the constitution of 1952 (*McPherson Constitution*), and finally the constitution of 1954.

Nigeria was divided into three major regions before 1960: north, east and west. Additionally, Lagos was declared a federal territory. There were *High Courts* in these regions and *Federal Supreme Courts* on the federal level. For the local context the *Native Courts of Appeal* as well as the *Moslem Court of Appeal* existed under supervision of the *High Courts*. Through this structure the British colonial

---

<sup>175</sup> According to Abun-Nasr, Ahmadu Bello who was the Chairman of the ruling party of the north Region (the *Northern People's Congress*; NPC) was ready to compromise on *Islamic Criminal Law*. He sent a delegation to Libya, Pakistan and Sudan in 1957 under the premise of comparing their law systems influenced by the British law tradition. In 1958 a committee of law experts was initiated by the government of the north and asked to prepare a report as well as a recommendation for northern Nigeria. After a long debate and political pressure the Emirs accepted the reform in September 1959; for more details see *Ibid.*, pp. 213-216.

administration succeeded in limiting Islamic criminal law and situating it under the British law tradition.<sup>176</sup>

The new *Penal Code* (mentioned above) which was inspired by the Sudanese judicial system was ratified in September 1960. Islamic Law became more meaningful especially in civil matters. The so-called *Moslem Courts of Appeals* were replaced by *Sharia Courts of Appeals*.<sup>177</sup>

Hock describes the judicial system in Nigeria in the early years of independence as follows: the top of the system consisted of the *Supreme Court of Nigeria*, followed by the *Federal Court of Appeal* and *Federal High Court*. At the level of the provinces there were *State Courts* represented in all states by the *State High Court* or by the *State Sharia Court of Appeal* and in some states by the *State Customary Court of Appeal*. The last category of the judicial system is represented by the *Area Courts* and the *Customary Courts* at the local level. Judicial cases were handled according to this hierarchy from the local to the federal level. The *Federal High Court* was the place where ultimate judgements were taken. In case of conflict between two different law traditions (e.g. a struggle between a Muslim and a Christian) an agreement over one court (Islamic or not) was agreed upon.<sup>178</sup>

According Ostien and Dekker, the implementation of the *Penal Code* of 1960 was to the advantage of Muslims in northern Nigeria. Although the new *Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes* replaced the *Native and Customary Criminal Law* and

---

<sup>176</sup> Hock (1996), p. 191.

<sup>177</sup> Reynolds, Jonathan T. (1999), pp. 95-96.

<sup>178</sup> Hock (1996), p. 192-193.

became standardized for all Nigerian citizens, and although *Sharia Court* jurisdiction was reduced to personal matters, and the *Emirs Courts* lost much of their juridical weight to the *Provincial Courts*, and the *Alkalis' Courts* were asked to rely on the Penal Code (translated into Hausa) instead of using Arabic law books, Muslims nevertheless maintained higher legal prestige in the federation.<sup>179</sup> This prestige was achieved through the establishment of the *Sharia Court of Appeal* whose judgements (usually restricted to Islamic family and personal law) were final and could not be revised by other courts. In addition, the *Native Courts Appellate Division* was instituted with the duty of listening to cases of *Native Courts* directed to the *High Court*. The *Native Courts Appellate Division* consisted of three judges: two from the *High Court* and one from the *Sharia Court of Appeal*. Another advantage for Muslim judges was that they could handle cases according to Islamic Law as long the conflicting parties agreed on it and confirmed it in written form.<sup>180</sup>

The judicial system introduced in Nigeria after independence worked well and judges were in a position to handle Islamic, English, or customary law. Problems started in 1967 when Nigeria was divided into twelve states instead of the existing four regions. Through this partition six new *High Courts*, six *Sharia Courts of Appeal* and later on a Court for every state was established. Ostien raises the problem in the following statement: "How to harmonize the work of all these new state courts, while

---

<sup>179</sup> Ostien, Philip and Albert Dekker (2010): *Sharī'a and national law in Nigeria*, in: Otto, Jan Michiel (ed.): *Source Sharī'a Incorporated: a Comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, pp. 564-566.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 567.

preserving the essential elements of the settlement of 1960?"<sup>181</sup> For the *High Courts* the situation was unproblematic since they could appeal to the *Federal Supreme Court*. For the *Sharia Courts of Appeal* the situation was more complex: judgements from these courts were divergent and could not be directed to any other court. The establishment of a final, *Upper* or *Federal Sharia Court of Appeal* was suggested as a solution to the issue. This kind of court's role was to solve cases from the different *Sharia Courts* and to solve all judicial questions between them.<sup>182</sup>

Throughout the 1970s the need for establishing a *Federal Sharia Court of Appeal* became more apparent. Particularly in relation to debates over the new constitution of 1979 and the transition to the Second Republic<sup>183</sup>, *sharī'a* turned out to be an issue in the country. The preparation for the new constitution started 1976. Two years later, the Constituent Assembly turned the proposed establishment of a *Federal Sharia Court of Appeal* down and suggested the related section 180 (1) c from the planned constitutional draft be removed. As a protest against this decision, Muslim deputies left the assembly.<sup>184</sup> The then head of the state, General Obasanjo, appealed to all factions to engage in dialogue. The *Constituent Assembly* proceeded

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 569.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. pp.569-570; for more details see also Ostien, Phil (2006): An Opportunity missed by Nigeria's Christians: The 1976-78 Sharī'a Debate revisited, in: Soares, E. Benjamin (ed.): Muslim-Christian encounters in Africa, pp. 221-255.

<sup>183</sup> The First Republic in Nigeria was between 1960 and 1966. After that the Civil War (Biafra) took place. A military government took over from 1970. General Murtala Muhammad, the head of State at the time, announced in 1975 a transition to civil government. He formed a *Constitution Drafting Committee* (CDC) with the aim of sketching the new constitution of the federation; see Ostien and Dekker (2010), p. 570.

<sup>184</sup> According to Abun-Nasr (1993), 88 among 93 Muslim deputies left the Assembly, see p. 221; Hock (1996) indicates that all 93 Muslim members protested by boycotting the meeting, see p. 194.

with its task on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1978, and the new constitution was presented on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1979 without the *Federal Sharia Court of Appeal* clauses. Apart from that, states could create *State Sharia Courts of Appeal* in case they elected to establish such courts.<sup>185</sup>

The debate on Islamic law did not stop in the postcolonial period. For many Muslims this law is part of their identity and cannot be replaced by any other law. If Muslims were ready to compromise that Islamic law was reduced to personal and family matters by the British and that *Islamic Criminal Law* was integrated in the *Penal Code* of the whole country, they were not ready to compromise when it came to the *Sharia Court of Appeal*.

The democratization process in Nigeria in the 1980s was interrupted by the military, and the Second Republic came to an end in 1983 when General Buhari became head of State. Two years later general Babangida took over after a successful coup d'état. Babangida announced a transition to a civilian government by end of the 1980s and a new discussion about the constitution of the federation in the Third Republic of Nigeria arose again. The head of the state set up a political board in 1986 with a consultative function of pertaining to the judicial situation of the country. Muslim leaders of the ten northern states asked Islamic Law beyond personal matters to be extended. Replacing the expression "Personal Law" with

---

<sup>185</sup> In Section 240 (1) of the 1979-constitution it was indicated that establishing *State Shari'a Courts of Appeal* is allowed "for any state that requires it"; see Ostien and Dekker (2010), p. 572.

“Islamic law” in *Decree 26* in 1986 of the constitution of 1979 made this expectation feasible. Also the creation of *Sharia Courts of Appeals* was allowed.<sup>186</sup>

The constitution of 1979 was again revised in 1988 and several committees were asked to come up with suggestions. According to Hock, Committee 16 was concerned with the *sharī'a*-issue. From the beginning, views were divided between Muslims asking for obligatory *Sharia Courts of Appeal* in all states and Christians suggesting removal of all *sharī'a* sections from the constitution. The representative of the military government on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1988 stated that the absence of any compromise, all negotiations over *sharī'a* were halted. A few days later an official declaration was announced, keeping the 1979 constitutional formulation.<sup>187</sup>

Hock describes the *sharī'a* -discussions in the 1980s as the “second round” of the debates on Islamic law. Several factors hindered the establishment of a law system combining British secular law with traditional Islamic law. Muslims never forgot the devaluation of their law through the British and used any opportunity to revive it. Christians considered *sharī'a* a danger and tried every means to have it removed from the constitution. The Military government failed to solve the *sharī'a*-controversy. At the same time Nigeria was passing through a political, economic, and social vacuum during the 1980s. The division between Christians and Muslims took on another dimension with absence of a compromising policy of Babangida’s administration. Hock articulates the controversy surrounding Nigeria’s membership in *Organisation of Islamic Conference* (OIC) in 1986 and the crisis related to it. The

---

<sup>186</sup> Hock (1996), p. 196.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-198.

author wonders if such a membership can be explained as “grand design” or a “misleading step” of the government of Babangida. Certainly, such an event challenged Muslims and Christians to place their religion an increasingly central aspect of their interest in the federation.<sup>188</sup>

The 1980s were not different from the crisis of 1979 when it came to the *sharī'a*-issue. Questions related to Islamic law in the constitution were still not answered. The establishment of *Sharia Federal Courts* failed several times since Muslims and Christians did not find a way to compromise. The democratic election of 1993 with the elected President Abiola gave Nigerians hope that the third transition to civilian government (the Third Republic) could solve the country’s problems, including judicial controversy. These hopes disappeared very soon when a new coup d’état occurred in the same year and the military took over again until 1999. The era of General Sani Abacha was one of the most unstable periods in Nigerian postcolonial history. The turmoil in all sectors deeply affected the Nigerian experience with democracy. According to the historian Toyin Falola „...General Abacha (...) abolished all the elected national and state assemblies, dismissed all the state executives, dissolved all the local government councils, and banned all political parties.“<sup>189</sup>

General Abdulsalami Abubakar became head of state after Abacha died unexpectedly in 1998. As part of his accession, he promised a speedy transition to

---

<sup>188</sup> The OIC is an Islamic organization that was established 1969 in Fez, Morocco. General Babangida registered Nigeria 1986 in that organization apparently for economic reasons. This act raised a big controversy between Muslims and Christians in the federation. The form of the state (secular, Islamic) was especially contested; for an overview on the debate see Hock (1996), pp. 212-235.

<sup>189</sup> Falola (1999), p. 195.

democracy. Within a few months new presidential elections were organized and Olusegun Obasanjo was elected President of Nigeria. From 1999, the Fourth Republic was declared and a new controversy over constitution and Islamic law arose once again.

The civil war, the military regime, the transition to democracy, the constitutional and judicial debates, and the political discussions about Islamic Law in Nigeria during the postcolonial era overshadowed other debates within the different religious communities. The ongoing political discussions in the federation seemd to be confrontation between the two major religious communities: Muslims and Christians. Religious struggle and political interest can be found in any religious community. In the following section, the intra-Islamic debates between Muslims in Nigeria, especially the struggle between the Sufi-brotherhoods and subsequently against Sheikh Gumi are evaluated. These debate(s) can be understood as the historical background of the Izala formation.

## 2.5 The conflict between the Sufi Brotherhoods

The Qādiriyya Sufi-Brotherhood is the oldest and most dominant Sufi-order in northern Nigeria. The Sokoto-Caliphate played a decisive role in spreading the Qādiriyya. Most leaders of the *jihād* movement of Usman Dan Fodio were members of the Qādiriyya.<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> Loimeier, Roman (1993): Auseinandersetzungen im islamischen Lager, in: Abun-Nasr, Jamil (ed.): Muslime in Nigeria: Religion und Gesellschaft im politischen Wandel seit den 50er Jahren. Münster, Hamburg, p.129.

The Tijāniyya came to Nigeria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and soon became a counter-pole *ṭarīqa*. If the leaders of Sokoto were members of the Qādiriyya, then the Tijāniyya spread among traders and religious scholars. According to Loimeier, the controversy between both brotherhoods dates back to 1845 when a debate arose about the affiliation of Dan Fodio's son, Muhammad Bello, to the Tijāniyya. That was the starting point when affiliation to one of these *ṭuruq* (pl. of *ṭarīqa*) became religiously and politically meaningful. Being "Qadiri" means the conservation of Dan Fodio's tradition and changing to Tijāniyya means a rebellion against Sokoto rulers and the old tradition. In addition, Kano emerged as a new centre of the Tijāniyya that became increasingly independent from Sokoto, the Qādiriyya centre. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the two brotherhoods started looking for more adherents and prestige in northern Nigeria and building networks with Sufi centres outside of the country, particularly via Kano, where trade and religious contact was intensive.<sup>191</sup> The more Kano became economically prosperous and religious affiliation became an important part of social life, the more the growth of the Tijāniyya became visible. The contact with Morocco and Senegal was intensified. Even the Emirs of Kano were affiliated with the Tijāniyya and strove for legitimacy through their membership to the *ṭarīqa*.<sup>192</sup>

The Tijāniyya changed from being a *ṭarīqa* of traders and scholars to a mass-movement in Kano and in other parts of northern Nigeria. This can be attributed to

---

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>192</sup> Loimeier indicates that the Emir of Kano between 1903 and 1919 'Abbas was a member of the Tijāniyya. The Emir Abdullahi Bayero who ruled from 1926 to 1954 was initiated to the Tijāniyya by the Senegalese Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (1900-1975) during the Pilgrimage to Mecca in 1937. Also Muhammad Sanusi, Emir of Kano between 1954 and 1963 took advantage of the contact with the Tijāniyya in order to become more independent from Sokoto; see more details in Ibid., pp. 131-133

the success of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse<sup>193</sup> as the Tijāniyya caliph of West Africa as well as the affiliation of the Emirs of Kano with this *ṭarīqa*. The Qādiriyya reacted to such a development through the actions of Sheikh Nasiru Kabara (1925-1996) who tried to reform his own brotherhood. Apart from building networks with the hometown of the Qādiriyya, Bagdad, Sheikh Kabara initiated a reform-project of his *ṭarīqa* in Nigeria. Among others he introduced the celebration of the birthday of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Kano as well as the *bandiri*-celebrations (Hausa: drum) in the mosques. He also became the Qādiriyya Caliph in West Africa.<sup>194</sup>

The Sufi dispute over hegemony and followers within Muslim Nigeria took on a political dimension during the 1950s. For political parties, Sufi brotherhoods represented a source of networks and potential voters. The brotherhoods themselves became involved in politics and increased their political influence and the numbers of their followers. Having religious, economic and political influence was part of the “rules of the game”. Nevertheless, the more the political weight of religious leaders increased the more this influence turned out to be ambivalent and risky.<sup>195</sup>

The politicization of religion in northern Nigeria can be seen through the debate on the identification of many Tijānī youth with the political party, northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and the reaction to that by Ahmadu Bello

---

<sup>193</sup> For more details on Sheikh Niasse’s life and influence see Seesemann, Rüdiger (2011): *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>194</sup> Loimeier (1993), p. 134.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135; the author speaks of the “political instrumentalization” of religious debates among religious scholars from the 1950s.

northern People's Congress (NPC) as well by other religious leaders. In addition, a religious debate over the correct way to perform prayers (with *qabdh* or with *ṣadl*)<sup>196</sup> emerged. The Tijāniyya leader Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse tended to pray with *qabdh* and Sheikh Nasiru Kabara preferred *ṣadl*. This became a political issue among adherents and a reason to divide mosques as well for blaming *kufṛ* (non-belief) on each other during the 1950s and 1960s. The discourse consisted of finding proof for each point of view in the tradition of the Prophet. This controversy was used by Sardauna Ahmadu Bello in his political program. The political leader tended to condemn *qabdh* and distanced himself from Ibrahim Niasse as well from the NEPU. This pragmatic choice reflects Bello's interest in avoiding any obstacles blocking his political agenda of "one north". The *qabdh-ṣadl*-controversy came to an end in the mid-1960s. In the following years it became a minor issue particularly with the appearance of Sheikh Gumi as an opponent to Sufis and Sufism.<sup>197</sup>

Reynolds understands the link between the Qādiriyya and NPC as well as between the Tijāniyya and NEPU as a "cooperation (...) [that] was constantly being renegotiated as necessitated by changing political conditions."<sup>198</sup> Historically, the spread of the Tijāniyya in Kano and Zamfara State was a continuation of a long resistance against the center of Qādiriyya, Sokoto. The Qādiriyya was linked to the

---

<sup>196</sup> Qabdh means praying with arms crossed in front of the navel and *ṣadl* means having them alongside the body.

<sup>197</sup> Ahmadu Bello set up the *Kaduna Council of Malamai* in 1963 in order to solve the issue of *qabdh-ṣadl*. The report recommended that Imāms should practice *Sadl* since it is the common practice of the Maliki School of Law, see *ibid.*, pp. 136-138.

<sup>198</sup> Reynolds (1999), p. 179.

authority of the emirs and was positively perceived by the British. In times of violent clashes, sanctions were imposed on the Tijāniyya.<sup>199</sup> The measures against the Tijāniyya varied from banning the order from building mosques to stopping some of its practices (*wazīfa*<sup>200</sup>, *qabdh*) in the public sphere.<sup>201</sup>

The Sufi-orders' involvement in politics does not mean that all Qādiriyya followers are members of the NPC and that all Tijāniyya are members of the NEPU. Reynolds gives examples of Tijāniyya members who were in leading positions of the NPC. There were also leaders of NEPU who were not affiliated with any brotherhood. Ordinary members of political parties are from both the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya.<sup>202</sup> The rivalry between the two parties and two Sufi orders was a feature of the 1950s and 1960s. The situation was complex and boundaries between religion and politics were in many cases blurred. At the beginning of the 1960s the NPC set up a new brotherhood called *Usmaniyya*, as an attempt at reunification of all Sufi Brotherhoods under the umbrella of Dan Fodio's tradition. These efforts failed to attract the attention of Sufi leaders and came to an end with the Sardauna's death.<sup>203</sup>

---

<sup>199</sup> Reynolds (1999), p183; the author gives an example of the clashes between the Qadiriyya and Tijāniyya-followers in the 1940s. In Sokoto, the riots in 1949 resulted in many mosques of the Tijāniyya "levelled on the order of the Sultan of Sokoto".

<sup>200</sup> *Wazīfa* is especially practiced by Tijāniyya adherents in Nigeria. It consists of a daily remembering of Allah through reciting "la ilaha illa Allah" (there is not God but Allah" 100 times, 100 times *ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ* (a special Tijāni prayer), and 100 times of *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from Allah).

<sup>201</sup> See Reynolds (1999), pp. 184-185.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>203</sup> Reynolds summarizes the complexity of affiliation to a Sufi order and at the same time being member of political party (NEPU or NPC) during the 1950s and 1960s. The affiliation to the Qādiriyya or Tijāniyya was used to achieve political goals. The efforts of the Sardauna to unify the north under

The rivalry between the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya was largely due to their struggle for space in northern Nigeria. Both brotherhoods attempted to attract more followers. Over time both developed two different indications of identity. The Qādiriyya was (and is) related to the Sokoto caliphate. This gave it the opportunity to be in the centre of events. The Qādiriyya, was the Sufi order associated with the state. It was then the order of the political elite within the NPC. The Tijāniyya was a symbol of rebellion against established structures and a symbol of opposition. The link between Tijāniyya and the NEPU is intelligible. The ideology of the party and its founder (Aminu Kano) was based on criticism of the elites in the North as well of the authority of the emirs and the colonial administration. No wonder that NEPU was perceived as a symbol of opposition in the north as was the case with the Tijāniyya. John Paden makes an interesting observation when he compares NEPU to a Sufi-brotherhood:

“(...) a network similar to the *zāwiya* [Sufi corner or place] structure of the reformed brotherhoods was developed. Members of NEPU referred to each other during this period as “brothers” (‘Yan Uwa).”<sup>204</sup>

Yasir A. Quadri confirms that the relationship between the Qādiriyya and the Tijāniyya during the period of 1956 and the mid-1960s was violent.<sup>205</sup> Both

---

one party (NPC) and one Sufi order (Usmaniyya) on the eve of the independence failed; for more details see *Ibid.*, pp. 185-206.

<sup>204</sup> Paden, John (1973): *Religion and political culture in Kano*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 295-296; for more details on NEPU actors as well its political program see *Ibid.*, pp. 273-305.

<sup>205</sup> Quadri (1981), p. 373; the author narrates violent events between the Tijāniyya and Qādiriyya in Sokoto in the year 1956; see pp. 378-380; in the same area riots between the two groups took place in 1965 leaving eleven victims. These events reflected the high tension between the Qadiris and Tijānīs especially in Sokoto province, for details see pp. 280-282.

brotherhoods were concerned with propagating their ideology and attracting more members. Both claimed superiority over the other *ṭarīqa*. They tended to “convert” new members to the order and at the same time warn adherents about the consequences of leaving their *ṭarīqa*-path. These ideas were propagated in the form of writings by leaders who expressed their reciprocal criticism. From the Qādiriyya side, Sheikh Nasiru Kabara in one of his publications criticized the Tijāniyya order and warned his followers not to become a member of it. The Tijāniyya answer came from Sheikh Abubakar Atik who offended Sheikh Kabara and even doubted Kabara’s status as a Sufi.<sup>206</sup>

In conclusion, the two dominant Sufi-Brotherhoods in Northern Nigeria struggled for authority and power within the religious field. This contestation was based on winning new adherents, strengthening networks to other religious centers in and outside of Nigeria, and opposing each other’s ideologies. The Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya both presented themselves as the most appealing *ṭarīqa* to Nigerian Muslims. They criticized each other’s path, questioned each other’s rituals, and legitimacy of each other’s sources. Both orders claimed supremacy and the authenticity of their origin. The Tijāniyya success in attracting many followers was considered dangerous by the Qādiriyya. Loimeier formulates it rightfully when he describes the growth of the Tijāniyya in the following: “The Tijāniyya was about to

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., pp. 376-377; Sheikh Kabara wrote his “al-Nafaḥāt” in which he attacked the Tijāniyya heavily. Sheikh Atik replied in two books entitled “Risāla fi Taḥdhīr al ‘Iṣābah al-Aḥmadiyya al-Tijāniyya” (1958) and “Al-Ṣarim al-Mashrafi al-Maslūl ‘ala al-Munkir al-ghabi” (1959). In both he criticized Sheikh Kabara and at the same time defends the Tijāniyya; see also Paden (1973), pp. 143.144.

literally remove the ground from under the feet of the Qādiriyya.”<sup>207</sup> After the formation of political parties from the 1940s the *ṭarīqa*-controversy took a political dimension. For politicians, *ṭarīqa* including its leaders and followers presented a potential medium through which to reach the masses. For Sufi Brotherhoods, dealing with political parties and being involved in politics was a way to broaden their influence and protect their interest.<sup>208</sup> With the appearance of Sheikh Gumi as an active member in the religious politics of Northern Nigeria, the Sufis had to change their strategy towards fighting a “common enemy” who started attacking Sufism in all its aspects.

## 2.6 Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and his struggle against Sufism<sup>209</sup>

The intra-*ṭarīqa* controversy ended in the mid-1960s. This period of time was characterized by several events in Nigeria. Apart from gaining independence and the introduction of the penal code, the death of the Sardauna and the subsequent civil war in 1966, Nigerian Muslims witnessed the establishment of Jamā‘at Naṣr al-Islām (in Arabic: Society for Victory of Islam, JNI) in 1961, which was an institution to unify all Muslims irrespective of their social background and religious convictions.

Sheikh Gumi (1922-1992) was not only a religious authority in northern Nigeria during the 1960s, but also a political figure. The Sheikh served as a religious adviser of the Sardauna and accompanied him on several trips to Arabic and Muslim

---

<sup>207</sup> See Loimeier (1997), p. 72.

<sup>208</sup> For more details on the Qādiriyya-Tijānīyya conflict as well their involvement in politics see Ibid., pp. 71-82.

<sup>209</sup> For details on biography and writings of Sheikh Gumi as well his reform-program and the relationship to Sufi orders see chapter “Reform Islam versus Sufism”.

countries. The idea behind setting up the JNI was to unify all Muslims in Nigeria despite of their religious orientations. Sheikh Gumi was at the head of the JNI and received financial assistance for the institution from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Sheikh Gumi was fluent in Arabic and knowledgeable in Islamic law and *tafsīr* (in Arabic: exegesis of the Qur'ān). In addition to that, he was privileged to be very close to the Sardauna. This position gave him the opportunity to build networks of contacts in Nigeria as well in the Islamic world. Sheikh Gumi became the Grand Qadi of the north in 1962, a prestigious post that afforded him influence in Arewa (the north).

The political and religious influence of Sheikh Gumi made him a “supervisor” of Islam and Muslims in Nigeria. From his position he even criticized the well-established brotherhoods as well as the traditional authority of the emirs or the Sultan. The Sheikh confessed: “I knew I was not in their [the emirs] good books. (...) I often criticized their deviation from Dan Fodio path.”<sup>210</sup> Sheikh Gumi criticized the position of Sufism in Islam and the way sainthood was propagated and practiced. He even doubted what has been said about Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (Qādiriyya) and Aḥmad al-Tijānī (Tijāniyya): “Both Sheikh Abdul Qadir and Sheikh Aḥmad al-Tijjani were innocent of most what was written about them, including many practices which they were said to have advocated or sanctioned.”<sup>211</sup> Sheikh Gumi criticized the supernatural power attributed to Sufi-Sheikhs. He opposed considering them as intermediaries who are able to communicate with God. He refused the claim that Sufi Sheikhs received special prayers through the Prophet. He denounced the

---

<sup>210</sup> Gumi and Tsiga (1992), p. 108.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

expectation of favors through sacrifices and the use of drums and in mosques. For Sheikh Gumi, Sufis have neither access to the hidden nor are they privileged among other Muslims.<sup>212</sup>

After the death of Ahmadu Bello in 1966 Sufis reacted to the attacks of Sheikh Gumi and wanted him to leave the JNI: “at times, even the meetings of the Jamā‘at Nasril Islam (JNI) became more an avenue to isolate me and charge me with sowing crisis in the society” - as Sheikh Gumi formulated it.<sup>213</sup> Because of his opposition to them he lost the legitimacy and political backing that was present during the lifetime of the Sardauna. In addition, the JNI failed to be an organization for all Muslims of Nigeria in absence of a compromise between the leaders from the different Muslim groups. During the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s Sheikh Gumi concentrated on his *tafsīr*-sessions as well his writings.<sup>214</sup>

### 2.6.1 Sheikh A. Gumi: his early life until 1972<sup>215</sup>

One cannot study the postcolonial history of Islam in Nigeria without dealing with Sheikh Abubakar Gumi.<sup>216</sup> He was one of the most influential Islamic scholars from the 1960s until his death in 1992. He was present in religious circles, served as Grand Qadi of the northern Region (1962-67), worked as a pilgrim’s officer in Saudi Arabia, and was a member of the Constituent Assembly of the *Rābi‘at al-‘ālam al-*

---

<sup>212</sup> See more details in *Ibid.*, pp. 138-142.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>214</sup> See Loimeier (1993), pp. 140-141.

<sup>215</sup> The choice of 1972 is related to the publication of Gumi’s book in which he attacked Sufism. The biography of Gumi himself in this chapter goes beyond 1972.

<sup>216</sup> For the life of Sheikh Gumi I rely on his Autobiography Gumi, A. with I. A. Tsigia (1992) and Loimeier (1997).

*islāmī* (Muslim World League).<sup>217</sup> He was also close to Sardauna Ahmadu Bello<sup>218</sup> (1909-1966), Premier of the northern Region, and acted as his religious adviser.

Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi was born in 1922, in Gumi, in the modern-day Sokoto State. He was educated by his father, Mallam Mahmud na-Gumi. He attended the Central Middle School (1936-42) in Sokoto and moved to Kano to study Islamic Law at the prestigious Sharia Law School. He traveled to Sudan where he studied Arabic and graduated in 1951. Upon his return to Nigeria Sheikh Gumi was appointed as a teacher in Maru, in what is now Zamfara State before he moved to the School of Arabic Studies in Kano, the same institution he attended several years ago. Gumi was appointed as deputy Grand Qadi of the north in 1960 and three years later he served as Grand Qadi of the northern Region. In 1976 he was appointed as Pilgrims Board Chairman<sup>219</sup>. General Murtala Muhammad (1938-76), president of Nigeria (1975-6), appointed Gumi as Grand Mufti but the coup d'état of 1976 and his assassination hindered this measure.<sup>220</sup>

In his autobiography, Sheikh Gumi mentioned that he was a peaceful person, who avoided any kind of conflict. He was “blessed with an excellent memory” and he liked mathematics, geography and history, and had trouble with the English

---

<sup>217</sup> For an overview on the Muslim World League see Schulze, Reinhard (1990): *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zur Islamischem Weltliga*, Leiden: Brill; in this book Sheikh Gumi is mentioned with other prominent Islamic personalities as member of the Constituent Assembly of the IWL in 1964, p. 227; also as member of the *Majlis al-ala al-alami li-l-Masajid, MAAM* (World High Council of Mosques) in 1975, p 285; It is also mentioned that Gumi was a delegate in the Egyptian Organisation *Majma' al-Buhuth al-islamiyya* (Academy for Islamic Studies) from 1972, P. 237.

<sup>218</sup> See Paden, John (1986): *Ahadu Bello. Sardauna of Sokoto*, Zaria: Hudahuda Publishing Company.

<sup>219</sup> For details on pilgrimage politics in northern Nigeria see Loimeier, Roman (1988): *Das Nigerian Pilgrimage Scheme* In: *Afrika Spectrum*, 23, 2 (1988), pp. 201-14.

<sup>220</sup> Shehu, Balarabe I. (2001): *The Light of Truth*, Kano: Gidan Dabiro Publisher, p. 1.

language. At an early age, he started identifying himself with religion: “Identifying me with the religion quite early in life, was, indeed, a moral and social check.”<sup>221</sup> He studied the classical work of Islamic law like *Mukhtassar*, *al-Risala* – to mention some.<sup>222</sup>

At school, Gumi met prominent personalities who later became famous figures of the country. Among others, Gumi was taught by Mallam Junaidu, the later Wazir of Sokoto. Also the Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello was teaching in the same school in Sokoto. Shehu U. Shagari, who headed Nigeria as President between 1979 and 1983, was a classmate of Gumi in Sokoto and later on in Kaduna College.<sup>223</sup> During his time in Sokoto, Sheikh Gumi was close to Aminu Kano, one of the prominent activists and oppositionists to the British colony. Both of them, along with Shehu Shagari, were known in Sokoto as trouble- makers: “...the three of us, Malam Aminu, Shagari and I were marked down as being dangerous to the peace in Sokoto province.”<sup>224</sup>

After primary school, which Sheikh Gumi finished in three years instead of four, he attended a Middle School in Sokoto, and then he attended a Qadi School in

---

<sup>221</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 20.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23; the *Mukhtassar al-Risala* is considered a standard book of Islamic law in Nigeria. It is written by Sidi Khalil (d. 1365) on the basis of the *al-Risala*, a work by Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani (d. 996); on an overview on Maliki law and its application in Nigeria see Ghazali, Abdullahi (n.d.): *Maliki Law: The Predominant Muslim Law in Nigeria*, published online at <http://www.gamji.com/article4000/NEWS4601.htm> (21/05/2011).

<sup>223</sup> Gumi (1992), pp. 22-34.

<sup>224</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 48.

Sokoto between 1942 and 1943.<sup>225</sup> Later on, Sheikh Gumi went to Kano where he joined the School of Arabic Studies<sup>226</sup> and graduated with the highest distinction in four years.<sup>227</sup> After his graduation he served as Secretary of the Chief Alkali between 1947 and 1948. Being uncomfortable with his job, Sheikh Gumi left Sokoto again to teach in the newly-established Teacher Training College in Maru, Katsina. The Sheikh remained at that institution for 18 months. He was unsatisfied, especially regarding the ignorance about religion and basic knowledge of Islam:

“I observed quite early that both students and workers in the school were in many respects ignorant about their religion. They had no significant knowledge about the proper Islamic regulations even as they affected their daily life. They did not observe Islamic Etiquette in much of their conduct. Many could not say their prayers well. In fact, some could hardly perform the ablution.”<sup>228</sup>

In town, Sheikh Gumi observed that people performed *tayammun* (in Arabic: connotation of ablution with sand if water is not available) and not *wuḍū'* (in Arabic: ablution) and even the Imam of the Central Mosque did so. As a result Gumi started praying with students on the school grounds and warned them about going to the mosque in town.<sup>229</sup>

---

<sup>225</sup> Sani, Abul-Mumin (1994): The image and legacy of late Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi, unpubl. BA-Dissertation, Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

<sup>226</sup> Sani Umar points out that „...the School (School of Arabic Studies, Kano) came to be regarded as the breeding ground of Anti-Sufism in Nigeria“, See S. Umar (1988): Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Nigeria, MA-dissertation, ABU Kano, p. 169.

<sup>227</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 34.

<sup>228</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 47-8.

<sup>229</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 48.

At the same time, the Sultan of Sokoto gave a speech during the Muslim Eid celebration<sup>230</sup> thanking Allah, the Prophet, Usman Dan Fodio, and the King of Britain. Gumi sent the Sultan a letter warning him about thanking the King of Britain. Disappointed, the Sultan wanted to punish him. Gumi was charged with illegal praying in the school grounds, stopping students from going to Friday prayers, and for pretending to be a *mahdī*.<sup>231</sup>

The next step in Gumi's life was his move to Kano where he began to teach in the same School of Arabic Studies that he attended as a student. During this period Gumi applied for a scholarship to study in Egypt, but the government decided to send him with seven others to the Institute of Education in Khartoum, Sudan.<sup>232</sup>

Sheikh Gumi left Sudan in 1956. In the year 1957 he became the Pilgrims Welfare Officer in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He was confronted in Mecca by established Sheikhs who guided pilgrims for money and he tried to change their attitude towards pilgrims.<sup>233</sup> According to Loimeier, the fact that Sheikh Gumi was close to "religious scholars of the neo-Wahhâbiyya in Saudi Arabia"<sup>234</sup> and a leading member of the

---

<sup>230</sup> *Eid* is the most important religious feast of Muslims. There are two different *Eid* celebrations: the first one is the first day after the fasting month of Ramadan and the second one occurs during the Hajj period and during which all Muslims sacrifice (a sheep/a cow) in memory of the Prophet Ibrahim's sacrifice story in the Qur'ân.

<sup>231</sup> Gumi (1992), 49-51; being a *mahdī* seems to have a negative connotation in northern Nigeria during Gumi's time.

<sup>232</sup> Paden (1986) mentioned that 6 students (including A. Gumi) traveled to Sudan for Bakhter-Ruda School in Khartoum, Sudan, see p. 301.

<sup>233</sup> Gumi (1992), 69.

<sup>234</sup> Loimeier (1997), 182.

*Rābiṭat al-‘ālam al-islāmī* founded in 1962 meant that he was largely identified by Sufis and others in Nigeria as representative of Wahhābiyya in the country.

Back in his country, Sheikh Gumi served as Deputy Grand Kadi for two years (1960-2) and was promoted to Grand Kadi, when Sheikh Awad, of Sudanese descent and holder of that position, went back to Sudan. Gumi described his years in the *Sharia Court of Appeal* as “memorable” and he appreciated the work of that body to establish justice in northern Nigeria.<sup>235</sup> Of course such a position allowed the Sheikh to come closer to politicians. He became the “principal adviser” of the Sardauna Ahmadu Bello. Both of them travelled together to several countries in Africa and the Middle East and went on *‘umra* to the Mecca every year during Ramadan.<sup>236</sup>

This opportunity of travelling in the Islamic world and observing Nigerian Muslims especially during their visits to the Holy Land provoked Sheikh Gumi to establish an organisation to educate Nigerians about their Islamic faith. That was the idea behind the JNI (*Jamā‘at Naṣr al-Islām*: Society for the Victory of Islam) established in 1962 with financial assistance from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.<sup>237</sup>

Although Sheikh Gumi held the position of Grand Kadi, he was passionate – as he confessed – about teaching and preaching. The opening of the Sultan Bello Mosque in Kaduna in 1963 gave him a good opportunity to fulfil this passion. His *tafsīr* sessions were attended – apart of ordinary people – by prominent politicians

---

<sup>235</sup> Gumi (1992), pp. 96-97.

<sup>236</sup> Gumi (1992), pp. 100-104.

<sup>237</sup> Sheikh Gumi wrote to the Saudi government asking for assistance to set up the JNI. The Saudis donated £ 100000; also the government of Kuwait contributed £ 300000, see Gumi (1992), p. 107.

(the Sardauna amongst others). This opportunity was used by Sheikh Gumi to transmit his message(s):

“I was happy with the mosque especially because it allowed me to talk directly to those in authority. (...) It has always been to my conviction that the best way to effect change in the society is to educate those who have power, about the virtue of justice and the fear of God.”<sup>238</sup>

In Kaduna, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation started recording the *tafsīr* sessions of the Sheikh in 1967 and transmitting them over the the radio.<sup>239</sup> This happened without special organization or any financial support to the Sheikh.<sup>240</sup> In addition, in 1970 Gumi started writing in the daily Hausa newspaper *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo*. This access to the media allowed him to propagate his ideas about many religious issues and particularly about Sufism. Gumi dealt with many issues in the religion of Islam from sacrifice to communication with spirits and from attributing a divine nature to Sufi Sheikhs to criticism of drums and songs in mosques.<sup>241</sup> Andrea Brigaglia speaks of three phases when it comes to Gumi's *tafsīr*: the first one was between 1962 and 1966 when Gumi was preaching in Ahmadu Bello Mosque in Kaduna and his audience was “made up of the administrative bourgeoisie of this

---

<sup>238</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 130.

<sup>239</sup> Brigaglia, Andrea (2007): The Radio Kaduna 'Tafsir' (1978-1992) and the construction of public images of Muslim scholars in the Nigerian media, *Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 27, pp. 173-210.

<sup>240</sup> Sheikh Gumi mentioned that he neither visited a radio studio nor received money for recording his Tafsir sessions, Gumi (1992), p. 133.

<sup>241</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 138.

political centre.”<sup>242</sup> During this first period Gumi “attributed specious elements to Sufism”; the second phase suggested by Brigaglia was between 1967 and 1976 when Gumi’s preachings were broadcasted for the first time by Radio in Kaduna. Here Gumi avoided open conflict with Sufism and “moderated the anti-Sufi tones of his comments”<sup>243</sup>. The last phase which began in 1977 was characterized by “explicit tones” that go as far as to *takfīr* (in Arabic: charge of *kufr*, non-belief).<sup>244</sup>

Sheikh Gumi was a distinguished Islamic scholar. His closeness to the Sardauna Ahmadu Bello opened several doors for him. Gumi travelled to many Islamic countries; He established a network of contacts in and outside of Nigeria, and found access to the media in order to propagate his ideas and ideology. His criticism towards Sufis and Sufism reached an apogee when the Sheikh published his book “*al-‘aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa bi muwafaqat al-sharī‘a*” which is regarded by Loimeier as the major religious work of Gumi – apart of his Qur’ān translation into Hausa.<sup>245</sup>

## 2.6.2 Sheikh A. Gumi: from *al-‘aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa* (1972) to the establishment of Izala (1978)

Gumi wrote his book “*al-‘aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa...*”<sup>246</sup> in Arabic language, gave it to a Mallam Galadanci, who at that time was a member of the academic staff at the University of Kano, to be revised and then to a Syrian publisher in Saudi Arabia for

---

<sup>242</sup> Brigaglia, Andrea (2005): Two published Hausa Translations of the Qur’an and their doctrinal background, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 35 (4), p. 429.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>244</sup> This *takfīr* was especially directed to the Tijānīyya followers as Brigaglia mentions; see Brigaglia (2005), p. 430.

<sup>245</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 186.

<sup>246</sup> *Abubakar Gumi* (1972): *Al-‘aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa bi muwafaqat al-sharī‘a* (*The Right Belief Is Based on the Sharī‘a*), Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari.

publication. Gumi opposed certain doctrines of Sufism in his book, criticized their “access to the hidden” (Arabic: *al-bāṭin*), “their communication with the Prophet” and “receiving special prayers from him”. Gumi drew upon the writings of Usman Dan Fodio that there is “nothing after the *sunna* of the Prophet.”<sup>247</sup>

Gumi denounced the idea that a Sufi sheikh can intervene for their disciples during the Last Day (the Day of Resurrection). He criticized the presence of drums in mosques.<sup>248</sup> He insisted on the idea of oneness of God (Arabic: *tawḥīd*) and confirmed that Muhammad is the seal among all Prophets. Gumi opposed the Sufi idea that the Prophet still exists mystically and continues to transmit instructions (to particular persons, Sheikhs, etc.). Gumi analyzed the issue of sainthood and insisted that “religious obligations” (Arabic: *wajibāt*) are as important as faith (Arabic: *īmān*). He then discussed the concept of *bid‘a*. He considered *bid‘a* to be all practices that contradict the Qur’ān and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Sheikh Gumi criticized the Tijāniyya Sufi Brotherhood and its practice. Tijānī’s believe that *ṣalāt al Fātiḥ* (one of their important prayers) was revealed to the founder of the order by the Prophet himself and reciting it is equivalent to six thousand recitations of the Qur’ān. Gumi criticized practicing witchcraft and looking for blessings for a particular purpose. He attacked practicing *dhikr* and categorized it as *bid‘a*. He also attacked hierarchies

---

<sup>247</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 142-4.

<sup>248</sup> Sani, Abul-Mumin (1994), p. 31.

in Sufi orders and how leaders are considered as *aqṭāb* (in Arabic: poles) who can receive revelations or communicate with the Prophet.<sup>249</sup>

Gumi's book was not written for the public as he himself confessed:

“The book had not been written for general reading, and I was aware that in formulating its major arguments a lot had been taken for granted.”<sup>250</sup>

His book was taken by one of his students, Ismaila Idris, who used it to preach in Kaduna to the public in absence of its author who was by then in Saudi Arabia. This provoked a big controversy and a campaign against Gumi in the media. Sufi Brotherhoods defended their doctrines in the media and especially through writings of their leaders at that time. Both Sani Kafanga and Nasiru Kabara, leaders of the Tijāniyya and the Qādiriyya, wrote replies to Gumi's books. They used a polemic language to defend Sufism. They blamed Gumi of being a *Wahhābī* who misunderstood the language of Sufis and their interpretation of the text. The Sufi leaders traced Sufism in the tradition of the Prophet. They claimed to follow orthodoxy and by no means deviate from it. According to them Sufism is a part of the *sunna*.<sup>251</sup>

The situation escalated and reached the grassroots level. Sheikh Gumi was isolated in the JNI (where many Sufi leaders were present) and common people (among Sufis) became agitated against him. The reactions went as far as several

---

<sup>249</sup> Loimeier (1997) provides a detailed analysis of *al-'aqīda al-saḥīḥa* and the major argument and criticism of Gumi towards Sufi Brotherhoods see pp. 186-196.

<sup>250</sup> Gumi (1992), 145.

<sup>251</sup> For an overview of the Sufi answers see Loimeier (1997), 197-206.

attempts to kill him in Kano and Jeddah – as mentioned in his autobiography. The relationship between Gumi and the Sufi Brotherhoods took on another dimension when a new organization called *Jamā'at Izalat al-Bid'a Wa Iqamat as-Sunnah*, abbreviated as J.I.B.W.I.S. or simply, Izala, was established in Jos 1978. The founder of the organization was the same Ismaila Idris who used Gumi's book to preach in Ahmadu Bello Mosque in Kaduna.

## Chapter Three: Reform Islam versus Sufism

The success of Sheikh Gumi in building a counter-pole to Sufi-Brotherhoods has been limited by the death of the Sardauna. It was necessary for the Sheikh to find other strategies to “survive” politically and religiously. Amongst others he heavily criticized General Gowon (1966-1975), head of the military-administration, and accused him of corruption and mismanagement. This reflected the feelings of many unsatisfied young northerners and Sheikh Gumi sympathizers.<sup>252</sup> Furthermore, broadcasting Sheikh Gumi’s *tafsīr* on the radio contributed a lot to his reputation and the transmission of his ideas in northern Nigeria. Sani Umar observes two aspects of the “popularization of anti-Sufism” at that period of time. On one hand the radio presence of Sheikh Gumi as well his publications in the newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* were published in Hausa. On the other hand Gumi’s criticism was shifted from verbal attacks in public discussion to written articles and books.<sup>253</sup>

Gumi’s ideas and ideology attracted many in northern Nigeria. This can be understood within the context of Nigeria as a whole. The mid-1970s were characterized by another coup d’état which resulted in the appointment of General Murtala Muhammad as head of the state. He was killed only a few months later, and

---

<sup>252</sup> According to Loimeier (1993) young people under the Muslim Students Society (MSS) were especially attracted by Sheikh Gumi’s criticism of General Gowon. They were also unhappy with the military regime of a Christian leader; see p. 141.

<sup>253</sup> Umar, Muhammad Sani, (1993): Changing Islamic identity in Nigeria from the 1960s to the 1980s: From Sufism to anti-Sufism, in: Louis Brenner (ed.), Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa, London, Hurst, p. 163; in his autobiography Sheikh Gumi himself confessed that he never visited a radio station or prepared a particular *tafsīr* for the radio. He added that he never earned money for answering questions or for being interviewed by a radio program, see Gumi and Tsiga (1992), p. 133.

General Obasanjo took over as military president. According to Loimeier, Sheikh Gumi lost his political ambition through these events especially once the head of the state was a Christian and not a Muslim.<sup>254</sup>

Nigeria reached a certain level of economic stability in the 1970s. This was due to the oil boom at that period of time. This wealth allowed the country to reconstruct parts of what was destroyed during the civil war. The economic prosperity influenced Nigeria's position internationally. Nigeria attracted not only big international oil-companies but it became another chance for the country to be integrated in the world community. Nigeria joined OPEC in 1971. The country also started playing an important role in Africa and ameliorating its relationship with Europe, China and the Soviet Union. Internally, the economy was based on oil revenues. The currency was stabilized and money reserves were ensured. This wealth also had a dark side. Falola formulates it rightfully "Oil has been a blessing and a curse for Nigeria".<sup>255</sup> Especially during the Gowon-era several sectors of the economy were neglected. The oil industry did not solve all the problems of the country like unemployment, bureaucracy, bad infrastructure, and mismanagement. The short military-regime of Murtala Muhammad was promising in regards to fighting corruption and introducing new reforms. The civil service sector was particularly affected by these reforms which were continued by general Obasanjo. Other reforms

---

<sup>254</sup> Loimeier (1993) mentions that General Murtala Muhammad appointed Sheikh Gumi as Grand Mufti of Nigeria. This was never realized, for details see p. 142.

<sup>255</sup> Falola (1999), p. 138; the author describes the economic and socio-political situation in Nigeria during the 1970s and compares the era of General Gowon, General Murtala Muhammad, and of General Obasanjo; for more details see *Ibid.*, pp. 137-164 (chapters 9 and 10).

of government structures were undertaken particularly at the local level. Internationally, Nigeria succeeded in internationalizing problems of the African continent like the conflicts in Angola and South Africa. Dissatisfaction and government opposition started in 1978 when oil-revenues decreased and the living standard of Nigerians went down.<sup>256</sup>

For the Muslim community in Nigeria, the period of time between the 1970s and 1980s was characterized by the penetration of a “new trend” – as it is called by Anwar – namely Wahhabism. Anwar explains the rise of these kinds of ideas through both internal and external forces. Internally, the assassination of the Sardauna and the division between Sheikh Gumi and the Sufis destabilized the fragile unity of Muslims. Externally, the socio-economic and political instability as well the connection of Nigerian Muslims with the Muslim community as a whole led to the penetration of reform ideas as a proposed solution to the country’s problems.<sup>257</sup>

The transition to democracy and the new constitutional draft that started in 1976 and the Muslim call for a *Federal Sharia Court of Appeal* were important events in that period of time. The rivalry between Sheikh Gumi and Sufi-groups led to his isolation from political participation in the name of the Muslim community. Being a single preacher and ambitious politician against the strong Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya, Sheikh Gumi faced disequilibrium of capacities and power. The formation of a group or organization sharing Gumi’s ideology was only a question of time. If Gumi himself

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., pp. 151-164; high military expenses and the neglect of other sectors like education, inflation and high taxes as well bad living standards led to protests against the military regime. Falola gives the examples of demonstrations by high school and university students in 1978; see pp. 158-159.

<sup>257</sup> See more details in Anwar (1981), pp. 191-215.

was indirect in his criticism of brotherhoods and Sufism, then his student Sheikh Ismaila Idris (1937-2000) was more outspoken and direct in denouncing Sufism.

The basis for an anti-Sufi organization was arranged. Unsatisfied young people in a politically, economically and socially unstable state like Nigeria appreciated Gumi's ideas and identified themselves with his writings and statements. The enemies are not only the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya who deviated from the "right" path of Islam but also the Nigerian state that failed to find solutions to people's problems.

### ***1 What is reform in "Nigerian" Islam?<sup>258</sup>***

As a way of enhancing the discussion on the issue of reform, this chapter tries to deal with the following questions: Can we speak about reform in African Islam?<sup>259</sup> What does reform mean to Islam? What are the concepts used by African Muslims when they refer to reform? Who can be considered as reformers and who cannot? Are Sufis also reformers or do they oppose reform? Can we consider reformers and Sufis as two opposite poles? Do we need this concept at all? What does "reform movement" mean?

During my fieldwork in Nigeria and my interviews with Izala followers, Sufis, and other scholars, the terms *tajdīd* (in Arabic: renewal), *mujaddid* (in Arabic: renewer) seems to be widespread among Nigerian Muslims. Interestingly, both Izala

---

<sup>258</sup> Here I mean Islam in Nigeria in all its forms: Sufi-Islam; Reform Islam; and all other Islamic traditions in the West African country.

<sup>259</sup> The term "African Islam" is contentious. For an example of the discussion surrounding this issue see the book by Rosander, Eva Evers and David Westerlund: (1997): African Islam and Islam in Africa. Encounters between Sufis and Islamists. Athens, Ohio Univ. Press.

and Sufis refer to the same source of *tajdīd*: the Sokoto caliphate and its main figure Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio (1754-1817).<sup>260</sup> He is considered to be the first *mujaddid* of Islam in Nigeria. When I asked about the importance of these concepts and why Muslims need their religion to be renewed, my interviewees drew my attention to one *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet mentioned by Abu Dawood (d. 888), one of the most important *Ḥadīth*-collectors in the Islamic tradition:

”At the beginning of every century God will send to this community someone who will renew/revive/restore religion.”<sup>261</sup>

Theologically, there has been an on-going discussion concerning the meaning of *tajdīd*. The majority of scholars of Islam link the term *tajdīd* with “explanation”, “correction”, “revival”, and several other meanings.

In Nigeria, many Izala followers consider Sheikh Abubakar Gumi (1922-1992) to be the most important figure of *tajdīd* in the post-colonial era. The fact that he came in the 20th century confirms their understanding that a reformer appears every hundred years. This is interesting because the 14<sup>th</sup> Islamic century commenced in

---

<sup>260</sup> On the History of Islam and the Sokoto Caliphate as well for the life and influence of Usman Dan Fodio see the introductory chapter on the History of Islam in Nigeria.

<sup>261</sup> The Book: *Sunan Abi Dawood* is considered as one of the most important sources of *ḥadīth* collections. In the science of *ḥadīth* (*ʿIlm al-ḥadīth*), many discussions took place on the authenticity of any statement by the Prophet. Without going deeper into those discussions, we have to mention that there are categories developed to classify any *ḥadīth*. The most known are *ṣaḥīḥ* (in Arabic: authentic), *ḍaʿīf* (in Arabic: weak); other use the terms *ḥasan* (in Arabic: good) and *munkar* (in Arabic: rejected) but many other connotations and categorizations exist. More important for one *ḥadīth* is if it is *mutawātir* (in Arabic: narrated by several known narrators) or not; considering the quotation from Abu Dawood’s collections, a discussion concerning the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* (mentioned above) if it is authentic or not? There is no clear answer to that question although the majority of Islamic scholars consider it as such.

1882 and ended in 1979. Many theologians accepted the mentioned *ḥadīth*, but its authenticity is still debated. The literature on reform (*tajdīd*) is linked to diverse definitions and interpretations. In the following, a few approaches will be illustrated.

The historian, Mukhtar Umar Bunza, tries to look at the impact of “north African Tajdeed Tradition”<sup>262</sup> on northern Nigeria. According to him, “Tajdeed refers to a periodic renewal of faith. It is thus considered to be rebirth, puritanism, fundamentalism, re-assertion, awakening, reformism, resurgence, renewal, reassurance, revitalization, militancy, activism, integrism, millenianism, messianism, return to Islam, march of Islam, etc.”<sup>263</sup> The first experience with reform in northern Nigeria came – according to Mukhtar Bunza – with the Algerian Islamic scholar al-Maghīlī (d. 1505)<sup>264</sup> who came with a religious mission and he furthermore “advocated the socio-economic transformation and political restructuring of the state to conform to *sharīʿa*.”<sup>265</sup> The distinguished Egyptian scholar al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505) who visited West Africa and then corresponded with Hausa kings is by the same author also considered to be one of the contributors to “reform” in that area. Also local *ʿulamāʾ* seemed to be regarded during the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a continuation of the

---

<sup>262</sup> Bunza, Umar Mukhtar (2005): The North African factor in 'tajdeed' tradition in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria, In: The Journal of North African Studies 10:3/4, pp. 325-338.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p. 325.; the author sees that Tajdeed started in Nigeria from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, although the relationship between North Africa and Hausaland goes back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the period when Islam reached the north of the African continent.

<sup>264</sup> For life and influence of al-Maghīlī in Hausaland see Batrān, 'Abd-Al-'Azīz 'Abd-Allah (1973): A Contribution to the Biography of Shaikh Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd-Al-Karīm Ibn Muḥammad ('Umar-A 'Mar) Al-Maghīlī, Al-Tilimsānī, in: *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 381-394; also see Gwarzo, Hassan Ibrahim (1972): The life and teachings of al-Maghīlī with particular reference to the Saharan Jewish community, PhD, SOAS, London.

<sup>265</sup> Bunza (2005), p 327.

reform project in northern Nigeria. They brought several writings and books of the Mālikiyya in North Africa.<sup>266</sup> The period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century is called by Bunza, or a period of “emerging scholars” and resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate as part of Usman Dan Fodio’s reform program during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>267</sup> Also during the colonial and postcolonial period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, revivalism in the Hausaland seems to have its roots in North Africa’s experience with Islamism. Scholars like Ḥasan al-Bannā’ (1906-49), Sayyid Quṭb (1906-66), Muḥammed ‘Abduh (1849-1905), al-Afghānī (1838-1897) are considered by Bunza to be “sources of materials and inspiration” for the Nigerian revivalism movement.<sup>268</sup> To give examples of reform in post-colonial Nigeria, Bunza mentioned Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and the major Islamic organizations that he deeply affected: Jamā‘at Naṣr al-Islām (JNI) and the Izala-movement. Also Zakzakys Muslim Brothers movement and others have been influenced by writings from North Africa (e.g. Sayyid Quṭb and Ḥasan al-Bannā’).<sup>269</sup> Bunza goes further in recognizing that the call for *sharī‘a* in northern Nigeria should also to be understood in the context of *tajdīd* inspired by Mālikī jurisprudence and North African scholars of Islam.<sup>270</sup> Thus, Bunza’s historical account highlights the distinctive role of the North African scholars over reform in Nigeria.

---

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p 328; al-Mudawwana al-Kubra, al-Risala al-Qayrawaniyya, Mukhtassar Khalil are some examples mentioned books of Malikiyya by the author.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p 330.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p 331.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., pp 331-333.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., p 333.

According to Loimeier “reform” has no fixed definition (it is rather a described but not defined concept). In an Islamic context, reform is linked to several connotations like *tajdīd* (in Arabic: renewal); *iṣlāḥ* (in Arabic: restitution, restoration); *iḥyāʾ* (in Arabic: revival); *ṣaḥwa* (in Arabic: awakening).<sup>271</sup> For Sub-Saharan-Africa, Loimeier identifies the concept *tajdīd* as key concept for reform during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. He summarizes his understanding of the concept of reform as “change with a program”. Its meaning is especially related – according to Loimeier – to criticism of immoral life or government. Loimeier regards a change during the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the level of terminology from using *tajdīd* to *iṣlāḥ* which is more related to “programmatische reorientation of Muslim reformers” as well as to “new types of Islamic reform movements in Sub-Saharan Africa.”<sup>272</sup> Generally, “reform” is to be found in both in academic and non-academic literature and is related to societal, political, and religious movements. The concept is translated as “progress” and “modernization” or as “renewal of Society on the basis of “fundamental” dogma.”<sup>273</sup> Loimeier suggests the following definition of reform: “Reform has many meanings. It has modernizing as well conservative, liberal, progressive, egalitarian, elitist, activist or revolutionary connotations.”<sup>274</sup> He adds that any reform movement “conduct a specific dialogue

---

<sup>271</sup> See Loimeier, Roman (2007): “Yesu Hakusulubiwa –Jesus wurde nicht gekreuzigt”: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Vergleichs religiöser Reformbewegungen; Paper presented at the University of Leipzig, 11/10/2007, p 2. The Author mentions that other concepts are also found in literature like *nahda* (renaissance), *taraqqi* or *taqaddum* (progress), see footnote (4).

<sup>272</sup> My English translation of Loimeier’s German Terminology „programmatische Neuausrichtung muslimischer Reformen“ and „neuer Typus islamischer Reformbewegungen im subsaharanischen Afrika“, Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p 3.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. (my translation).

with history and the canon of its own religious tradition (...).<sup>275</sup> Loimeier speaks of “markers” that characterize religious reform movements. He listed eleven markers: having particular religious reference (particular person or event), using specific texts and particular interpretation, choosing particular types of organization, particular position to the state – just to mention some.<sup>276</sup> The example of Loimeier hints at the fluidity of the term “reform”.

Ousmane Kane, from political sciences, refers to “reform movements” as “those Islamic movements that attempt to reform social and religious practices”<sup>277</sup> and differentiates between them and “islamist movements” that “attempt to capture political power and establish the rule of God.”<sup>278</sup> Kane’s approach links a reform program to social change. This aspect is missed in several studies on Islam in and outside of the African continent.<sup>279</sup> Furthermore, Kane understands reform – of Izala (the movement he is dealing with) – as a modernity project.<sup>280</sup>

According to Peter Clark, sociologist and historian of religion, “Islamic reform in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon.”<sup>281</sup> It becomes more visible in the context of the

---

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., p 4 (my translation)

<sup>276</sup> See these eleven “markers” explained by Loimeier; Ibid., pp 4-5.

<sup>277</sup> Kane, Ousmane (2003): *Islamic Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, p. 7.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ousmane Kane listed several case studies dealing with reform Islam in Algeria, Indonesia, Morocco, Egypt, Oman, Ivory Coast, French Sudan, and Guinea. In these examples, the author misses a “direct causality between social change and the rise of a new Islamic attitudes or beliefs” – as he said. See pp. 8-14.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. especially see pp 1-7 and Kane’s discussion on his understanding of “modernity” in relationship to reform Islam (Izala Movement).

<sup>281</sup> Clarke, Peter (1988): *Islamic Reform in contemporary Nigeria: methods and aims*, in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (2), p. 519.

“nation-state” where Muslims as well as Christians were, and still are asked to answer the demands of one nation. From their site, Nigerians (Christians and Muslims) questioned the “character and orientation” of that state.<sup>282</sup> Clarke locates Islamic reform in Nigeria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Sokoto *jihād* of Usman Dan Fodio has not only “religious, political, social, and economic” effects on Muslims and non-Muslims, but it also led to “fear and opposition to Islam which persist to this day”.<sup>283</sup>

In contemporary Nigeria, Clarke identifies two types of reform: moderate and radical. Clarke makes his differentiation on the basis of the sources used by reformers. He considers those who only rely on the Qur’ān and the *sunna* of the Prophet as “fundamentalists”, while moderates are those relying on other sources (in addition to the two). When it comes to *sharī’a*, both (moderate and conservative types of reform) have similar attitudes. Both of them desire to Islamize Nigeria although the “fundamentalist” invests more energy in that direction.<sup>284</sup> Furthermore Clarke understands Reform in its social and economic circumstances. By giving the example of Maitatsine riots in Kano in the beginning of the 1980s and the Kafancan disturbance of 1987, Clarke tries to find a link between fundamentalism and Islamic reform. He suggests the following definition:

“Fundamentalism is essentially about the reform of Islam for the purpose of creating a more just society along Islamic lines. It is not only a moral response to what it sees as the corrupting influence of western libertarianism and exploitation, and godless socialism, but

---

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., pp 521-2

also a failure of western, secular (...) political, economic, and educational systems to provide solutions to the country's problems."<sup>285</sup>

Clarke concludes by making a distinction between what he called "intellectual and moral" reform of the Sokoto Caliphate and between the "purifying" reform that fights innovation and tends to Islamize Nigeria.<sup>286</sup>

The expert on Nigerian Islam, Andrea Brigaglia<sup>287</sup>, observes the transformation of the concept of Islamic "reform" in Nigeria. He stresses that the Muslim identity of the elites during the Sokoto Caliphate was related to Sufism and was adopted by the masses. Interestingly, "reform" as a concept is also present in Sufi milieu. Brigaglia gives the example of the "doctrinal reorientation" of the Tijāniyya headed by Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975)<sup>288</sup> and also of the Qādiriyya led by Sheikh Nasiru Kabara (d. 1996)<sup>289</sup> in Kano. He also quotes the concepts used by John Paden who speaks of "traditional" and "reformed" brotherhoods (Qādiriyya, Tijāniyya)<sup>290</sup> respectively.

The appearance of a "counter-reform" project of Sheikh Gumi (d. 1992) and the Izala movement inspired by him drew attention to a new discussion about reform.

The internal discussion among Sufis on reformism seems to have taken a new

---

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p 527

<sup>286</sup> Ibid, p 538.

<sup>287</sup> Brigaglia (2004).

<sup>288</sup> For more details, see Seesemann (2004); also Brigaglia, Andrea (2001), "The Fayda Tijāniyya of Ibrahim Niasse: Genesis and implications of a Sufi doctrine", *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 14/15, pp. 41-56.

<sup>289</sup> Among others see Loimeier (1997), pp. 52-70 on the Life of Sheikh N. Kabara and the development of the Qādiriyya-Nasiriyya.

<sup>290</sup> Brigaglia (2004), pp 108-109.

dimension. This tendency is a result of the anti-colonial resistance of many West African Muslims against colonial masters, but also is due to Islamic education and rapprochement to the Arabic and Islamic world.<sup>291</sup> Sheikh Gumi is the pioneer of religious reformism in post-colonial Nigeria (from 1969), but it seems that “reform” or “reformism” appear to have been used even during the colonial time.<sup>292</sup>

Sani Umar<sup>293</sup>, an expert on Islam in Nigeria, uses the concept of “Islamic modernism” to qualify the Izala movement and its Salafi/Wahhābī program. This form of Islam seems to be the counter-pole of the so-called “popular Islam” represented by the Sufis. The argument of Sani Umar is that Izala adopted a modern “organizational format” and its leaders and members have such an educational background.<sup>294</sup> Dealing with the development of Izala, Sani Umar speaks of the division of Izala beginning in 1984 and how doctrinal differences lead to different orientations within the movement. On the one hand a faction of Izala follows the teachings of Sheikh Idris (the founder) and which is considered the “hard-liner” faction (fundamentalist) while the other one (those who are largely Medina-educated members) is more moderate or “soft-line” (as Umar calls it). In fact, Sani Umar regards the terms

---

<sup>291</sup> Brigaglia (2004) quotes the study of Kaba Lansiné (1974) on Wahhabism in Mali and how Islamic education in Egypt (Al-Azhar) and Sudan (Omdourman) played a role in the “reformist” movement established in Mali, see pp 115-117

<sup>292</sup> In the context of Nationalism and resistance against the British Colony, Sa’du Zungur and Amino Kano criticized the established traditional authority of the Ulama in the north in that they considered it as an obstacle to any “reform” or political progress. See Brigaglia (2004), pp. 116-118

<sup>293</sup> Umar, Muhammad Sani (2001): Education and Islamic trends in Northern Nigeria, 1970s-1990s, *Africa Today* 48:2, pp. 127-150.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134; Sheikh Gumi and Sheikh Idris attended modern schools like the Kano School of Arabic; concerning the Sufi-context Sani Umar speaks of a transformation to “virtual civic associations.”

“fundamentalist” and “modernist” as not reflecting “stable realities”. He shows the flexibility of both concepts by giving the example of how the “*‘ulamā*”s traditionalism shifts to modernism” and “Izala’s shifts from modernism to fundamentalism”.<sup>295</sup>

The Africanist and Historian, John Hunwick<sup>296</sup> observes a “connection” between reform and revival in an Islamic context. Revivalism in Africa started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Usman Dan Fodio in Nigeria and Muḥammad Aḥmad in Sudan. Both movements took place to “regenerate” religion (*tajdīd*) and the two leaders appeared to be the *mahdī*<sup>297</sup> (in Arabic: rightly guided restorer of religion) of their time.<sup>298</sup> Although Nigeria and Sudan have two different experiences with Islam and colonialization, Hunwick links the idea of Islamic revival and Mahdism to social, political, and economical changes in both countries. In Nigeria Usman Dan Fodio is seen as a *mahdī* who brought change especially to Muslims. His “movement” became a source of inspiration during the post-colonial era when Muslims called for implementation for *sharī‘a* as a solution to the problems of the West African country. In Sudan, the situation is comparable. The rise of change is due to social and political problems of the country. The appearance of the Sudanese *mahdī* Muḥammed

---

<sup>295</sup> For Umar’s analyses of the two Izala factions see pp. 135-138; concerning the different types of shifts see p. 138.

<sup>296</sup> Hunwick, John (2005): Islamic Revival in Africa: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. In: Kamari Maxine Clarke (2005): Local practices, Global controversies: Islam in Sub-Saharan African Context, pp. 25-42.

<sup>297</sup> On the concept of *mahdī* see among others Kramer, Roberts S. (2009): Mahdi, In: Esposito, John (eds.): The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic world, pp.448-450; the author refers to standard work on the term *mahdī* and refers to Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah*, chap 3 where the term is discussed in *sunni* as well as *shi‘a* Islam.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-30.

Aḥmad at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century was an answer to colonialism. The religion of Islam became an identity marker for Muslims. This revival attempt reflects their wish. Similar developments can also be found in the 1989 implementation of Islamic law – *sharī'a* – as a result of years of social and political instability in Sudan.<sup>299</sup>

The concept of reform narrated above is multifaceted and complex. Sometimes this concept is presented in relationship to new Islamic movement with Salafi/Wahhābī tendencies opposing Sufis and Sufism<sup>300</sup>. In other contexts reform is to be found among Sufis – as Brigaglia points it out.<sup>301</sup> In some cases reform is related to other phenomenon (like fundamentalism) and discussed in relationship to it and to the Nigerian nation-state – as Clarke did.<sup>302</sup> This demonstrates that the concept of reform is fluid and depends on the circumstances in which it is used. I would agree with Kane and Loimeier who relate reform to a “program with change”. Analyzing the context of reform instead of defining it appears to be more fruitful. Tariq Ramadan, the popular scholar of Islam, articulates it rightly: “We are in a kind of terminological haze in which the meaning of words is so variable that one no longer knows exactly what the discourse about “reform” refers to.”<sup>303</sup> This sentence summarizes the dilemma of defining “reform”. In the African context, including

---

<sup>299</sup> For more details on revival in Nigeria and Sudan, see Ibid., pp 32-40.

<sup>300</sup> See Loimeier 1997; Kane 2004 and Sani Umar 1983, 1988.

<sup>301</sup> See Brigaglia 2004.

<sup>302</sup> See Clark 1988.

<sup>303</sup> Ramadan, Tariq (2007): On the Concept of Reform; at <http://www.tariqramadan.com> (accessed 01.12.09); even in the European context, debates on reform are still going on. Ramadan mentions different concepts meaning reform. Among others: *Iḥyā'* (in Arabic: revival), *tajdīd* (in Arabic: renewal), *iṣlāḥ* (in Arabic: reform). According to him, *tajdīd* and *iṣlāḥ* are more related and complementary. See also his book *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (2009).

Nigeria, we witness similar developments. In times of uncertainty, turmoil and political instability, the door of “reform” and the need for change are more debated than in times of prosperity. The example given by Hunwick in Nigeria and Sudan shows it very well.<sup>304</sup>

One cannot study Islamic reform in Nigeria without speaking of the Izala movement. This movement stands for the recent experiences of Nigerian Muslims with a structured organization that took up the course of purifying Islam from innovation and establishing the *sunna* of the Prophet. Before dealing with “reform” as seen by Izala itself, a few other examples of Muslim groups are introduced. Shi’ites, JTI, Maitatsine, Boko Haram or Salafiyya oriented groups all share one goal: reforming Islam in Nigeria. These groups, their doctrines, and their objectives are introduced in the following section.

## ***2 Shi’ites in Nigeria***<sup>305</sup>

This movement is led by Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky. The Movement itself was influenced by the Iranian revolution of 1979. This influence developed into to a full Shi’ite orientation. The movement calls itself “The Islamic Movement” and is known in Nigeria as Yan Shi’a (Shi’ite people). The group is based in Kano and it became more visible among Nigerian Muslims as the only group publicly opposing the *shari’a* re-implementation and declaring this point of view openly.

---

<sup>304</sup> See Hunwick 2005.

<sup>305</sup> Sulaiman, Muhammad Dahiru (1993): Shiaism and the Islamic movement in Nigeria 1979-1991, Islam et sociétés au Sud du Sahara 7, pp. 5-16.

The Shi'ite doctrine originates in Nigeria's social, economic and political challenges during the colonial era and especially throughout the post-independence period.<sup>306</sup> Inspired by the success of the revolution in Iran and due to Nigeria's turmoil in many directions Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky started introducing Shi'ite ideas to the West African country. Sheikh Zakzaky was born in Zaria in 1950 and studied at Ahmadu Bello University in the same city. He was among the most active members of the Muslim Students Society (MSS) before he left it. He was amongst the students who demonstrated against the state. He visited Iran in the 1980s and came back to recruit new members for his "Islamic movement". He sees in Islam a solution to the country's problems and propagated these ideas through lectures and public gatherings in northern Nigeria. He opposed the nation-state with all its symbols and defined it as a *ṭāghūt* (in Arabic: symbol of idolatry, evil). In many cases, demonstrations by Zakzakys followers turned into violent contestations against the police. Zakzaky himself was imprisoned several times because of his ideas and opposition to the federal state.<sup>307</sup> There were debates in Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s concerning the "Islamic movement" and whether it was a real Shi'ite group or not. The debates were related to the ideology and practices of its members. There was no doubt that it started as a political movement inspired by Iran and the revolution of 1979. Nowadays the movement seems to be fully involved in Shi'ite

---

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-8.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-10.

doctrine.<sup>308</sup> Zakzakys position on the re-implementation and his views in this direction will be elaborated within the context of the *sharī'a* debates.<sup>309</sup>

### ***3 The JTI in Nigeria***

Jamā'at Tajdīd al-Islām (in Arabic: Society for Renewal of Islam) or simply abbreviated as JTI is an Islamic group that emerged in northern Nigeria during the mid-1990s. This group and its main figure Abubakar Mujahid split from Ibraheem Zakzaky and his Shi'ism-project. Sheikh Mujahid himself teaches at Ahmadu Bello University of Zaria. The group seems to have its leading personalities in Zaria, Kaduna, and Kano. I had the chance to visit one of their mosques during my stay in Nigeria. I also interviewed Sheikh Mujahid himself on the *sharī'a*-issue in Nigeria. As he explained, the group played a crucial role in framing the *sharī'a* project. Sheikh Mujahid was close to Zakzaky and deeply influenced by his ideas. He travelled to Iran after the revolution of 1979. The fact that Zakzaky “converted” to Shi'ite doctrine resulted in a split from Zakzaky, as well as from some former followers. Ahmad Bello,<sup>310</sup> a Nigerian scholar from Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, mentions that a lecture given by Zakzaky on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1994, led to the split of a group of nine people including Sheikh Mujahid. In this lecture Zakzaky openly declared the

---

<sup>308</sup> The Shiite influence is visible on the homepage of the movement [www.islamicmovement.org](http://www.islamicmovement.org) especially through celebrations related to Shiite Islam; this has been confirmed by a personal visit to Az-Zakzaky House in Zaria in January 2007.

<sup>309</sup> See chapter “Sharī'a Debate of 1999”.

<sup>310</sup> Bello, Ahmad (2008): The Role of Jamaat at-Tajdīd al-Islami and its role in spreading the Arabic and Islamic culture in Bauchi”; BA-Dissertation in Arabic Studies, Ahmadu Bello University.

adoption of the Shi'ite doctrine.<sup>311</sup> Consequently, the JTI declared its own *da'wa* based on the Qur'ān and within Sunni Islam. It derives its doctrine from Ḥasan al-Bannā' (1906-1948), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The slogan of the Society is "Allah is our target, the Prophet is our example, the Qur'ān is our canon, *jihād* is our way, and dying for the cause of God is our noble wish".<sup>312</sup>

The idea of founding this organization took shape in January 1995. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt was used extensively as model. At the head of the JTI there is the Majlis al-Shūra al-ʿĀmm (in Arabic: General Consultation Board) followed by a Director General. At the third level there is: a general secretary, a treasurer, leaders of committees (culture, economy, education, media, first aid, and students work), and a person responsible for the different regions. Under this last category there are state leaders, then a consultations board at the state level, then group leaders, then *ḥalqa*-responsibles (in Arabic: circle), and finally family representatives.<sup>313</sup> Sheikh Mujahid is the Director General and Ustaz Amin is his Deputy. The goals of JTI can be summarized in six points:

- 1) having an individual Muslim obeying God;
- 2) creating a Muslim house on the basis of Islamic education;
- 3) development of an Islamic Society;
- 4) development of an Islamic State on the basis of the Qur'ān and *sunna*;
- 5) making the Islamic revival a reality;

---

<sup>311</sup> Bello (2008), pp. 7-12.

<sup>312</sup> Bello (2008), p. 13.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

6) re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate.<sup>314</sup>

The JTI stands for an Arabic and Islamic identity and opposes Western cultural colonialism especially in the field of education. To achieve its goals the JTI has developed Arabic and Islamic educational programs in Bauchi State. It actively supports '*ulamā'* who feed into their doctrine, establishes schools dealing with Islamic thought and Arabic language, and preaches in villages.<sup>315</sup>

In his PhD-thesis on Islamic civil societies in Nigeria, (Bayero University, Kano), Tahir Haliru Gwarzu<sup>316</sup> dedicates a chapter on the JTI. He mentions how the movement split from Zakzaky in 1994 and established an independent organization. The author describes the leaders of JTI as "*ulamā'* of solid religious knowledge, devoting their time to teaching, preaching, and advocating the association's ideology."<sup>317</sup> Members of the JTI are recruited via public preaching and the activities of the association. Schools and mosques are both good places to recruit newcomers. JTI attracts youth and students. Women's education is also part of the association's concerns.<sup>318</sup> Being associated with JTI requires registration with an *usra* (in Arabic: family or cell). Gwarzu categorizes members of JTI into religious leaders, first aid groups/*hisba* (in Arabic: an Islamic institution for controlling values and enforcing conformity of behaviour according to *sharī'a*), and ordinary members.<sup>319</sup> In the matter

---

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-29.

<sup>316</sup> Gwarzo, Tahir Haliru (2006): Islamic civil society associations and the state: A Kano State case study 1994-2004, PhD in Political Science, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>318</sup> Gwarzu (2006), p. 193.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

of resources, the association relies on small donations, wealthy members, schools fees, and on selling newspapers and business ventures.<sup>320</sup> The association occupies religious, social, and political fields in northern Nigeria. Its activities vary from seminars and preaching sessions, to public lectures on both national and international issues. Its *da'wa* activities tend to invite all Muslims without excluding any specific group. The association apparently played a crucial role in mobilizing people for the implementation of Islamic law at the end of the 1990s. Furthermore it seems that they contributed to the formation of *hisba*-groups in Zamfara State and to the spread of *sharī'a* in northern Nigerian states.<sup>321</sup>

#### ***4 From Maitatsine to Boko Haram - a coincidence or a continuation?***

The heterogeneity within the Islamic community in Nigeria is a fact. Scholars face difficulties in giving an exact number of Muslims (and Christians as well) in the country. This is also the case for Islamic groups. For many people, Sufism in Nigeria is only represented by the Tijāniyya and Qādiriyya, but the spectrum of Sufi groups is wider than these two orders (Shādhiliyya and many other Sufi groups are rarely mentioned). Nevertheless, anti-Sufism is basically represented by Sheikh Gumi, and after his death it has been represented by the Izala-movement. Among Nigerian Muslims there are other groups and individuals rejecting Sufism but which are not visible in the society. There are many other groups and orientations mostly within Sunni Islam. The only Shi'ite oriented group is that of Zakzaky.

---

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>321</sup> For more details see Ibid., pp. 203-279.

During the postcolonial era and because of the riots during the 1980s in Kano, the Maitatsine movement was identified. A decade ago the struggle between followers of Abubakar Gumi and the representatives of Sufi-brotherhoods reached the highest level of contestation. Boko Haram, which existed before the events of 2009 and 2010, became more visible. Even the mass media in Western countries reported about the movement, especially after the events of July 2009, which involved the killing of hundreds in northern Nigeria. The list of Islamic groups is long and cannot be fully introduced.

Maitatsine was the group of Muhammadu Marwa, a religious scholar and preacher originally from Cameroon who settled in northern Nigeria. Maitatsine means in Hausa “may God damn you”, and was directed at Marwa’s opponents. The movement’s leader was related to a revolt in Kano during the 1980s and was killed during one of the riots. The group goes back to the beginning of the 1970s when the number of its followers increased massively. Maitatsine recognizes the Qur’ān as the sole source of Islam. He claimed himself to be a prophet. Apart from his rejection of some Muslim practices, he also opposed western materialism and all of its aspects. Any kind of dress related to the west was rejected, and even travelling by car or bus was not appreciated by him and his followers. Members of the group were not only Nigerians, but came also from neighboring countries like the Republic of Niger. The Maitatsine was involved in several riots against the police in northern Nigeria between 1980 and 1985. In 1980 in Kano, when the police attempted to arrest Muhammadu Marwa they were resisted by his followers. The unrest that occurred for

a few days resulted in over four thousand victims. The leader himself was fatally injured. The turbulence extended to other parts of the north like Maiduguri, Kano, and continued in Kaduna in 1982, Gongola state (today Adamawa and Taraba states) in 1984, and Gombe in 1985. Many people lost their lives and Nigerian authorities failed even to identify the reasons behind the events. Maitatsine followers were mobile and hardly distinguishable from ordinary people. The majority of the group is poor. This may explain their rejection of the society and the potentiality of their recruitment.<sup>322</sup> The rise of Maitatsine cannot be studied out of its socio-political and economical context. The same period of time witnessed the rise of other Islamic groups and movements.<sup>323</sup>

News on Boko Haram riots in northern Nigeria attracted worldwide attention in the summer of 2009. The brutality and the high number of victims brought the

---

<sup>322</sup> Elizabeth Isichei (1987): The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 17 (3), pp. 194-208; for a historical overview on Maitatsine as well its social, political and especially economical dimension see Lubeck Paul M. (1985): Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine explained, In: *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 55 (4), pp. 369-389. When the Maitatsine riots started the Sufi-Izala controversy was going on and Izala was accused by Sufi brotherhood of being behind the violence. Izala then changed its tactics of physical confrontation from 1981, see more details in Loimeier, Roman (1992): Die Dynamik religiöser Unruhen in Nord-Nigeria, In: *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 27 (1), pp. 59-80 (esp. pp. 67-69). For the teaching and origin of Maitatsine see also Hiskett, Mervyn (1980): The Maitatsine Riots in Kano, 1980: An Assessment, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 17(3), pp. 209-223.

<sup>323</sup> For the rise of Islamic organizations in northern Nigeria from the 1970s see a description of "the emergence of new Ideas and militant organizations, 1970-1980" by Anwar, Auwalu (1989): *Struggle for Influence and Identity: The Ulama in Kano, 1937-1989*, MA-Thesis (History), University of Maiduguri, pp. 180-269. Among others the rise of Izala and Jundullahi (a Sufi oriented and anti-Izala organization in Kano) are mentioned as well the social, political and economic circumstances of Nigeria.

Maitatsine riots of the 1980s back to into focus. Mass media<sup>324</sup> reported extensively on the events and were divided in their condemnations of the movement, its anti-west orientation as well its ideology on one hand and criticizing the Nigerian state's way of dealing with it on the other. In academia the movement seems to attract attention of scholars from different disciplines.

Boko Haram<sup>325</sup> is an Islamic group led by Muhammad Yusuf, a Nigerian Muslim who was arrested and killed during the riots of 2009 in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. The name "Boko Haram" translates in Hausa as "western education is a sin". The movement is often labeled as a "sect". It is also referred to as the "Taliban

---

<sup>324</sup> Most of German newspapers (like Die Zeit, FAZ, Süddeutsche Zeitung, etc) and magazines (like Der Spiegel, Focus) as well TV-programs reported extensively on the events at the end of July 2009 and those in December 2010. Also the BBC and Aljazeera English (to mention other examples) spoke of the riots in Nigeria. For a comparative study of Aljazeera English and the BBC see Gerhard, Tobias (2010): Counter-discourse in global news media? How Aljazeera English covers sectarian violence in Nigeria, MA, Central European University, Department of International Relations and European Studies, Budapest, Hungary.

In the first riots the media estimated the number of victims to be over 700. In 2010 several conflicts between Boko Haram and the police especially in Maiduguri were registered and mostly accompanied by deadly shootings. Boko Haram became well known because of its tendency towards western education and its militant answer to the Nigerian state. There was also an interpretation assuming a connection between that group and the Taliban of Afghanistan.

<sup>325</sup> Not much has been written in academia on Boko Haram but the group is gradually subject of intensive study by researchers from different backgrounds. Adesoji, Abimbola (2010): The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria, In: *Africa Spectrum* 45 (2), pp. 95-108; for more understanding of the genesis of the movement see and possible connections of Boko Haram in and outside Nigeria see Brigaglia, Andrea (2012): Ja'far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria, In: *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, Vol. 11, pp. 35-44; Brigaglia, Andrea (2012), A Contribution to the History of the Wahhabi Da'wa in West Africa: The Career and the Murder of Shaykh Ja'far Mahmoud Adam (Daura, ca. 1961/1962-Kano 2007), in: *Islamic Africa*, 3, 1, 1-23.

of Nigeria” and in many cases people have speculated about its relationship to the Al-Qaeda network.<sup>326</sup>

The group has existed under different names, and had another leader from the mid-1990s (if not earlier) and became visible in Yobe state as a result of its confrontations with the police.<sup>327</sup> In the year 2004 some students in Borno and Yobe withdrew from the university and joined Boko Haram. The Nigerian federal government became aware of the group in 2007.<sup>328</sup>

The group ideology consists of denying western culture and way of life and establishing Islamic values and norms on the basis of *sharī'a*. It opposes the secular state and attempts to resist it. The leader himself made use of western technology like “exotic cars, the latest communication equipment and the best medical services”<sup>329</sup>. The members of the groups come from different social backgrounds, and vary from former students and university lecturers to jobless and lawless people. The majority of them come from an underprivileged background. Many factors have

---

<sup>326</sup> Muhammad Yusuf (1970-2009) was from Yobe State. He was married to four wives and father of twelve children. He was educated in Chad and Niger Republic. He attended Qur'anic school and broke with education at the secondary level. He rejected Darwinism, the Nigerian State; and western civilization. His group sees establishing Sharī'a in the whole country is a duty to be fulfilled; see Onuoha, Freedom C. (2010): The Islamist challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained, In: African Security Review, Vol. 19 (2), pp. 56-57.

<sup>327</sup>; Ibid., p. 55; the author narrates that the group was known as “Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah wal hijra” and its leader was Abubakar Lawan. After that it has different names like “Taliban”, Yusufiyya, and Boko Haram. It was called by Taliban through the events of December 2003, when the group stormed police stations and other buildings, occupied them and hoisted the Taliban's flag. In 2004 the group founded a base called “Afghanistan” in Yobe state. The new leader was Muhammad Yusuf.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

<sup>329</sup> Adesoji (2010), p. 100.

led them to join the movement of Muhammad Yusuf. Among others, lack of opportunities, poverty, educational deficiency, unemployment and corruption.<sup>330</sup>

Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen see the riots related to Boko Haram as the first "...intra-state governmental power since 1966." An armed struggle that had already started in 2005 broke out again in 2009.<sup>331</sup> Jonathan Hill relates the rise of Boko Haram to the re-implementation of *shari'a* in northern Nigeria. According to him the group emerged in 2002 as an answer to the re-implementation project and quickly recruited adherents among young people, women and students.<sup>332</sup>

There are speculations as to where to place Boko Haram within the Islamic spectrum. In the absence of evidence about a link to foreign Islamic movements and organizations, it is difficult to place it within a particular Islamic ideology or group. Nevertheless it is compared to the Taliban and its model. Apart from that, it is situated within the spectrum of groups with Islamic-Jihadist and fundamentalist orientations.<sup>333</sup> There is no proof about monetary support from outside to Muhammad

---

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>331</sup> Harbom, Lotta and Peter Wallensteen (2010): Armed conflict 1946-2009, In: *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 47 (4), pp. 501-509.

<sup>332</sup> Hill, Jonathan N. C. (2010): Sufism in Northern Nigeria: Force for counter-radicalization?-  
[www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil](http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil), pp. 1-65.

<sup>333</sup> Adesoji (2010) mentions that the "modus operandi" of Boko Haram is "fashioned after the Taliban" model; The author also listed the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) of Algeria, Tablighi of Pakistan, Wahabiyya of Saudi Arabia, and Al-Qaeda as possible links to Boko Haram. These all are speculations of the press in and outside of Nigeria and need further investigation; see p. 101.

Yusuf. Some wealthy sympathizers from northern Nigeria seem to have supported him financially. One can only speculate about the reasons for this assistance.<sup>334</sup>

### ***5 Salafiyya<sup>335</sup> oriented groups***

The Salafiyya is oriented after *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* (in Arabic: pious predecessors; first three generations after the death of the Prophet). There are Salafiyya-oriented groups in the country like the Izala movement, but many Salafiyya scholars act as individuals. The late Sheikh Jaafar clarified in an interview that the Salafiyya as an organized group does not exist in Nigeria.<sup>336</sup> Salafi ideas are considered to be among the fastest growing Islamic orientations especially in West Africa.<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, these ideas are preferred by several Muslims in this region of the continent:

“There is a current fervour among Muslim communities for the shariah and the return to the Salaf’s vision ranks high in popularity with many Muslim masses in different parts of West Africa.”<sup>338</sup>

---

<sup>334</sup> Adesoji (2010) speaks of Alhaji Buji Foi, the former commissioner of Borno State, as a supporter of Muhammed Yusuf. There are speculations about other religious leaders and businessmen who believed in Yusuf’s cause and may have assisted him financially. The failure of the “Sharī’a project” and the desire to make change could be an explanation of that, see p. 101-102.

<sup>335</sup> For an overview on the Salafiyya generally as well for a biography of its leaders see Murtaza, Muhammad Sameer (2005): *Die Salafiya, die Reformer des Islam: eine Darstellung der Biographien und des politischen Denkens von Gamal Al-Din Al-Afgani, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Muhammad Rashid Rida und Hasan Al-Banna, sowie der Muslimbruderschaft in ihrer formativen Phase 1928 - 1932*, Norderstedt; see also chapter “Izala and Wahhabism” for a summary on Salafiyya.

<sup>336</sup> Interview in Kano, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

<sup>337</sup> Muhammad, G. Bala and M. Sani Umar (2002): Religion and the Pan-African ideal: The Experience of Salafi Islam in the West African Sub-Region; in: *African Journal of International Affairs*, p. 141.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

The emergence of Salafiyya ideas in Nigeria can be understood within the context of the struggle against “colonization” and “decolonization” and the rise of Islamic activism after the success of the Iranian Revolution. Salafī ideas were appreciated by educated as well as non-educated Muslims. Mosques, education (especially women’s education) and media such as cassettes/VHS-cassettes contributed to the propagation of the Salafiyya.<sup>339</sup> Its central strategy is to remind Muslims of the oneness of God (Arabic: *tawḥīd*) and reject all practices related to *shirk*. Salafists question the relevance of Sufism and its basis in Islam.<sup>340</sup>

Sani Umar elucidates that the emergence of Salafiyya in Nigeria took place during the 1960s. According to him this movement is a response to Sufism. This response became more structured under the Izala organization. Furthermore Izala is perceived by Sani Umar as a Salafiyya/Wahhābiyya oriented organization with a modernist agenda.<sup>341</sup>

For Roman Loimeier, the Salafiyya in Nigeria is related to Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and his *tafsīr* sessions and “dogmatic” contest with Sufi leaders. Sheikh Gumi was inspired by writings of Salafiyya forefathers like Muḥammed ‘Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, Sayyid Quṭb – amongst others.<sup>342</sup> His interpretation of the Qur’ān is to be understood within that same tradition and goes beyond the tradition of the four Islamic schools of law (Mālikiyya, Ḥanbaliyya, Ḥanafiyya, Shafi’iyya). Gumi’s

---

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-147.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., pp.148-149.

<sup>341</sup> Umar, Muhammad S. (2001): Education and Islamic Trends in Northern Nigeria: 1970s-1990s In: Africa Today, Vol. 48 (2), pp. 127-150; see pp. 132-134.

<sup>342</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 177.

terminology is strongly influenced by the language used by Salafiyya leaders themselves.<sup>343</sup>

There are many Islamic groups in Nigeria which follow Salafi ideology. They have different names like *Ahl al-Sunna* – among many others. They are currently modeled on Islamic centres like Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Sudan. It is difficult to speak of one organized group or movement called Salafiyya. It is a “trend,” or an Islamic orientation within the Muslim community. According to Bala and Umar this tendency is especially observed among youth (both men and women) and became a kind of “way of life,” particularly in places like university campuses.<sup>344</sup>

The establishment of the Izala-organization in Jos in 1978 was an answer and a concretization of many anti-Sufi oriented Muslims. With the foundation of the Izala, the conflict with the Sufis turned out to be more equally weighted. The new organization undertook the duty of criticizing Sufism and purifying Islam in Nigeria from all “non-Islamic additions”. How was the Izala established? Who were its leaders/actors? What was the agenda introduced by the organization? To what extent has Izala succeeded in achieving its objective(s)? How did the conflict with the Sufis change over the years? What is the difference between the Izala of the late 1970s and the Izala of today? All these questions as well as the Izala understanding of *bid'a*, the relationship between Izala and Wahhabism, as well the division of the organization will be highlighted in the next chapter.

---

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, p. 181.

<sup>344</sup> Bala and Umar (2002), p. 143.

## Chapter Four: The Izala movement between success and failure

After dealing with the keyword “reform” itself, the discussion proceeds to some biographical sketches of the life and work of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, the pioneer of Islamic reform in postcolonial Nigeria, and his student Sheikh Ismaila Idris who took over from him and established the Izala organization and proceeded with his own “reform” program. Furthermore, the Izala movement is to be described from its establishment until until now with focus on its division, attempts at reconciliation and its main figures in Nigeria today. Of course, the relationship with Sufis and the doctrinal discourses are not to be ignored.

### *1 Sheikh Ismaila Idris and the Izala Question*

The person of Abubakar Gumi overshadowed Sheikh Ismaila Idris, the real founder of Izala in Jos. Even now, some Nigerians (Muslims as well as non-Muslims) still believe that Gumi is the one who set up Izala. This chapter tries to give an overview on the life, influence, and writings of Sheikh Gumi and Sheikh Idris, and then clarify the Izala question.

Muhammad N. Gurama<sup>345</sup> described Sheikh Idris as someone who grew up without “games and sport”, without “fun and festivity”, but who was more interested in books since an early age.<sup>346</sup> Sheikh Idris was born in 1937 in Gwaskwarom, which is

---

<sup>345</sup> Muhammad Nuhu Gurama. (2000): Leadership trusless in an Islamic Organisation: A case study of the Jama'at Izala Al-Bid'ah Wa Iqamat Al-Sunnah (J.I.B.W.I.S.), M.A in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

modern-day Bauchi State. His grandfather, belonging to the *Jahun* tribe (Fulani), came from what is now Kano State with his entire family and their belongings to settle in that area. Sheikh Idris' father, Idris Zakariyya, was an Islamic scholar, imam, and preacher in his community. The first education of Sheikh Idris was with his father. Apart from recitation of the Qur'ān and the reading of classical books of *fiqh*, they looked after their cattle – as is the case for many Fulani.<sup>347</sup>

Muhammed Sadis tried to give an overview on Sheikh Idris's life. He indicated that Sheikh Idris started learning under several Islamic scholars. He was taught Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and Arabic. Mallam Mahmud in Bauchi especially drew the attention of Sheikh Idris to the notion of *tawḥīd*. With him, Sheikh Idris read *Mukhtasar* – among many other Islamic books of the Mālikī School of Law.<sup>348</sup> Sheikh Idris then attended the School of Arabic in Kano, where he studied Arabic under Gumi and Sheikh Hassan Khalil who were known for their “anti-*ṭarīqa* ideas” – as mentioned by Loimeier.<sup>349</sup> After his graduation, Sheikh Idris was appointed as a teacher in Bauchi State. “He was not satisfied with that because his aim in life was to preach and teach about Islam”.<sup>350</sup> As a result, he left Bauchi in order to go to Kaduna where he was appointed as a teacher in the Sultan Bello Primary School which was under the control of the newly founded organization, J.N.I.

---

<sup>347</sup> The late Sheikh Ismaila Idris Bin Zakariyya- His contribution to the development of Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'a Wa Iqamatis Sunnah (J.I.B.W.I.S) in Nigeria, B.A. in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Jos, Nigeria, p. 4; Loimeier (1997) indicates that in addition to the Fulani-language, Sheikh Idris spoke Hausa, Arabic and English, see p. 211.

<sup>348</sup> Muhammed, M. Sadis (2001), p. 6-7

<sup>349</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 211.

<sup>350</sup> Muhammed, M. Sadis (2001), p. 8.

His dream of preaching to people was realized in Kaduna where Sheikh Idris started talking to people after Friday prayers in different mosques (Kawo Mosque, Doka Mosque), but, in particular in the Sultan Bello Mosque and from time to time in the barracks of the Army. Annoyed by a report of the J.N.I. which indicated that the Kakuri mosque had been turned by some soldiers into a “beer parlour” and the impossibility of any reaction, Sheikh Idris decided to join the Nigerian Army as an Imam and his application was successful.<sup>351</sup> Sheikh Idris was employed as a Chief Imam Grade I civilian in 1<sup>st</sup> Division in Kaduna. He was known by his superiors because of his “harsh” preaching and from time to time they tried to send him to the primary schools to teach soldiers’ children, a duty that Sheikh Idris was not comfortable with. At the same time the Sheikh was also preaching to people in town, outside the barracks. Consequently he was punished, and transferred to Ibadan, where Muslims are few in number. Apart from leading prayers, Sheikh Idris had the duty of solving problems between Muslim soldiers. In Ibadan, Sheikh Idris observed that soldiers have to pay *zakāt* (in Arabic: alms) from their own salaries to the officers, so he issued a *fatwā* (in Arabic: legal opinion) condemning that act.<sup>352</sup> This act influenced the relationship between Sheikh Idris and his superiors in Ibadan. Sheikh Idris appeared to many people as a “trouble-maker” since his first day in Ibadan and his open criticism of the Imam for performing additional practices and recitations after the *zuhr* obligatory prayer (after midday prayer). Sheikh Idris called

---

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 9-11; see also Aliyu, Tamimu (n.d.): *Ingataccen Tarihin Jama’atu Izalatil Bid’ah Wa’ikamatis Sunnah* (1), p. 17, the author confirmed the event leading Sheikh Idris to join the Nigerian Army

<sup>352</sup> The JIBWIS Journal 2005, Vol. 1 No. 3, p. 8 and p. 12; see also Loimeier (1997), p. 211.

the attention of the Imam and the congregation that there is no proof of their practice neither in the Qur'ān nor in the *sunna* of the Prophet. Furthermore, he invited them to read the book of Usman Dan Fodio *Ihyā' al-Sunna* (in Arabic: revivalism of the *sunna*).<sup>353</sup> After only three months he was transferred to Kontagora, which is in modern-day Niger State.

Sheikh Idris continued his preaching to soldiers in Kontagora and even people from town came to listen to him and record his sermons/lessons. He then examined the need for establishing a Friday-mosque in the barracks and obtained permission from his Captain for it. The mosque attracted many people from inside and outside the barracks and caused problems with the local authorities.<sup>354</sup> A dispute between Sheikh Idris and an Imam from the town – a Sufi – occurred. The situation escalated and finally Sheikh Idris was demoted to Warrant Officer I. Later on, Sheikh Gumi intervened as mediator and organized a meeting between the former student of his and other local scholars in Kontagora. After the meeting, the same Imam, who was also the Emir of Kontagora, left his Sufi order.<sup>355</sup> Loimeier regards this event as a political and religious success of Sheikh Idris in Kontagora.

The next important step in Sheikh Idris' life was his transfer to Jos, the capital of Plateau State. Jos is especially meaningful because of its ethnic and religious diversity. The city still holds symbolic relevance for many Izala members today. Not

---

<sup>353</sup> Muhammed, M. Sadis (2001), p. 13-14.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. p. 16-17.

<sup>355</sup> See Loimeier (1997); Loimeier himself relies here on Umar (1983), p 51.

only was the Izala as an organization born in Jos, but it also succeeded in a milieu where Christianity has had a long tradition.<sup>356</sup>

Sheikh Idris was sent to Jos, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division. In Jos he was under the supervision of Major Alhassan who was warned about the activities and troubles created by the “new-comer” in the last stations he passed through. First of all a commitment was made that the Sheikh should not preach in places where a mosque does not exist. Sheikh Idris was in the Rukuda barracks when he started preaching in his residence. After that, he extended his activity to other areas in Jos, especially in the private houses of those who were attracted by the preaching of Sheikh Idris (the house of Alhaji Lawal Mai Suga, and the house of Alhaji Garba Pasali).<sup>357</sup> The preaching activities were also extended to other areas of the town – Dogon Dutse for e.g. He attracted more and more people especially among the Tijānīs, the dominant Sufi brotherhood in Jos. As in other places, there was attempt to transfer Sheikh Idris to Borno State but it failed.<sup>358</sup> The Sheikh was successful in establishing a network of followers. The fact that the preaching of Sheikh Idris attracted many followers was the basis for establishing an organized body. It is not clear if Sheikh Idris resigned from the Nigerian Army or if he was dismissed,<sup>359</sup> but it is a fact that he left his job to form the Izala-organization in 1978. Before dealing with the Izala, the important

---

<sup>356</sup> I spoke to many Izala people in Jos who stressed the success of Sheikh Idris in there, where many *tariqa*-people, Christians, and Pagans were/are present.

<sup>357</sup> Muhammed, M. Sadis (2001), p. 18-19.

<sup>358</sup> See Loimeier (1997), 213.

<sup>359</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 214, mentioned that Sheikh Idris was dismissed from the Nigerian Army on April, 7, 1978; according to Muhammed, M. Sadis (2001), p. 22-23, Sheikh Idris decided to resign himself in order to found the J.I.B.W.I.S and restrict himself to preaching.

events in the life of Sheikh Idris will be summarized, and a reconstruction of his character and personality will be attempted.

Loimeier observed that “recurrent manifestations of protest and rebellion (...) seem to have a constant feature in the life and career”<sup>360</sup> of Sheikh Idris. This is confirmed by the fact that he had several confrontations in every place where he worked and lived. He was opposed to many *wahala* (in Hausa: problems) in and outside of the army barracks. He was under the supervision of the Nigerian Security Service. He was not only interrogated on many occasions, but also jailed in Kano in 1978.<sup>361</sup> Sheikh Idris was outspoken and more open to criticizing Sufis and Sufism – unlike his master and teacher Sheikh A. Gumi. In an interview with a former member of Izala and actual *murshid* of the JNI in Jos, Mallam A. Lawal Adam phrased it in the following:

“With the coming of Sheikh Ismaila Idris things changed. Sheikh Idris was a student of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, but he [I. Idris] was more inclined to say: “this is *ḥarām* (in Arabic: forbidden) and this is against the *sunna*, anyone who does that is a *kāfir* (in Arabic: unbeliever). This is the way in which Sheikh Ismaila Idris came across, not like Sheikh Abubakar Gumi who was indirect.”<sup>362</sup>

The former Qur’ān reciter under Sheikh Idris, Sheikh Alhassan Said al-Hafiz (in the Kanuri language *ala ramma* is a title for a person who memorizes the Qur’ān) who accompanied him for several years, also stressed that he was a strong and

---

<sup>360</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 212.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p214

<sup>362</sup> Interview with Mallam A. Lawal Adam in Jos, 27<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

severe person. He indicated that the character of Sheikh Idris led some Izala-followers at a later stage to doubt his leadership and way of directing the organization.<sup>363</sup>

If we compare both Sheikh Gumi and Sheikh Idris it can be stated that the latter was more present at the local level. His preaching and confrontations with locally established religious authorities and his superiors in the Nigerian Army made him famous. Followers recorded his preaching and circulated it to other interested people. For Gumi, he was more present in a wider context. His preaching was transmitted in the media and his closeness to the political authority (Ahmadu Bello) as well his position as a Grand Kadi helped him to expand his doctrine. One common thing the two shared was that they preached in the same Ahmadu Bello Mosque in Kaduna which holds symbolic meaning for many Muslims in northern Nigeria. Both of them had the same attitude towards Sufis but they are distinguishable in their method(s) of criticism.

There is no doubt, that Gumi's influence inspired Sheikh Idris to continue with his preaching against Sufism and Sufi practices. It also assisted him in attracting more followers and to escape direct confrontation with well-established Sufi Brotherhoods and with the state. Many Muslims and even non-Muslims today identify Izala with Sheikh Gumi and vice versa. One cannot deny Gumi's impact on the formation, assistance, and support of the organization. The role of Sheikh Idris, the architect of Izala, seems to have been crucial. The organization started with Gumi's

---

<sup>363</sup> Interview with Sheikh Alhassan Said in Jos, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

support and established itself independently from him. In the following section, the circumstances of the establishment will be described and the role of Sheikh Gumi will be clarified.

## ***2 The J.I.B.W.I.S.: Formation of Izala Organization in 1978***

When Sani Umar interviewed Sheikh Idris during his lifetime, he was told that the idea of establishing the organization goes back to the time when the Sheikh was preaching to soldiers in the Dogon Dutse neighbourhood of Jos. Civilians were attracted by his preaching through recorded cassettes and also came to attend his lectures. At the next stage, Sheikh Idris was invited to preach outside the barracks in “private residences”. Many of these people distanced themselves from their brotherhoods to join Sheikh Idris.<sup>364</sup> At that time one could observe that the Muslim community in Jos was divided into three major groups: those who joined or were attracted by the teachings of Sheikh Idris; those who were *ṭarīqa* members; and finally; the group of those neutral people who did not belong to any of these religious groups.<sup>365</sup>

Many observers argue that the establishment of the organization was a way to protect Sheikh Gumi. The fact that he opposed the Sufi brotherhoods as a single person and because the same was true for Sheikh Idris made the establishment of an organization that was an anti-pole to the *ṭuruq* more than a necessity. In a wider

---

<sup>364</sup> Umar, M. Sani (1983), p. 33

<sup>365</sup> Interview conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007 with Mallam Sani Modibbo, who was an Izala follower and held several posts between 1979 and 1987 before he resigned. He is actually a PhD candidate and lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Jos.

framework, “many politically interested Muslims sought alternative ways to express their political energies and thus engaged themselves in religious organizations”- as formulated by Loimeier.<sup>366</sup>

Although Sheikh Gumi described the establishment of Izala as a “quite historic event” – as people reported to him – he couldn’t hide his awareness of the new movement and its inexperienced leaders and members:

“I was somewhat worried that most members of the new association were young men and women, who combined their learning with a lot of vigor and enthusiasm. My fear was that they might not be very patient in their preaching, especially with older scholars in the society, many of whom had been brought up in a centuries-old *ṭarīqa* tradition.”<sup>367</sup>

The launch of the organization, it took place in Jos on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1978. Sheikh Gumi was invited, but could not attend. He selected two people to attend on his behalf: Muhammad Awwal Abubakar and Ibrahim Qarab.<sup>368</sup> As part of the preparations for the establishment, a committee of seven people was set up. Among others, the committee included Sheikh Ismaila Idris, Alhaji Ibrahim Musalla, Alhaji Musa Muhammad, Alhaji Hussein, Alhaji Sabo, and Mallam Tanimu Aliu. The first concern of the committee was to give a name to the organization. Alhaji Musalla suggested “*Jamā‘at al-Birr wa’l-Taqwā*” (in Arabic: Society for Welfare and Fear of God) and the name was rejected. Sheikh Musa Muhammed suggested “*Jamā‘at*

---

<sup>366</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 214.

<sup>367</sup> Gumi (1992), p. 155.

<sup>368</sup> Interview on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006 with Ustaz Nasir Abdelmuhyi, Director of High Islamic School, Sarkin Mangu, Jos. Headquarter of the Izala A which is more attached to the founder Sheikh I. Idris.

Izālat al-Bid‘a” (in Arabic: Society for the Removal of Innovation).<sup>369</sup> A comment came from Sheikh Gumi who was informed of the suggestions concerning the name. According to him, if the Society wanted to fight *bid‘a* so what should be established? Sheikh Gumi proposed “Jamā‘at Izālat al-Bid‘a wa-Iqāmat al-Sunna” (in Arabic: Society for Removal of Un-Islamic Innovation and Re-establishment of the *Sunna* of the Prophet).<sup>370</sup>

The inauguration of the Izala happened on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1978. However, the official registration took place much later in 1985. It was on December 11<sup>th</sup> 1985 that the Nigerian ministry of Internal Affairs signed the certificate of incorporation allowing Izala to be officially registered as an organization. According to my interviewee, Mallam Sani Modibbo, there is a rule that any organization must have a formal approval from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Any organization should also advertise its establishment (in a newspaper). The Ministry gave some time for reactions if there were any objections against the organization. This procedure was undertaken by Izala. As expected by many people, “not hundreds but thousands of objections from all over the country”<sup>371</sup> were sent to the ministry to stop the registration. This “mass-protest” was the reason why the approval of Izala happened in the mid-1980s and it had to do with the fact that Saidu Badawa, then a permanent secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was an Izala patron and supporter which facilitated the official

---

<sup>369</sup> Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Musalla on the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2006, at his house in the Angwan Rogo area, Jos.

<sup>370</sup> Interview on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007 with Alhaji Mustafa Imām, National Director of the Izala Kaduna First Aid Group, at his house in Zaria. This information was also confirmed by Mallam Sani Modibbo during the Interview with him on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007 in his office in Jos.

<sup>371</sup> Mallam Sani Modibbo Interview, on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007 in Jos.

accreditation of the organization.<sup>372</sup> Before being registered, the Izala operated under the umbrella of the JNI and it had several names like *Jamiyyar Yada Addinin Musulanci* (Hausa: Society for the Propagation of Islam) in Kaduna, *Kungiyar Raya Addin Musulanci* (in Hausa: Association for the Promotion of Islamic Religion) in Gusau.<sup>373</sup>

The launching of Izala was the result of the efforts of Sheikh Ismaila Idris and several other people around him. Loimeier identifies a crucial role of Sheikh Gumi in “building the organizational structure” of Izala. Furthermore he argues that many Izala leaders “were former students and followers of Gumi” and they benefited from the “existing JNI networks” in several areas of the north.<sup>374</sup> Furthermore Loimeier explains the Izala Foundation as a kind of break with the existing traditional networks that dominated not only the JNI but also the “political establishment”.<sup>375</sup> In addition, Loimeier illustrates that the continuation of the struggle between Sheikh Gumi (and

---

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.; Gurama (2000) provides a copy of the “Public Notice” of 11<sup>th</sup>/12/1985: “This is to notify the general public that the association *Jama’atul Izalatzul Bid’a Wa Ikamatis Sunnah* has applied to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Registration and the Land (Perpetual Succession), Act, Cap 98, Law as of Nigeria”. It is also mentioned “Any objection of the registration should be forwarded in writing to the Permanent Secretary of the Land (Perpetual Succession) Division, Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ikoyi, Lagos within 21 days of this publication, see p 157.

<sup>373</sup> Yandaki (1997) lists more names of the Izala in different places in Nigeria: *Association for Extinguishing Excesses and Establishing the Sunna* or *Movement of Extinguishing Innovations and Establishing the Sunna* (Anka district, Zamfara State), *The Association of the Upholding of Islam* (Katsina). See Yandaki, A. I (1997): *The Izalah Movement and Islamic Intellectual discourse in Northern Nigeria: A case Study of Katsina*, in: Tsiga, I. Abubakar and A. Uba Adamu (1997): *Islam and History of Learning in Katsina*, p 48; Sani Umar (1983) uses the name “The Movement of Orthodoxy against Heterodoxy”, see p 31.

<sup>374</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 214-5.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., p. 208; Loimeier relies here on Sani Umar (1988), p. 191 in explaining the fact that the JNI “was no longer an adequate platform for his (Gumi’s) own efforts of *Tajdīd*”.

his supporters) and the Sufi in Kaduna inspired the “establishment of an organization (...) for any effective opposition to the Sufi brotherhoods.”<sup>376</sup>

Yandaki elucidates the emergence of Izala as a protest against “socio-cultural and economic milieu” on one hand, and on the other hand against “ignorant followers of Izala” and the *juhhal* (in Arabic: ignorants) of Hausa society<sup>377</sup>. Yandaki – as a historian – recognizes three different phases when it comes to the development of Izala: the formative period (1978-82), a period of consolidation (1983-88), and “Izala as a reality”. He adds a fourth and final phase that he called a “critical phase”.<sup>378</sup>

Yandaki tries to understand Izala in the context of its time and relates it to several social, religious and political events of the late 1970s. He especially stresses the presence of laborers and students in the movement as crucial elements in the emergence of the movement in both towns and villages. According to him, students are to be found everywhere and at different levels, while laborers are “all over”. The Izala protest was against three major groups of the society: the *‘ulamā’* who abandoned Islam and followed “mystification and innovations”, the majority of the Muslims who followed their sheikhs blindly (Arabic: *taqlīd a‘mā*), and finally the group of traditional rulers (like Emirs) who kept practices that were non-Islamic.<sup>379</sup>

Yandaki considers the first years of the Izala establishment to be the years of “struggle for survival” and of establishing adherents and followers among Muslims. The movement succeeded in recruiting preachers and followers who joined Sheikh

---

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>377</sup> Yandaki, p. 136.

<sup>378</sup> For more details see Yandaki (1990). P 116-193.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 146-8.

Idris in his *da'wa*. In 1978, the Sheikh wrote a polemical treatise in Hausa entitled *Gane bambanci gaskiya da karya* (in Hausa: Towards the difference between truth and lies) in which he shows his criticism of Sufism and *shirk*.<sup>380</sup> Such written booklets – especially those written in Hausa, the dominant vernacular in northern Nigeria – are not only read by intellectuals but also by ordinary Muslims.

At the initial stage, when Izala operated under the umbrella of JNl and not as an organized society or independent body, their scholars used Sheikh Idris as an example and followed his path to preach in different places. Step by step, they recognized the necessity of an independent organization that supports the ideology of its founders and protects him and their followers. This is how the idea of the establishment took place.<sup>381</sup> In fact, it is not possible to speak of Izala as an established body in the first years after its establishment. Concerning its program, it was restricted to leading people to the Qur'ān and *sunna* as basic elements of Islam and to rejecting affiliations with Sufi brotherhoods. The program of Izala was summarized by Loimeier in three points: a) one can join Izala only if s/he abandons his/her *ṭarīqa*; b) Izala is not sectarian; c) and finally it recognizes the Nigerian constitution.<sup>382</sup>

Since Islam in Nigeria was spread on the basis of a long Sufi tradition, especially of the Qādiriyya and the Tijāniyya, it was necessary for the Izala to look for a strategy to deal with the Sufi dominance. Preaching in Jos and other towns and

---

<sup>380</sup> Loimeier (1997), p 214; also Sani Umar (1983), p 47.

<sup>381</sup> Interview with Mallam Sani Modibbo, 28<sup>th</sup>/2/2007.

<sup>382</sup> Loimeier (1997), p. 229.

villages was not enough for Izala. Loimeier points out that one of the basic strategies of the movement was to “bring as many mosques as possible under their control.”<sup>383</sup> This strategy succeeded to a large extent; many Sufis were sometimes inclined not to attend ceremonies or festivities because of the “fear” of Izala.<sup>384</sup> Izala simply “invaded” mosques, took them under its control and started preaching to people.

The situation escalated violently during the late 1970s between Izala and its opponents. Loimeier sees this development as “symptomatic” of that period of time, since it was characterized by social and political turmoil.<sup>385</sup> When Izala gained the attention of many Muslims in the north and received huge support from youth, intellectuals, businessmen, and of course the assistance of Sheikh Gumi, the movement started to organize itself internally. In the year 1980 the so-called Maitatsine riots<sup>386</sup> took place in Kano and influenced the first organizational stage of Izala. The Sufis used the opportunity to blame Izala for violence and cooperation with the Maitatsine.<sup>387</sup> Many Izala were arrested and imprisoned. This was a turning point for the movement. As a result, they were obliged to change their strategy to a more peaceful program –especially since the Maitatsine riots vehemently influenced the development of the Izala.

---

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>385</sup> See the list of riots given by Loimeier (1997), pp. 347-9 he gives a chronology of the clashes between Izala and Sufis. The author suggests approaching the history of these events with caution and understanding them in their general social and political context.

<sup>386</sup> For more details see Isichei, Elisabeth (1987), pp. 194-208.

<sup>387</sup> Loimeier (1997), 218

Concerning the Izala formation, Brigaglia speaks of an organization established by Gumi as the first organization of the masses “di tipo moderno”, with a statute and constitution and concentration on “learning”.<sup>388</sup> This type of organization which adapted modern structures was a new phenomenon among Nigerian Muslims familiar with the traditional way of religious organizations.

Nobody can deny the role of Sheikh Gumi when it comes to the establishment of the Izala organization. This is due to his religious and political influence on Nigerian Muslims from the 1960s. He was not only the Grand Kadi of the north, but he was also present through his writings against Sufis and his name became familiar to people through the media because of his close relationship to the Sardauna Ahmadu Bello. The initiative to establish an official organization was planned and put into action by Sheikh Idris and his supporters. These people were divided into preachers and wealthy men who supported the organization with money. Sani Umar makes a nice differentiation that Sheikh Idris was the “principal architect” of Izala and Sheikh Gumi was among the “influential supporters”.<sup>389</sup>

Through interviews that I conducted with different Izala members it is difficult to give a precise list of those who attended the founding meetings. It always depends on the perspective of the interviewee. Alhaji Ibrahim Musalla, who is now associated with the Kaduna faction of Izala whom I interviewed in Jos in December 2006,

---

<sup>388</sup> Brigaglia (2004), p 226.

<sup>389</sup> Sani Umar (1983), among others Muhammad Abba Aji Maiduguri (Borno State), Mallam Sidi Attahiru (Sokoto State), Malam Tudu Shikaji and Malam Muhammad Ba'are (Kaduna State) are in the category of those who were close to Sheikh Idris and served as preachers; others like Sheikh Gumi, Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu, Alhaji Shehu Tabacco are among the “influential supporters”; there were also other government functionaries and politicians who also supported Izala at its initial stage, see p 48.

mentioned that the need to establish an organization was more than necessary especially to gain more recognition by the state. It also gives the people joining Izala a kind of “identity” especially when the organization has a name, and an address, etc.

## **2.1 One constitution and two factions or many constitutions of the same organization?**

Izala struggled for many years to gain authenticity and legitimacy among its followers and also from the state. Izala was/is registered as an official organization in Nigeria. It also has a constitution detailing its organization, leadership, and structure. After the division of the movement into two branches in Jos and Kaduna each group considered itself to be the genuine movement. One of the major issues was the constitution of the Izala as a registered organization. If a faction decides to draft a new constitution and declares its independence from the other group, then it should also change its name. Neither group was ready to do so. Changing the name indicates loss of power and damaging the image amongst Muslims. Furthermore it confirms superiority of one group or the other amongst the followers. This was the situation at an early time of the division. After that, a new orientation took place and attempts to amend the constitution according to the new needs of each group took place. For my analysis I will be using the following documents: the constitution of Izala as a united organization<sup>390</sup>, then the amendment ratified by the faction in Jos in 2004 and the Kaduna faction in 1995. This new development explains that the “two” Izala redefined their objectives and continue to be a modern society by fixing these

---

<sup>390</sup> a copy of the constitution from the headquarters (1981) which is also to be found in Loimeier (1997), Appendix 4, pp. 351-366; translated from Hausa by Jibril H. Yola).

goals in the constitution. Interestingly, both amendments cite Jos as the permanent headquarters of the movement.

The constitution of Izala (Kaduna faction) is written in the Arabic language, is dated 3<sup>rd</sup>/08/1995, and bears the signatures of Sheikh Yusuf Sambo, leader of the High Council of *Da'wa wa'l-Irshād* (in Arabic: propagation and guidance), Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu, the General Chairman of the Society, Ustaz Umar Hassan Imam, Secretary of the High Council of *Da'wa wa'l-Irshād*, and finally Muhammad Inua, General Secretary of the organization. The document has fourteen pages with a cover containing the full name of the organization, its Headquarters (Jos) and its physical address. The title is *Nizām al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya* (in Arabic: Code of the *Salafī* mission) of the J.I.B.W.I.S. in Nigeria. The slogan of the society is also indicated: *al-Taṣfiya wa'l-Tarbiya* (in Arabic: clearance and education). Apart from an introduction and a conclusion, the document is made of four sections including eight paragraphs. In the introduction, the situation of some Muslims in Nigeria is described in the following:

“(...) some Muslims today are under polytheism, following their passion, under Sufi Brotherhoods, and several myths, totally devoted to colonial rule and to plots of communists and others have led to the weakness and separation of Muslims today...”<sup>391</sup>

Based on these circumstances, Izala was established in order to invite Muslims to come back to their religion on the path of “*al--Salaf al-Ṣaliḥ*”. The

---

<sup>391</sup> Izala Kaduna Draft of Constitution, 1995, p. 1 (my translation). I am thankful to Sheikh Ali Mustapha, leader of the Ulama Council, Maiduguri, Borno State (Izala Kaduna) for providing me with a copy of this constitution.

organization invites Muslims to *al-‘aqīda al-saḥiḥa* (rightful faith) and considers the Qur’ān and the *sunna* to be principal sources for unifying Muslims. What is outside these two sources is the view as to whether the concept of *ijtihād* (in Arabic: effort, individual reasoning) can be considered “true” or “false”.<sup>392</sup>

The first part of the document is comprised of five paragraphs dealing with the establishment of the organization, its name, headquarters, slogan, and finally, a general overview of the organization. In the first paragraph the formation of Izala is described. Interestingly, only Sheikh Gumi and his famous book (*al-‘aqīda as-saḥiḥa*) are mentioned. The Sheikh started in Kaduna before a group of *‘ulamā’* continued to establish Izala in Jos in the year 1978. There is no single indication of the role of Sheikh Idris and his efforts to establish Izala. This was an attempt to discredit him as founding father of the organization and eliminate his name from the history of the movement. Even in the next two paragraphs (name, headquarters) only the contribution to the name of Izala by Sheikh Gumi (he added/suggested “*wa Iqāmat al-sunnā*”) is indicated. In addition, the capital of Plateau State, Jos is named as the headquarters of Izala.

Paragraph four defines the slogan of Izala as “*al-Taṣīya wa’l-Tarbiya*” without giving details. The last paragraph (§ 5) is made of four points and gives an overview about of organization.

---

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

1. The situation of Muslims is described and Izala is established to bring them back to the *sunna* and free them from *Jahl al-‘aqīda al-Islāmiyya* (in Arabic: ignorance of Islamic faith).
2. Izala is not a political organization acting secretly. It is an organization of *da‘wa* along the lines of *Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jamā‘a*. When it comes to Islamic *sharī‘a* (Arabic: *Siyāsāt al-Sharī‘a al-Islāmiyya*) Izala is regarded to be part of it.
3. Izala tries to avoid any ethnic, sectarian or provincial differences. It works for the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) both in- and outside of Nigeria.
4. Izala does not rely on a particular *madhhab* (in Arabic: school of Law), group of people, or person. The difference is based on *taqwā* (in Arabic: Fear of God).<sup>393</sup>

The second part of the constitution (§ 6) deals with objectives of the organization.

These are summarized in ten points:

1. Returning to the Qur’ān and the *sunna* following *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* in faith, worshipping, human transactions, and in all fields of life;
2. showing Muslims their religion and inviting them to follow its rules;
3. warning Muslims against polytheism, innovation, new ideas of atheists and communists;

---

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-5.

4. unify Muslims under the same faith and same path in order to establish an *umma* organized under one flag and one Imam;
5. purify the Islamic Society from polytheism, innovations, myths,... etc. in order to create a comfortable atmosphere in which to educate generations of Muslims;
6. establish “the good Muslim” who is far from polytheism, fundamentalism and belief in myths;
7. free the Muslim world from its enemies who destroyed the unity of Muslims;
8. warn Muslims against sectarianism;
9. *al-Taṣfiya wa’l-Tarbiya*;
10. attempt to set up an Islamic society and practice the rule of God on earth. This is the path of Izala in Nigeria. The organization invites people in- and outside the country to assist in propagating the message of Islam.<sup>394</sup>

In order to achieve these goals the following means are proposed in the third part of the document (§ 6). These means are, among others: establishing Quranic schools, establishing an institute for preachers, creating an Islamic cultural center, organizing educational workshops in the entire country, founding a school for Muslim women, assisting orphans and weak people, assisting newly converted, and giving scholarships to needy people.<sup>395</sup>

---

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

The fourth and last part (§ 8) elucidates the administrative structure of the organization

- 1) The organization has a **General President** and two deputies. He is responsible for leading and organizing meetings and for representing Izala.
- 2) **The General Committee of Organization:** comprised of seventy members representing local governments. The committee elects members of the advisory committee and executive committee of the Society. This committee is headed by the leader of the organization or one of his deputies.
- 3) **Department of Da'wa or Advisory Committee:** comprised of twenty-five members and is headed by the leader of *al-Majlis al-a'lā li'Shu'ūn Da'wa wa Irshād wa Ta'līm* (in Arabic: High Council of Da'wa Affairs, Orientation and Education), a secretary and his deputy. This department deals with *da'wa*, schools and mosques, *fatwās*, and teaching. The committees of Education, of *fatwās*, of Mosques are headed by Administrative leaders within this department.
- 4) **The Executive Committee:** made of fifteen members, its meetings are headed by the General Leader of Izala or his deputy (head of the "*al-Majlis al-a'lā li'Shu'ūn Da'wa wa Irshād wa Ta'līm*"). In this part, qualifications of *dā'ī* (in Arabic: a person practicing *da'wa*) are fixed.

Every member of Izala is considered to be *dā'iya*. He should be well versed in the teachings of Islam. His work should be to please Allah and not because of *maṣlaḥa* (in Arabic: personal benefit). He should be far from any political practice. Any political activity should take place outside of the organization and not in the name of Izala. Everybody should strive to follow *sunna* personally and in his family and should be an example for others. He should protect the society from any defamation.

- 5) **First Aid Groups:** trained members who assist sick and injured people. They also organize places of gathering and meetings. They have a particular uniform similar to the armed forces.
- 6) **Secretariat:** is responsible for letters, prints, and everything needed by the society. This body is headed by a General Secretary who has a deputy.
- 7) **Information Section:** shows activities of the organization through publications, loudspeaker, records, and cassettes.
- 8) **Communication Section:** Communication within local governments and Islamic organizations in- and outside the country. It represents the Society in any location within the Islamic world.
- 9) **Organization Section:** organizes meetings and workshops of Izala. It fixes the date of meetings. It collects *da'wa* requirements and directs preachers to their places of *da'wa*. This body is made of eleven

Members (the president and his deputy, Secretary and his deputy, three from the Council of *'ulamā'*, Leader of Information Section, two representatives from the First Aid groups and a representative from the Finances Committee.

10) **Finances Section:** collects money and plans the budget of the Society and organizes the management of resources. Cannot act without the treasurer of the Society, the Leader of Izala, and leader of the *'ulamā'* Council. A seal is necessary for all documents and no transaction can be achieved orally. This section can also initiate projects for the Society to fulfill its objectives.<sup>396</sup>

The second document is entitled “The Constitution of *Jama' tu Izalatil Bid'ah Wa'lkamatis Sunna*”.<sup>397</sup> It has twelve pages (the first and last ones are stamped indicating name and headquarters in Jos) and is divided into two major parts. **The first part** deals with the name, objectives, and membership in Izala. **The second part** concerns sponsorship and structure of the organization.

On the first few pages give the name of Izala and its meaning, Sheikh Ismaila Idris (written in capital letters) is introduced as the founder, Chairman of the Preachers Council and the “Grand Mufti”. Again this is a marker of Izala in Jos to identify the organization with Sheikh Idris and Sheikh Idris with Izala. Also in this first

---

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-13.

<sup>397</sup> I am thankful to Kadi Muhammad Adam Farinkasa for providing me with a copy of this constitution; he ensured that the copy dates from the year 2004. The document itself has no indication of day or year of the amendment.

part, the headquarters is indicated to be in Jos, with offices in the entire country. Concerning membership, it is open to every Sunni Muslim who “protects the dignity of the Organization and Sovereignty of the Nation.” The aims and objectives of Izala are specified in the following. The organization is purely Islamic and relies only on the Qur’ān and *sunna*. It is neither political nor tribal. It works to unify Muslims and teach them about the “true teachings of Islam”. It alerts Muslims about “confusing books” written on Islam. It confirms that the message of the Prophet Muhammad is the last one and opposes any new Prophecy. The organization makes efforts to set up education and health in Nigeria in respect of law. It organizes teachings and preaching and makes use of media. It assists the state to keep peace. These objectives are to be achieved in accordance with the Qur’ān and the *sunna*.<sup>398</sup>

The second part of the constitution begins with an indication of monetary sources of Izala. The organization relies – as mentioned – on voluntary donations, publishing (books, journals, etc), and farming (§ 4). Also a bank account and a regulation about important documents of the organization are indicated (§5). Izala holds different meetings at different levels. They can be quarterly or organized when it is necessary. All meetings of the Council of *‘ulamā’*, the Administration or First Aid Groups can only be held in Jos, the headquarters. Any meetings of one of these councils take place when the Chairman, secretaries and nine members are present.<sup>399</sup>

---

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

The constitution fixes the structure of the organization (three councils/basic bodies), the composition and function of each council (§ 7 to 11).

1. The National Council of Preachers consist of 1) a Chairman; 2) a Deputy; 3) a Secretary; 4) an Assistant Secretary; 5) a Chairman State Council of Preachers; 6) secretaries to the State Council of Preachers; 7) ten preachers and reciters of Qur'ān. This council is considered to be the highest authority and policy maker for the organization. It organizes policy with administration, appoints or removes trustees, solves problems within the organization, and trains preachers. It has the highest authority as indicated in the following: “The common SEAL of the organization shall only be used or affixed on the authority of a special resolution duly passed by the National Council of Preachers.”
2. The National Administrative Council also considered the executive council, is comprised of 1) a Chairman (surprisingly here it is the same Chairman of the National Council of Preachers; 2) a Deputy Chairman; 3) a National Secretary; 4) All registered Trustees; 5) a National Director of First Aid Groups; 6) All State Chairmen of Administration and Preachers' Councils; 7) All National Officers of the Organization; Secretaries of the Administration Council and Preachers' Council; ten representatives appointed by the Chairman of the Council of Preachers and a Deputy Chairman of Administration. The function of this body is to execute decisions of the organization, approve proposals and reports of Committees, approve the budget of the Society, and secure the

Organization's assets. It can only act under supervision of the National Council of preachers.

3. The National Directorate of First Aid Groups is the third important body fixed in the Izala constitution. It consists of 1) a National Director; 2) a National Advisor; 3) All National Officers of Air Groups; 4) All State Directors of First Aid Groups; 5) All State Secretaries of Aid Groups; 6) All State Organizing Secretaries of First Aid Groups; and 7) All State Discipline Officers of First Aid Groups. It is also under the Council of Preachers in the matter of rules or regulations. First-Aiders have a brown uniform and badge with two cross-swords and a palm tree in the center. They wear blue berets and white belts. This body is allowed to initiate divisions or units.<sup>400</sup>

Apart from the three mentioned councils, Izala has Committees that can be set up when necessary: Education Committee; Finances and General Purpose; Health; Personal and Discipline; Elders. Depending on the field of action, these committees assist with improving policy of Izala. Concerning the Elders committee, it serves an advisory function for the purpose of rightly directing the Organization.<sup>401</sup>

It is stated that the organization should have trustees (between five and seven) who hold this position for the rest of their life. They are under the Council of the Preachers and are members of the Council of Administration (§14).

An authoritarian sign of the organization is given under General matters (§ 17). This paragraph gives more influence to *'ulamā'* in the organization. It can be interpreted as

---

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-8.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., see pp. 8-10.

an answer to the split group and at the same time as a protection of the Izala leader. These appear in paragraph 17 (b): “The Chairman of the National Council of Preachers shall NOT be suspended or otherwise be removed except if he commits any indecent or criminal offences...” Also paragraph 17 (d) allows the National Headquarters of the Organization to appoint or remove the Deputy Chairman of Administration and the Chairman of the State Council of Preachers.<sup>402</sup>

The two versions provided by the headquarters (1981) and the translation of the constitution from Hausa are different in some aspects from the amendments of Jos and of the Kaduna faction. While the constitution of 1995 proposed by Kaduna recognizes Sheikh Gumi as the founder and initiator of the Organization and completely ignores Sheikh Ismaila Idris, the Izala Jos version of 2004 dignifies Sheikh Idris as the founder, leader of the Council of *‘ulamā’* and the Grand Mufti of Izala. This is not surprising to non-Izala, since the division in Izala happened at the level of leadership. The objectives and aims of the organization seem to be similar in all versions. This is a confirmation that the split in Izala did not occur at the level of doctrine and objective. The new amendment of the constitution is more about prestige and protection of personalities of the movement. This is visible when it comes to the institutional structure. For both factions, Jos was and is the headquarters of the movement. For the Jos faction, the important change in the new version is the position of the leader and the Council of *‘ulamā’*. Both are given more power and action in the Society and have the opportunity to appoint or remove any

---

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-12.

person in the organization. The Council of preachers supervises the other two councils in all directions and has the highest authority when it comes to decisions and policy-making.

For the Kaduna faction of Izala, the new version of the constitution recognizes a general president of the Society. This person represents the organization and chairs meetings. The most important body for this group is the so-called *al-Lajna al-‘amma li’Tanẓīm* (in Arabic: the General Committee of the Organization). This Committee has the exclusive right to change the other two: the advisory and executive ones. It designs the major structures of the organization and elects members of the other two committees. This is a hint from the Kaduna faction that the *‘ulamā’* are part of the organization, but not the most important one. It is an answer to Sheikh Idris that the Administration played and still plays a crucial role for in organization. This council has seventy members, which is larger than the two others (twenty five for the Preachers Council and fifteen for the Executive Council). Maybe it is a message that the organization should be more “democratic” rather than being under the authority of a single person or a small group of people.

Until April 2008<sup>403</sup>, there has been no confirmation as to whether one of these two versions was officially approved or not. From the point of view of the State, recognizing one faction’s constitution amendment means denying the existence of the other one. This risky decision can influence the stability not only within Izala, but also the Muslim community as a whole.

---

<sup>403</sup> Time of my second field work in Nigeria.

## 2.2 Structure of the Organization<sup>404</sup>

The Izala organization developed a threefold structure since the early years of its establishment. Even after the division into two major branches, the organization kept its three-dimensional setting. The three bodies of Izala are called councils: The first is the council of *'ulamā'*; the second is the council of Administration, and the third is the First Aid Group. The three councils are related to each other and are in place to satisfy the needs of the organization. Preachers and other servants of the organization needed an administrative setting that facilitated the work of Izala (authorization to preach; registration of events, official letters, salary management, etc.). These two bodies are complemented by the first aid groups' work.

### 2.2.1 The Council of *'ulamā'*

The *'ulamā'* constitute one of the most important categories in the hierarchy of the organization. Izala needs well educated Islamic scholars who are familiar with Islamic tradition, Islamic law, and are experienced in preaching. *'ulamā'* can be considered to be the “elementary capital” of Izala. They organize preaching and

---

<sup>404</sup> This chapter relies basically on material collected from the Izala branch in Jos. I am grateful to Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir for providing me with some of the organization's publications as well some of his writings; the publications of the headquarters in Jos J.I.B.W.I.S (n.d.): al-Jama'a fi Sutūr (the Organization in a few lines), National Headquarters, Jos, Nigeria, Abdulazeez Printing Press Ltd, p. 58; this booklet is written in three languages (Arabic, Hausa and English, and provides important information on the structure of Izala as well the duty of the different councils and committees of the Organization. The document also provides a statistical overview about the different institutions under Izala.

seminars, give lectures, fix the guidelines of the organization and provide adherents with written material. Being an *‘ālim* (in Arabic: singular of *‘ulamā*) requires deep knowledge of Islam, the different schools of thought among Muslims, the Quranic text and the tradition of the Prophet. Apart from traditional Islamic education and mastery of the Arabic language, many contemporary *‘ulamā* of Izala attended (and still attend) universities and acquire official diplomas in various fields.

### 2.2.2 The Administration Council

The task of this council is defined by the Izala Jos branch in four different points:

- 1) achieving decisions undertaken by the *‘ulamā* Council,
- 2) reporting suggestions of the different committees,
- 3) supervising the achievement of projects or programs,
- 4) and clarifying as well protecting the organization’s belongings.<sup>405</sup>

One of the crucial problems leading to the division of Izala was the discussion about whether the Council of Administration headed by Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu is higher-ranking than the *‘ulamā* Council, or vice versa. The Kaduna faction still supports and considers Mai Gandu to be the Izala leader. The Jos branch considers the *‘ulamā* Council to be the highest authority in the organization. The entourage of Mai Gandu tried to impeach Sheikh Idris at the beginning of 1991. During the same period of time Sheikh Idris, as well as some of his followers excluded Alhaji Mai Gandu from Izala. These events within Izala are qualified by Loimeier as a “crisis of orientation” in

---

<sup>405</sup> J.I.B.W.I.S. (n.d.), p. 5.

mid-1991. This crisis took on another dimension a few months later, especially after the death of Sheikh Gumi who was considered to be the “spiritual father of Izala”.<sup>406</sup>

### 2.2.3 First Aid Group (FAG)

The FAG was formed in 1978 to assist in the logistics of the Society and give practical assistance to the two other Izala councils. FAG is hierarchically organized from the local level, then the state, and finally national director. Members of FAG are trained in first aid basics. They practice sport in order to be ready for intervention. They wear uniforms and are easily identifiable. During Izala gatherings, the FAG is responsible for organizing the meetings and to uphold the order. They control the traffic in front of mosques during times of prayer, and collect alms after the prayers. Due to their training in first aid they assist weak, injured or sick people before bringing them to a medical doctor or to the hospital. The FAG is active in Islamic charity projects. They even plant trees or repair roads. Besides such basic tasks like maintaining religious facilities, the FAG manages more complex duties like assisting pilgrims at airports.<sup>407</sup>

At the top of the organization there is a *national director* who controls the organization at a national level. A *state director* of FAG has the same duty at the state level. On the local government level a *division leader* is responsible. At the district level there is a *detachment leader*. Concerning the ward level there is a *unit*

---

<sup>406</sup> See Loimeier (1997): “Die Radikale Islamische Opposition ...”, p. 8.

<sup>407</sup> J.I.B.W.I.S. (n.d.), pp. 22-24.

*leader*. This structure more or less mirrors the Nigerian state. All these directors are supervised by a committee of people controlling their work. The FAG aid group has its own regulations which assign duty, dress, and grades at all levels.<sup>408</sup> FAG opposed the participation of women as first aiders with the argument that such a participation lead to *ikhtilāf* (in Arabic: mixing of men and women in public). Other first aid groups of other Islamic organizations encouraged the participation of women with the argument that “a woman should assist her sister when it is necessary.”<sup>409</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Other Committees<sup>410</sup>

The three councils mentioned above are complemented by different committees which are established according to the needs of the organization and are specialized in particular matters. The Jos branch counts five different committees:

- education,
- finances,
- health and welfare,
- personal and discipline,
- committees of elders.

The education committee is responsible for the educational system of the organization and is under the supervision of the *‘ulamā’*. This committee is

---

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-25; see also p. 72.

<sup>409</sup> See A. Lawal Adam (1992), p. 43.

<sup>410</sup> Also based on information from the J.I.B.W.I.S. publication; for a comparison with the five committees (finance, guidance, discipline, communication, and central committees) of Izala are introduced in the first constitution of the Organization (8 February 1978) see also Loimeier (1997): “Political change...”, pp. 360-366.

responsible for preparing curricula and providing materials for schools. The organization also made efforts to obtain recognition from the state. The Director of the Diploma Section, Sarkin Mangu, Ustaz Nasir Abdelmuhyi ensured that the examinations of Izala are recognized by the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU).<sup>411</sup> Students who have completed their three-years diploma from the Izala High School for Islamic Studies can join ABU in their second year.

The educational system of Izala consists of schools from nursery to the diploma level. There are also certificates that are issued (by Izala, State ministry of Education, ABU Zaria, or by the Institute of Education in Bauchi) after an accomplished period of studies. Nursery school for example lasts three years and is under the supervision of the State Ministry of Education, while the primary school called *Maljaus Sunnah* is under the supervision of the Directorate of education of JIBWIS. Izala defines thirteen types of schools with different names, levels and orientations. These schools are set up in a hierarchy from bottom to top; the top being the Diploma Section.<sup>412</sup> Concerning the number of schools, the Jos Branch specifies that in any local government in Nigeria where members of Izala reside there should be two primary schools, one Arabic/Muslim-style and one western-style education school. At the state level a *tahafiz* (in Arabic: Qur'ān recitation school), a

---

<sup>411</sup> Interview in Jos, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

<sup>412</sup> Asas Nursery (3 years), Asas Primary (6 years), Maljaus Sunnah Primary School (5 years), Sat/Sun Mutawssid School (3 or 4 years), Upliftment School (3 years), Tahafiz School (5 years), Junior Islamic Studies (3 years), Muassasah School (6 years), Senior Islamic Studies (3 years), Junior Sec School (3 years), Senior Sec School (3 years), and finally Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies; For more details see table J.I.B.W.I.S. (n.d.) pp. 63-64.

secondary and a Higher Islamic Studies schools are found.<sup>413</sup> In 2000 the Jos branch counted one Diploma Section school and eighteen Higher Islamic Studies Schools in eight different Nigerian States. The organization has four preparatory and secondary English schools in three different states. Among the concerns of the organization is to establish schools for elderly people. Izala lists ninety Saturday/Sunday schools in eight different states. Quranic schools are also an important part of the educational system. There are fifty-two Quranic schools in ten states and the so-called *Martau Awlad* (Quranic School for children) with one in Jos and one in the Republic of Niger.<sup>414</sup>

The committee of finance has the duty to supervise the economic aspects of the organization. It also proposes budgets as well as expense reports to the Administration. The committee of health is concerned with building hospitals, centers for orphans and widows, and introducing programs for disease prevention. The committee for personal matters and discipline is under supervision of the administration council. It organizes employment and promotion or suspension of staff. The elders committee has an advisory task to direct the organization to conform to the Qur'ān and the *sunna*.<sup>415</sup>

There are also other mosque committees. These committees are made for every mosque and consist of seven members (head, secretary, the *imam*, *muezzin*, and three other people). They are controlled by the *'ulamā'* council. Mosques are built

---

<sup>413</sup> J.I.B.W.I.S. (n.d.), p. 64.

<sup>414</sup> J.I.B.W.I.S. (n.d.), pp. 15-16; for the hierarchical set up of schools see p. 17.

<sup>415</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

through alms collection or through donations from individuals, the state or Islamic associations. A committee for *ṣulḥ* (in Arabic: reconciliation) comprised of *ʿulamāʾ* is charged with resolving disputes between Muslims according to the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. Another important committee is that of preaching which is organized according to the different levels mentioned above (local, state, national and international). This committee is concerned with *daʿwa* activities. It organizes meetings for imams and propagates Islamic knowledge through mass media, publications, cassettes and videos.<sup>416</sup>

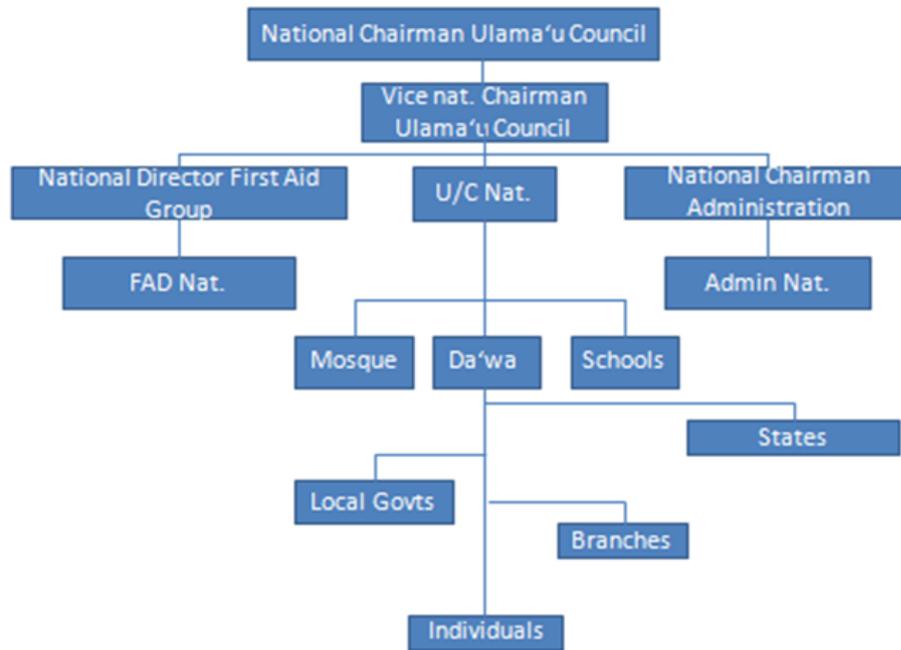
The Qurʾān recitation competition belongs to the most prestigious activities of Izala. It was established in Nigeria in 1986 and Izala members have participated in it since 1987. This competition follows the example of Saudi Arabia which commenced this contest in 1979. This activity encourages young people to memorize and study the Qurʾān. The Izala introduced such an activity at all levels and there is a committee that organizes this event as well as a jury of fifteen members under direction of the leader of the council of *ʿulamāʾ*.<sup>417</sup>

---

<sup>416</sup> J.I.B.W.I.S. (n.d.), pp. 8-10.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., pp. 18.20.

## The Sketch showing the Administrative Set up of the Izala Organizations<sup>418</sup>



### 2.3 Current leadership in Izala<sup>419</sup>

The split of the organization led to a division at the level of leadership as well as between the two highest councils of Izala. The *'ulamā'* are in the leading positions of the organization for the Jos branch. This is also confirmed in the new draft of the organization (see section "one constitution and two factions..."). These events led to a struggle for identity and authenticity within the movement. Neither of the two branches was ready to give up the name or the constitution. Both still refer to Jos as the origin of the movement. Both groups still refer to the initial objectives of the

---

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>419</sup> Most of the written material (pamphlets, booklets, copies of ceremony) collected is largely from the Jos branch of Izala. This is not due to a personal choice but rather to the availability of the material. The Jos branch of Izala seems to be more productive when it comes to publications.

organization and ensure that the division has nothing to do with faith-based issues, but rather with ideological and organizational matters.

### 2.3.1 The Jos branch of Izala

The founder of the organization and leader of the *'ulamā'* was the late Sheikh Ismaila Idris (d. 2000). His deputy was Sheikh Uthman Muhammad until his death in Zaria in 1991. Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir took over as Idris' deputy and became the head of the organization and its council of *'ulamā'* from 2000 until today. His deputy is Sheikh Alhassan Said Jingir. Most if not all Izala institutions (schools, hospitals, shops, etc.) related to Jos have the marker "Jamā'at Izalatul bid'a Wa Iqamatis Sunnah allati assasahā Sheikh Ismaila Idris" (J.I.B.W.I.S. founded by Sheikh Idris). It is always indicated on the first page of Izala publications that Jos is the national headquarters. Again this is a sign of authenticity from this branch of the movement.

The current Izala leader, Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir is regarded as a distinguished scholar in northern Nigeria. He was born in 1950, and originates from the Bassa local government in the Plateau State. He is fluent in Arabic and has studied the Qur'ān since his childhood. He worked as primary school teacher. He joined the Islamic Institute of Teachers in Jos and later moved to Maiduguri where he completed secondary school. In 1984 he went to Kano where he later received a Diploma in Arabic and Islamic studies. In 1997 he went back to the University of Jos where he completed his studies in 2001 with a B.A. in literature and education. In Jos, Sheikh Jingir served as director of the School of Higher Islamic Education for ten years and contributed to the spread of the Arabic language as well as to the *da'wa* of

Izala in some areas of Nigeria.<sup>420</sup> Sheikh Jingir is the head of the council of the 'ulamā' for the Jos branch of Izala. After the death of the founder he became the highest religious authority of the movement. He is still very active in preaching, present in the mass media and is the first speaker of Izala in Jos.

*Fatwās* expressed in his preaching, seminars, meetings and lectures are either recorded or printed and circulated among the Izala Jos followers. The leader also has several publications edited by the headquarters which deal with different subjects. To reach a large readership these publications are published in Hausa, Arabic and English. The main topics of these publications are focused on specific religious matters, like the issue of sacrifice, leadership or *tawḥīd* which is a central concept in the doctrine of Izala.

His view on this concept is introduced by Sheikh Jingir in a publication in the Arabic language.<sup>421</sup> *Tawḥīd* is related to the number "one" (in Arabic) and *al-Wāḥid* (in Arabic: the Unique, the only One) is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah. There are two different types of *tawḥīd*:

1. Oneness of God (Arabic: *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), names (Arabic: *tawḥīd al-asmā*), and attributes (Arabic: *tawḥīd al-sifāt*),
2. Oneness of actions (Arabic: *tawḥīd al-ṭalab*) and intentions (Arabic: *tawḥīd al-qaṣd*).

---

<sup>420</sup> For his biography in the Arabic language, see Jamila Adam Abdallah (2005), pp. 54-55; for a more detailed biography in the Hausa language see Muhammad, Saliḥu Idris (n.d.): *Gwagwarmayar. Sheikh Sani Yahaya Jingir* (the Struggle of Sheikh Sani Yahaya Jingir).

<sup>421</sup> See Jingir, Muhammadu Sani Yahya (2006): *Tawḥīd a-l-Tālib ilā 'Ibādat Allah 'Ibadatan wa Mu'āmalā* (Guidance of the Student to the Oneness of God in the context of worshipping and religious transactions), Jos: JIBWIS-Headquarters.

The oneness of God is a central doctrine for every Muslim. All the prophets invited humanity to believe in the oneness of God and the term is mentioned in the Qur'ān several times. The Prophet Muhammad also spent several years calling people to *tawḥīd*.<sup>422</sup> The advantages of *tawḥīd* are summarized by the Izala leader in three major points:

1. achieving the guidance of Allah,
2. spiritual tranquility/peace (Arabic: *sakīna*),
3. unity of the *umma* (in Arabic: Islamic community).<sup>423</sup>

After elaborating on the concept and its different categories, the Sheikh emphasizes how polytheists are in a status of anxiety and skepticism and contrasts them with believers [monotheists] and their status of peace.<sup>424</sup> Speaking of *tawḥīd* led Sheikh Jingir to reject Sufism and the Sufi way of worshipping God. For the author worshipping Allah is based on three basic elements:

1. *maḥabba* (in Arabic: love),
2. *rajā'* (in Arabic: supplication),
3. *khawf* (in Arabic: fear).

In the case of Sufism this relationship is based on *'ajab* (in Arabic: wondering) and loving the Prophet in a way different to Allah's guidance.<sup>425</sup>

---

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5; for this differentiation the author relies on the categorization of the prominent Islamic scholar Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350).

<sup>423</sup> For more details see Ibid., pp. 7-10.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-29.

<sup>425</sup> See Ibid., pp. 29-32.

Leadership is one of the most controversial issues in Izala. The organization's split took place because of a struggle for leadership. Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir<sup>426</sup> points out that leadership starts at home until it reaches the global level. He confirms that leadership needs obedience and that the "absence of leadership led to anarchy and insecurity".<sup>427</sup>

Leadership is as old as Islam and goes back to the time of the Prophet. All successors followed his leadership in the context of religion (Arabic: *dīn*) and state (Arabic: *dawla*). Sheikh Jingir insists on the concept of *bay'a* (in Arabic: oath of allegiance to a leader) which means the obedience to the leader and his leadership.<sup>428</sup> The author insists that leadership requires piety i.e. fearing Allah and following His Prophet, trustfulness, and just deeds.<sup>429</sup> His arguments are complemented by references from the Qur'ān confirming his point of view. Finally, the Sheikh stresses the importance of *shūrā* (in Arabic: consultation) within the context of Islam and leadership and considers it to be compulsory for any leader in order to avoid "dictatorship and anarchy".<sup>430</sup> This publication reflects the Sheikh's view on leadership and can be considered a general overview of the concept. It can be

---

<sup>426</sup> Jingir, Muhammadu Sani Yahya (2006): Leadership in Islam, Jos: National Headquarters.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>428</sup> See more details in Ibid., pp. 7-16.

<sup>429</sup> As part of the qualifications of the leader, Sheikh Jingir lists twelve points of a successful leadership in Islam: purity of intent, humility and modesty, patience and perseverance, being calm and gentle, being subtle and forgiving, being kind hearted, leading by example, being honest and sincere, has the ability to reward good words and punish bad ones, considers specialization when attending to the division of labour, accepting criticisms, and being moderate, see Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

considered by Muslims in general and to Izala members in particular as a guide for following their leader and not deviating from him.

In my opinion this booklet is an implicit message to all those who split from the Izala founder and deviated from his path. If Sheikh Idris requires adherence to all the features described by Sheikh Jingir, then the division from him was not based on comprehensible reasons.

In addition to the *'ulamā'* of the Jos faction who are in the foreground of the society, the other two councils play a crucial role to facilitate the achievement of the leaders' ideology. The Council of Administration has been headed by Alhaji Ibrahim Na Alhaji Azare since the death of the former leader Alhaji Habibu Gado Damasu. His Deputy is Alhaji Marafan Tambuar, and the Secretary of Administration is Alhaji Abdurrahman. Concerning the FAG, the national Director is Alhaji Captain Issa Waziri and his deputy is Alhaji Ibrahim Shuayb. The secretary of FAG is Alhaji Muhammad Abubakar.<sup>431</sup>

### **2.3.2 The Kaduna branch of Izala**

The Kaduna faction of the Izala does not accept the leader of the Izala in Jos. In Kaduna, Alhaji Musa Muhammad Mai Gandu is regarded as the head of the Izala as a whole. It is interesting to note that he was not among the religious scholars but headed the Administration Council during the lifetime of Sheikh Idris, the founder.

---

<sup>431</sup> Interview in Gombe on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008 with Captain Alhaji Issa Waziri, the National Director of the First Aid Group of Izala, Jos branch.

The leader of the Izala in Zaria insists that the current leader of Izala and even during the lifetime of Sheikh Idris was and is Alhaji Mussa Mai Gandu:

“The people of Jos are hardliners in the context of this conflict. They want to keep the conflict to prove that they were the initiators of the Society. This is not true because the first leader of the Society was Mussa Muhammad Mai Gandu – he is still alive – and the people of Kaduna are to this day on his side. Mai Gandu was the first leader and even Sheikh Ismaila Idris was under his authority.”<sup>432</sup>

Most names given to the government for official registration of the society were from the Kaduna faction – five altogether. Two of them already passed away but three are still alive. From the three alive; two of them are with the Kaduna branch and only one with Jos.<sup>433</sup>

Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu was born in 1930. He is a businessman who was active in the politics of northern Nigeria. He used to be a member of the *Northern People's Congress* (First Republic) and later on was a member of the National Party of Nigeria (Second Republic).<sup>434</sup> Even before Izala became recognized as an official organization, he supported it financially. He served as the chairman of the Elders Committee. The actual national chairman the Council of the *‘ulamā’* of Izala, Kaduna faction, Sheikh Yusuf Muhammad Sambo Rigachikum insists that Alhaji Mai Gandu was and still is the leader of the entire organization:

---

<sup>432</sup> Interview in Zaria with Ali Abdallah Telex, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2007. He is an Imām, advisor and member of the Council of Ulama. He is affiliated with the Kaduna faction of Izala.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.; my interview subject mentioned the name of Sheikh Cikaji, Sheikh Yakubu Musa (Izala Kaduna), Sheikh Alhassan Said (Izala kaduna) , and Cap. Isa Waziri (Izala Jos). He couldn't remember the fifth name.

<sup>434</sup> Kane (1994), p. 498.

“Alhaji Musa Muhammad Mai Gandu is the leader of the organization. The leader even before the name was given to the organization. He was the first leader, and still is the leader, and has never been impeached by any person.”<sup>435</sup>

Sheikh Yusuf Sambo insists that during the founding stage of Izala and during an early meeting in Kaduna Sheikh Rabi'u Daura who is actually the chairman of the Council of *'ulamā'* of Kaduna State (with the Kaduna faction of Izala) was nominated to become the head of the *'ulamā'* Council of the organization. Since Sheikh Idris was the founder of Izala, the decision was to appoint him to the head of the *'ulamā'* Council.<sup>436</sup> Alhaji Mai Gandu's nomination as leader of the Izala initiated a controversial debate. The entourage of Sheikh Idris refused to accept a person who is not an Islamic scholar, *'ālim*, as head of the directing committee of an Islamic organization like Izala. The leader of the council of *'ulamā'* in Katsina (Kaduna branch), Sheikh Yakubu Musa Hassan (Kafancan) clarifies:

“(...) the followers of Sheikh Idris claimed that Alhaji Mai Gandu was not an *'ālim* [Islamic Scholar]. We answered that we were aware that and we elected him as a leader of the organization. How can we remove him from his position when the organization became stronger and more successful among people under his leadership?”<sup>437</sup>

The organizational structure of the Kaduna faction of Izala is comparable to that of Jos. In every state there are three leaders of the organization. The leadership starts at the level of local government, then the state level and finally at the national

---

<sup>435</sup> Interview in Arabic with Sheikh Yusuf Sambo in Kaduna; 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007. (my translation)

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Interview with Sheikh Yakubu Musa Hassan (Kafancan) in Katsina, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

level. The Izala faction is active through preaching. Topic(s) like *zakāt*, *ṭalāq*, or *nikāḥ* at any religious gathering are announced in advance on the radio and people travel to the mentioned preaching-place. Preachers normally travel Saturday for *da'wa* activities and come back home on Sunday. The so-called *wa'z* (in Arabic: preaching, moralizing) usually takes places once a month in the federation. At the state level this activity happens twice monthly. The Izala faction in Kaduna is financially assisted by wealthy people and through the contributions of its members. The organization has its own schools, mosques, hospitals, and pharmacies. There is a chairman who is responsible for mosques and schools. There is also a leader appointed to manage *da'wa* activities. The current chairman of *da'wa* is Sheikh Yakubu Musa Kafancan.<sup>438</sup>

Speaking of the contribution of Izala to Islam, Sheikh Rabiū Daura refers to the several Quranic schools that attract many people. The activities of Izala vary from calling people to teaching about the oneness of God, to teaching about the Qur'ān (recitation, exegesis) and Islamic law. As a result of the organization's work Sheikh Daura mentions that more women are wearing *ḥijāb* (in Arabic: veil) and more young people (between 15 and 16 years) are studying and memorizing the Qur'ān. In the beginning of the Izala movement there were only two mosques in Kaduna, where Sheikh Daura is based. Now there are seventy five Friday-mosques and many Islamic schools. His organization is also active in other countries like Togo, the Republic of Niger, Cameroon, and Chad.<sup>439</sup>

---

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.; Sheikh Y. Sambo couldn't give any official statistics about schools or other institutions of the organization.

<sup>439</sup> Interview with Sheikh Rabiū Daura in his House in Kaduna, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

In 2005 the Kaduna branch counted thirty-three sheikhs and mallams who were active in preaching and propagating the message of the organization. These scholars are active in different parts of northern Nigeria (like Sheikh Yusuf Sambo in Kaduna, Sheikh Usman Isah Taliyawa in Gombe, and Sheikh Alhassan Said in Jos. Sheikh Abdullahi Sale Pakistan in Kano, and Dr. Ibrahim Jallo in Jalingo – to mention a few), but also in the south of the country (like sheikh Buhari Yakubo in Lagos) or in the east (Sheikh Abdullahi Bala Lau in Yola, Adamawa state.). The organization also has thirteen Qur'ān-reciters or *alarammomi* (sing. *Alrama*, in Kanuri language) – as they are known locally.<sup>440</sup>

Like the Jos faction, the Kaduna faction has its own FAG. The tasks and duties of both FAGs – Jos and Kaduna – are the same. In fact FAGs are a crucial part in many Nigerian Islamic organizations, only in Izala. Their role is indispensable in logistics and organization as well as in assistance work. The FAG of the Kaduna group are headed by the Zaria based leader and National Director Mustapha Imam. The FAG of Izala are under National supervision of the organization. Apart from that, there are leaders at the state, division, and detachment level. In Nigeria, Izala Kaduna has one General Director, thirty-one state directors, and every state director has thirty two-officers. There is also a divisional leader under which there are twenty-four officers (division refers to local government). Concerning the detachment leader

---

<sup>440</sup> See more details in the publication written in the Hausa language explaining the system of Izala as well the way of preaching of the organization. Rigachikun, Yusufu Muhammad Sambo (2005): *Ayyukan Majalisar Malamai Da Siffofin Mai Wa'azi Da Manifofin Kungiyar J.I.B.W.I.S Ta Kasa*, Kaduna: Al-Amana Printing Press, pp. 47-48; the Qur'ān reciters are in Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, Gwando, Gusau, Argungu, Shendam, and Gashuwa.

of FAG there are twelve officers under his supervision. The lowest level is that of unit leaders (small area). FAG assists in fire and water disasters, and they also take care of Hajj and pilgrim matters. They give assistance to hospitals and cooperate with the government. Most FAG members rely on donations from wealthy people or they get assistance from the government.<sup>441</sup>

Apart from the *'ulamā'* and the FAG, the Izala branch of Kaduna also has also a council responsible for administrative matters.<sup>442</sup> In addition to that there are several committees established to facilitate the activities of the organization. Amongst others there is a committee responsible for education and the educational programs of the society. There is also a committee for *fatwās* concerned with legal aspects as well as facilitating the work of the Islamic scholars. An important committee is responsible for *da'wa* activities. Izala Kaduna also has a committee responsible for the printing, publication and translation of material used by the organization in both education and preaching. The committee of finances is responsible for the monetary aspect. Finally there is a committee of revision which revises the work of imams, preachers and controls the processes of education.<sup>443</sup>

---

<sup>441</sup> Interview in Zaria with the General Director of FAG, Kaduna Branch, Ustaz Mustapha Imām, his House, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

<sup>442</sup> The material I collected on the Kaduna faction does not include information on that council of the organization.

<sup>443</sup> See more details on these committees in Rigachikun (2005), pp. 42-46

### ***3 Izala and Innovation***

Since its establishment, the Izala movement has considered fighting *bid'a* as a crucial element on which the entire organization is based. This concept is not only to be found in the official name of the Society: “Jamā‘at Izalatul Bid‘a...” (Society of Removal of Innovation...), but also reflects its doctrine and understanding of Islam. In the coming paragraphs the concept of *bid'a* is introduced and analyzed from different angles. Dealing with the concept itself is by no means an attempt to reach a final definition or to legitimate its use(s) or mis-/understanding, it is instead an attempt to show the complexity of such a notion like *bid'a*. The discourse surrounding *bid'a* among the Izala themselves as well as between Izala and *ṭarīqas* seems to be more fruitful to look at. The discussion on the concept and the way in which Izala uses it appears more interesting than any other concept used by the movement.

#### **3.1 Definition(s) of bid'a**

In the Arabic dictionary “al-Munjjid fi-l-Lugha w-al-A‘alām” of 1986 we read five different forms of the root (b, d, ‘) from which the word *bid'a* is derived.

- 1) “bada‘a” means to invent something and create it without following a model; concerning the concept *bid'a* (pl. *bida*) it means “what was established without being there before”; one of the names of Allah is “al-Badī” – which is mentioned in the Qur‘ān – it means the Creator (of Heaven and Earth); “al-Mubtadi‘” is the one who creates something new.

- 2) “badda‘a” means someone related to *bid‘a*; “ibtada‘a” means somebody comes out with a *bid‘a*; (*bida‘* in plural) is a doctrine (Arabic: *‘aqīda*) different from faith (Arabic: *imān*); “Mubtadi‘ūn” are those who come up with *bid‘a*.
- 3) “abda‘a” means somebody does his work perfectly.
- 4) “istabda‘a” signifies being astonished by something.
- 5) “abda‘a (bihi)” means to ignore something and abandon it.<sup>444</sup>

In his article on *bid‘a* for the first edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam, D. B. MacDonald defines *bid‘a* as the opposite of the *sunna*. The concept can be understood as “Neuerung oder Neuheit” (innovation or novelty). The word *bid‘a* developed into a “theological keyword” (theologisches Schlagwort) connoting “new Ideas and practices, (...) which deviates from the *uṣūl* (in Arabic: Fundamentals of Islamic Jurisprudence). (...) The meaning “individual specific point of view” (individuelle Sonderansicht), “legal entity” (Selbständigkeit), and even “heresy” (Ketzerei) cover the concept *bid‘a*. The meaning doesn’t reach the level of *kufr* (non-belief).” MacDonald adds that in dealing with *bid‘a*, two main points of view have been developed: one is conservative and the other is liberal. The first one – basically the Ḥanbali School of Law and the Wahhābī Doctrine – follows the *sunna* and rejects *bid‘a*, while the second (liberal) deals with the development of the concept and

---

<sup>444</sup> Al-Munjid fi-l-Lughā w-al-A‘alām (1986), Dar al-Mashreq, Beyrouth, p 29; this is only a sample from the mentioned dictionary. There are several other meanings and categorization of the term.

categorizes *bid'a* under several categories (necessary, good, bad, rejected, possible – to mention some).<sup>445</sup>

J. Robson points out that *bid'a* is understood by some Muslims as “something that must be wrong”. In fact there is a distinction between a good or praiseworthy innovation (Arabic: *bid'a ḥasana* or *maḥmūda*) and a bad or blameworthy (Arabic: *sayyi'a* or *madhmūma*). This differentiation is a “necessary principle”. The author indicates that according to the Shafi'i School of Law any *bid'a* contradicting the Qur'ān, *sunna*, consensus, and the tradition of the Companions can be considered to be “erring innovation”, but any *bid'a* not contradicting these sources can be seen as praiseworthy. Robson identifies the following categories of *bid'a* in the Islamic tradition: prohibited (Arabic: *muḥarrama*), recommended (Arabic: *mandūba*), disapproved (Arabic: *makruha*), and permitted (Arabic: *mubaḥa*). He adds that *bid'a* is distinguishable from heresy. An innovator is defined as “one who introduces something on an arbitrary principle without having any basis in the recognized foundations of Islam”.<sup>446</sup>

In the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam *bid'a* is explained as “innovation, a belief and practice for which there is no precedent in the time of the Prophet”; here we find an example of how *bid'a* was understood by the Ottoman administration. *Bid'a* was seen as a contradiction to the *sharī'a* and the “Ottoman principles”. The Ottomans differentiated between two types of *bid'a*: a) “*bid'at*

---

<sup>445</sup> MacDonald, D. B. (1913): „Bid'a“, in: Enzyklopädie des Islam, Leiden: Brill & Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, pp. 742-3.

<sup>446</sup> Robson, J. (1960): „Bid'a“, in: The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition. Leiden: Brill & London: Luzac & Co., p. 1199.

*marfuū‘e*” which means, “*pre-conquest taxes and dues that were abolished by the sultan’s specific order*”; b) “*bid‘at ma‘ruufe*” which are “*pre-conquest taxes and dues that were customarily recognized*”.<sup>447</sup>

The well-known program in Arabic countries “*al-Sharī‘a wa’l-Ḥayāt*”<sup>448</sup> aired on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2008 by Al Jazeera was devoted to discussing the issue of *bid‘a* : “*al-bid‘a wa majālātuhā al-mu‘āṣira*” (in Arabic: Innovation and its contemporary fields). The Syrian Islamic scholar and law expert Wahba Zuhayli was invited to speak. Zuhayli began by mentioning the famous *ḥadīth* “*kullu bid‘a dhalāla wa kullu dhalāla fi-l-Nār*” (in Arabic: every innovation is an errancy, and errancy leads to hell) and raised a number of questions dealing with the essence of *bid‘a*, as well as theological discussion(s) on the concept and the contemporary fields of *bid‘a*. Wahba Zuhayli begins his statement by illustrating the difference between *bid‘a* and *sunna*. According to him, “*sunna* is what was transmitted from the Prophet (PBUH) and everything contracting and deviating from it is considered *bid‘a*.” The prominent scholar adds that something can be considered *bid‘a* if it is associated with issues of *‘aqīda* or *‘ibādāt* (in Arabic: worship). This led the Sheikh to differentiate between *bid‘a* that contradicts basic elements of faith or worshipping and *ijtihād* which exists within the Islamic *sharī‘a*. The fundamental difference that he points out is that *bid‘a* –

---

<sup>447</sup> Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition. Glossary and Index of Terms to Volumes I-IX (2000): „bid‘a“, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, p. 52.

<sup>448</sup> This is a weekly platform to discuss religious, social and political issues of the Islamic Society. Every week a prominent Islamic scholar is invited to talk on a particular topic. People from all over the world can call and raise questions to the expert. The entire show is then recorded live; all speeches are transcribed and archived at [www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net) (accessed 4/4/2010) where they are accessible to the general public.

in contradiction to *ijtihād* – lacks proof. Concerning the question of the relationship between innovation in religion (Arabic: *ibtidāʿ fiʾl-dīn*) and non-belief (*kufʿ*), the Sheikh mentions that an innovation can lead to non-belief if it falls in the context of *ʿibādāt* or *muʿamalāt* (in Arabic: worship or human transactions). He mentions the example from the history of Islam when the group of “al-Mushabbaha” who identified the dimensions of the Creator (God) or the group of “al-Mujassama” who described the Creator as having a body. These examples can be considered *kufʿ*. Sheikh Zuhayli confesses that the understanding and interpretation of the concept is in many cases exaggerated and returning to the basic sources (Qurʾān and *sunna*) of Islam solves this problem. When it comes to a contemporary issue such as visiting of the tomb of the Prophet during pilgrimage, celebrating the Prophet’s birthday or even Issa’s (Jesus) birthday, the Sheikh considers such practices to be *bidʿa* except if the reason behind them is seeking *thawāb* (in Arabic: reward) and by no way imitating others or expressing regards or exaltation to a particular person. He concludes that personal intention (*niya*) is crucial in deciding whether it is a case of *bidʿa* or not.<sup>449</sup>

The historian, Bernard Lewis deals with the complex concept of heresy in Islamic history and shows the existence of more than seventy-two terms connoting heresy.<sup>450</sup> These words have different meanings and reflect in no way the exact expression of “heresy” as understood in the Christian sense. The term *bidʿa* is one of

---

<sup>449</sup> www.aljazeera.net (accessed 4/4/2010); the printable version of the discussion is comprised of eight pages. In reflecting the point of view of Sheikh Zuhayli, a summary of his views is given rather than quoting his statements and indicating the number of the page(s).

<sup>450</sup> Lewis, Bernard (1953): Some observations of the significance of Heresy in the history of Islam, In: *Studia Islamica* 1, pp. 43-63.

these meanings of heresy. B. Lewis understands *bid'a* as “innovation, and more specifically any doctrine and practice not attested to in the time of the Prophet. The term is thus the opposite of *sunna*.<sup>451</sup> Lewis sees the “extreme” form of *bid'a* as everything not identified during the time of the Prophet or the time of his companions. In his later analysis, Lewis sees the differentiation between a “good” and a “bad” innovation. This distinction is based on the so called *ijmā'* or consensus of the Muslim community and because of that the author claims that “the *bid'a* of today may become the *sunna* of tomorrow (...) since *bid'a* may thus vary with place as well as time.”<sup>452</sup> The author concludes that although in some contexts *bid'a* is translated as heresy, both are “far from being exact equivalents”.<sup>453</sup>

Mohammed Talbi<sup>454</sup>, the Islamologist, considers the discussion on *bida'* (he uses the plural of the term) as “rich and promising” when dealing with the development of *fiqh* and generally with the Islamic civilization.<sup>455</sup> Talbi thinks that because of historical context of the mid-first century *hijri* (622 CE), anything “nouveau” (new) became a synonym for “condemnable” (condemnable, rejectionable).<sup>456</sup> Talbi considers the first three generations after the Prophet as a period during which the big theories of *fiqh* were largely developed. At that period of time two concepts were common to people: *bid'a* on the one hand and *muhdath*

---

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid. 53; in the same context of heresy B. Lewis discusses other terms like *ghuluww*, *zandaqa*, *hartaqa*, *kufr*, *ilhād*, and all of them seem to be complex – as it is the case of *bid'a*

<sup>454</sup> Talbi, Mohammed (1960): Les *bid'a*, In: *Studia Islamica* 12, 1960, S. 43-7.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

(new) on the other hand. In the next two centuries, intensive engagement with *bid'a* as a notion took place. It was during the first century of Islam that the concept was developed, but the author sees the second century in which the important books of *fiqh* were written as a more significant period. In the context of defending *dar al Islam* (house of Islam) from novelty/innovation the issue of *bid'a* and the entire discussion behind it represented an “aspect of defence”.<sup>457</sup> Talbi draws attention to the idea that *bid'a* is related to the concept of *sunna*. Both are interrelated and represent the two sides of the same coin: one is positive and the other is negative: “*bid'a* and *sunna* were inseparable, correlative. They constituted the two aspects of the same ideal order that we tried to follow on immutable basis- two faces of the same reality. If one (of the two) taught what should be avoided, the other proposes the model to be followed.”<sup>458</sup> The author mentions that the notion *bid'a hasana* is an output of the “*bid'a* controversy”. Especially in the Shafi'i School of the Law, the notion of *muḥdathāt* (Arabic: novelties; sg. *muḥdatha*) was introduced and differentiated from *bid'a*.<sup>459</sup> Talbi also mentions the well-known categorization of *bid'a* into five categories: obligatory, recommended, illicit, blameable, and licit.<sup>460</sup> This classification is a model among others. In other cases *bid'a* exists only when there is a

---

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., p. 52. (my translation)

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-64; Talbi mentions that this differentiation (*bid'a* and *muḥdatha*) or Shafi'i' „solution“ – as he calls it – led to the understanding of *bid'a* as contradiction to *Usūl al Fiqh*. The differentiation did not survive may be because it was rejected or ignored –as the author explains.

<sup>460</sup> According to Talbi, this differentiation seems to be developed during the 13<sup>th</sup> century especially with Ibn Abd al-Salam; for more details see *ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

contradiction to Islamic law.<sup>461</sup> Far from the meaning of *bid'a*, Talbi considers it a “phenomenon” and a “tool of social conservatism” (facteur de conservatisme social). In the context of the discussion surrounding *bid'a* and *sunna*, reformers have used the former concept as a way to protect the religion of Islam (Wahhabis opposition to visiting saints and marabouts for e.g.).<sup>462</sup> As for whether *bid'a* can be considered innovation in and of itself, M. Talbi answers: “elle ne l'est pas toujours!” (It is not always the case). It can be something that existed previously, but recently considered to be strange to Islam. By giving this answer Talbi is aware of the absence of a high authority defining “la véritable orthodoxie” (the ideal orthodoxy). The concept of *bid'a* thus remains dynamic and changeable.<sup>463</sup> As a conclusion, Talbi assumes that *bid'a* cannot be defined through the “domaine assez complexe” (quite complex field) that it covers. It can be more easily defined through the attitude of the authority that condemns it. Talbi sees *bid'a* as a deviation from the path of *sunna* – a deviation through ideas considered as “nouvelles” or “extra-islamique”.<sup>464</sup>

In his book *Muhammedanische Studien*, Ignác Goldziher deals with the issue of *bid'a*. In his approach, Goldziher spoke of the use of “politische *bid'a*” (political

---

<sup>461</sup> In this context, Talbi quotes the Islamic scholar al-Shatebi (d. 1388) who opposed the categorization of *bid'a* as well the so called *bida' ḥasana*. According to al-Shatebi can only be understood in relationship to law. Furthermore, al-Shatebi understands *bid'a* in the context of “cult” (*ibādāt*); see pp 66-69.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., p. 71; as part of the Wahhabiyya use of the concept of *bid'a* M. Talbi mentions Muhammed Abdu and Rashid Ridha who criticized the situation of the Islamic Umma. Both Abdu and Ridha gave the spread of *bid'a* as an explanation for the stagnation of Islam.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.,

*bid'a*) during the early stage of Islam.<sup>465</sup> The concept was generally understood as “following law” long before it was specified – “following religious law”. The author then referred to the so-called “ritualistische *bid'a*” (ritualistic *bid'a*). He situated *sunna* as an opposite of *bid'a*. Interestingly, Goldziher related the two concepts to a particular place- Medina. This place that he called “house of the *sunna*” is considered to be the origin of the Prophetic tradition.<sup>466</sup> The *sunna* is as old as Islam and developed at an early stage into a “normative principle the in life of Muhammedaner”<sup>467</sup> (Muslims as called by Goldziher). During the 2<sup>nd</sup> century of Islam (722 CE), *sunna* – like the Qur'ān – reached a level of standardization.<sup>468</sup> Later on the concept of *Ihya al-sunna* (revival of the *sunna*) appeared as in opposition to *imātat al-bid'a* (killing of innovation).<sup>469</sup> According to Goldziher, “Muhammadan theologians” understand two different types of *bid'a*: practical (every practice that was not exercised during the time of the Prophet) and dogmatic (heresy). Goldzieher proposed a simple definition of *bid'a* as an “arbitrary individual insight whose admissibility to religious sources is not documented”.<sup>470</sup>

Maribel Fierro<sup>471</sup>, historian of Islam, offers an overview of writings on *bid'a* from the history of Islam and focuses on two of the oldest treatises (that of Ibn

---

<sup>465</sup> Goldziher, I. (1971): *Muhammadanische Studien II*, Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag. (First published 1890).

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>471</sup> Fierro, Maribel (1992): *The treatises against innovations- (kutub al-bida')*, In: *Der Islam* 69, (*Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients*), pp. 204-246.

Waddah (d. 900) and of al-Turtushi (d. 1126) dealing with the issue of *bid'a*. First of all, the author indicates that the term *bid'a* has a negative connotation in an Islamic context. The meaning of *bid'a* in the Islamic legal tradition, deals with innovation in rituals and practices and also with dogma.<sup>472</sup> Fierro stresses that accusations of *bid'a* can happen within an Islamic School (institution against individual) or between two different institutions (institution against institution). Accusations can also occur between Sunni and non-Sunni Muslims.<sup>473</sup> The author sketches a list of “kutub al-bida” (books of innovations) dealing with specific innovations.<sup>474</sup> Within the Mālikī School of law, the issue of innovation goes back to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (CE). The topic was also presented and discussed by Islamic scholars during the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (CE) in North Africa.<sup>475</sup> Although a number of scholars handled *bid'a*, Maribel Fierro considers Ibn Waddah to be the first who directly wrote a treatise on the subject. Concerning al-Turtushi, he is also seen by the author as an authority that influenced literature on *bid'a*. Both of them are Mālikī scholars of Andalusian origin.<sup>476</sup>

---

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., p 204; the author – a part of classical Islamic writings on *bid'a* - relies on the publication of Goldzieher, McDonald, M. Talbi, and B. Lewis summarized above.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>474</sup> This list is made up of twelve books and their authors. Among them six are from the Maliki School of Law; interestingly the famous book of Usman Dan Fodio on *bid'a* is also among them; see *ibid.*, pp. 207-209; the author mentions that *kutub al-bida'* was a widespread genre especially among the Malik writers, see p. 210.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., p 210; the author mentioned a few Maliki Scholars from North Africa like Muhammad b. Sahnūn (d. 870), Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 996), al-Qabisi (d. 1012), and al-Baji (d. 1081) who wrote about the issue of “bid'a”.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

Maribel Fierro thematizes the issues considered to be *bid'a* discussed by the two writers. The first point concerns the recitation and writing of the Qur'ān. Both Ibn Waddaḥ and al-Turtushi criticized the so-called *qirā'a bi'l-alḥān* (Arabic: musical recitation) stressing that it influences the meaning of and comprehension of of the Qur'ānic text – apart from the fact that it is un-Islamic. Also *qirā'a bi'l-idāra* was also criticized. In this case the recitation is performed simultaneously and there is no possibility to both listen and understand the text. Another innovation identified by al-Turtushi in the context of the Qur'ān is reciting the text for money, or reciting the Qur'ān quickly without understanding its meanings. He also criticized dividing the written Qur'ān into small parts, numbering the verses of each surah or punctuating the text.<sup>477</sup>

The second field of innovation is the mosque. Al-Turtushi sees *miḥrab* (Arabic: niche in the wall of the mosque indicating the direction of Mecca) as an innovation. An Imam should not stand in it and it shouldn't be decorated by Qur'ānic text. Decoration of mosques is rejected by al-Turtushi since it “corrupts” people. Ibn Waddaḥ criticized the practice of *ittibā' āthār al-Nabi* (Arabic: following the steps of the Prophet), in particular, praying in places where the Prophet prayed. There is a risk that they will be transformed into sanctuaries. Al-Turtushi also criticized putting boxes in mosques for the collection of alms, eating and drinking in mosques, making noise, writing copies of the Qur'ān in the mosque, etc. When it comes to the mosque of Mecca, Al-Turtushi criticizes “raising the hand in front of the Ka'ba” since it is a

---

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., pp. 213-215.

Jewish practice. Concerning the Mosque in Medina he rejects the practice of touching the tomb of the Prophet.<sup>478</sup>

The third context of criticism is regarding the month of Ramadan. Al-Turtushi considers the *tarāwīḥ*-Prayer in Ramadan to be recommendable, but criticizes some practices associated with it, such as the mixing of men and women. Both Ibn Waddah and al-Turtushi denied celebrating the night of mid *sha'ban* or fasting the whole month of *rajab*, celebrating the day of *'Arafa* (9<sup>th</sup> of the month *dhu'l-Hijja*) when people go to local mosques to celebrate it, festivals on the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> *muḥarram*, and celebrating non-Islamic festivals.<sup>479</sup>

Prayers are the fourth field where innovation(s) occurs. Ibn Waddah criticized the practice of calling people to morning prayer through the sentence “prayers are better than sleeping”<sup>480</sup> that follows the *adhān* (in Arabic: call for prayers). He and al-Turtushi refused the raising of hands during *du'ā* (in Arabic: invocation) since it is practiced by the Jews. Ibn Waddah also considers the use of a rosary to be *bid'a*.<sup>481</sup>

The fifth point concerns the issue of funerals. Al-Turtushi advises that funerals should be short. He heavily rejected funeral ceremonies as – *bid'a* –, as well as reciting the Qur'ān at tombs or practicing *tasbiḥ*.<sup>482</sup> The next innovations condemned by al-Turtushi and Ibn Waddah are related to food and clothes, the *quṣāṣ* (in Arabic:

---

<sup>478</sup> Ibid. pp. 217-221.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid. pp. 221-228; the practices considered here as innovations are not explained in details as the author did this article; *sha'ban* is the 8<sup>th</sup> month in the Muslim calendar, *rajab* is the 7<sup>th</sup>, *dhu-l-Hijja* is the 12<sup>th</sup>, and *muḥarram* is the 1<sup>st</sup> one.

<sup>480</sup> This practice is spread today in many Islamic countries.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., pp. 229-231.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., pp. 231-234.

people telling their stories in mosques), and substituting somebody to perform pilgrimage on one's behalf.<sup>483</sup> Maribel Fierro concludes on the basis of the works of these Islamic scholars that *bid'a* is a dynamic concept in the history of Islam. Although many practices were defined as innovation and excluded from the Islamic canon, they persisted in being part of the Islamic history.<sup>484</sup>

The concept of *bid'a* is also studied by Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio (d. 1817) who is an Islamic authority for contemporary Nigerian Muslims regardless of their different affiliations (Sufis, Salafī, etc.). In his book *Iḥyā al-Sunna wa Ikhmād al-Bid'a*<sup>485</sup> (Revival of the *sunna* and the Extinguishing of Innovation) the Sheikh deals with innovation and its manifestation(s). As a definition, he agrees with the point of view of Abu al-Hassan al-Saghir that *bid'a* is "what is outside the Book (Qur'ān), the *sunna*, and the consensus."<sup>486</sup> Dan Fodio like many previous scholars positioned innovation in opposition to the *sunna*. When it comes to the categories of innovation, Dan Fodio spoke of the above five already mentioned categories. Dan Fodio distinguishes a *bid'a* that can be denied and an innovation that cannot be denied: "...it is not allowed to you to deny (somebody's *bid'a* until you know that it is among the forbidden ones (through consensus))."<sup>487</sup> In Dan Fodio's book a duality can be observed from the beginning to the end. In all of the thirty-three chapters, only in the first three did he define what he understands as *sunna* and *bid'a*, while all the other

---

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., pp. 236-238.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>485</sup> Dan Fodio, Usman (n.d.): *Iḥyā al-Sunna wa Ikhmād al-Bid'a*, Al-Fikr-Distribution.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., P. 15. (my translation).

chapters are constructed according to the following schema: an issue is introduced and how it is understood in the context of *sunna* and then innovation(s) related to that issue are listed and studied (for e.g. *īmān* (faith) is evaluated in the context of *sunna* and then innovation(s) related to it are analyzed). Thematically the whole book can be divided into the following categorizations: issues on the relationship between God and human beings (*īmān*: faith, invocation, etc.); issues related to *‘ibādāt* (worship) (prayer, ablution, pilgrimage, times of calls for prayer, etc.); issues dealing with human transactions (selling of property, inheritance, etc); issues of human behavior (ways of eating or dressing, etc.); and finally issues associated with specific knowledge (healing, vision, Sufism). All these examples are studied according to their position in the *sunna* and in relation to *bid‘a*.<sup>488</sup> Dealing with the first topic (relationship between God and human beings), *īmān* (faith) comes early in the book. *īmān* means for Dan Fodio that “*every believer should take his faith from the Qur‘ān. All regulations of faith are to be found in the Qur‘ān.*”<sup>489</sup> The Sheikh elaborates on this point, indicating that somebody’s *shahada* (confession of faith) allows somebody to get married, to lead people in prayers; people can eat his slaughtered animals, to inherit and to bestow inheritance, and to be buried in Islamic cemeteries.<sup>490</sup> Concerning the issue of *bid‘a* in the same context, *al-ta‘ssub fi-l-dīn* (fanaticism in religion); corrupting a Muslim’s faith, bringing common people to struggle, “dark”

---

<sup>488</sup> The thematic categorization of the chapters allows us to give few examples of Dan Fodio’s analysis of “*bid‘a*”. All issues of the book will not be introduced here but only a sample from each subject.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

philosophy are considered to be aspects forbidden as *bid'a*.<sup>491</sup> In the same category, a believer should only swear by Allah – as the Prophet did. The act of swearing implies that the believer should restrict him or herself to that. Swearing by the Prophet or by the *Ka'ba* can be considered *bid'a*. Also the practice of fasting for three days is taken into consideration. When somebody cannot remember what he has sworn for and consequently free somebody, clothe ten poor people or feed them – can be considered as *bid'a*. Also fasting on Fridays or praying during the entire night of Friday falls under the category of *bid'a*.<sup>492</sup>

The second category is that of *'ibādāt* (in Arabic: worship). Two examples – prayers and pilgrimage – will be introduced in the following. Performing prayers should follow the example of the Prophet. The famous *Ḥadīth* collectors al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Abū Horayra (d. 681) described the way the Prophet performed prayers as an ideal way to practice this religious duty. As for the issue of *bid'a* in the context of prayers, no adjustment of lines (Arabic: *taswiyat al-ṣufūf*)<sup>493</sup> before prayers is considered a “disapproved innovation” (Arabic: *bid'a makrūha*). In addition, using *sajjāda* (in Arabic: a carpet for prayers) is considered *bid'a*. Dan Fodio's argument is that the pious predecessors preferred praying on the ground without any carpet or any other similar item whatsoever. It was known that some people used the so-called *khumra* (in Arabic: a small palm leaf used to place face and hands on during prayers) and this practice was rejected. It is preferred to pray on the ground, and if this is not

---

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., p 29, the author did not explain what he understands under “dark” philosophy.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., pp. 119-121.

<sup>493</sup> This is a duty of any Imām leading *ṣalāt*. He should look for *Taswiyat al-Sufūf*

possible on a thick mat (Arabic: *hasīr ghalīz*), or on a thick linen (Arabic: *kittān ghalīz*), or on cotton (Arabic: *quṭn*).<sup>494</sup>

Pilgrimage is the next issue discussed here. Dan Fodio emphasizes that everybody should perform *ḥajj* (in Arabic: pilgrimage) following the way the Prophet performed it. This way is described in the *Ḥadīth* tradition. What is considered *bidʿa shayṭaniyya* (in Arabic: Satanic innovation) is the practice of kissing *al-ḥajar al-aswad* (in Arabic: the Black Stone in the Kaʿba, in Mecca) or putting one’s cheek and forehead on the stone. Touching the Kaʿba’s wall or that of the Grand Mosque in Mecca is also considered innovation. In addition to that having a special *duʿāʾ* (in Arabic: supplication) for a particular place during *ḥajj* (like *duʿāʾ* in the Mosque in Mecca, another one for the mosque in Medina, particularly at the Black Stone) is also considered *bidʿa*. Furthermore Dan Fodio rejects surrounding the tomb of the Prophet and touching it, condemning this practice as *bidʿa*.<sup>495</sup>

Among the categories of issues dealing with human transactions only the issue of *bayʿ* (in Arabic: sell) is discussed. Dan Fodio indicates that facility (Arabic: *suhūla*) and generosity (Arabic: *samaḥa*) but also not cheating are required for any transaction (buying, selling, or borrowing). Concerning *bidʿa* in the context of buying and selling, a *jāhil* (in Arabic: ignorance of the buying and selling rules) is not allowed to practice this activity and considered to be innovation. Also the fact that men stay at home and women go to the market and compete with other men is also a *bidʿa*. It is

---

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-70; the examples given here are only a sample from many issues related to prayers raised by Dan Fodio.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., pp. 107-110.

also *bid'a* when a woman goes out to buy something from a seller, or if she is alone with a seller in his shop. Dan Fodio adds that if a woman is obliged to go shopping in the market, it is allowed since there is no possibility of being alone with a man.<sup>496</sup>

The next type of issue discussed by Dan Fodio in his book is human behavior. The Sheikh describes regulations concerning clothing and eating. In the *sunna* of the Prophet it is preferred that clothes are white, and not very long. Clothes made of silk are not allowed for men. *Bid'a* is when clothes are too large and long (only for women). Also imitating non-Muslims in clothing is *bid'a*, but also when men imitate women. In addition to that pride in one's clothes (Arabic: *mubāḥāt*) is a form of *bid'a*. Sleeping without clothes is also *bid'a*. When a woman wears her best clothes and jewellery when going out in public, this is *bid'a muḥarrama* (in Arabic: forbidden innovation).<sup>497</sup> Concerning the issue of eating, only a few examples are mentioned. Sitting – and not leaning – when eating is *sunna*. Also giving food to people sitting on one's right side is *sunna*. However, making food for a particular person is *bid'a*, since food is to be shared. Eating with a spoon is *bid'a* and joking while eating is also *bid'a*.<sup>498</sup>

The last category of innovations is special knowledge like healing, visions or Sufism. A few examples of *bid'a* related to healing and to Sufism are given here. In the *sunna* and among the methods of healing is the use of the Qur'ān. Honey is one recommended method. The use of *kay* (in Arabic: cautery by fire) as a remedy is

---

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., pp. 125-130.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-153.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., pp. 153-159; only some examples are listed here and not all points reflected by Dan Fodio.

rejected. What is considered *bid'a* is for e.g. the use of trash or alcohol in the healing process. Also in the Mālikī School of Law the use of foreign or incomprehensible language or statements is forbidden. Also any practice resembling magic is *bid'a*.<sup>499</sup> Sufism is covered in the last chapter of Dan Fodio's book. Any practice (binding oneself, cautery, etc.) leading to damage of oneself (Arabic: *idhrār al-nafs* is under *bid'a muḥarrama* or forbidden innovation. Also listening to singers is *bid'a*. Additionally, the so-called *karāmāt al-awliyā* (in Arabic: marvels of the saints) is a *bid'a* for those who claim it without proof or without going back to the Qur'ān, the *sunna*, and the tradition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*.<sup>500</sup>

From this by far not exhaustive discussion on the concept of innovation in Islamic history it is clear that *bid'a* is a complex and multifaceted notion. From the definition of the term *bid'a*, the meaning varies between innovation in a positive and negative sense. The meaning of *bid'a* can change drastically from innovation and novelty to creativity and heresy. In many cases *bid'a* is presented as an antithesis of the *sunna*. Some researchers think that *bid'a* does not mean *kufr* (MacDonald, 1913). For other scholars (Robson, 1960), the concept is misunderstood and it has negative connotations for Muslims. In some contexts, *bid'a* is related to state administration – often related to taxes during the Ottoman administration (Encyclopaedia Islamica, 2000). In other cases, it is related to heresy without being synonymous to it (Lewis, 1953). Innovation can be “good” or “bad”. It can be considered an aspect of non-belief if it concerns faith and worship (Zuhayli, 2008). The expression *bid'a* has

---

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., pp. 164-166.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., pp. 170-175.

different forms and occurs differently. For these reasons, maybe it is better to use it in the plural: *bida'*. Historically, the concept goes back to the first century of Islam and was debated along with other terminology like *muh'dath* (in Arabic: new). The famous categorization of *bida'* classifies it into: obligatory, recommended, illicit, blameable, and licit. This is not the only one. Islamic authority(ies) plays a crucial role in defining innovation (Talbi, 1960). *Bid'a* can be political or ritualistic. By the time a *sunna* is revived, *bid'a* is uprooted (Goldzieher, 1971). Innovation can occur among individuals, between an individual and an institution, or between two institutions. Innovation can also be in a particular place (mosque) or time (Ramadan). It can touch orthopraxy (prayers, funerals, recitation of the Qur'ān) or behavior (ways of dressing, eating, etc) (Fierro, 1992). Innovation is dynamic and is to be found in many fields of Islamic tradition. There are various examples of innovation(s) – as shown by Dan Fodio in his book. Surprising for an eminent Sufi leader is his criticism of certain Sufi practices. *Bid'a* is dynamic and it changes from time to time depending on understanding(s), definition(s), and interpretation(s) of Islamic scholars of a particular period of time. Bernard Lewis' statement can be used as a sort of conclusion since “a *bid'a* of today may become a *sunna* of tomorrow.”<sup>501</sup>

*Bid'a* and its different meanings and connotations, the topic is studied in the Nigerian context. The approach of Izala to *bid'a* is introduced and the discourse between Izala and Sufis in particular is analyzed. The book of Dan Fodio seems to be a good introduction to the next section since the Sheikh is considered by Izala to be a

---

<sup>501</sup> Lewis, Bernard (1953): Some observations of the significance of Heresy in the history of Islam, In: *Studia Islamica* 1, p. 53.

fighter and opponent of both *bid'a* and Sufism. From their point of view, Sufis consider Dan Fodio a Sufi and a religious authority for Nigerian Muslims.

### 3.2 The Discourse of Izala on *bid'a*

When asked about the history of Izala in Nigeria, the current Izala leader in Jos, Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir responded: “Sheikh Ismaila Idris tried to show people how some enemies of Islam practice some things in the name of religion and by doing that they deviate from the path of the Prophet.”<sup>502</sup> The Founder of the movement directed his criticism towards Sufi brotherhoods. He belongs to the tradition of Sheikh Gumi, the initiator of anti-Sufi tendencies in Nigeria. Izala sees itself as protector of the *sunna* of the Prophet and the fighter against innovations in the religion of Islam. Criticism of Izala is related to issues of faith. The so called *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ*<sup>503</sup> (a Tijāniyya prayer practice) was heavily criticized by Izala. The claim that reciting this prayer is 6,000 times better than the recitation of the Qur’ān raised a huge debate and heavy criticism from Izala. This debate concerns a crucial element of the Izala world view: the Qur’ān. The Holy book of Islam is the central source and the basis of the Islamic faith. It is also the basis for the tradition of the Prophet. Izala doubts the credibility of this prayer, *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ*, and its origin. If this prayer was revealed only to Sufis, why it is mentioned neither in the Qur’ān nor in the *sunna*? This is the main argument of Izala. And why do only members of the Tijāniyya (among all Muslims) know about it? Is it possible for certain Muslims to have

---

<sup>502</sup> Interview with Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir, Izala Jos leader, Jos, 28 January 2007.

<sup>503</sup> Abun-Nasr (1965) mentions that this prayer “came from heaven to the Sufi Muhammad al Bakri (1492-1545) and Sheikh Tijānī was told about it through the Prophet.” see p. 51.

something better or more valuable than the Qur’ān? Something that is 6,000 times better? These kinds of questions have been raised by the Izala concerning the “extra-prayers” recommended to the Tijāniyya and only to them. In a letter entitled “Risāla ila’l-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn fi’l-Radd ‘alā Qawl al-Sheikh al-munḥarif ‘an al-Kitāb wa’l-Sunna” (Letter to Muslim Brothers as an answer to the Sheikhs deviations from the Qur’ān and *sunna*) written by Sheikh Ali Mustafa Abubakar Alburnawi, an Izala leader from Maiduguri, who was linked to the Kaduna faction of Izala, the Sufis are criticized of pretending to have a hidden and unrevealed source in the Islamic tradition:

“Allah - glorious and exalted is He – did not order us to follow what has not been introduced through the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon Him. Sufi Brotherhoods: Tijāniyya, Qādiriyya, Shādhiliyya, Rifā’iyya, Hurūriyya, Aḥmadiyya, and others – you can’t find a concrete indication (*mran dhahiran*) related to them in the Qur’ān, in the *ḥadīth* of His Prophet – PBUH –, or in the sources of the *Saḥāba* (companions). These *ṭuruq* (Brotherhoods) are a sum of interpretations of some Qur’ānic verses and weak *ḥadīth*. So don’t cheat yourself so that you lose your knowledge through total following of saints and Sheiks in erratum (*khata*) and correctness (*ṣawab*), in what is admissible (*ḥalāl*) and what is forbidden (*ḥarām*), in guidance (*huda*) and aberration (*dhalāl*), and in non-belief (*kufī*) and conviction (*īmān*).”<sup>504</sup>

---

<sup>504</sup> Alburnawi, Ali Mustafa Abubakar (1990): *Risāla ila al Ikhwa al-Muslimīn fil Radd ‘ala Qawl al-Sheikh al-munḥarif ‘an al-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna* (letter to Muslim brothers as an answer to the Sheikh who deviated from the Sunna); pp. 5-6; the author indicates in this letter that it is an answer to Gonimi “who deviated from the “path of truth” (...) and who wrote strange things that nobody in Maiduguri understood the content and he distributed it among the Ulama and the Zawāya” (corners; usually areas surrounding Sufi tombs), see p. 4. (my translation)

The author doubts that Sufism has its origin in Islamic tradition and criticises the misguidance of Sufi Sheikhs vis-à-vis their followers. His argument in the entire booklet is that there is no mention of saints (Sheikh al-Tijānī or Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī) in the Qur’ān. Also in the *ḥadīth* neither Sufi leader is mentioned. The Izala leader condemns Sufi practices as litanies, and indicates that no one among the *Ṣaḥāba* and the four Imams (Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfa, Ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Shafī‘ī) have heard about it.<sup>505</sup> He adds that it is a *bid‘a* to claim “prophecy” through receiving something more valuable than the Qur’ān.<sup>506</sup> Alburnawi opposes the claim that Sheikh al-Tijānī belonged to the family of the Prophet or that any *silsila* (in Arabic: chain) – confirming that – ever existed in Islamic History.<sup>507</sup>

If there is something that has been more heavily criticized by Izala, then it was the celebration of the *mawlid* (in Arabic: birthday of the Prophet). Izala draws attention to the fact that neither the Prophet himself nor his companions celebrated this event. That is why this celebration feeds into the category of *bid‘a*. Ustaz Nuhu Tahir Tajudden, the Centre for Islamic Development in Zaria, linked to Izala Jos indicates that *mawlid* was rejected by Izala and categorizes it as a small *bid‘a* within the larger system of Sufism:

“*Mawlid* was among the things they do and that we criticize, but we consider it a small *bid‘a* (innovation), smaller than Sufism itself. The smallest *bid‘a*...”<sup>508</sup>

---

<sup>505</sup> Ibid, pp.7-8.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15; the author raises the question here as to how Sheikh Tijānī can be related to the Prophet? He criticizes the “salasil” (chains) made by Sufis to reach the Prophet or his family.

<sup>508</sup> Interview with Ustaz Nuhu Tahir Tajudden, Centre of Islamic Development, Zaria, 10 January 2007.

Izala does not recognize any statement or practice which is not mentioned in the Qur'ān, the *sunna*, or the tradition of the pious predecessors. Izala presents itself as the “guardian” of the *sunna*. Anything that is outside this system is categorized as innovation. The Izala's understanding of *bid'ā* compares the issue to an antipode in relation to *sunna* – as presented by MacDonald.<sup>509</sup> Beyond that, Sufism is considered an aspect of non-belief – as presented in the context of heresy by Brenner.<sup>510</sup> The Kaduna-faction of Izala avoids declaration of non-belief (*takfir*) towards other Muslims.<sup>511</sup>

The late Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam of Kano summarized the following points of criticism from Izala towards Sufis and Sufism: unity of universe, incarnation, practicing *dhikr*, amulets, etc:

“Certainly, in my opinion, Sufism has ways of thinking common in most Sufi brotherhoods: “*wiḥdat al-wujūd*” (the unity of universe); “*‘aqīdat al-ḥulūl*” (infusion of substance, incarnation) which means the incarnation of human beings in God and God in the human being. This idea has been massively opposed by Izala.

Also the issues of “*dhikr jamā'i*” (collective remembering of God) and reciting of “*adhkār*” (pl. of *dhikr*) in congregation have been rejected by the Izala.

---

<sup>509</sup> See MacDonald 1913.

<sup>510</sup> See Brenner 1953.

<sup>511</sup> During an Interview with Sheikh Alhassan Said in Jos, he mentioned that the Kaduna faction of the Izala doesn't go so far as to declare Sufis “*kuffar*” (non-believers) – as the Izala Jos did/does; 12 December 2006. This information is also confirmed by Sheikh Abubakar Mujahid, leader of the Tajdīd-group, 05 January 2007, Zaria.

Also hanging of “tamāim” (amulets) and “ta‘widh” (exorcism) with the motive of protection from “al-‘ayn” (the evil eye) and from al-shaytan” (Satan)...this was also was refused

Again some formula of praising the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – that is not to be proved in the *sunna* is also condemned by the Jama‘a. So there are many issues, but we can say that these are the most important.”<sup>512</sup>

The ex-Izala member and a JNI-*murshid* (in Arabic: advisor) in Jos, Abdurrahman Lawal Adam lists eight points on the issue of *bid‘a* that have been condemned by Izala and especially by Sheikh Idris during his life time: 1) the *mawlid* is considered something “new” which was not celebrated during the time of the Prophet or by his disciples after the Prophet’s death; 2) the book of *Jawāhir al-Ma‘āni* and the prayer *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ* were rejected by Sheikh Idris; 3) Sheikh Idris criticized the practice of *jawharat al-Kamāl* by Tijānī s and also the use of the word *saqam* (in Arabic: seek) to qualify the Prophet; 4) practicing *dhikr*, *wazīfa* (Friday, after afternoon prayers) during which the Prophet appears, seems to be heavily rejected by the Izala founder and his followers; 5) The giving of *ṣadaqa* (in Arabic: voluntary alms) after someone’s death and that people come after the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 40<sup>th</sup> day after someone died in order to supplicate Allah; 6) the *lāzim* (in Arabic: binding; obligatory custom) especially practiced by the Tijāniyya brotherhood and consists of someone engaging him or herself in praise of the Prophet or *tasbīḥ* (in Arabic: glorification of God) everyday for 100 or 1000 times; 7) Sheikh Idris also considered the recommended number of *awrād* (in Arabic: special prayers supposedly

---

<sup>512</sup> Interview, 02 January 2007; late Sheikh Jaafar can be considered part of the Salafiyya movement in northern Nigeria.

recommended by the Prophet) that should be practiced to be *bid'a*; 8) finally the so-called *al-qubūriyya* (from Arabic: *qabr*: tomb; visiting tombs).<sup>513</sup>

Again we see that most issues criticized by Izala and considered *bid'a* belong to the category of orthopraxy. Only a few examples relate to *'aqīda*. Izala condemns issues related to *'ibādāt* and demands their origin. The organization raises the point as to why Tijānīs practice certain litanies and prayers which are not known by the rest of the Muslim community. Izala doubts the source of these prayers and has failed to identify these practices in the *sunna*. Yandaki mentions that Izala condemned Sufi concept such as “blameworthy innovations”. These concepts are related to sainthood, intuitive knowledge, mediumship to spirits or to God, control of *jinn*, etc. Also practices like *dhikr*, the use of drums in mosques are condemned. Yandaki proposes another category of innovations criticized by Izala: those related to the Hausa culture and seen as un-Islamic, those related to marriage, birth, and naming ceremonies or death (burial ceremonies).<sup>514</sup>

The national secretary of Izala, Bashiru Makama, from the Kaduna faction of Izala, raises a basic point of criticism against Sufism. He explains that recognizing *ṭarīqa* and its practices as something revealed by God means opposing what occurred in the Qur'ān- that the Prophet Muhammad is the seal of all Prophets and his message is the last one addressed to mankind:

“All these *ṭuruq* or Sufi Schools are not organized in a proper way.  
Why? This Islamic religion was revealed to Muhammad – *ṣallā Allahu*

---

<sup>513</sup> Interview 27 December 2006; for more details on the issue of “*bid'a*” see also his (A. Lawal Adam, 1992) MA-Dissertation, pp. 132-155.

<sup>514</sup> Yandaki (1990), pp. 133-134.

*alayhi wa sallam*- and Allah – *subḥanahu wa ʿāla* – it is stated in the holy Qurʾān that Muhammad is the final messenger of Allah and after him (the messenger) there is no more revelation to anybody.”<sup>515</sup>

This movement denies any type of “divine” character of Sufi practices with the argument that it was not mentioned in the basic sources of Islam (Qurʾān and *sunna*). Interestingly, Sufi brotherhoods counter with the same argument. They also blame Izala of practicing *bidʿa*. Sheikh Tijani Ibrahim from Kano points out that the expression *Ahl al-Sunna* (in Arabic: people of the *sunna*) does not occur in the Qurʾān and it was not mentioned by the Prophet himself. He questions, astonished; “Is that not *bidʿa*?”<sup>516</sup>

This concept of innovation is a complex and dynamic term in Islamic context. It demonstrates again the problem of definition of the concept and the issue of authority. Who has the right to define the concept? How can it be rightfully understood? How can it be used correctly?

Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh al-Husseini, the Tijāniyya leader from Maiduguri, dedicates a chapter (chapter 33) of his book *al-Mughīr*<sup>517</sup> to the issue of *bidʿa* introduced – according to him – by Izala. The Sufi Sheikh criticizes the fact that the new “sect” (Izala) declared other Muslims “non-believers” and abandoned the mosques to establish their own. According to the Sheikh, this is a deviation from the

---

<sup>515</sup> Interview in Zaria, 09 January 2007.

<sup>516</sup> Interview with Sheikh Tijani Ibrahim in Kano, 03 January 2007.

<sup>517</sup> Al-Husseini, Ibrahim Saleh (1986): *Almughīr ʿala Shubuhāti Ahl al-Ahwā wa Akādhib al-munkir ʿala Kitāb al-Takfir* (The Agressor), Beirut; here I am using the second edition (2003) of Almaktaba Alibrahimiyya publications.

path of *Ahl al-Sunna* and the Mālikī School of Law. Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh provides evidence that establishing a new Friday-mosque has particular regulations. The *'ulamā'* defined certain extenuating circumstances under which two Sunni groups can establish a new mosque. If the conflict is between a Sunni group and what he calls *Ahl al-Ahwā* (people of the passion; Izala in this case), then they should be banned from performing the Friday prayer:

“If there is a struggle between Ahl al-Ahwā and Ahl al-Sunna, then it shouldn't be taken into consideration. The judgment for Ahl al-Ahwā is that they should be banned from performing the “jumu'a prayer” – they should even be banned from anything allowing them to spread their innovations (*bida'*) and aberration (*dhalāl*).<sup>518</sup>

Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh indicates that a meeting was held by a committee of Islamic scholars to discuss the issue and came to the result that the Mālikī School of law does not allow a new mosque if there is no need for it. There are cases when the mosque may be too small and cannot be extended or where two Sunni groups are at odds. On struggle, there are four major points:

1. The impossibility of solving the problem.
2. If one group bans the other from praying in the mosque and fights them when they come for prayer;
3. If there is a ruler banning both groups from fighting;

---

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., p. 395; Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh indicates that in May 1984 the Izala-Group sent a letter to the High Council of Islamic Affairs in Borno asking for a permit to establish his own Friday-mosque in Potiskum as well as his own abattoir.

4. If there is a distance of three miles between the two communities.<sup>519</sup>

The Sufi Sheikh concludes that none of these requirements are available and adds that the committee agreed that such a step led to division of the Islamic *umma*. Furthermore, he sees the call to build a new mosque as *bid'a* and deviation from *Ahl al-Sunna* since the “innovator” (Arabic: *mubtadi'*) is someone who believes in something different from the (path of) *Ahl al-Sunna*.<sup>520</sup> Again we have an example showing the precarious use of concepts like *bid'a* and *Ahl al-Sunna*. In this context we have Sufis harnessing the concept of *Ahl al-Sunna* and accusing Izala of practicing *bid'a*.

Even before the establishment of Izala as an organized institution, the founder, Sheikh Idris criticized Sufis and Sufism. He distinguished between a small *bid'a* that deals with practices (naming ceremonies, marriage, etc) and a “major” or “serious” ones that corrupt faith (*īmān*). This second type seems to be more dangerous:

“He [Sheikh Idris] started discussing issues of *bid'a* like the practicing of the naming ceremony, in regard to the institution of marriage, and social activities of Muslims in general. Let's put it in that way. This is one sight of the *bid'a*. Then the second sight of the *bid'a* comes to a major *bid'a* which can corrupt faith (*īmān*). He called it a major and a serious one.”<sup>521</sup>

---

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., p 398.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., pp. 400-1; chapter 34 of the book also discusses *ḥukm* (regulation) of establishing two *Jumu'a* mosques in the same town. Islamic Scholars of the Committee agreed that Izala should not be allowed to establish its own mosque.

<sup>521</sup> Interview in Jos with Mallam Sani Modibbo, 28 February 2007

Sheikh Idris went beyond *bid'a* by classifying Sufi practices as “non-Islamic” and as a “polytheistic performance”. He concluded that praying behind Sufis during group prayers or getting married to their daughters “is not accepted, not correct, and is invalid”.<sup>522</sup> The Izala founder regards such innovations as leading to hell. His interpretation of the famous *ḥadīth kullu bid'a dhalāla wa kullu dhalāla fi'n-Nār* (all innovation goes astray, which leads to hell fire) is that “kullu” means in Arabic “all” (grammatically it is known as “kullu al-kulliyya”) without exception. On the basis of this understanding, Sufism is categorized under *kufr* and all innovations will lead believers to hell. Some followers of the movement looked for a confirmation of such an approach regarding the concept of innovation. Renowned scholars from outside Izala were asked for more clarification on *bid'a* and on the meaning of the mentioned *ḥadīth*.<sup>523</sup> Interestingly, a new category of *bid'a* was added to its several meanings:

“Then there is Sheikh Abū Bakar al-Jazā'irī who was also delivering lectures at the mosque, on Medina premises, and between Maghreb and Ishā'. We went and asked him a question on *bid'a* to explain what the meaning of *kullu kulliyin* is? *Kullu bid'a dhalāla*.

He cited that there are certain *bid'a*, which are unwanted but are compulsory. He gave one example: circumambulation on the top of the Ka'ba. When we go there, there are stairs leading to a walkway for circumambulation above the Ka'ba. The Prophet did not perform circumambulation in this way...he performed it only on the ground floor. There are those who refused to perform it in this way...; this is

---

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Izala members used the opportunity of the Hajj in Mecca to clarify the meaning of “*bid'a*” as given by Sheikh Idris and inquired with Islamic scholars for more clarification. Sani Modibbo (and few Izala followers), (interview 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007) also used the example of the Hajj to ask scholars like Sheikh Umar al-Fulati (Imām in Mecca) and Abdelqadir al-Jazairi (Imām al-Medina).

one of the controversies we raised there. We went to him to ask question: Are there those who say: “whoever who performs the circumambulation at the top, is not accepted because it is a *bid‘a*? So we raised such questions.”<sup>524</sup>

This example shows how the issue of innovation is debated not only among Izala and Sufis/non-Izala but inside the Izala movement itself, especially during the initial stages of its development. The issue of *bid‘a* not only drove a wedge between the ‘*ulamā*’, but also among the followers who started questioning the correctness and basis of such a concept. During and after the division of Izala, the issue turned out to be a matter of trust between those who trusted Sheikh Idris and followed him in all directions and those who doubted his *fatwās* and deviated from his path.

In conclusion, the matter of *bid‘a* is a central concept used by Izala. The meaning of the word has been widely debated among the Islamic ‘*ulamā*’. Having the concept as part of the name of the organization summarizes its aim: “fighting *bid‘a*”. In the absence of a clear definition and the limitations of the concept, Izala followers have nothing but to rely on their leaders’ views. *Bid‘a* as defined by Islamic scholars of Izala is basically directed at the practices of Sufis (dancing, prayers, celebrating *mawlid*, burial ceremonies, etc.) and asks for the relevance of their sources. Izala sees itself as having access to relevant sources and at the same time controlling any deviation from the Qur‘ān and the *sunna*. *Bid‘a* is an open system of meaning.

---

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.; another example raised by the Izala followers here is the issue of paying taxes to the Saudi state through Hujjāj (pilgrims) and if it is *bid‘a* or not. They received the answer that there are some innovations which are necessary and others which are forbidden. Concerning the meaning of *kullu* in the mentioned *ḥadīth*: “So there are certain *bid‘a* which are not *kullu kulli*, but *kullu Jozi*’. “Kollu Jozi”. The Prophet said “kullu” but not all. It is not general.

Sometimes it is used in a negative way and sometimes it has positive connotation(s), as shown above. The categorization of the concept depends on the perspective from which it is understood. In most cases, dealing with the concept is subjective and if a Sufi is an innovator from the perspective of a follower of Izala, then a follower of Izala can also be considered an innovator from the perspective of a Sufi. Within the Izala itself views on innovation are different – especially for those who left the movement either to study abroad, to join another movement, or those who simply left. Meanings and interpretations change over time. After the division of Izala, it became evident that meanings are more related to personalities than to any other thing. The Jossawa (Jos faction) are more fixed on the views of Sheikh Idris while the Kadunawa (Kaduna faction) invoke different interpretations. The limits of using the concept are also limitless. Every Muslim can interpret a particular practice as *bid'a* and can blame another Muslim for deviating from the 'right path' of Islam. During a discussion in Kano, I once heard a Sufi saying astonished; "Did Muslims have loudspeakers during the time of the Prophet? If Izala now uses them, can't we also speak of a *bid'a*?"

There is no doubt that the issue of innovation is still central for the Izala movement, but during and after the split of the movement into two major groups the concept was more related to leaders in particular. Innovation was used in the inner-Izala conflict to develop a new definition of *bid'a* – among other concepts.<sup>525</sup> From a politico-psychological point of view, Jerrold M. Post's analysis – although in dealing in

---

<sup>525</sup> See chapter 4.5. on division and the debate between Izala Jos and Kaduna. Many concepts here are newly defined and directed towards the political dispute in the movement. The whole conflict was between those following Sheikh Idris and those who were against him.

a different context of follower-leader relationships-reflects this point.<sup>526</sup> The author speaks of a “mirror-hungry” personality and “ideal-hungry” followers. In the first category, the charismatic personalities, “... convey a sense of conviction and certainty to those who are consumed by doubt and uncertainty.”<sup>527</sup> “Ideal-hungry” people “(...) can experience themselves as worthwhile only so long as they can relate to individuals whom they can admire for their prestige, power, beauty, intelligence, or moral stature. They forever search for such idealized figures.”<sup>528</sup> The issue on *bid‘a* can be understood through this approach. In other words, Izala followers obtained their understanding of the concept from the guidance of their leaders. Even after the death of Sheikh Idris, the debate continued amongst those defending the founder and those who separated. The leader is the source of orientation in most religious organizations. He has the access to the Islamic sources and has the potential to guide followers in a ‘right way’. The issue of innovation became a personal issue and overshadowed a theological debate. The whole discussion became an approval and disapproval of Sheikh Idris’ views on the concept. This development is common especially when it comes to successions in religious organizations. The identification with the founder and with Jos as reference is still symbolic today.

---

<sup>526</sup> Post, Jerrold M. (1986): Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship, In: Political Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 675-688.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., p. 680.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., p. 679.

#### ***4 Izala and Wahhabism***

In many cases, the Izala movement is understood as part of or connected to Wahhābiyya, not only amongst Nigerian Muslims (esp. Sufis) but also outside of West Africa. There are different connotations of Izala. The movement is considered by some to be among the *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* (in Arabic: people of the *sunna* and the Community). Some people labelled it as *Wahhābiyya* and link it to the Wahhābī movement which originated in Saudi Arabia, and others consider it to be a *Salafiyya*-movement. This section serves as a clarification of *Ahl al-Sunna*, *Salafiyya* and Wahhabism and especially where to place Izala.

The prominent Nigerian Tijānī Islamic Scholar Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh al-Husseini warns in his book<sup>529</sup> about a group of people of who are innovators (in Arabic: *mubtadi'a*) who sometimes claim to be *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* and sometimes on the path of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*, but in reality they are neither nor. In fact this category of people belongs to *madhhab al-mushabaha* and can be considered neither among *Ahl al-Sunna* nor *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*. Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh clarifies the existence of three different directions when it comes to understanding the concept of *madhhab* (in Arabic: school of law or jurisprudence):

---

<sup>529</sup> Al-Husseini, Ibrahim Saleh (2005): *A-l-Durar al-lammā'a fi Haqiqati Ma'na Ahl a-l-Sunna wal Jamā'a* (The Shiny Pearls in the really meaning of People of the Sunna the Community).

He calls the first category *Madhhab Ahl al-Ta'wil*, or those scholars who use their reasoning and by doing so deviated in their interpretation from the scripture (Qur'ān) – amongst others the so-called *Jahmiyya* and *Mu'tazila*.<sup>530</sup>

The second group is that of *al-mushabaha* who exaggerated in demonstration so that they were mistaken when it came to the attributes of God. When it came to the explanation of faith they showed explicit confusion.

The third and last category is *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a*. This *madhhab* believes that anything related to the Prophet (Qur'ān and *sunna*) is “absolute” (Arabic: *qat'i*) or “rightful” (Arabic: *ṣaḥīḥ*). This should be confirmed by trustworthy scholars. Any issue which is categorized as *mutashābih* (in Arabic: ambiguous) is only known by Allah. Scholars interpret it only in case of necessity, unlike the appearance of “innovators” who can influence people’s faith.<sup>531</sup>

The scholar and *dā'i* (in Arabic: the one who practices *Da'wa*; preacher, “missionary”) Ahmad Bello Dogarawa does not see much difference between *Ahl al-Salaf*, *Ahl al-Sunna* or *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*. According to him, after the death of the fourth “Rightfully Guided” Caliph 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (d. 656), the Islamic *umma* witnessed the appearance of different Islamic groups like the “Qadariyya”, and the “Mu'tazila” – as a result of the Charijites. This was seen by some Muslims as innovation in *dīn* (in Arabic: religion). He elaborates his argument by dividing the Islamic *umma* into two

---

<sup>530</sup> Al-Jahmiyya is named after Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān (d. 745); al-Mu'tazila is an Islamic school of thought which emerged between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10 centuries (CE); both orientations were controversial among Muslims and were known for using reasoning to define the nature of God.

<sup>531</sup> Al-Husseini (2005), pp. 18-19; I tried to summarize the explanation given by the author in his Arabic text. The author elaborates more on the third category and narrates several sources agreeing that *Ahl al-Sunna* is basically comprised of the four Schools of Law (Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, Ḥanbalī and Ḥanafī).

major groups: the Shi'ites and *Ahl al-Sunna* (Sunni Muslims). He categorizes *Ahl al-Sunna* in:

1. *al-Marji'yya*;
2. *Charijites*;
3. *al-Mu'tazila*;
4. *Ahl al-Hadiith wa'l-Athar*.

The debate was raised concerning belief in the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet. Especially during the time of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 855, CE) the community was "divided" between those who followed *Ahl al-Sunna* and those who did not.

The *Salafiyūn* believe in the Qur'an, the *sunna*, *as-Ṣaḥāba* (the Companions), *al-Tabi'ūn* (the followers), and *Tabi'u al-Tabi'in* (the followers of the followers) – in general the first three generations of the Muslim community. Concerning *Ahl al-Sunna*, there is no substantial difference. Both *Salafiyūn* and *Ahl al-Sunna* agree on matters of *tawḥīd* (oneness of God) and '*ibāda*' of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*.<sup>532</sup>

Ustaz Umar Adamu Muhammad (al-Hafiz), an *imām* and scholar of Arabic, constructs a link between Izala and Wahhābiyya as a movement. According to him, Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb denied anything which outside of Islam – a point of view which is similar to Izala. In addition, Izala uses the book of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, although they (the Izala) don't call themselves Wahhābbis. He mentions an interesting point that Sufis call anything coming from Saudi Arabia "Wahhābi". Since

---

<sup>532</sup> Interview with Ustaz Ahmad Bello Dogarawa in Zaria, 8<sup>th</sup> January/2007.

Sheikh Gumi, the spiritual father of Izala, was linked to Saudi Arabia, the Izala is thus 'connected' to Wahhabism in many cases.<sup>533</sup>

The Islamic scholar and student of Sheikh Gumi, Sheikh Muhammad Sanusi Gombe categorizes Nigerian Muslims as Mālikīs following *al-‘aqīda al-ash‘ariyya*. Apart from the Sokoto Caliphate and the call of Usman Dan Fodio to the *sunna*, Sheikh Sanusi Gombe considers the call of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi to be *awwalu da‘wa ‘alā ṭarīqa Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jamā‘a* (the first call to people following the path of *Ahl al-Sunna*) in modern Nigeria. According to him, Sheikh Gumi preached to people following the path of *Salafiyya – al-‘aqīda al-Salafiyya*.

When it comes to the Izala movement in Nigeria, Sheikh Sanusi Gombe mentions that the organization was established on the basis of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*. Furthermore, Sheikh Sanusi Gombe finds a connection between the Izala and the Wahhābiyya-movement especially in their methods. He argues that both Izala and Wahhābiyya are against visiting tombs and *istighātha* (in Arabic: supplication; relying on an intermediary between creator and creature). He adds that Izala teaches the books by Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. The interviewee differentiates between Izala and the Wahhābiyya-movement in the following:

“The Wahhābīs have nothing to do with this life, but Izala do. The Wahhābī consider leadership [the Sheikh is the leader], but in Izala everyone is considers himself a leader”.<sup>534</sup>

---

<sup>533</sup> Interview with Dr. Umar Adamu Muhammad, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007, Kaduna.

<sup>534</sup> Interview with Sheikh Sanusi Gombe, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2007, Kaduna.

Sheikh Sanusi Gombe further elaborates in his argument that the Tijāniyya and the Qādiriyya brotherhoods in Nigeria are also among *Ahl al-Sunna*, following the Qur’ān and the *sunna* of the Prophet. Although the two are older than the Wahhābiyya, they were attacked by the Wahhābiyya-movement. He gives an example from the Sudan where the Mahdī Muḥammad Aḥmad opposed the Tijāniyya and the Qādiriyya. At the same time, the Tijāniyya opposed the Qādiriyya and al-Mahdī, etc. He concludes that the Wahhābiyya “cleansed” (Arabic: *masaḥat*) any type of Sufi-Brotherhood.<sup>535</sup>

According to the Izala leader in Lagos (linked to the Jos faction) Dalhah Abubakar Abdullah, every contemporary Salafiyya-follower was associated with Izala before. He cannot see a big difference between Izala and the Salafiyya movement. He is surprised to identify a Salafiyya outside of Izala:

“As you know and as I told you, the people of Nigeria like leadership. Everybody who belongs to Salafiyya now was an Izala before. He wants to have a specific name different from Izala and he calls his followers to recognize him as a leader. I don’t know how we can differentiate between the Izala and the Salafiyya.

There is only a Salafiyya mu‘āsira (modern Salafiyya) that from renowned ‘*ulamā*’ and denied the Salafī-‘*ulamā*’. This is what they do and it is a mistake. They take from a famous ‘alim and leave all that comes from Salafī-‘*ulamā*’. People who call for Salafiyya doctrines don’t like to belong to any of the four schools of law. They think that they are able do deal with law without the opinion of old and new ‘*ulamā*’. These people call for the Salafiyya-doctrines.”<sup>536</sup>

---

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Interview with the Leader of Izala, Dalhah Abubakar Abdullahi in Lagos, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

One can understand from this statement that the Izala leader regards the Salafiyya-movement in Nigeria to be a kind of deviation from Izala. He criticizes the fact that the current Salafiyya establishes itself in a tradition outside of the four Schools of Law. He mentions the examples of late Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam, the Kano Salafiyya scholar, who was with Izala - according to the Izala-leader in Lagos – and then travelled to Medina (Saudi Arabia) to study and when he came back, he established the Salafiyya movement.

When asked about the doctrine of the Salafiyya in Nigeria and whether they are following the path of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*, Mallam Dalhah Abubakar Abdallah cited that the movement [Salafiyya] follows only what is in conformity with its own standpoints and everything which in not it is rejected. He adds that they claim to belong to the tradition of Sheikh al-Albānī (d. 1999), a controversial Islamic Scholar from Albania who taught *ḥadīth* at the Islamic University in Medina and who belonged to the Salafiyya movement. He gives the example that al-Albānī accepted three types of *taslīma* (in Arabic: closing prayers), but the Salafiyya denied them. He also mentions the example of *jinn*-Possession and the communication with *jinn* which was rejected by al-Albānī, which is not the case for the Salafiyya.<sup>537</sup>

Concerning the issue of Wahhabism and whether the Izala was influenced by the movement, Mallam Dalhah confirms that Izala reads and teaches the books of Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhābelwahhab especially when it comes to the issue of *tawḥīd*. He mentions the title of the book “Fath al-Majid” written by Ibn ‘Abd al-

---

<sup>537</sup> Ibid.

Wahhāb which is used by Izala in the context of the oneness of God. For this, this reason Sufis call Izala “Wahhābiyya”. He adds that Izala uses books by Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), but he makes it clear that: “We agree with every book that attests to the oneness of Allah.”<sup>538</sup>

The caliph of the Qādiriyya-Nasiriyya in Kano, Sheikh Qaribullah Nasiru Kabara, avoids using the word “Izala” at all. He compares the relationship between the Sufi brotherhoods themselves and between Sufis and Wahhābiyya as “totally different”. The Sheikh confirms that Sufism is older than Wahhābiyya. He observes what he called “al-Ṭā’ifa al-Wahhābiyya” (the Wahhābī-Sect) in Nigeria develop during the post-colonial time after it garnered support from politicians. Without mentioning the name of the Wahhābiyya-leader [Sheikh A. Gumi], he describes how he was close to the Sardauna and Prime Minister Ahmadu Bello. Declaring the existence of Wahhabism implicitly or explicitly was not easy at that time since Dan Fodio was a Qādirī and the Sardauna himself. After the assassination of the Premier of the northern Region of Nigeria in 1966, a big change happened since the “Wahhābi-leader” declared that Sufis are practicing *shirk*. Since that time a kind of struggle between the Sufis and the Wahhabis has taken place. Sheikh Qaribullah is convinced that the Sufi-brotherhoods resisted and succeeded in stopping to Wahhabism. This is confirmed – according to him – by the fact that Sufis today represent the majority of Muslims in the West African country.<sup>539</sup>

---

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Interview in the House of the Qādiriyya in Kano with Sheikh Qaribullah Nasiru Kabara, 2<sup>nd</sup>/1/2007

Although Sheikh Qaribullah relates the issue of *shirk* and *takfir* (in Arabic: declaring non-belief) to the rise of the “Wahhābī-Sect” in Nigeria, he shows in a chapter of his “*al-Mir’āt al-ṣāfiya fi Bayāni Ḥaqqīqat al-Taṣawwuf wa ba’di Rijālihi dhawi al-Maqāmāt al-‘aliya*” (in Arabic: The Clean Mirror in the Truth of Sufism and some of his highly-ranked Representatives) that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb stood against *takfir* of Muslims. Sheikh Qaribullah warned that declaring Muslims as “non-believers” is associated with incorrect interpretations of the Qur’ān and the *sunna*. After listing a number of Islamic scholars like Ibn Ḥanbal and Imam al-Ghazālī - to mention a few – who rejected *takfir*, Sheikh Qaribullah quotes the book “*al-Taḥdir mina Mujāzafa bi’l-Takfir*” (in Arabic: Warning of the Risk of “Takfir”) by Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alāwī al-Mālikī al-Ḥusnī who explains his point of view of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb:

“Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb – God bless him – has a negative attitude towards *takfir*, especially when it is related to him in declaring *kufir* by those who opposed him and his ideas. This is Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb denying all that was related to him among these lies and claims (...).”<sup>540</sup>

On the first page of the journal “*al-Burhān*” (the Proof) edited by the Izala headquarters in Jos we read the sentence “*al-‘aqīda al-Salafiyya khayr mina al-Shahāda al-‘ilmiyya*” (in Arabic: The Salafiyya path is better than any academic certificate). The Izala itself insists on its original name and it neither accepts nor denies other connotations like “Salafiyya” or “Wahhābiyya”. The Sokoto-based

---

<sup>540</sup> Nasiru Kabara, Qaribullah (n.d.): “*al-Mir’āt a-l-ṣāfiya fi Bayāni Haqqīqat a-l-Tasawwuf wa ba’di Rijālihi dhawi al-Maqāmāt al-‘aliya*”, Darul Qādiriyya Publications, Kano, Nigeria.

historian Yandaki interprets the relationship of Izala and Salafiyya and the relationship of Izala and Wahhabism as follows: Salafism goes back to the first three generations of Islam. Salafism in general is opposed to Sufism. The Ḥanbalī School of Law is especially clear on this issue. The famous Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328 CE), a Ḥanbalī himself, rejected Sufism and regarded it as “corrupting the teachings of al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ”. Ibn Taymiyya rejected the visiting of tombs in order to obtain *baraka* (in Arabic: blessing). He refuses the idea of *tawassul* (in Arabic: continuity, intercession) in Sufism and understands it as a form of *shirk*. Yandaki observes similarities between this attitude and the attitude of Izala in rejecting Sufism and their practices.<sup>541</sup> When it comes to Wahhabism, Yandaki sees it as an external factor in the rise of the movement. He traced the roots of Izala back to the Saudi-dominated Muslim World League (*Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*):

“The Izalatul Bid‘ah movement is directly influenced by the Saudi based Rabita. In short, Izalah is the result of the outreach of the Rabita.”<sup>542</sup>

Yandaki explains that Wahhabism is behind the Muslim World League and concludes that Izala is indirectly influenced by the movement. Yandaki explains that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb after whom the Wahhābiyya is named led a “puritanical” movement that opposed Sufism and any innovation in Islam. Yandaki adds that the

---

<sup>541</sup> Yandaki, I. Aliu (1990): The History of Izalah Movement in Northern Nigeria up to 1989; M.A.-Dissertation in History, University of Sokoto, pp. 86-90.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

books of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb touch on problems of *‘aqīda* and concentrate on the issue of *tawhīd*. The historian sees Wahhabism as a common phenomenon in Africa from east to West and in the north of the continent. Especially in West Africa, he relies on the PhD-Thesis of Lansiné Kaba to explain the spread of Wahhabism. According to Kaba the spread of Wahhabism is explained in three elements: pilgrimage to Mecca, trade, and finally nationalism and the rise of revivalism.<sup>543</sup> During the 1930s in particular, Wahhabism took root in the Ivory Coast before it reached Mali, Niger, and some other countries in the region. The coming of Wahhābī ideas to Nigeria is similar to their spread in other West African countries. Students who studied abroad in Egypt, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia contributed to the coming of Wahhabism. A comparable situation was created by teachers and lecturers originating from these countries. They heavily influenced the religious landscape of West Africa. As a prominent example Yandaki mentions Sheikh Gumi.<sup>544</sup>

The late Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam of Kano, who underwent a transformation from a member of Izala to a Salafī scholar after he studied in Medina, remarks that both factions of Izala in Jos and Kaduna as well those who left the movement are similar in the way they act and in their religious outlook and goals. According to him they all practice *da‘wa* for the Qur’ān and the *sunna* of the Prophet. He called all of them *Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jamā‘a*. When he was asked about the Salafiyya in Kano, he responded:

---

<sup>543</sup> Yandaki (1990), p. 104; he relies on Lansiné, K. (1972): Evolution of Islam in West Africa, the contribution to political Islam 1945-58; PhD-Thesis.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., see p. 106-7.

“Salafi orientation (*Ittijāh al-Da‘wa al-Salafiyya*) is unstable because Kano is more a center of Sufism. Salafiyya is to be found more in Jos or Kaduna.<sup>545</sup>

From the different points of view shown above, the Izala can be classified as a Salafiyya movement i.e. its primary focus is to fight innovation in Islam and to establish the *sunna* on the basis of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*.

Although most Islamic scholars tend to define *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* as the third generation after the death of the Prophet, it is difficult to trace the origin and exact time of this generation. The Encyclopaedia of Islam lists the three generations in the following:

1. The golden age;
2. a second period of “relaxation of standards and deviation”;
3. and a period of division.

It was the generation of the *Ṣaḥāba* (companions), *al-Tābi‘ūn* (successors), and *Atbā‘ al-Tābi‘ūn* (successors of the successors) that are considered the “norm” and the “model” for all Muslims, called *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*. It is debatable when this period ends. It should be noted that some scholars consider only the period of the companions as the age of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*. In addition, there is a differentiation between traditional and modern Salafiyya.<sup>546</sup> The Izala with both its branches sees itself in that tradition of Salafiyya. Of course, it is difficult for the movement to build its *silsila* - if we can use a Sufi terminus – in the tradition of Salafism.

---

<sup>545</sup> Interview with late Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam in Kano, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007.

<sup>546</sup> Chaumont, E. (1995). *al-Salaf wa 'L-Khalaf*, In: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden: Brill, p. 900.

When it comes to Wahhabism, it seems to be more incomprehensible. The claim that Izala is a manifestation of the Wahhābī-movement is due to the same reasons. First of all, the Izala “spiritual father”, Sheikh Gumi was linked to Saudi Arabia and to Wahhabism. Secondly, the Izala itself uses the books of Sheikh Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, especially those which deal with *tawḥīd*, the oneness of God. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) himself was influenced by the two Ḥanbalī scholars: Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) and depended on them in many issues. The historian Michael Cook concludes that this “dependence provides the target for some of the earliest attacks on the doctrines of the Sheikh.”<sup>547</sup> Concerning the prevalence of *shirk* Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb seems to be influenced by the Islamic scholar Ibn al-Amīr (b. 1688).<sup>548</sup>

It is known that the name “Wahhābī” was given to sympathizers of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s teachings. Wahhābīs distinguished themselves as *al-Muwaḥḥidūn* (the puritans) or *Ahl al-Tawḥīd* (people of the oneness of God).<sup>549</sup> Hamid Algar, specialist of Persian studies, warns that there is no connection between the Wahhābiyya movements than we know in different parts of the world today and the initial stage instigated by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. The author rejects the idea of identifying Wahhabism as a reform movement that mushroomed to the rest of the Muslim

---

<sup>547</sup> Cook, Michael (1992): “On the Origins of Wahhabism”, In: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3(2), pp. 199-200.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>549</sup> Algar, Hamid (2002): Wahhabism: A critical Essay. Oneonta, New York: Islamic Publications International, p 1.

world.<sup>550</sup> He points out the connection between Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Ibn Taymiyya mentioning that the latter used to be a member of a Sufi order unlike the former.<sup>551</sup> The misinterpretation of Wahhabism started – according to Algar – with the formation of the first Saudi state during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The founders of that state proclaimed *jihād* against all who opposed their understanding of *tawḥīd*. Those who opposed their doctrines were declared *mushrikūn* (in Arabic: polytheists) and apostates.<sup>552</sup> Returning to the doctrine of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Algar stresses that the Sheikh concentrated on *tawḥīd* and especially on one particular type of it: *tawḥīd al-‘ibāda* (in Arabic: oneness in worshipping context). Algar consider this fact important when it comes to *shirk*.<sup>553</sup>

There is a similarity between that doctrine of the Wahhābiyya and the formation period of Izala. The Izala developed its own arguments, attacked Sufis in the past and declared their practices as an act of *shirk*. Additional prayers and Sufi-beliefs are irrelevant for the Izala and cannot be found in the tradition of *al-Salaf*.

One common thing between Izala and Wahhābī is that both use the concept *bid‘a* in a negative way. Algar clarifies it in the following:

---

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., p31; Algar lists three types of *tawḥīd*, *tawḥīd a-l-rubūbiyya*, *al-asmā’ was ṣifāt*, and *al-‘ibāda* (Oneness of God; of his attributes; worshipping).

“This concept has been defined as “an innovated matter not followed by the Companions or the Followers and not part of that which a legal proof (*dalīl sharī*) necessitates.”<sup>554</sup>

According to Algar this rejection of Sufism, the attachment to the tradition of *al-Salaf al-Saliḥ* and the abandonment of affiliation with a particular Islamic school of law seems to be a common feature of Wahhābiyya and Salafiyya.<sup>555</sup> The author makes the distinction between both on the basis of two elements:

“Two important and interrelated features have usually served, however, to distinguish the Salafis from the Wahhabis: a reliance on attempts at persuasion rather than coercion in order to rally other Muslims to their cause; and an informal awareness of the political and socio-economic crises confronting the Muslim world.”<sup>556</sup>

The Izala can be placed in the Salafiyya tradition with Wahhābiyya influences. It is also part of *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* as are most Sunni Muslims and movements. The Izala defines itself as “fighters” against innovation and as establishers of the *sunna* of the Prophet. *Tawḥīd* plays a crucial role in the Izala doctrine. Izala relies on the teachings of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, but also on other Islamic scholars like Ibn Taymiyya, Imam Mālik, al-Albānī, and many others. Izala can be more closely identified within the Mālikī and the Ḥanbalī School of law, although as mentioned above, it doesn't restrict itself to a particular school of law.

---

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., p 47.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.,

### ***5 The Division of the Movement: One organization and two doctrines or two organizations and one doctrine?*<sup>557</sup>**

In most northern Nigerian states (and the whole country) institutions (schools, mosques, hospitals, etc.) of the 1978-established-Izala are separated according to two centres: Jos and Kaduna. The Jos-faction and its current headquarters in the Sarkin Mangu neighbourhood of Jos tries to keep the flag flying for the tradition of the founder, Sheikh Idris, and his doctrine. The Kaduna-faction is made of those who opposed him and chose to deviate from his path. Even if they decided to give their organization a new direction, they stick to the same name. Kaduna as the former capital of the northern Region is also symbolic for Muslims of the north. Of course there are those who witnessed the development of Izala and never belonged to one of the two factions or those who were members of the movement and left it at different stages. The division commenced in the mid-1980s. It was related to ideological differences in the movement. As a result, a separation at the level of institutions took place. Both major factions kept the initial constitution of the organization.

I summarized<sup>558</sup> the reasons of the division in four major elements:

---

<sup>557</sup> Dealing with the division of Izala here is more focused on the discourse going on in the society and by no way a trial to side with one or the other faction.

<sup>558</sup> On February 7<sup>th</sup> 2007 I presented a paper at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria, summarizing the reasons for the division of Izala into two major groups (Jos and Kaduna factions). Many Izala Jos followers (mostly students) attended the seminar and questioned the reasons for division, especially those of money-issues and the person of Sheikh Idris. This presentation opened the door for me to meet the actual leader of Izala and other personalities of the movement in northern Nigeria.

1. Questions of leadership, especially the position of *'ulamā'* in the Society. Members of the Jos faction consider the late Sheikh Idris, the head of the Council of *'ulamā'*, to be the highest authority of the organization. Izala Kaduna regarded Musa Muhammed Mai Gandu, the head of the Council Administration as the true leader of the Izala at that time.
2. The issue of finances of the organization. There was a discussion as to whether donations were directed to the Izala as an organization or to the person of Sheikh Idris.
3. Doctrinal division especially when it comes to *takfir* (declaring for non-believer) and the relationship with other Muslims.
4. The person of Sheikh Idris and his way of managing Izala. One crucial question was raised as to whether he is an ordinary preacher or if he is the highest religious authority of the movement. These issues will be discussed in the coming paragraphs.

### **5.1 Time of the division**

The division of Izala took place after the celebration of the thirteen year - existence of the organization. All the Izala leaders, members and sympathizers were invited to join the celebration in Jos. This date was symbolic for the movement and meant its attachment to the *sunna* of the Prophet. It was not by chance that the event coincided with the *hijra* of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina (which also occurred after 13 years). The Prophet also spent the time [of the *hijra*] inviting people to Islam

and introducing his message before he migrated to Medina.<sup>559</sup> The Izala event was a celebration that turned into an event of accusation.

Ousmane Kane spoke of a “process of domestication that led to the break-up of the society.”<sup>560</sup> He believes that efforts by political institutions to limit the influence of Izala and to restrict its emergence at the end of the 1970s and into the mid-1980s created problems in the organization. Kane regards measures taken by Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (Head of State 1983-85) as “backlash” to the Izala doctrine. As the head of state, Buhari grasped the nettle in order to restrict religious preaching and the building of new Friday mosques without permission.<sup>561</sup> Also the relationship between Buhari and Sheikh Gumi seems to have affected the movement as a whole. Izala preaching in Kano from the beginning of the movement until the mid-1980s was not permitted. The situation changed after the bloodless coup d’état of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (1985-1993) whose administration – according to Kane – supported more reforms.<sup>562</sup>

Taking Kano State as an example, a trial to “turn the preachers to an institutional channel for negotiation with the state”<sup>563</sup> (in this case A.K. Daiyyubu, former Izala leader in Kano) is considered to be one of the many explanations for the split. According to Kane, Daiyyubu organized the Izala in Kano and succeeded in

---

<sup>559</sup> Interview with Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007, Lagos.

<sup>560</sup> Kane (2003), p. 207; preaching and establishing new mosques/bringing many mosques under their control were two of the most successful strategies followed by the Izala movement at an early stage of the establishment; see also Loimeier (1997), p. 216.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., pp. 208-9.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., pp. 210-211.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

becoming a representative of the movement by end of the 1980s. Daiyyabu used his position in Izala to clarify his position vis-à-vis the state and its policy.<sup>564</sup> Kane expected the *'ulamā'* of Izala to be “frustrated” over being “relegated to the background”.<sup>565</sup> This is of course a good example which shows the kind of problems the movement had to face. Apart from the internal dogmatic controversies between leaders of Izala, the organization was used as a forum for propagating individual ideas and points of view. This is what Kane called an attempt to use Izala as a “channel of negotiation with the state”.<sup>566</sup> Another reason leading to the break of the Society can to be explained given the fact that “patrons of the movement” who were also part of the state apparatus tried to exercise power over Izala. As examples of this strategy Kane mentions the cases of Daiyyabu in Kano and an Izala leader in Borno who were both dismissed in 1990.<sup>567</sup>

The issue of the split mentioned above was in the context of Kano state. Concerning the Izala as a whole, the conflict between Sheikh Idris and Musa Mai Gandu escalated. It was a kind of struggle for power within the movement. The monetary aspect also seemed to play a critical role in the division. In the year 1991, the two parties of Izala started “discrediting each other”.<sup>568</sup>

---

<sup>564</sup> Kane (2003) mentions how A. K. Daiyyabu criticized the new government population policy. During an Izala meeting in Kano, 1989, Daiyyabu turned the event into a “one-man-show”- as described by Kane- to heavily denounce the implementation of a so-called structural adjustment policy (SAP) through the government; see pp. 218-219.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

The crisis of Izala started in the mid-1980s and intensified at the beginning of the 1990s. The Gulf war between 1990 and 1991 can be considered an external factor influencing the Izala movement. The leaders of the Society were divided between those who supported Saddam Hussein in his invasion of Kuwait and those who opposed it. Interestingly, two groups within the movement emerged: *Saddamawa* (supporters of S. Hussein) and *Bushawa* (named after G.H. Bush; supporters of the Saudis). The entire discussion developed from the question of whether Saddam Hussein was permitted to invade a Muslim country (Kuwait) or not. In addition, a heated debate arose among Izala as to whether it was permitted to station American troops in Saudi Arabia or not.

The events are nicely described by Sani Modibbo as follows:

“(...) When Saddam invaded Kuwait, Mallam Ismail was not in favor of supporting the invasion and then condemned the act and also support Saudis for giving Americans military bases in the Holy Land. We were not active in the Izala when this controversy emerged. It was around 1990, isn't it? Around 1991 was the Iraqi invasion. So politically the *'ulamā'*, those *'ulamā'* who said: “let us fight, said let us support Mallam (Idris).” They were also divided. Those who said: “no” although they were not supporting Saddam 100%, they disagreed; they condemned the Saudi Government for providing these Americans with military bases in the Holy Land because they will bring “fassad” (decline). And Mallam came out and said that they are right, they were right and have right.”<sup>569</sup>

---

<sup>569</sup> Interview with Sani Modibbo, 28 February 2007, Jos.

There are several speculations about the event and the Izala reactions to the Gulf War. Some views took the opportunity to confirm that Sheikh Idris was sponsored by Kuwait,<sup>570</sup> and that is why he opposed Saddam Hussein. In absence of any evidence, such a claim can neither verified nor falsified. Izala is known to Nigerian Muslims as an organization which self-reliant in matters of finances. It is possible that during a very early stage Izala was financially assisted by networks associated with Sheikh Gumi outside of Nigeria, but it is very difficult to find any proof. When asked about possible financial support to the organization originating from Kuwait and the fact that Sheikh Idris opposed the invasion of Kuwait, the Izala leader in Lagos (Jos-faction), Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, gave the following answer:

“From the Sheikh’s standpoint; we are not allowed to rely on any Arabic country, and what Arabs give as financial support is only for the improvement of Islam and also for the purpose of reaching paradise. And when he asked us if we don’t like al-Janna (paradise); we said that we do like it, and he continued: “we should rely only on ourselves and on what we have.”

I don’t know if Kuwait supported the Society but I don’t agree with it. It is not true.”<sup>571</sup>

Interestingly when leaders make decisions in Izala, they try to link followers to their views and interpretations. This has social implications in the movement, like

---

<sup>570</sup> Loimeier (1997) mentions that Yan Izala and Sheikh Gumi were supported by the Saudis and Kuwaitis see p. 287.

<sup>571</sup> Interview on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007, Lagos.

warning followers about getting married to a member of the group of opponents within the movement.

“And even when I heard, that even your daughter is married to a Saddamawa that marriage is annulled and thus void. So we have a controversy now.”<sup>572</sup>

Besides the concern at the social level, followers within the Izala are warned against opponents, but it also often becomes an identity issue of being Izala or not:

“If you are Saddam’s supporter for any cause, if you support Saddam, if you support the course of Saddam, you are not an Izala.”<sup>573</sup>

This is quite a widespread phenomenon in Izala. Even today the question of authenticity is crucial within the movement. Being Izala requires for example identifying with the founder Sheikh Idris and his *fatwās* for the Jos-faction. Furthermore it also requires protecting him in all directions (see chapter “The War of Word”). For the Kaduna-faction, guidance by other *‘ulamā’* in the organization is more important.

To conclude, the major problem causing the division of the Izala started in the mid-1980s. This was a period of time marked by political instability. In the year 1986 and during the presidency of Babangida, the OIC-controversy<sup>574</sup> was highly debated. In addition, the Muslim community in Nigeria witnessed events like the Maitatsine

---

<sup>572</sup> Interview with Sani Modibbo, 28 February 2007, Jos.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> See Hock (1996) more details on the issue.

riots in 1980. Finally the long lasting Sufi-Izala conflict over doctrines turned into a violent struggle several times.

Furthermore after being officially registered in 1985, the Izala movement entered into a phase of “consolidation” and at the same time tried to “cleanse itself” (from the Maitatsine riots and all accusations against Izala) – as Yandaki emphasizes.<sup>575</sup>

The period of division of Izala was an unstable one both within and outside the movement. The pressure on leadership inside and outside the movement was strong. A new and fast-growing movement like Izala faced challenges and ended up dividing into two major groups - or possibly even more. In several parts of northern Nigeria signs of division became more visible and influenced the movement. In Sokoto state for example, Sidi Attahiru, one of the major figures of the movement, broke with Izala in the mid-1980s and publicly disassociated himself from Izala before joining a Sufi Brotherhood. The case of Usman Dangungu is also well-known. He was very influential amongst the youth. In 1983, he criticized the governor of Kano in an audio cassette recording. Afterwards he was “excommunicated” – to use Yandaki’s word – from Izala. In Kano and during the same time, the Islamic scholar Aminud Deen

---

<sup>575</sup> Yandaki (1990) identifies the period between 1982 and 1988 in the history of Izala as a “phase of consolidation“. During that time Izala started growing and became “more tolerated in the society”, pp. 159-164; Izala also tried between 1982 and 1984 to polish its image and distance itself from the Maitatsine events of the 1980s, see p. 163.

Abubakar left Izala and established his own movement. Sheikh M. Sanusi Gumbi (based in Kaduna today) struggled with the leadership of Izala and left the society.<sup>576</sup>

The coming paragraphs will deal with the reasons for division. It is in no way an attempt to make any group or person in Izala responsible for the division.

Furthermore, it is an analysis of discourse and arguments from different angles.

## 5.2 Reasons of the Division

In his study on different Islamic institutions in Nigeria A. Lawal Adam summarizes four reasons for the division of Islamic groups: political (Arabic: *siyāsa*), faith (Arabic: *‘aqīda*), behavior (Arabic: *sulūk*), and fanaticism (Arabic: *‘aṣabiyya*).<sup>577</sup>

In fact, a division of any religious movement is often due to internal and external reasons. Izala is not an exception in this respect. In the movement itself as well as in the entire country, the split damaged the image of the movement in many ways. Nevertheless, following the crisis within Izala the same constitution and structures were kept.

The majority of people inside and outside the Izala movement confess that the issue of division was not at the level of *‘aqīda* or about the goals of the society. The type of leadership of the founder and his relationship to other *‘ulamā’* of the movement as well as to other leaders of the Society created a fissure within Izala. Of

---

<sup>576</sup> Ibid., the author gives different examples showing that the division of Izala was a question of time in the mid-1980s a question of time; for more details from different regions of the north see pp. 176-180.

<sup>577</sup> Lawal Adam, A. (1992), pp. 45-46.

course one cannot deny the general situation during the time of division on many levels: economically, politically and religiously.

There are many reasons leading to the division of Izala into two major groups. One cannot separate them from the political and religious context in Nigeria. The 1970s was a time of economic instability and political turmoil in Nigeria. Apart from the discussion on the new constitution of 1979, a series of ethno-religious clashes took place in the West African country. Additionally, events in the Islamic world affected the Izala movement in one way or another.

M. N. Gurama stresses that the media played a significant role in escalating the situation during the 1980s between the Izala and Sufis in the 1980s. This influenced the movement in one way or another.<sup>578</sup> Furthermore, Gurama related the crisis of Izala to other crises in the Muslim world. He mentions among others the Gulf-War, the case of Algeria during the 1990s, the *sharī'a* debate in Nigeria, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the war in Bosnia during the 1990s.<sup>579</sup> Concerning the direct reasons for the division of Izala, Gurama lists several reasons leading to the division of the movement. The author lists ten details causing the movement's crisis. Among others, some scholars left Izala since they refused Sheikh Idris' leadership. In addition, there were some tribalistic issues; some scholars were still affiliated with Sufism and Sufi practices; there was the involvement of Shi'ites in the movement; the use of the organization to achieve leaders' personal goals; the call to separate a

---

<sup>578</sup> For more details see Gurama (2000), pp. 62-65; most of the events described by the author are articles related to the Maitatsine riots of the 1980 written by Sufis and Izala leaders. Izala was accused of being irresponsible. The Society defended itself and distanced itself from the happening.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

women's wing of Izala; and the so-called academic terrorism i.e. deviating from the Mālikī School of Law.<sup>580</sup> Gurama speaks of secret meetings to impeach Sheikh Idris and compares what happened in Izala to what happened to Sheikh Gumi when he left JNi. Furthermore, Gurama speaks of propaganda against the founder of Izala. According to him, Sufis also got involved and used the situation to circulate "baseless stories" on Izala.<sup>581</sup>

The author mentions an important meeting held in Hadeja, Jigawa State, for the purpose of impeaching Sheikh Idris. The result of the meeting was the decision that the founder of Izala should be expelled because of:

1. Using law for his own purpose;
2. calling people "non-believers";
3. preferring things that contradict Islam;
4. considering *ṭarīqa* people to be *mushrikīn* (in Arabic: polytheists).<sup>582</sup>

After the struggle within Izala, a declaration over the Radio in Kaduna was made in 1991, that Sheikh Idris was not leading the Izala council of '*ulamā*' anymore and was replaced by Sheikh Rabiū Daura. In addition, the head of the First Aid Groups, Alhaji Issa Waziri, was removed from his position. Many other changes at the level of leadership were made by the Kaduna-faction of Izala. All these decisions

---

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-74.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., p 78; the author quotes a pamphlet in Hausa written by sheikh Muhammad Umar Nasarawa, Adamawa state leader of the Council of Ulama and affiliated with the Kaduna faction of Izala.

were explained by the fact that Sheikh Idris handled matters individually, that he refused advice, and used the organization's money for his own purposes (donations in matters of books or cars), and that he announced the thirteen-year anniversary celebration of Izala without the consultation of other *‘ulamā’*.<sup>583</sup> The answer of Sheikh Idris himself reflects his point of view: "Even if a non-Muslim is asked who founded Izala, he will tell you that Isma'ila Idris founded it."<sup>584</sup> As an explanation of the crisis within Izala given by the founder of the movement, Sheikh Idris spoke of the selfish interest of many people involved in Izala, Shi'a involvement in the Society, revival of innovation through some preachers, and opposition to a women's wing of Izala.<sup>585</sup>

As Kane shows, the issue of leadership of Sheikh Idris is mentioned as a reason for division. Apart from that money seems to play a role in the split.

In the following, the reasons for division are analyzed from different perspectives: from the perspectives of leaders in Jos and Kaduna, from the point of view of some former Izala followers, from the perspective of ordinary members of the movement and of those who never joined Izala.

For the current leader of Izala in Jos Sheikh Jingir, the division of the movement is due to three major reasons, among others. According to him, one of the reasons is the Shi'a influence of some preachers of the movement:

"(...) the influence on some preachers by Shi'ite ideas, which came to Nigeria and spread out. The *da'wa* started by telling people not to go

---

<sup>583</sup> Gurama (2000), pp. 81-82.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

to schools belonging to the state and so on. Some students left their schools since these institutions were under a taghut (devil, Satan) rule. This is one reason.”<sup>586</sup>

The leader adds that some preachers who belonged to political institutions of the state influenced the movement. In addition to that some people blamed Sheikh Idris for using the money of the Society for his own purposes. Furthermore they complained about his inability to obtain financial support from Arabic countries.<sup>587</sup>

Sheikh Yusuf Sambo, the leader of Izala (Kaduna-faction) saw a structural misunderstanding behind the whole issue of Izala. In his opinion, since the establishment of the organization Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu was and is the leader of Izala. He mentions that since the Izala is a religious organization, a Council of *‘ulamā’* was established during a meeting held in Kaduna. Leaders of the movement elected Sheikh Rabiū Daura but since Sheikh Idris was the founder of Izala he was given the position. He agrees that the conflict was in no way a matter of faith. He points out:

“As we removed Sheikh Idris from his position, they refused. They said: “this is not possible!” “Nobody can say this or that”.<sup>588</sup>

He adds

“They blame us for being Shī’a and Saddamawa (followers of Saddam). They blame us for many things but we don’t answer them.”<sup>589</sup>

---

<sup>586</sup> Interview on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007; (my translation from Arabic).

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Interview with Yusuf Sambo on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007 in Kaduna (my translation from Arabic)

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

This view is also confirmed by Sheikh Ali Abdallah Telex, the Izala leader in Zaria (Kaduna-branch). He confirms that Alhaji Mai Gandu was and is still the leader of the Society as a whole:

“(…) Money; I think it was monetary issues. They insulted each other. I would also say that the problems are also political because when the conflict matured, they started insulting each other’s in some cases – as I said.

The political conflict reached the leader of the Council of *‘ulamā’* of the Society: Sheikh Ismaila Idris.

The Society was founded on three basic elements: 1- the Administrative Council which is the strongest; 2- Aid groups; 3- and Knowledge and Education. The problem took place at the third level among the *‘ulamā’*. The monetary and political problems among the *‘ulamā’* affected the entire Society until the “Jossawa” (people of Jos) and “Kadunawa” (people of Kaduna) were established. They are known by this name even today.

I really know that the ones who belong to Izala in Kaduna try as much as possible to reconcile, but until now without success.

People of Jos are hardliners in the context of this conflict. They want to continue the conflict to prove that they were the initiators of the Society. This is not true because the first leader of the Society was Musa Muhammad Mai Gandu – he is still alive – and the people of Kaduna are today on his side. Mai Gandu was the first leader and even Sheikh Ismaila Idris was under his authority.

Most of the names given to the government for registration of the Society were from the Kaduna-faction. There were five: two of them died and three are still alive. From the three alive; there are two in Kaduna and one in Jos.”<sup>590</sup>

For the Kaduna branch of Izala, Sheikh Idris - although he was the founder of the Organization, is considered to be a *‘ālim* by many Izala members. According to

---

<sup>590</sup> Interview with Sheikh Ali Abdallah Telex on 07 January 2007, Zaria. (my translation from Arabic).

them, he neither was the leader nor was he registered as such. They criticized his lack of transparency in guiding Izala in financial matters. Very often the question was raised as to whether money (also other donations like cars, etc.) was donated to Sheikh Idris as a person or to his organization as an institutional body. Accusation and counter-accusations regarding the financial management of Izala played an important role in the division. The discussion about the structure of the society also took place. The main question concerned the structure of the organization: what is its paramount body? Is it the Council of *'ulamā'* - since the organization is a religious one? Or is it the Council of Administration? Who was leading Izala? Is it Sheikh Idris who is an Islamic scholar, or Alhaji Mai Gandu who was not a scholar?

The struggle within Izala was directed against Sheikh Idris, accusing him of selfishness in guiding the organization, but also for violating the constitution. Sheikh Idris blamed his opponent's deviation and rebellion against him. The actual leader of Izala in Lagos (linked to Jos-faction), Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, describes the situation as follows:

“In the center of accusation was Sheikh Ismaila Idris. Those who split from him accuse him of being selfish in guiding the society. They blame him of deviating from the initial goals outlined in the beginning. Sheikh Idris was charged with dominating Izala and “breaking” its constitution. He was accused of going beyond his position as an “ordinary scholar” among many others and deviating far from the leadership of Musa Muhammad Mai Gandu. The latter is not an Islamic scholar but an administrator and official leader of the society.

From his turn, Sheikh Idris accused the group that deviated from his path of 'rebellion' when they split from him – as the leader and architect of the organization."<sup>591</sup>

For Alhaji Ibrahim Musalla (Kaduna branch of Izala, served as state treasurer of the organization at a very initial stage), the issue of division started in the year 1981 in Saudi Arabia when Sheikh Idris contacted the Muslim World League and introduced himself as the leader of Izala. He was confronted by the fact that they recorded the name of Alhaji Mai Gandu as leader. Annoyed by this experience, Sheikh Idris started a struggle for power within the society:

"He went to Rabita and introduced himself as a leader of the organization. After sending the message the officer asked him: 'is he the one called Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu?' He said: 'no', he is Sheikh Ismaila Idris.'

They told him that the man in their record is Sheikh Musa Muhammed Mai Gandu. He is the leader of the organization in Nigeria. 'Did the organization have two leaders?'

He said: 'yes, he is the leader of the Imam committee, as Imam among preachers and Musa Muhammed Mai Gandu is the head of the entire organization's administration.' That is according to him.

They said: 'that they are very sorry and they can only attend to Musa Muhammad Mai Gandu as the leader in their record which they received from the embassy.'

Then he was annoyed, and was very very angry. He was complaining about why he was suffering and that somebody else is taking the all the credit. There is the beginning of the problem in the organization.

---

<sup>591</sup> Interview in Lagos on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007, (my translation from Arabic); in another occasion the interview subject compared the split of the group in Kaduna to the Charijites: the first Islamic group who split from Caliph Ali during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, See Gurama (2000) p. 110.

The moment he came back, he started bulldozing his way around, looking for a way to turn against Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu and place the fault with him.”<sup>592</sup>

The informant adds that according to the constitution of Izala, the executive chairman of the entire organization is Alhaji Mai Gandu who was elected by unanimous vote. When it comes to the Council of *‘ulamā’* and the First Aid Groups, both of them are under the chairmanship of the administration council. This was rejected by Sheikh Idris who considered the *‘ulamā’* to be at the top of the organization. Furthermore, in the mid-1980s Sheikh Idris started excluding members from the organization.<sup>593</sup>

If some leaders of Izala did not accept the way Sheikh Idris headed Izala, there were others who were also frustrated and left him because of a negative personal experience. An example of this is evident in the Jos-based Sheikh Alhassan Said Alhafiz, the former Qur’ān reciter under Sheikh Idris. He is now linked to the Kaduna-faction of Izala. Sheikh Alhassan Said points out that from the beginning he was on the side of the Izala founder and never thought of deviating from him:

“I swear by Allah that I did not belong to any other group when I was with Ismaila Idris. I was with him until they removed him from his position. They organized a meeting at Hadija – the name of the town as I told you – and some brothers asked us to go there to that meeting so if they say something wrong we can answer.

---

<sup>592</sup> Interview in Jos on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

Sheikh Idris agreed and appointed me as the leader of a committee that should go to Hadija and put a car under my disposition. We were on the way to leave and he stopped us and said: “No”, he didn’t want us to go there.

Since we didn’t go, they decided to remove him from his position. If we were there, this would not have happened. This is the will of Allah.”<sup>594</sup>

Sheikh Alhassan Said adds that other reasons led him to join the Kaduna branch of Izala. His relationship became worse with Sheikh Idris because of misunderstandings and wrong stories transmitted to the Izala founder. After leaving Nigeria to study at the Islamic University in Medina, Sheikh Alhassan Said came back for a visit in 1992/3 and preached against *riyā* (in Arabic: hypocrisy) of some people. He was misunderstood and blamed of bringing a “new religion” to the country. Furthermore Sheikh Idris was angry with him and advised him to abstain from that type of preaching which is not allowed among *Ahl al-Sunna*. The situation escalated when Sheikh Said was accused of being a *shīʿa* follower:

“He [Sheikh Idris] said: ‘Where are you and your Shiʿite teachers?!’ I said: ‘me’ and he added: ‘yes! In the Islamic University there are a lot of Shiʿites.’

‘No, no, no! By Allah, in the Islamic University there were no Shiʿites and I don’t know any teachers who are Shiʿite. Even if students, find out that another student is among the Shiʿites, they might kick him out of the University.’ And he swears by God that the majority of teacher in the Islamic University are Shiʿites. I said: ‘No! It is not like that’. (...) I said: ‘No, look; Sheikh, the books of the *sunna* are different from those of Shiʿites.’

---

<sup>594</sup> Interview in Arabic with Sheikh Alhassan Said in Jos on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006 (my translation).

He mentioned some saying and I answered him: ‘Sheikh! These are the statements of *Mu’tazila*.’ Suddenly I had the Tafsīr of Dhahabi and I opened it and said to him: ‘Look! These are the sayings of *Mu’tazila* and not of *Ahl al-Sunna*. You are our leaders, fathers, teachers and we will follow you according to the *al-‘aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa* (in Arabic: the right faith), but if you come with the teachings of then we will not agree with you.’

So he was angry and left. He also mentioned that if someone kills another person intentionally, he is a *kāfir* (non-believer) even if he repents. I said: ‘No! This is the sayings of Charijites’ and I opened the same book and showed him the proof. When a person kills a human being intentionally and if he repents then Allah will forgive him because Allah is the Forgiver and the Merciful. It is mentioned in the Qur’ān: ‘I am the forgiver for those who repent...’ And I showed him the places (where it was mentioned) as well as the *ḥadīth*. This is what brought the Sheikh to say: ‘You never come to me again!’

I said: ‘no, I will come and greet you. I consider you to be my teacher and Sheikh if you are mistaken, then I forgive you and I don’t blame you for anything since you are a human being. This is the crisis that started between them and me.’<sup>595</sup>

Sheikh Alhassan Said adds that he joined the Izala in Kaduna when he was asked to do so by that faction. He was given the opportunity to be with *al-ḥaqq* (in Arabic: truth) on the basis of the Qur’ān and *sunna*. From that time he could not remember any blame or big issues within the Kaduna group of Izala that led him to regret his choice.

This is an example at the top level of the organization of the factors that led to the division because of the founder of Izala. At the grassroots level, people are more or less guided by emotions. In Izala there is no particular ritual or initiation into any

---

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. (my translation).

faction of the organization. Followers can easily stop their affiliation to one group or the other. Followers are more directed by their own observations and interpretations of problems. If issues occur at the top level, interpretations of leaders circulate promptly and become well-known to members of the group. To identify with one faction means to be on the side of Sheikh Idris for the *Jossawa*-group and against him in the *Kadunawa*-faction. People who are in Jos and witnessed the Izala from its initial stage are mostly on the side of Sheikh Idris and follow his path. They also protect him against any accusation, be it concerning his leadership or concerning money.

Alhaji Khamis Zakariyya from Jos, who affirmed his attraction to the Izala and the preaching of Sheikh Idris since the early stages of the foundation, explains that the split of the movement is basically due to *al-ḥasad* (in Arabic: envy). He explains that there was a time when Sheikh Idris was given a new car by Mallam Hamza Abdallah. Sheikh Idris spent six months without using that car and then called the '*ulamā*' and asked them what to do with it. They suggested that he use it as a public car to generate some money. There are some people who were not happy with that. Mai Gandu and other Izala leaders betrayed Sheikh Idris in order to get money from the organization, and in the process they excluded him. Even today they blame Sheikh Idris for taking the money of Izala. In defence of the Izala founder, Alhaji Zakariyya mentions that Yusuf Sambo (leader of Izala Kaduna) also collected money to build his house in Kaduna. That money belonged to the organization. Also Sheikh Alhassan Said received money (one million Naira) from the ex-governor of Bauchi,

Muazu, and also collected donations in Port Harcourt and Abuja. He used the money to build a house. Then Alhaji Zakariyya asked, astonished, whether Sheikh Idris collected money or not. After his death they realized that he left behind only a house that was built by the organization for him. He confirms that he was present after the death of Sheikh Idris when his property was distributed among his children. Only a house was found. He says:

“I swear that all the people present cried!” Each daughter of the Sheikh got 5,000 Naira and every son received 10,000 Naira. He concludes: “I know Sheikh Idris personally! I swear! He will preach from morning to evening without having a single Naira in his pocket!”<sup>596</sup>

Of course such a statement cannot be confirmed or denied because of the absence of any evidence. It only shows how complicated the money issue in Izala is. The organization is based on donations – even today. Money is collected in mosques after prayers and at any big events organized by the society. Money is accounted for and directed to headquarters (local, state or nationwide). Trust plays a crucial role at all the different levels. The definition of donations is also important: are they directed either to a person or to the organization. There are always those who blamed, and still blame Sheikh Idris for using the organization’s money for his own purposes. The absence of clear evidence makes any accusation or counter-accusation void.

---

<sup>596</sup> Interview with Alhaji Khamis Zakariyya in his shop in Jos, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008; (interview conducted in Hausa with simultaneous translation into Arabic by Mallam Sani Abdurrazzaq).

The growth of Izala particularly in northern Nigeria made control over it complicated. It's no wonder that money became an issue since the increase of the organization's resources. A struggle for power between the *'ulamā'* and executive members of the Izala internally affected credibility and transparency in the organization. Many questions were raised within Izala: are *'ulamā'* only preachers or can they also act as treasurers of Izala? Can money go to individual accounts of *'ulamā'* or only into the account of the organization? If it goes to the *'ulamā'*'s account then how can the organization know about that? Is that money a private one or does it belong to Izala as a whole?

Ustaz Sani Modibbo who hold several positions<sup>597</sup> in Izala since its establishment and was familiar with its internal affairs illustrates how the issue of money developed into one of reasons for division in Izala. To some extent he considers money to be one of the major sources of the split:

“Money is one of the major factors because when the *'ulamā'* decided to have their own accounts, we said: “no!” at that time; because the account was for the organization. Nothing was wrong if one of the *'ulamā'*, if Ismaila himself was the signatory to the account, but they should not have a separate account. Anything belonging to the Izala should go into the main account. Later on we heard that they had their own accounts in case there is a donation from an individual. So if you are donating to account A, the executive will not have any idea; if the donation goes to the account of the executive account, then everybody will know. And then there are audits; and we have audit

---

<sup>597</sup> served as Secretary General of the Nasarawa-Gwon- Branch (Jos) between 1979 and 1985; State Secretary General in Plateau State from 1985 to 1986; Administrative Secretary 1985/86; National Executive Secretary 1985/1986 to 1987; National Escort Member of the organization.

unit and an auditor who will come and audit the account. (...) the monetary issue; one cannot deny that. Really!”<sup>598</sup>

The structure of Izala as a religious and modern society organized after regulations similar to state institutions (well-established structure, documentation, constitution, etc.) does not guarantee equality or transparency. The religious leaders and *‘ulamā’* of the organization enjoyed, and still enjoy a special status and are in positions of power. It is difficult to control them and adapt them to the law or to the constitution of the Society. They feel that they are the law-makers and controllers of the organization and when it comes to money they see themselves in a position of trustees. They are the ones who bring in money and they are the ones who control it, save it or distribute it in the name of Izala. They are the policy-makers and the “religious capital” of the organization. So how can they mollify any regulation or law?

Many interview subjects attested that the division of the movement was not because of the doctrine or concerning faith. This is also explained by the fact that both kept the same name even after the division:

“Indeed! Both kept the same name because their problem was not a basic one that concerned ideology. There was no need for changing the name. They did not split because of crucial, basic or principal issues, but because of new economic problems; maybe you can say “mashākil dunyawīyya” (in Arabic: problems of this world).”<sup>599</sup>

This can be also confirmed through the fact that both groups have kept the same name and constitution even today. As an outsider of Izala, the late Sheikh Jaafar

---

<sup>598</sup> Interview in Jos with Ustaz Sani Modibbo, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

<sup>599</sup> Interview in Jos with Ustaz Muhammad Khamis Idris, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007; former Izala member.

Mahmud from Kano related the division in Izala to *fitna*<sup>600</sup> (in Arabic: secession, upheaval) within the movement. He added that the financial aspect cannot be ignored as a reason for the division of the organization. According to him, the property of *Jamā'a* (community; Izala) especially seems to be a source of debate. In addition, the intervention of politicians and ethnicity played an important role in splitting of the movement:

“Despite that the *Jamā'a* was founded by loyal people, their knowledge is very limited. Of course, if the number of followers increases and the leaders don't have the proper knowledge, experience and study of old experiences of the *da'wa*-work, this leads to division among people.

The second issue is the attempt of some politicians to divide the *Jamā'a* into two. This happened with the first founder of the Izala, Ismaila Idris, when they tried to seek revenge on him by separating people from him and inventing issues within the movement.

They (politicians) used some members to harm to Sheikh Idris and blame him for things that only Allah knows whether they were true or not. Well, these things were mostly right. They (politicians) fear that the *Jama'a* spread out in a short amount of time and see in it a danger in the future. They tried to destroy it in this way. They opposed it by arresting people and by involving their own agents in it.

Well, maybe these are the main reasons. People also say that *al-ta'ṣṣub al-qabalī* (ethnicity) played an important role. You find ethnic differences everywhere and that can lead to an attempt to dominate the whole society. This could also play an important role in the division.”<sup>601</sup>

---

<sup>600</sup> This concept is mentioned in the Qur'an. Its meaning is related to division, chaos and the situation of war. In Islamic History, the first civil war is known as *al-Fitna al Kobra*. It took place after the death of the third “rightfully guided Caliph” Uthman (d. 656).

<sup>601</sup> Interview with late Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam in Kano, 2nd January 2007; the Sheikh assured me that he was outside of the country studying during the time of division and his point of view was

When asked about the role of Sheikh Idris as a founder and leader of Izala in dividing the movement and increasing opposition within leadership, Sheikh Jaafar added:

“Indeed, he was a very strong person towards others. He expects more from people than they are capable of. He has very strong and rigid ideas without any flexibility. If he would deal with issues with some of deliberation; maybe it would be better. But he was tough on the ones who agreed with him as well as on the ones who opposed him. He took things seriously. This exacerbated some sensitivity between him and others who wanted to eliminate him from power. Through that maybe the *Jama’at* can be rescued from his “religious dictatorship.”<sup>602</sup>

The internal and external conflicts of Izala created division on many levels. Leaders were basically divided into two groups; and institutions (schools, mosques, hospitals, etc) were also organized according to their affiliation to Jos or to Kaduna. In the same town representatives of Izala followers have the choice between Jos and Kaduna and to decide about the authenticity of each group. Certainly there are Izala adherents who do not belong to any faction and who see themselves as members of the Izala as a whole. Alhaji Abba Damburno for example introduced himself as one of the founding fathers of both groups. Not only did he witness the establishment of Izala, but also its development at many stages during the last 30 years. As reasons

---

based on news that he received from Nigeria but also through his own observation of the whole situation.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

for division he mentions “love of leadership and material things”.<sup>603</sup> Also the above-mentioned Ustaz Sani Modibbo who resigned from his office and left Izala in the mid-1980s clarifies that he in fact distanced himself from Izala as an organization, but still entertains good a relationship with all the leaders. Is it possible to speak of a third group of Izala? Maybe an Izala “C”, or a third faction?

Gurama speaks of a “third group C” in Izala and categorizes Medina students who broke with Izala when they came back to Nigeria as part of this third faction. They are called “Yan Medina” (in Hausa: people of Medina; literally, those who studied in Medina). Under this category he classified Sheikh Jaafar Mahmud Adam.<sup>604</sup> Of course this third “group” of Izala is more heterogeneous than the two other factions and it is neither organized under one name nor does it have visible or well-known leaders and representatives in the north. During my field research in Nigeria I heard the following sentence several times: “Those who studied abroad left Izala when they came back!” This strong speech cannot be judged in the absence of any evidence. Perhaps those who went to Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Sudan to study came back with a different worldview - different from that of Izala. Those who were uncomfortable with the conflict and decided to withdraw from any commitment can be considered part of this third category.

---

<sup>603</sup> Interview with Alhaji Abba Damburno (also known as Abba Eldanna) in Jos, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

<sup>604</sup> Gurama (2000) speaks of Izala A, B, and C. He sees the first one as extreme in “interpretation and application of Islam” and uncompromising, the second one called *Yan Tawaye* (the seceders) as liberal and moderate, and the third one as trying to maintain “spirit of neutrality”, see pp. 114-116; during my own interview with late Sheikh Jaafar he didn’t confess any affiliation to Izala before he left to study in Medina. Concerning the third group, he observed its existence adding that they are not organized and act individually. Interview (02/01/2007)

### 5.3 The Izala “War of words” between Kaduna and Jos: “Two open letters to Sheikh Jingir vs. answers from Jos”<sup>605</sup>

This chapter will examine the struggle between the two Izala factions, demonstrated by their publications: the first is entitled *Risalātān Maftuḥatāni ilā za’im al-Jamā’a al-Ismā’iliyya, al’-Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir* (in Arabic: Two open letters to the leader of the *Jamā’a al-Ismā’iliyya* [named after Sheikh Ismaila Idris, the founder], Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir). This “book”<sup>606</sup> was written by Dr. Ibrahim Jallo Muhammad, the second deputy of the leader of the Council of *‘ulamā’*, Izala Kaduna. Jallo is also the leader of Izala in Taraba State.

The reply to this publication was *Kalimāt Wajīza li-Qam’ Sharr al-Ḥasūd* (in Arabic: Short Words to overwhelm envious people’s evil) written by Saleh Idris Muhammad.<sup>607</sup> The current leader of Izala in Lagos (linked the Jos-faction), Dalha Abubakar, also wrote a booklet with the title *al-Radd wa’l-Naṣīḥa* (in Arabic: The answer and advice) responding to the statement(s) of Dr. Jallo’s document. The aim of this section is to illustrate the doctrinal debate through the analysis of these books.

---

<sup>605</sup> I am using the word “war” neutrally and as a metaphor. It is to be understood as debate, dispute or disagreement. This term is also used in Falola (1998): Violence in Nigeria.

<sup>606</sup> The choice to put the word “book” between quotation marks indicates the uncertainty about the publication and the year.

<sup>607</sup> Thanks to Saleh Idris Muhammad for providing me with copies of these two publications. It is indicated that the booklet was printed in Jos on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2006. There is no mention about the publisher. It looks like the many Izala-Jos printed material printed by the headquarters and circulated among members and institutions.

These “publications” are written in the Arabic language and show the high level of discourse achieved by the leaders of the two different Izala groups. Arabic is the language of the Qur’ān and the *sunna*. This language is not accessible to every Nigerian Muslim. Only scholars who have attained a particular level of intellectuality can understand and speak this language. The ability to write well in Arabic is an advanced stage of mastering the “sacred” language of Islam. Interestingly, this type of polemic writing is reminiscent of the polemical writings of Sheikh Gumi about Sufism and the answer from the Sufi Brotherhoods.<sup>608</sup> Writing in Arabic seems to be a common practice among Muslim intellectuals in Nigeria. The “religious capital” is not only based on reciting the Qur’ān and having knowledge of the Islamic tradition, but also achieving a high level of proficiency or even fluency in Arabic. Most of the Izala leaders master Arabic and prefer to write and publish in this language.

The goal in the following paragraphs is purely analytical and by no way a search for the theological legitimacy of any statement. In Islamic theology – like in any other theology –, the door of *ijtihād* is open. Many issues were and still are debated among the *‘ulamā’*.

The purpose of the next part is to depict the argumentation of both parties. The internal debate is known by many Izala insiders. Non-Izala are often aware of the split of the organization, but without knowing its reasons. I was abruptly drawn to these books through interviews conducted in Jos. The language of these texts often changes from the objective argumentation (showing sources, quoting classical

---

<sup>608</sup> Loimeier (1997) shows how the leaders of both Qādiriyya and Tijānīyya answered Gumi’s polemical Arabic publication *al-‘aqīda al-saḥīḥa*.

theologians, etc) to subjective criticism (mentioning of names, blaming ignorance/lies/rumors, defending the leaders, etc)

In these “publications”, the issue of *bid‘a* is surprisingly discussed at length among Izala themselves. This controversy is usually only found between Izala and Sufis. *Bid‘a* is a concept that exists not only in the official name of the Izala-organization, but it is also a basic element of its doctrine: fighting *bid‘a*. This development concerning disagreement over *bid‘a* was new to Izala. The intra-Izala struggle on *bid‘a* has an effect on its image as an anti-innovation movement. This controversy demonstrates how dynamic and unstable religious concepts are.<sup>609</sup>

In the following two out of the three internal Izala-publications are summarized. The focus is on the discourse of debate between the different factions.

#### “Risālātān Maftuḥatāni ilā za‘im al-Jamā‘a al-Is mā‘iliyya...”

Form of the two letters: This document was mentioned to me during an interview in Jos. The argument of my interviewee who is linked with the Kaduna group of Izala was that only a few leaders among the two factions of Izala write polemically. According to him, the *‘ulamā’* of Izala keep quiet on this issue. Most of these writings (debates) are composed by young scholars and other active members of both factions.<sup>610</sup>

The “book” is addressed to the actual Izala-leader in Jos – as the title explicitly shows. There is no indication about the publisher or the year of publication. It seems

---

<sup>609</sup> See chapter “Izala and Innovation”.

<sup>610</sup> Interview in Jos with Sheikh Alhassan Said on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

that the book is a collection of two letters which were not published. The first one was written on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and the second one dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, 2006.

The “book” is 335 pages in length. It reflects the author’s (linked with Izala Kaduna) message addressed to the actual leader of Izala in Jos. The text of the two letters is documented. The author also comments on the reactions of two Izala-Jos-writers who are mentioned in the work. The whole work is structured as follows: the two letters addressed to the leader of the Jos-faction (Sheikh Jingir), a short overview on the history of Izala, and comments on the answer to the two letters. These two introductory chapters are followed by arguments and counter-arguments. Issues like *al-tahajjud* (in Arabic: night prayers), amulets, – to mention some – etc. are introduced, and the matters are discussed according to classical scholars, then the answer of the Jos-faction of Izala is elucidated, and finally; the counter-argument(s) is stated. The author relies on the two main publications of the Jos-faction: that of Saleh Ibrahim Muhammad (*Kalimā Wajīza...*) and the other from Dalha Abubakar Abdallah (*Fil’ Radd wal’-Nasīha...*). This strategy (issue, argument, and counter-argument) is linear until the end of the book.

Content/ Subject(s):

The “book” starts by giving an overview on the issue of *bid‘a* that has occurred among Muslims especially since the death of the Prophet. The author gives examples from history in order to document how rulers fought innovation in Islam in

the past. He listed the first and second “Rightly-Guided-Caliphs” (Abū Bakr and ‘Umar) and their struggle to maintain the guidelines of Islam as established by the Prophet. The struggle of the *‘ulamā’* against new religious groups - like the Mutazilite (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, CE) - is mentioned by Dr. Jallo.

Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, and al-Shatebi are among the scholars – according to the author – who fought and responded to innovations in the religion of Islam. Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Usman Dan Fodio, and Abubakar Gumi also belong to this category. All of them contributed to the revival and purification of the *sunna* of the Prophet.<sup>611</sup> From this historical overview the author shifts to the Nigerian context, mentioning the appearance of *ḥaraka muḍilla* (in Arabic: delusive movement) under Ismaila Idris. This movement scarcely relies on the views of the founder and denies any advice or corrections.<sup>612</sup> After the death of Sheikh Idris, he was succeeded by his *murīd* (in Arabic: committed one) Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir. Again the use of a Sufi term to qualify the Izala leader shows the deepness of the intra-Izala-conflict. The author concludes his introduction with the fact that he wrote the first letter to the leader of Jos in order to advise him and his followers. The reaction and denial of the first letter pushed him to write a second one, which was more detailed and explanatory than the first.<sup>613</sup>

---

<sup>611</sup> See Jallo (n.d.), pp. 1-7

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., p. 9-12.

**The first letter, written on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2005.**

Jallo addressed his statement to the *Rais al Jamā'a al-Isma'īliyya* (leader of the group of Ismaila Idris) urging him to return to the *sunna* of the Prophet and to abstain from any form of deviation from Islam. This letter relies on a study of Sheikh Idris' cassettes and *fatwās* which conform neither to the *sunna* nor to the Māliki School of law – as Jallo claims.

There are five points mentioned in the letter criticizing the founder's *fatwās*. The first and third issue are on *al-tahajjud*, the second on *qabdh*, the fourth on circumcision, and the last point on *jinn*-possession.

The author blames the founder of Izala for lies and deviation from the Māliki School of law in many ways. According to him Sheikh Idris rejects the claim that his followers pray with *qabdh* or hold amulets. Sheikh Idris denies the existence of *Ahl al-Kitāb* and refuses to eat their slaughtered animals or to get married to their daughters. He advises his followers to circumcise their children after they reach seven years of age. He rejects the claim that anybody can exorcise a possessed person from *jinn*. Jalo demonstrates that these *fatwās* are not in conformity with the Mālikiyya and quoted several *ḥadīth* indicating the opposite.<sup>614</sup>

The author closes his letter by warning the current leader of Izala and urging him to avoid *bid'a* and repent to Allah and return to the *sunna* on the path of the pious predecessors. Furthermore he declares his disposition for any religious debates:

---

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., p. 14-27.

“I am ready – by the will of Allah – to meet you for any debate in order to clarify truth, revive the *sunna* of the Prophet, and eradicate satanic innovations. This meeting can happen in any place and at any time here in Jalango or any other suitable town.”<sup>615</sup>

### **The second letter, written on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.**

While the first letter is only a few pages in length, the second one is much longer and includes more details. The issues discussed are the same mentioned in the first letter. Jallo tries to legitimate the night prayers denied by Sheikh Idris. The author relies on different sources that mention this practice of the Prophet. Jallo did not restrict himself to argumentation and proof from the source (Qur’ān and *sunna*), but he goes a step further and attacks Sheikh Idris by locating him at the same level of Sufis and their practices:

“You! Leader of the Ismai’liyya-Sect! [the group around Sheikh Idris] You are on the same path as the Sufis because you invite people (in your *fatwās* and cassettes) to undertake *bid’a* and other rubbish. Sufis in many cases disregard what is written in the Qur’ān and the *sunna* of the Prophet – PBUH – and follow their passion (*al-hawā*). This is exactly your case. You urged your *murīdīn* to advance the decision of what you call “Headquarters in Jos” instead of what is fixed in the *sunna*. By doing that, you led your *murīdīn* to be like *Ahl al-Kitāb* and Sufis in making their *‘ulamā’* like their deity. You do that through denying what Allah allowed and by allowing what Allah denies.”<sup>616</sup>

---

<sup>615</sup> Ibid., p. 27. (my translation)

<sup>616</sup> Ibid., p. 47

The strategy followed by Jallo in his statement is to question the *fatwās* or legal opinions of Sheikh Idris, then to compare Idris with Sufis and *Ahl al-Kitāb* in falsifying their holy books. He quotes the classical work of the Tijāniyya *Jawāhir al-Maʿāni* where it is required that the leader should be followed and obeyed without any opposition and compares this obedience to Sheikh Idris and his followers from the Jos-faction.<sup>617</sup>

Jallo uses the opportunity to remind the Jos leader of the history of Izala. In a long (two pages in length) footnote on page fifty-three, he refers to the establishment of Izala by enthusiastic people wanting to re-establish the *sunna* of the Prophet. He denies Sheikh Idris' taking of any leadership position apart from being on the head of the *ʿulamā'* Council. According to him Sheikh Idris deviated from that path until he – as a person – became the norm and not the *sunna*.<sup>618</sup>

Jallo accuses Sheikh Idris of allowing aid group members to look after his personal security instead of performing prayers (Jallo: 61) and of banning his followers to listen to no other recorded preaching apart from his cassettes (Jallo: 63). The author criticizes the fact that Sheikh Idris' followers would not pray behind somebody who is not Izala. They will not even greet a non-Izala or go to his funeral. This behavior is different to the tradition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* since many *ʿulamā'* accept differences and criticism (Jallo.65).

---

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>618</sup> For more details see pp. 53-55.

Similar to the first letter, the author points out to the actual Izala leader that Sheikh Idris took people back on the path of Sufism and not on the path of *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a*:

“There is no doubt that what I mentioned to you is enough to confirm that Sheikh Ismaila Idris, the founder of the *al-Jamā'a al-Isma'iliyya* was the one who brought people to the pathway of Sufism by encouraging them to follow their passion and deviate from the Qur'ān and the *sunna*.”<sup>619</sup>

The author reiterates in the very last footnote of this letter that he is preparing a new book entitled *Ismaila Idris fi Mizān al-Shar'* (Ismaila Idris at the Level of Legacy) in which he indicates the numerous mistakes and *bid'a* of the Izala founder. The next part of the “book” consists of discussing the answers from the Jos group (Saleh Idris Muhammad and Dalha Abubakar). Jallo considers these responses to be not only full of mistakes (print, language, knowledge), but also as assertions to keep *bid'a* alive and to deviate from the Islamic *sharī'a*.<sup>620</sup>

### **Kalimāt Wajīza li-Qam' Sharr al-Ḥasūd**

This booklet was published in 2006. On the front page is a picture of the Grand Mosque in Medina and the last page has the logo of the Izala: a palm tree and two crossing swords in the middle. This picture is overlaid by the full name of the organization at the top. Below that it reads “founded by Sheikh Ismaila Idris”. Finally it is indicated that the national headquarters of Izala are in Jos.

---

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

A first interpretation of the cover of this booklet is that the author locates – as expected– the Izala between the tradition of the Prophet that has its origin in Saudi Arabia, Mecca, and the tradition of Sheikh Idris who founded Izala in Jos. Identifying the Jos-faction with its founder is a “marker” of its originality and loyalty to him. The sentence *li mu’aṣṣihā al-Sheikh Ismaila Idris* (established by Sheikh Idris) is visible at all Izala schools and institutions. The name of the founder is a sign of authenticity of the Jos-faction. This faction of Izala insists that the movement represents the tradition of the founder. It gives the organization not only a historical originality but also legitimacy among other groups. Even when it comes to official documents issued by Izala in Jos, the name of the founder is always connected with Sheikh Idris’ name.

Content/Subject(s):

The thirty-six-page booklet is subdivided into twenty chapters introduced by the author. After the first sentence reserved for to praise Allah, Saleh Idris Muhammad quotes a verse from the Qur’ān (4:112) and a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet.

[4:112] “anyone who commits an offence or a sin, and then throws the blame on to some innocent person, has burdened himself with deceit as well as flagrant sin” (Abdel Haleem translation of 2005)

The *ḥadīth* quoted by Sunan Abu Dawood (book 24, 14) states: “Allah sends the one who tells lies about a believer (Muslim) to hell, until he repents from what he said.”

From the beginning the author shows that any Muslim risks committing a sin if he mistakenly blames an innocent of any fault. Also anyone who slanders a believer (a Muslim) risks going to hell until he repents.

It is a sign that the “defense”-project of Sheikh Idris started with two major sources: The Qur’ān and *sunna*. He continued by defending the founder of Izala and proving that that which has been written by Dr. Jallo is nothing but a rumor.

In the introduction the author mentions that he had the letters addressed to the current leader of Izala in Jos. Saleh Idris Muhammad expected a kind of warning about the mistakes, but he was surprised by the level of subjectivity of Dr. Jallo’s text.

He says:

„I observed through what I read in the “fire of jealousy”, that there is antagonism and abhorrence in your heart. In fact what you have written cannot in any sense damage the two Sheikhs. [Sheikh Idris and Sheikh Jingir]”<sup>621</sup>

To make the argument more plausible, the author makes use of Arabic poetry by emphasizing the issue of jealousy and illustrating the sentiments of envy and jealousy towards those who are in a higher position – the Izala founder and his successor in this case.

The first chapter of Saleh Idris bears the title “Sheikh Idris is on the side of truth”: here the author explains how the founder of Izala relies only on the Qur’ān and the

---

<sup>621</sup> Saleh (2006), p. 2 (my translation)

*sunna* of the Prophet and the path of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* including the four Imams (four schools of law). He stresses that nobody can deny the importance of Imam Malik.

He also defends Malik (d. 795) in front of al-Albānī (d. 1999) preferred by Jallo.

“What divides us is that we invite people to learn about the Oneness of Allah and to avoid polytheism without restricting ourselves to the sayings of this or that person. And you work to destroy what we build, for instance, your invitation to people to keep amulets and prayers like every polytheist worshipping al-Tijānī or ‘Abd al-Qādir.”<sup>622</sup>

The next nine chapters deal with the issue of *bid‘a*. The main subject is the night prayers during Ramadan and its evidence in the *sunna*. The argument of the author is that the Prophet practiced it, but because he feared that people would make it into a *sunna* [norm, canon], he stopped doing it. The discussion deals with the controversy over the *ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ* (in Arabic: a prayer after night prayers during Ramadan) considered to be *sunna* (optional but a recommended practice).

Interestingly, it is in this context that Saleh Idris Muhammad accuses his opponent of practicing *bid‘a*. First of all he criticizes the call for prayers (Arabic: *adhān*), inviting people enthusiastically to perform it, and to practice it in only during a few days of Ramadan.

“You start practicing this *bid‘a* at midnight, five hours after finishing *at-tarāwīḥ* (we don’t deny its existence). Before you start somebody can hear the voice of the muezzin with a new type of *adhān*: Prayers! Prayers! Prayers! And so on ... continuously. You! Jallo! Keep Allah in

---

<sup>622</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

mind! You and those who are on your side! Where did you get this [prayer]?”<sup>623</sup>

Saleh Idris Muhammad relies on the statements of the Prophet, especially regarding his practices in insisting that he [the Prophet] preferred prayers during Ramadan and advised people to perform them at home.

Consider the sentence *practicing bid‘a is more difficult than practicing sunna* (Saleh: 12). The argument is to show that the Prophet considered the different categories of people (weak, sick, needy) before establishing any rules. The author adds that the practicing of this *bid‘a* led to the fact that many Muslims cannot perform *fajr*-prayer (in Arabic: first Muslim obligatory prayer). If Muslims – according to Saleh – would restrict themselves to the *tarāwīḥ*-prayers during Ramadan, which is recommended by the “pious predecessors”, that would be much better for them. The so called *qiyām* (synonym for *tarāwīḥ* prayers) as known by *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* is practiced during the entire month of Ramadan. The new *bid‘a* [night prayers] is only practiced during the last ten days of Ramadan – which is not in conformity with the practice of *al-Ṣaḥāba* (Prophet Companions). One of the practices that is harshly criticized by the author is what he called *al-adhān al-mukhtara‘* (the invented call for prayers).

In chapter eleven, a new topic is introduced and discussed, namely the *qabdh-ṣadl*-controversy. The author mentions that Izala in Jos prefers praying *ṣadl* (in Arabic: hands alongside the body during the prayer) instead of *qabdh* (in Arabic: right hand crossed over the left hand at the navel). He adds that followers of the Jos-

---

<sup>623</sup> (my translation)

faction pray in both ways and that Sheikh Idris never forbid it. The argument of Saleh is that Izala relies on strong sources confirming its preference for *ṣadl* over *qabdh* (Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ḥasan and Ibrāhīm al-Nakhī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Ṭabarī are some sources mentioned by the author in order to give legitimacy to his argument).

The next subject, which is discussed in chapter twelve, concerns *taslīma*, or the conclusion of prayers. The Izala Jos has a preference to perform one *taslīma* instead of two. This practice is criticized by the Kaduna group. To show the strength of his argument, Saleh quotes three different *aḥādīth*<sup>624</sup> (Arabic: pl. of *ḥadīth*) showing that the Prophet completed his prayers with one *taslīma*. Many ‘*ulamā*’ have not considered them [*aḥādīth*] weak or authentic but instead that the four “rightfully guided Caliphs” (the first four caliphs after the death of the Prophet) practiced only one *taslīma*, which shows that it was a widespread practice. The argument of the author here is to prove that the issue of “closing” prayers is debated among Islamic scholars. He assumes that opponents of Sheikh Idris would never agree with him.

The next subject touched by Saleh concerns *al-tamāʿim* (amulets). From the title his position is clear: holding amulets is an act of polytheism. He addresses Jallo directly by saying: “You defend amulets although it is related to *shirk*.”<sup>625</sup>

The fact that Imam Mālik allowed this practice (of holding amulets) doesn’t mean that Mālik’s statement is unquestionable. Saleh’s duty is to defend Sheikh Idris

---

<sup>624</sup> The first *ḥadīth* here is documented in the at-Turmudhi *ḥadīth* collection and corrected by al-Hakim (here Aisha narrated that the Prophet practiced only one *taslīma*); the second one is to be found in Ibn Majah and narrated by Sahl Ibn Sa’d (one *taslīma* is also documented here); finally the third source is a *ḥadīth* of Salma Ibn al-Akwa’; for more details see Saleh (2006: 16)

<sup>625</sup> Saleh (2006:21), (my translation)

“who erased the state of polytheism in our country.”<sup>626</sup> Interestingly, the issue of following the Sufi path is raised again. Saleh accuses his opponents of being followers of Sufi brotherhoods. He adds that by criticizing Sheikh Idris, he [Jallo] is in fact praising his own deeds (fighting of polytheism and establishing *tawhīd*).

Can Izala members marry women who are *Ahl al-Kitāb*, and can we eat their slaughtered animals? This is the focus of the next few chapters. The author confesses that the Qur’ān allows such a marriage. He mentions although this is a fact in the Islamic tradition, most of the schools of law (Mālikī, Shafiī, Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī) advised marrying a Muslim woman instead. In addition Saleh brings up that contemporary *Ahl al-Kitāb* cannot be considered the same as the *Ahl al-Kitāb* mentioned in the Qur’ān. To make this statement stronger, the author listed situations of conflict between Muslims and Christians from Nigeria (in Plateau, Kaduna, Taraba, and Adamawa) and raises the question: how can Muslims marry non-Muslims?<sup>627</sup> He concludes this part of the booklet by warning Jallo against attacking Sheikh Idris and achieving fame by attacking the Izala founder and defender of the *sunna* [Sheikh Idris].<sup>628</sup>

The last two chapters deal with circumcision and communication with *jinn*. Concerning the first issue, Saleh defends the attitude of Sheikh Idris in delaying the circumcision of children until after seven years of age. He relies on two *ḥadīth* confirming this practice and clarifies that Sheikh Idris spoke of *karāha* (in Arabic:

---

<sup>626</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., p 28

<sup>628</sup> Ibid., p29.

abhorrence) and not *taḥrīm* (in Arabic: ban). He clarifies that many Islamic scholars reject circumcision on the eighth day after birth because this is a Jewish practice.<sup>629</sup>

Concerning communication with *jinn*, only Prophets can communicate with them. Saleh opposes any person that claims the ability to see or speak to a spirit. He goes further by saying:

“We will never believe in that [communication with a *jinn*] and we cannot pray behind you until you repent. We can only consider you as diviner and conjurer.”<sup>630</sup>

The fact that the Prophet exorcised *jinn* from a human body belongs to his status as Prophet and nobody can perform the rite besides him. The author adds that the majority of diviners left their practices [*communication with jinn*], apart from Jallo and those who are on his side.

The conclusion of the booklet takes the form of advice and warning. The author invites his opponents not to look for fame through criticism of Sheikh Idris and his successor. In imperative language he warns them to leave jealousy and to stop attacking the two Izala founders. Like Jallo in his “book”, Saleh also declares himself ready for any debate at any place or time.

Through the comparison of both texts one can find many similarities. The main source of both authors is the Qur’ān, the *sunna* and the tradition of Islamic scholars of Sunni Islam. The use of Arabic poetry (which has a long tradition even in pre-

---

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

Islamic times especially when it comes to defending or criticizing a person) is common amongst them.

The issues of ignorance and knowledge of Islamic sources occur often. When it comes to the strategy used by both writers, they surprisingly use the concept of *bid'a*, which is controversial and dynamic. Almost the same vocabulary used to attack Sufism now is used by the two Izala writers themselves. The readiness for meeting – as a kind of test of knowledge or defense of argument(s) – is also a common element shared by both.

#### **5.4 Attempts at reconciliation**

When the conflict within Izala occurred and the organization faced division at an early stage, there were attempts to reconcile leadership in Izala. These efforts were noticed by different people (insiders and outsiders) from Nigeria and even outside the country. The fear that the division of Izala could bring another fracture within the Muslim community in Nigeria has led several people to attempt to reconcile within the Izala. Division in Izala means failure of its reform program and doctrine for various people. Attempts to reunify the two Izala-factions were undertaken by Sheikh Abubakar Gumi. The Governor of the Central Bank during the Babangida era also undertook an attempt at reconciliation on behalf of the movement. A delegation from Saudi Arabia came to Nigeria and invited the conflicting parties in Izala to engage in dialogue. Even the *Jamā'at Ahl al-Sunna fi Gharb Ifrīqiyya* (the Society of Ahl al-Sunna of West Africa) based in Ghana sent delegates to Jos and invited the Izala representatives of Jos and Kaduna to engage in discussion. Dr. Ahmad Gumi

(Sheikh Gumi's son) who is based in Saudi Arabia and who comes to Nigeria every year for *tafsīr* sessions during Ramadan made an effort to re-unite the Izala. These attempts all failed. The reasons for these failures are interpreted by Izala members differently. The differences seem to be more complicated than expected and each faction maintains its own position. In absence of a compromise, especially concerning the role of leadership in the movement and also about the exact reasons for the conflict, reconciliation could not be achieved. Although Izala today is still divided, there are voices arguing that reaching an agreement is only a matter of time. For others, the two Izala groups underwent different experiences since the split. This view is reflected by an informant saying: "I don't see reunification of Izala in our life time! Not now! Maybe in the future!"<sup>631</sup>

"Sheikh Abubakar Gumi tried during his life time to solve the problems in Izala. Being the father and the most respected authority in Izala, he invited the struggling leaders and attempted to help them reconcile. The fact that Sheikh Idris insisted on being the Izala leader and also the case of Alhaji Mai Gandu made the reunification impossible. There was also a delegation sent from Saudi Arabia with the aim (came to elect students from Nigeria) of unifying Izala but they failed as well, just as Dr. Ahmad Gumi did. He never came to me! He did it individually and failed. If he had come to me, I would be able to manage it and put things under control."<sup>632</sup>

---

<sup>631</sup> Name of the interviewee hidden.

<sup>632</sup> Interview on 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> March 2008 with Sheikh Abbas Hamid Abbas, the former leader of the Council of Ulama in Kano, Izala Jos branch.

Intensified attempts at unity within Izala took place in the year 1991. The Governor of the Central Bank undertook two initiatives. It was recommended that Sheikh Idris and Alhaji Mai Gandu keep their positions under the same constitution. Differences between both made agreement impossible. During the same year, a delegation from Saudi Arabia tried to assist with reconciliation. Here an issue was raised by Sheikh Yusuf Sambo who heavily criticized Sheikh Idris. The founder of Izala countered the issue by criticizing the involvement of politicians in Izala and the enrichment of some members like Yakubu Musa Kafancan (Kaduna-faction).<sup>633</sup> Again the problems were not solved during this time even when Sheikh Idris intervened later that same year and invited all parties to a meeting in his house. The suggestion to impeach Sheikh Idris is the reason why this effort was unsuccessful.<sup>634</sup>

In 2006 the “Jamā‘at Ahl al-Sunna fi Gharb Ifrīqiyya” made an attempt to facilitate the reunification of the two Izala-factions. The organization invited the actual leader Sheikh Jingir to Ghana to give a lecture. The Izala leader could not attend but sent a representative: Dalha Abubakar Abdallah. The Kaduna-faction sent Sheikh Alhassan Said. Issues were discussed and another meeting at the headquarters in Jos with the leaders was made. Finally representatives from Ghana came to Jos and engaged in discussions with the two Izala-factions. This effort was not successful.<sup>635</sup>

Concerning the attempt made by Dr. Ahmad Gumi, it was no different from the others and failed at an early stage. On the first page of the JIBWIS Journal of Izala

---

<sup>633</sup> Gurama (2000), pp. 127-128.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>635</sup> Interview in Lagos with Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

Jos the title “Like father like son? Dr. Gumi’s misconception” is meaningful.<sup>636</sup> In 2004 he called on the two Izala groups to attempt reunification. The criticism of Dr. Gumi came from Jos. The Jos group blamed him of being politicized. According to them, he started talking to media even before talking to the Izala leaders. They accused him of not being an Izala member and of not being involved in any activity of the movement in or outside Nigeria. His plea was seen as “an intimidation and a provocation”. He was urged by the Jos group of Izala to curb his political ambitions:

“Our request to him is to jettison the misconception of his sponsors and their political ambitions and to join us in the task of keeping alive the message of Allah and Ḥadith of his last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Izala National Headquarters is in Jos by the will of Allah. It has come to stay.”<sup>637</sup>

Sharp disagreement came especially from the Jos-faction. They blamed him of being biased and of favoring the Kaduna-faction over the Jossawa people. It was expected of Dr. Gumi to be like his father in unifying the two Izala groups. At an early stage people were interested in the new reconciliation project before they became disappointed and judged his attempt as a failure. The expectations were high at first, but the Izala people were soon disappointed. The reasons for the failure are given in the following statement:

“Yes, he wanted to unify the Society and reconcile between the two groups. Well as you know, if someone wants to reconcile between two

---

<sup>636</sup> Gurum, H. M. and Bello A. M (2005): Like father like son? Dr. Gumi’s misconception, in: JIBWIS Journal, pp. 21-22.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

parties, then he should not prefer one and leave the other. He should invite all people, meet them and engage in discussion in order to know the truth ... isn't it like this?

But when Sheikh Dr. Gumi came back to Nigeria; you know that relying on the Mālikī Law is one thing that divides us and the Kaduna-faction. We say that the majority of people are ignorant and if we introduce this and that, people will not know how to worship Allah. So let us have only one stand point.

In the first year Sheikh Dr. Gumi said: "If a person abuses the *madhhab*, then is it proof that he is ignorant?"

Every person who abuses the Mālikī School is an ignorant person. This is what he said (Dr. Gumi). In that first year we supported him (Dr. Gumi) because we thought that he was following the way of his father Sheikh Abubakar Gumi in teaching people. Sheikh Abubakar Gumi was Mālikī and worked according the Mālikī School of Law.

We saw that Dr. Gumi only followed the path of his father and he was closed to us."<sup>638</sup>

Dr .Gumi addressed the media regarding the problem of money, and provoked both groups by expressing the notion of *takfir*. Furthermore he suggested removing the current leadership and replacing it with a new one:

"In the second year he (Dr. Gumi) said that the Jamā'at Izalat al-Bid'a Wa Iqamat as-Sunna should be one group under one leadership, but we should remove the current leaders in Jos and Kaduna and elect new ones. He said this on the radio. It was better to invite the leaders and discuss the issue with them instead of saying it openly on the radio.

He came as a sultan accusing both groups of *kufr* and tried to unify us. But when the Society was established, he was studying the modern sciences in the English language.

---

<sup>638</sup> Name of Interview subject, place and date are hidden.

He also said that they (faction of Izala in Jos) should bring him our cars, close mosques and schools and we answered: “you were not the one who built these mosques or schools from your own money. The cars were purchased when you were in Mecca and you cannot have them now.” (...) So reconciliation cannot be like this.”<sup>639</sup>

Dr. Gumi’s comparison of the division of Izala to *Ahl Ridda* (in Arabic: people of apostasy) that should be fought according to the Qur’ān made reconciliation unachievable:

“He also told people one day that it is allowed to kill us according to the Qur’ān...

We are allowed to be killed since we are *Ahl Ridda* - as he said. He relied on one Qur’ānic verse saying “if two sects among believers are fighting, then reconcile between them and if one of the two refuses then fight the one that refuses (the reconciliation)” this is a proof for people to kill us.

We said that this Quranic verse was there when your father was alive, but (the father; Sheikh Gumi) never relied on it to kill the Kaduna-faction who refused reconciliation at that time. Your father left both parties do what they want because Allah is on the side of those who are in the right. That’s it. If you want to kill us and do this and that, then we say: “we are ready to fight.”

This is the reason why he failed to bring reconciliation between us. He was inflexible in the end. He invited people to Kaduna and even the leader there didn’t go: Abubakar Ikara didn’t go; Yusuf Sambo didn’t go; Mai Gandu didn’t go. These are the leaders; the leader of the *‘ulamā’*, administration and the deputy to the leader. They didn’t attend the meeting.”<sup>640</sup>

---

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid.

This is one version of why the attempt at the reconciliation of Izala undertaken by Dr. Gumi failed. These attempts took place in 2004 and 2005 and both Izala-factions boycotted it. During my field research in Nigeria it was not possible to meet Dr. Gumi or to listen to his point of view on the reconciliation project of Izala that he suggested. The leader of the Council of *'ulamā'* in Katsina (Kaduna-faction), Sheikh Yakubu Musa Kafancon, assures that although several reconciliation attempts failed to bring Izala groups together, there are efforts still on the way. He argues that the intervention of the government in Izala affairs hindered its reunion. This was due to Izala's boycott of a president who was not a Muslim. The Sheikh mentioned that Izala's intervention was the reason why Obasanjo left his position as head of state. As a result of the work of Izala, the late Umaru Yar'Adua then became president of Nigeria.<sup>641</sup>

---

<sup>641</sup> Interview with Sheikh Yakubu Musa Kafancon in Katsina, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

## Chapter Five: Sharī'a Debate of 1999

The military rule of Sani Abacha in 1990 was one of the worst periods of time in Nigeria's modern history. The West African country suffered from repression, economic and political instability, ethnic conflicts, corruption, and human rights abuses. Abacha broke away from established democratic structures and turned Nigeria into an authoritarian state in which no room was given for opposition or political activism.<sup>642</sup>

After the unexpected death of Abacha on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1998, under unclear circumstances<sup>643</sup> General Abdulsalami became the head of state and promised to initiate the transition of Nigeria to a civilian government. In February 1999, presidential elections resulted in Olesegun Obasanjo becoming president. This was the starting point of the Fourth Republic – another attempt to democratize the federation. This transition was accompanied with a lot of expectations in and outside of Nigeria. Nigerians wished for a better life with higher living standards, political and economic stability, and for the development of democratic structures and a more peaceful coexistence. Internationally there was interest in reintegrating Nigeria into the world community after years of political isolation.

---

<sup>642</sup> Ogbondah, Chris W. (2000): Political Repression in Nigeria, 1993-1998: A Critical Examination of One Aspect of the Perils of Military Dictatorship, In: *Africa Spectrum* 35 (2), pp. 231-242; apart of dissolving political parties and general assemblies the Abacha's regime persecuted political opponents and activists; see also Falola (1999), p. 196.

<sup>643</sup> See Maier, Karl (2000): *This House has fallen. Nigeria in crisis*, London: Penguin Books.

The Fourth Republic faced big challenges at an early stage of its institutionalization. Nigeria is a rich country in terms of minerals. It is the largest exporter of petroleum in Africa and sixth worldwide. Nevertheless the country suffers from mismanagement, poverty, corruption, ethnic and religious disturbances, and increasing criminality.<sup>644</sup> Before all these issues can be solved, the constitution has to be revised and confirmed. This was part of the democratization process and a chance for political parties and Nigerian citizens to participate in the political debates of the federation.

The discussions over the 1999-constitution and the future of Nigeria was overshadowed by another debate: namely the so-called *sharī'a*-controversy. The decision of Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru, Zamfara's democratically elected governor, to implement *Islamic Criminal Law* in his state in November of 1999 was reminiscent of sentiments in the 1970s and the political crises related to it. Zamfara's governor announced that Islamic Law, *sharī'a* would be fundamental in his state and that Muslims could rely on it in all aspects of their lives. This decision was later followed by another eleven states of the north that also announced *sharī'a* re-implementation.

This chapter analyzes the *sharī'a*-issue and the way in which it was initiated. The following questions are central: What type of socio-political setting facilitated the re-implementation? Who are the major actors? Who contributed to the so-called *sharī'a*-project and who opposed it? Which Islamic groups stand for *sharī'a* and which

---

<sup>644</sup> Fatunde, Tunde (2000): Nigerias Rückkehr zur Demokratie. Eine Bewertung, in: KAS-AI/00, pp. 74-76.

resisted it? What is the position of Izala in the controversy and what was its role in the re-implementation?

### ***1 Who implemented Sharī'a?***

The Houses of Representatives of the twelve northern states of Nigeria voted for the introduction of *sharī'a* within a very short period of time. These states are Zamfara, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Yobe, and Niger. The Federal Republic of Nigeria consists of thirty six states plus the Federal Territory of Abuja. The introduction of *sharī'a* took place legally according to the laws of the states. Philip Ostien sums up the re-introduction of Islamic law and its implication for the north in the following five points:

- Establishment of State Sharia Courts and its implementation in criminal and personal matters of Muslims. Appeal of judgement can be directed to the State Sharī'a Court of Appeal;
- introduction of new *Sharia Penal Code* and *Code Procedure* for Muslims within the Sharī'a Courts of Appeal;
- laws related to “social vices” and “un-Islamic behavior” (as Ostien calls them) including alcohol consumption, gambling, prostitution, separation between the sexes;
- Zamfara State and Kano state introduced Public Complaints and Anti-Corruption Commissions to fight corruption;

- new institutions emerged from the *sharī'a* re-implementation, such as the State Sharia commissions, Council of *‘ulamā’*, *zakāt* -Board and *ḥisba*-Board among others.

These measures are not consistent and differ from one state to another. They are applied only to Muslims in the *sharī'a* states. These states still recognize the Nigerian constitution.<sup>645</sup>



Before the introduction of Islamic law, governors of the northern state constituted the so-called *Sharia Implementation Committees*. These committees defined the needs and wishes of the people, consulted Islamic experts, and made suggestions for the

<sup>645</sup> Ostien, Philip (2007): *Shari‘a implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006: A Source Book*. Volume 1 “Historical Background”, p. viii.

<sup>646</sup> ([http://undhimmi.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/nigeria\\_shari‘a\\_states.gif](http://undhimmi.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/nigeria_shari‘a_states.gif); 24.4.2011)

future implementation of *sharī'a*.<sup>647</sup> These efforts before the re-implementation of Islamic law that took place implied that northern politicians were conscious about the importance of Islamic Law for Nigerian Muslims. From a historical perspective *sharī'a* was a problem both during colonial rule and after independence. It was (and still is) an important part of the Islamic identity of Nigerian Muslims. The governor of Zamfara State as well as all the other northern states insisted that such a step should be in conformity with the Nigerian federal constitution and in no way a deviation from it. The re-implementation of *sharī'a* and particularly criminal law meant that these laws should be codified as it is mentioned in chapter 36(12) of the 1999 constitution:

“Subject as otherwise provided by this constitution, a person shall not be convicted of a criminal offence unless that offence is defined and the penalty therefore prescribed in a written law; and in this subsection, a written law refers to an Act of the National Assembly or a law of a State, any subsidiary legislation or instrument under the provisions of a law.”<sup>648</sup>

The *sharī'a* re-implementation was part of the political campaign of Ahmed Sani before he was elected governor in January 1999. He promised to introduce Islamic law in his state and to promote Islam and Islamic values. In a speech at Ali Akilu Square in Gusau, the capital of Zamfara State, the governor declared “It has become pertinent that we wake up from this sorry state of slumber and live up to our

---

<sup>647</sup> See Ostien, Philip (2007): *Sharī'a implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006: A Source Book*. Volume II “Sharī'a Implementation Committee Reports and related White Papers”, p. 3; the author indicates that the governors of the twelve northern Sharī'a states were concerned about not violating the constitution of the federation. “In most states it [Sharī'a implementation] was done only after wide consultation”- as Ostien formulates it.

<sup>648</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Lagos: Federal Government Press, p. 22.

responsibility to the Almighty in order to avoid His curse.”<sup>649</sup> This decision was announced on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999. The Sharia Penal Code came into operation on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2000.

Ahmed Sani appointed a committee of eighteen members to review existing laws and prepare the implementation. This was according to the Nigerian constitution. The Zamfara State commissioner of Justice, Hon. Attorney-General Ahmad Bello Mahmud, presented thirteen points of *sharī'a* re-instatement from the time it was merely an idea until its legalization. This was introduced as part of a pattern among other northern states which were also in the process of *sharī'a* re-implementation at that time. In a paper which Zamfara's Attorney-General presented in a seminar on *sharī'a* in Jigawa in 2000, he clarified the basic steps followed in Zamfara State. The elected *Sharia Committee* identified Sec. 6 of the 1999-constitution as a legal framework for the implementation of *sharī'a*. He defined the reasons behind the establishment of the law (curb social vices, moral decadence). Islamic Law was codified (*Sharia Penal Code, Penal Code Procedure, Sharia Court of Appeal*). The author also describes the policy of Zamfara State to fight corruption, to organize *zakāt*-collection, to make dress code compulsory (*hijāb* for women), and to regulate marriage and trade sectors among others. The Commissioner insisted that such a process needs a transition phase during which people can be informed about *sharī'a*. He also mentions obstacles that the re-implementation could face,

---

<sup>649</sup> Oduyoye, Modupe (2000): *The Shari'ah Debate in Nigeria*. October 1999-October 2000. Ibadan: Sefer, S. 1.

especially human rights laws, Christian opposition and discussion regarding the general outline of the state i.e. secular or not.<sup>650</sup>

The re-implementation of *sharī'a* in Zamfara State was part of the political campaign of a single governor. This decision was appreciated by the majority of Nigerian Muslims. They expected this change of laws as a solution to many of their problems. Ahmad Sani's campaign was successful twice and the *sharī'a*-topic seems to have been a winning card during the elections in more than one state.<sup>651</sup>

The other northern states did nothing but answer the demands of the masses. Weimann observes that the example of re-implementation in Zamfara State which was followed by the other states led to a dilemma for some states' governors in the north. On the one hand they (as Muslims governing states of predominantly Muslim inhabitants) were put under pressure to implement Islamic law, and on the other hand, they had to comprise with the federal government and especially with the

---

<sup>650</sup> For Details see Ostien (2007), Volume II, pp. 171-176; the entire paper of Alh. Ahmed Bello Mahmud untitled "On the adoption and Implementation of Sharī'a Legal System in Zamfara State", presented at the JNI-sponsored seminar on Sharī'a in Jigawa State, 6 July, 2000, is available. After mentioning the thirteen steps that took place in Zamfara throughout the re-implementation of Sharī'a, the author insists on the necessity of dialogue between the proponents and opponents of Sharī'a. He emphasizes that Sharī'a was introduced by law and that all Nigerian states should respect the wish of Muslims.

<sup>651</sup> According to Weimann, Gunnar J. (2010) the governor of Zamfara played the Sharī'a-card in both 1999 and 2003 during the elections. Also Governor I. Shekarau succeeded with a similar strategy in Kano state during the 2003 elections, see p. 17. For an overview on the "Sharī'a-factor" in the 2003 elections in the federation, see Kogelmann, Franz (2006): The "Sharī'a Factor" in Nigeria's 2003 Elections, in: Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa. Benjamin F. Soares (ed.), pp. 256-274, Islam in Africa series 6. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

newly elected president's party, the PDP, that had commitments towards all Nigerians and the international community.<sup>652</sup>

Most of the legal procedures of the re-implementation of *sharī'a* in the northern states took place during the years 2000 in Zamfara, Kano, Niger State, Kebbi, and Jigawa and 2001 in Sokoto and Yobe.<sup>653</sup> Although the northern states are predominantly Muslim, they are different in matters of laws, ethnic groups, political settings and presence of non-Muslims. If the re-implementation in Zamfara State occurred quickly because the majority of the population are Muslims, then the situation in other states was much more complicated. In Kaduna for instance the situation was much more complicated since there is a large Christian population in that state and they felt threatened by the *sharī'a*-re-implementation in one way or another. Here we should mention that there are no reliable statistics about affiliation to any religion. This question was (and still is) a "taboo" even as recently as the 2006 population census.<sup>654</sup> The state of Kaduna witnessed one of the first *sharī'a* related

---

<sup>652</sup> Weimann, Gunnar J. (2010): Islamic Criminal Law in Northern Nigeria. Politics, religion, judicial practice; PhD-thesis at the University of Amsterdam, p. 16; the governors of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) acting in the northern states were Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (Katsina State), Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso (Kano State), Abdulkadir Kure (Niger State), Ahmed Makarfi (Kaduna State), and Ahmadu Adamu Mu'azu (Bauchi State).

<sup>653</sup> For more details see Peters (2003), p 14.

<sup>654</sup> Statistics about religious affiliation is a political question in the country and can be misinterpreted. During the last census of 2006 this question was not raised. The last time the "question about religion" was part of the census dates back to 1952. Personally, I prefer not to give statistics about religion. For an attempt to give the percentage of Muslims in the twelve Sharī'a-States see Ostien (2007), Vol. II, p. xix.

riots between Muslims and Christians with casualties on both sides.<sup>655</sup> The riots in Kaduna required the intervention of the then President of Nigeria Obasanjo who condemned the occurrences and called for the reconciliation of the conflicting parties. After he travelled to the region he appealed to the nation on March 2000 to deal with *sharī'a* democratically and peacefully.<sup>656</sup> *Sharī'a* law become effective in Kaduna state in May 2001.<sup>657</sup>

The late Umaru Yar'Adua, former Katsina State governor and the second president of the Forth Republic, implemented Islamic law in his state in August 2000. During the same year this law was officially applied.<sup>658</sup> The politician addressed the people of his state indicating that *sharī'a* needed the contribution of all and called on them to take responsibility: "...all Muslims now bear a heavy responsibility for the need to contribute to the successful implementation of the legal code (...)."<sup>659</sup> In addition, he ensured that Non-Muslims would not be affected by the new laws: "I assure adherents of other faiths that the government will guarantee the security of their lives and property. I assure them that none of their rights will be trampled on."<sup>660</sup>

---

<sup>655</sup> For a detailed description of the riots in Kaduna see Danfulani, U., Ludwig, F. und P. Ostien. (2002), p. 74; the riots seems to have an ethnic aspect between the Muslims (Hausa) and Christians (Kajes and Katafs for instance)

<sup>656</sup> See Obasanjo's speech "President Olusegun Obasanjo's address to the nation on Sharī'a Crisis", March 1, 2000, [http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/speech/obasanjo\\_sharī'a\\_address.html](http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/speech/obasanjo_sharī'a_address.html) (2.5.2011)

<sup>657</sup> Peters (2003), p. 55.

<sup>658</sup> Peters (2003) registered cases of application of Islamic law in Katsina in November 2000 (lashes for consuming alcohol and unlawful sexual intercourse), see p. 57.

<sup>659</sup> Quoted in Oduyoye (2000), p. 95.

<sup>660</sup> See 'Nigeria's Katsina state adopts Sharī'a' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/860660.stm>, Tuesday, 1 August, 2000. (7.10.2004).

In Kano, the center of Sufism in Nigeria and the commercial metropolis of the north, thousands of people celebrated the decision of the governor to implement *sharī'a* in June 2000.<sup>661</sup> A few months later (in November) Islamic law was legally approved. In December of the same year, consumption of alcohol in police stations, which is a federal institution, was banned. The institution of *hisba* was set up.<sup>662</sup> Among other responsibilities, the *hisba* groups are charged with reminding Muslims to fulfill their religious obligations and impose sanctions on those people who ignore them.<sup>663</sup> In order to fulfill the requirements of the *sharī'a* Project Kano state established the so-called Sharia Commission, *zakāt* and *Hubusi* Commission (in Hausa: Islamic endowment).<sup>664</sup>

Since June 2000 Islamic law has been in practice in Sokoto State. The first stoning case and three hand-amputation cases according to *sharī'a* law took place in 2001.<sup>665</sup> The case of Safiya Hussaini, a Muslim woman of the north, attracted the attention of the entire world. She was accused of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning by a *Sharia Court* in Sokoto. This case was extensively discussed nationally and even internationally.<sup>666</sup>

---

<sup>661</sup> See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/798630.stm>. (07.10.2004).

<sup>662</sup> For details on *hisba* see Fwatschak, Sati U. (2003): *Shari'a Enforcement in Northern Nigeria: The Hisba and the Publics*. Paper presented at the conference on: "The Sharī'a debate and the shaping of Muslim and Christian Identities in Northern Nigeria". Bayreuth, Germany. 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July, 2003, pp. 1-23.

<sup>663</sup> Peters (2003), p. 30.

<sup>664</sup> See Yusufari (2004), p. 4.

<sup>665</sup> Peters (2003), p. 58-59.

<sup>666</sup> For an extensive legal analysis of this case see Ostien (2007), Volume V "The Two Famous Cases" [Safiya Hussaini and Amina Lawal], the author provides excellent material on these cases including a translation of all proceedings of the process as well a statement of the lawyer who defended Hussaini;

Although Hussaini was acquitted, a bitter controversy over the compatibility of human rights and *sharī'a*, and equality between men and women under *sharī'a* law arose.

The Governor of Niger State Abdul-Kadir Kure announced the implementation of a modified form of Islamic law in his state. He announced the re-implementation of Islamic law as a remedy for a corrupted political system. As was the case in Katsina, he guaranteed Christians that *sharī'a* would not affect them.<sup>667</sup> Niger state represents an exception among the other states of the north since it kept the *Penal Code* of 1960 and added *Section 68A* for Islamic law and so called *hudūd*-penalties.<sup>668</sup>

In Jigawa state, *sharī'a* was announced in August 2000 and many people travelled to Dutse, the state capital in order to show their support of the re-implementation of Islamic law. Other inhabitants were sceptical about *sharī'a* and preferred to stay indoors and kept shops, hotels and bars closed.<sup>669</sup> Nevertheless cases of burning down churches as well as violent acts between Muslims and Christians were documented in the territory of Jigawa State.<sup>670</sup>

In the north-east of the country where Borno State is situated *sharī'a* was implemented in 2000 and celebrated by the predominantly Muslim population. Christians are a minority in that region. The governor addressed the Christians in his state insisting that *sharī'a* is for the Muslims only. This statement was not

---

in addition see Kalu, Ogbu (2003): 'Safiyya and Adamah: punishing adultery with Sharī'a stones in twenty-first-century Nigeria', in: African Affairs vol. 102, no. 408, pp. 389-408.

<sup>667</sup> Oduyoye (2000), p. 7.

<sup>668</sup> Peters, p. 14.

<sup>669</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/862662.stm>. (12.10.2004).

<sup>670</sup> Peters (2003) reports cases of burning of churches in the town of Gwaram related to tension between Christians and Muslims, see p. 55.

considered by Christian authorities as a guarantee of their freedom to worship and of their safety. They reacted by performing prayers and fasting in protest of the planned law.<sup>671</sup> *sharī'a* was officially introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2001 although the Christians remained suspicious about the project.<sup>672</sup> In the neighboring Yobe State Islamic law was introduced in August 2000 and legally implemented two months later. The *Sharia Penal Code* became effective in April 2001.<sup>673</sup>

Bauchi state was the tenth state that implemented *sharī'a* law on 27 February 2001. The protest from human rights organizations and Christians in the state failed to discourage *sharī'a* law in that territory. As *sharī'a* became legal in June 2001 approximately sixty-three judges were appointed to act as *Sharia Court Judges*. The *sharī'a* re-implementation caused a wave of riots in Bauchi State. Apart from burning places of worship, several people lost their lives, property was destroyed and thousands were displaced.<sup>674</sup>

Protests with slogans like “no *sharī'a*” related to the *sharī'a* re-implementation in Gombe states led to violent acts at the end of May 2001 between Muslims and Christians in that region.<sup>675</sup> Riots were registered in different towns of the state and caused rivalry between the two religious communities. The Anglican archbishop of Gombe, Henry Ndukuba, described the *sharī'a* re-implementation as “a lie, a ploy and

---

<sup>671</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/887355.stm>. (12.10.2004)

<sup>672</sup> Peters (2003), p. 54.

<sup>673</sup> Peters (2003), p. 58.

<sup>674</sup> Peters (2003), p. 54.

<sup>675</sup> Peters (2003), pp. 54-55.

the greatest deceit.”<sup>676</sup> He doubted that *sharī'a* would be able to guarantee equality among people in his state.

In Kebbi State, *sharī'a* was introduced in July 2000 and was implemented by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2000. In January 2001 Muslim women in that state were asked to dress according to *sharī'a* law. In July of the same year a young boy was accused of stealing money and was punished by amputating his hand. In September of that year a man was sentenced to death by stoning over the sexual abuse of a seven-year -old child.<sup>677</sup>

The re-implementation process of Islamic law differed from state to state. In most cases it happened under the pressure of the Muslim population. Thus, most of the governors of the northern states re-implemented *sharī'a* as an answer to mass protest. Zamfara State was a pioneer in implementing *sharī'a* and its *Penal Code* was adapted by some states, while others used it as a template to develop their own codes. Seven states introduced *Sharia Penal Codes* (Bauchi, Kebbi, Jigawa, Kano, Zamfara, Yobe, and Sokoto) and Niger State preferred to keep the 1960 Penal Code with a particular section related to *sharī'a*.

The northern Muslim states of Nigeria were not ready to re-implement Islamic law: they were largely surprised by the events which followed. The *Penal Code* varied from one state to the other. Islamic judges were not prepared to handle cases according to these recently implemented laws. There were no support-institutions in place to facilitate the re-implementation process. Even the drafting of the *Penal Code*

---

<sup>676</sup> Compass Direct, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

<sup>677</sup> These sentences were never enforced.

needed revision. In Zamfara State for instance, Peters speaks of a “hasty drafting” with “incorrect cross-references, incorrect and defective wording, omissions and contradictions.”<sup>678</sup>

The *sharī'a* re-implementation raises several questions about its constitutionality and conformity with the laws of the federation. Laws in Nigeria like in any federal system are complex. The constitution is the most authoritative document defining regulations within the territory of the federation. Nevertheless laws may differ from one state to the other. In Nigeria Islamic law was controversial during and after the colonial era. Islamic Law was reduced for personal and family matters. The reintroduction of criminal law implicates its codification and integration of the law of the federal state in a written form as fixed in the 1999-constitution:

“Subject as otherwise provided by this constitution, a person shall not be convicted of a criminal offence unless that offence is defined and the penalty therefore prescribed in a written law; and in this subsection, a written law refers to an Act of the National Assembly or a law of a State, any subsidiary legislation or instrument under the provisions of a law.”<sup>679</sup>

According to Rudolph Peters the notion of “codification” in an Islamic context goes back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He understands it as a measure of fixing that “(...) only the state determines what law is and that the state law is the highest form of law.”<sup>680</sup> Nadjma Yassari, a jurist, observes that Islamic law was uncodified for more

---

<sup>678</sup> Peters (2003), p. 45.

<sup>679</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Lagos: Federal Government Press, p. 22.

<sup>680</sup> Peters, Rudolph (2002): From Jurists' Law to Statute Law or What happens when the Shari'a is codified, in: Mediterranean Politics, Vol. 7, 3, p. 88.

than a thousand years, although it was based on a collection of textbooks, annotations, and *fatwās* (legal opinions). The process of codification took place through contact between Muslim societies and colonial powers. It was a sort of adaptation to the exigency of that period of time.<sup>681</sup> Codification of Islamic law first took place in the Ottoman Empire before it moved to other North African countries. The codification process varied from one country to another. It changed the legal framework of *sharī'a* from being “jurist law” to become “statutory law” - as Aharon Layish formulates it.<sup>682</sup>

Apart from the codification of Islamic Law several questions were raised, especially as to whether this law violates the constitution of Nigeria. One of the controversies has to do with Section 10 of the 1999-constitution stating that “The government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as state religion”. This section was interpreted by many opponents of *sharī'a* in Nigeria as a confirmation that the form of the state is “secular”. This means that none of the 36 Nigerian states can adopt a religiously inspired law (like *sharī'a*) as a state law. On the contrary supporters of the *sharī'a*-project argue that the term “secular” was not mentioned in the constitution and the re-implementation was by no means a violation of it. Furthermore Muslims mention that the constitution guarantees the right of religion and reinstating Islamic law was part of that right defined in Section 38 (1):

---

<sup>681</sup> Yassari, Nadjma (2004): Islamisches Recht oder Recht der Muslime- Gedanken zu Recht und Religion im Islam, in: Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaften, 103, p. 112.

<sup>682</sup> Aharon Layish (2004): The Transformation of the Sharī'a from Jurists' Law to Statutory Law in the Contemporary Muslim World, In: Welt Des Islam 44 (1), pp. 85-113; the author provides a good historical overview on Sharī'a codification and how it took place and what kind of methods were applied. Furthermore he gives an overview of the perception of codification by the Ulama.

“Every Person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”<sup>683</sup>

There was an attempt to unify the *Sharia Penal Code* initiated by the Institute of Islamic Legal Studies (CILS) at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This was a project of “harmonization” of all Codes.<sup>684</sup> Furthermore its aim was to develop a judicial backdrop for the re-implementation in all Muslim states and at the same time the project was meant to “ (...) enhance legal certainty and facilitate the training of judicial staff and police personnel.”<sup>685</sup>

One of the biggest issues of the re-implementation was the legislative power between the states and the federation. According to Section 4 of the 1999 constitution, this legislative power is divided between both the state and the federation. Peters clarifies that “matters mentioned in the Exclusive Legislative List (...) are exclusively federal matters, while matters mentioned in the Concurrent Legislative List can come under both the legislative power of the Federation and the legislative power of the states.” Other matters not mentioned in both lists are part of

---

<sup>683</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999).

<sup>684</sup> Ostien (2007), Volume IV “The Shari’a Penal and Criminal and Procedure Codes” provides a good comparison of the “harmonized” Codes projects and the Penal Code of 1960. In fact, views on the CILS suggested Penal Codes are divided between “sceptics” (as Ostien calls them) who asked for reasons for such a project that may restrict Shari’a to what is written and those who perceive it as a chance to redraft and correct the introduced Penal Codes; see pp. 20-21. The same volume provides a copy of this “harmonized Shari’a Penal Code” with annotations; see pp. 33-139.

<sup>685</sup> Peters, p. 45.

the state's legislation. This was exactly what happened with the introduction of Islamic Criminal Law. Peters indicates that the Penal Code itself is unproblematic, but introducing *sharī'a* as a *religiously-inspired law* was challenging.<sup>686</sup>

## ***2 Proponents and opponents of the Sharī'a-project***

One may get the impression that all Muslims advocated the re-implementation of *sharī'a* and that all Christians opposed it. This claim is not true. There were also Muslims who did not agree with the re-implementation but at the same time could not oppose it. This was the case among Muslim politicians, intellectuals, scholars and even among ordinary people.

Allen Christelow observes a loophole in the constitution of 1999 that led the twelve northern states to implement Islamic criminal law in addition to the existing personal and family law.<sup>687</sup> Christelow speaks of several other secondary factors that generated the Nigerian *sharī'a*-crisis. According to him, the feeling of insecurity amongst the population, social inequality, violence, and the absence of a well-structured state system are other factors behind the call for *sharī'a*.<sup>688</sup>

Tabiu Muhammed summarizes views of the opponents of *sharī'a* and their argument for a possible violation of the constitution of 1999 in the following points:

---

<sup>686</sup> Peters (2003), p. 34.

<sup>687</sup> Christelow, Allen (2002): Persistence and transformation in the politics of Sharī'a-Nigeria, 1958-2002, in: search of an explanatory framework. Paper presented at the Conference on Muslim Law in Post-Colonial Africa, Centre for Contemporary Islam, University of Cape Town, 11-14 March 2002, p. 16.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

1. *sharī'a* opponents questioned the legislative power of Zamafara as well of the other northern states to reimplement Islamic criminal law;
2. for these opponents *sharī'a* is reduced to personal matters and its use in criminal law is nothing but a violation of the constitution;
3. finally they consider Nigeria to be a secular state according to Section 10 of the constitution.<sup>689</sup>

The jurist Bashir Yusuf Ibrahim analyzes the conformity of *sharī'a* with the constitution. He mentions the establishment of the *National Assembly* and the *State Houses of Assembly*. Both have different fields of legislation fixed in the *Exclusive Concurrent Legislative Lists* mentioned above. The fact that Islamic Criminal Law was not mentioned in one of these lists became a matter for the states. This means that any state in the federation can introduce its own legislation or its own criminal law independently whether this law is inspired by a particular religion or not.<sup>690</sup> When it comes to the question of *sharī'a* and human rights, Ibrahim understands penalties like death by stoning or the amputation of limbs and legs as a way to fight and reduce criminality in the society and keep secure the life, property and dignity of people. In

---

<sup>689</sup> Tabiu, Muhammed (2001): *Sharī'a, Federalism and Nigerian Constitution*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Sharī'a 14<sup>th</sup> April, organized by the Nigerian Muslim Forum, London, United Kingdom, pp. 6-7.

<sup>690</sup> Ibrahim, B. Yusuf (2003): *Application of the Shari'a Penal Law and Justice System in Northern Nigeria: Constitutional issues and implications*, in: Ezeilo, J. Ngosi; Ladan, M. Tawfiq and A. Afolabi-Akiyode (Eds): *Shari'a Implementation in Nigeria: Issues and challenges on Women's Rights and Acces to Justice*. Enugu/Port Hartcourt/Abuja: (WACOL); Lagos: (WARDC); Heinrich Böll Foundation, p. 133.

addition, he reminds us that there is no paragraph in the constitution forbidding the death penalty.<sup>691</sup>

Frieder Ludwig, a scholar of religion and an expert on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, clarifies that the majority of Muslims (proponents) understand the *sharī'a* re-implementation as “restitution of their rights” while on the contrary, many Christians (opponents) consider Islamic law as “a step to Islamize Nigeria”.<sup>692</sup> This opposition within the two camps is motivated by events like the two famous stoning cases of Amina Lawal and Safiya Hussaini as well by discussions about the presidency of 2007 and whether the president should be a Muslim or a Christian. Ludwig quotes the reaction of the Anglican Archbishop Peter Akinalo when President Umaru Yar’Adua, a Muslim and PDP (People’s Democratic Party) candidate was elected as successor of Obasanjo as head of the state: “Oh! My God, a Sharia governor”.<sup>693</sup> In the same vein, the reaction of the governor of Kano State, Ibrahim Shekarau, who showed his disappointment in 1999 when *sharī'a* was introduced not introduced sooner.<sup>694</sup> These two examples illustrate stereotypes of divided views on *sharī'a* re-implementation.

---

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>692</sup> Frieder Ludwig (2008): Christian–Muslim Relations in Northern Nigeria since the Introduction of Shari’ah in 1999, in: Journal of the academy of Religion, Vol. 76 (3), pp. 603.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid., p. 604.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid., p. 607.

## 2.1 Proponents of Sharī'a

Danladi A. Mohammed<sup>695</sup>, from the Centre of Journalism Studies in Wales, seems to be among those who defended *sharī'a*. His article is an answer to the prominent Islamic scholar and *sharī'a* critic, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi (whose views are reflected in the next chapter). Danladi A. Mohammad considers Sanusi to be one of those modernist scholars who is influenced by “orientalists”. For him, Sanusi is a Marxist who developed personal views on *sharī'a* that are far from reality. In addition, Danladi Mohammad goes further in reproaching Sanusi for being attracted to the views of the controversial Sudanese founder of the Republican Brothers, Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭaha.<sup>696</sup>

As part of his protection of *sharī'a*, Mohammad goes even further when he categorizes Sanusi among secularist scholars (in the same category with Abdullahi Aḥmad An-Na'im, a prominent Sudanese law expert living in the USA) who oppose '*ulamā'*' and blame them of corruption and incompetence.

According to Danladi A. Muhammed, Sanusi and the modernists want to reform Islam and change its rules. This step could be a danger to Islam since it leads

---

<sup>695</sup> Mohammed, Danladi A. (2002): Muslim Intellectuals and the Sharī'a debate in Nigeria, aus: [www.nigeriadeltacongress.com/marticles/muslim\\_intellectuals\\_and\\_the\\_Sha.htm](http://www.nigeriadeltacongress.com/marticles/muslim_intellectuals_and_the_Sha.htm). (22.05.2011).

<sup>696</sup> Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭaha was executed in 1985 during the time of President Numeiri because of his controversial views on Islamic Qur'ān revelation. He made a differentiation between two types of revelations: one that happened before the *hijra* of the Prophet to Medina in 622 and one after that event. Taha believes that the Medinian-revealed Quranic text should be understood in its historical context. This point of views was heavily criticized by Muslim scholars of that time; Danladi reproaches Sanusi for being influenced by such views.

to total secularization and abolition of the religion, which was the case in much of Christianity:

“The problem is that Sanusi and other modernists before him wanted to change the rules so that Islam would be totally reformed like Christianity, leading to complete secularisation and the abolishing of Islam just as Christianity was abolished. This is clear from the writings of Mahmud Taha and his followers.”<sup>697</sup>

The author concludes by attacking Sanusi Lamidu Sanusi and reproaches him for practicing propaganda, manipulating Islam, and even for selecting particular chapters from the Qur’ān and the *sunna* in order to confirm his point of view on the rejection of *sharī’a* laws.

Danladi Mohammed judges most secular reforms in the Islamic world as failed reforms. He cites the example of Turkey and the program of laicism imposed by Atatürk that failed to replace the long-lasting hegemony of the Ottoman Empire. This attempt, like many others, led to a westernization of Islamic societies and the adaptation of western norms.<sup>698</sup>

Along the same lines of defending *sharī’a* re-implementation, the prominent Kaduna-based Islamic scholar, Muhammed Sanusi Gombi, argued that compared to other religious communities in Nigeria, Muslims have been disadvantaged for many years. The Islamic scholar raises the points that for a long time Muslims tolerated non-Muslim norms like accepting Saturday as a public holiday instead of Friday. He even advocates extending *sharī’a* to the entire federation, not only in the north. The

---

<sup>697</sup> Mohammed, Danladi A. (2002).

<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

Islamic scholar Ali A. Mazrui also legitimizes the re-implementation of Islamic Law in Nigeria. According to him, this law questions western model(s) of law. Mazrui considers Nigeria a unique African state which offers an alternative to western law traditions. He adds that *sharī'a* was a result of a critical reflection on existing western norms. Furthermore, *sharī'a* led, according to Mazrui, to a pluralistic society and in no way to a repressed one.<sup>699</sup>

The current Izala leader in Jos, Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir, fully supports the *sharī'a*-project of 1999 and considers it an “embryo” which is in the process of growth. He expects this “embryo” to fully mature one day. He formulates it in the following:

“Yes indeed! We also support that. We wanted *sharī'a* and consider it a *janān* (in Arabic: embryo) that will not be old in only one day, but will mature gradually. As westerners [the British] came to us and criticized the *sharī'a* and reduced it until we couldn't do anything. Now we want to react to them. We have to react gradually and when *sharī'a* becomes strong enough, then we will correct what we failed to correct before...”<sup>700</sup>

This statement reflected the views of many Muslims in northern Nigeria who viewed Islamic law as a chance to unite Muslims. This unity was deeply affected by the colonial policy of reducing Islamic law to personal and family matters. The journalist Suleiman Shehu who covered the *sharī'a*-related event for Radio Kaduna in 1999 speaks about the feelings of Muslims at the gathering of Gusau, in the capital of Zamfara State when the announcement to reinstate Islamic law was made. During

---

<sup>699</sup> Danfulani, U., Ludwig, F. und P. Ostien (2002), p. 89.

<sup>700</sup> Interview with the Izala-leader in Jos in his office, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

the re-implementation ceremonies, Shehu who was deeply moved and he confessed that he has never seen a comparable crowd of people before. For him, the project unified Islamic groups in spite of doctrinal differences:

“(...) the implementation of *sharī'a* involves the religion of Islam, you have all the groups, I mean the sects, the groups under Islamic organisations coming together to give their input. They were called by the state government to come and give their input because you have the '*ulamā*' of the Sufis, you have '*ulamā*' in the Izala, you have '*ulamā*' in the other groups. So they called for unity. For the implementation of *sharī'a* is basically teaching of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him. That was, I think, the basis under which the groups were unified.”<sup>701</sup>

The acceptance and support of *sharī'a* happened at the level of the '*ulamā*' as well as at the grassroots level where expectation were enormous. Ordinary Muslims were enthusiastic and interpreted *sharī'a* as a solution to their problems in the country. Suleiman Shehu added that in most cases, people at the grassroots level are “guided by the '*ulamā*'” and consider them their “mentors”. Although many Muslims at the grassroots level are ignorant about what *sharī'a* really means and what kinds of challenges and changes can occur because of it, they trusted their religious leaders who supported *sharī'a*. Apart from this support, ordinary Muslims also expected *sharī'a* to improve their economic and social conditions:

“Yes, *sharī'a* is the way. It will work for us. (...), maybe it is the cradle of the years: years of campaign, years of call, years of..., you know; people,

---

<sup>701</sup> Interview with Suleiman Shehu in Arewa House, Kaduna, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

you know, aspiration towards having a *sharī'a* government. So whatever that will entail, they will say rudely, 'oh yes, we are ok.'"<sup>702</sup>

## 2.2 Opponents of the re-implementation of Islamic Law

It seems that most Muslim groups, except the Shi'ites under the leadership of Ibraheem Zakzaky,<sup>703</sup> welcomed the *sharī'a* reimplementation without reservation. Zakzaky and his group – known as the Muslim Brothers and labelled as Shi'ites by the majority of Muslims – opposed the reimplementation. In a lecture given at Bayero University in Kano in December, 1999, Zakzaky tried to clarify his position towards *sharī'a*. After defining the word *sharī'a* he classified Islamic countries practicing *sharī'a* into three major categories:

1. traditional ones that have applied the *sharī'a* for a long time and that were hardly colonized by western colonialists;
2. countries that applied *sharī'a* only partially: these countries have been colonized and after independence they started practicing a 'post colonial system of democracy';
3. Finally countries where the *sharī'a* is absolute and where an Islamic revolution may have taken place.<sup>704</sup>

---

<sup>702</sup> Ibid.; Suleiman Shehu mentions that these expectations were demonstrated by the masses that came to Gussau to support Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru in his undertaking of instituting of Islamic law. While many people estimate the number of people would reach one million, the journalist speaks of approximately 800,000.

<sup>703</sup> See Suleiman, G. Ibrahim (2005): Mallam Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and the Question of Shi'ism, B.A.-Dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos.

<sup>704</sup> Az-Zakzaky, Ibraheem (1999): Application of Shari'ah in the contemporary world: Lessons from some Muslim countries; a Paper presented to the national Conference on the Application of *sharī'a*

After discussing the examples of Pakistan, Sudan and finally Iran, Zakzaky came to the conclusion that *sharī'a* was successful only in Iran because it is part and parcel of an Islamic state. He concludes that the success of a full *sharī'a* implementation is only guaranteed within a system of government which is 'purely Islamic'. Concerning Nigeria, Zakzaky predicted two conflicts that would coincide with implementation of the *sharī'a*: One conflict would be with the constitution which would claim superiority over the *sharī'a* and would, therefore, place the *sharī'a* under its control and regulations. The other conflict would be with *sharī'a* itself which, as the Law of Almighty God, claims superiority over all laws and therefore cannot accept the supremacy of the Nigerian constitution.<sup>705</sup> Zakzaky concludes by saying that the application of *sharī'a* under a government system which is not Islamic will subject it (*sharī'a*) to 'restrictions, manipulations and possible abuses.'<sup>706</sup>

One of the most prominent independent Islamic scholars in northern Nigeria is Sanusi Lamidu Sanusi. He is an economist by profession and since 2009, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria. He is also an expert on Islam in northern Nigeria and has published extensively in that field.<sup>707</sup>

---

organized by the Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of law, Bayero University and RAMNAN Law Consult, Kano, Bayero University, 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999, p. 8.

<sup>705</sup> Az-Zakzaky 1999, p. 13.

<sup>706</sup> al-Zakzaky 1999, p. 15.

<sup>707</sup> Most of Sanusi Lamido Sanusi's articles and views were published on the Internet platform [www.gamji.com/sanusi/htm](http://www.gamji.com/sanusi/htm). According to personal observation he published extensively until the year 2005 on that platform. After that period he seems to have been more engaged in Economics as Risk Manager at the United Bank of Africa before he was appointed as governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria in June 2009. Also Barbara Taschner (2006): Die Scharia in Nigeria anhand der Texte von

Sanusi criticizes aspects of the application of *ḥudūd* in general and aspects of particular questions related to the law as it is practiced in Nigeria. In the case of Amina Lawal, a women accused of unlawful sexual intercourse (Arabic: *zinā*) and sentenced to death by a Sharia Court in Katsina, Sanusi questioned the background of Islamic Law in Nigeria, its relevance in the sources (*Mukhtaṣar Sīdī Khalīl*) and how Islamic judges dealt with the adultery case of Amina Lawal.<sup>708</sup> Sanusi emphasizes that the rights given to Safiya Hussaini – another prominent *zinā* case in Nigeria – to revoke her confession of committing *zinā* and who was initially sentenced to death in Sokoto State and then released were not given to Amina Lawal by the *Upper Sharia Court* in Futuna, in Katsina.<sup>709</sup> According to the Sanusi, the standard book of Islamic Mālikī law used in Nigeria, *Mukhtaṣar Sīdī Khalīl*, considers personal confession evidence for a *ḥadd*-penalty “unless it was withdrawn in any manner whatsoever.”<sup>710</sup> This means that the accused has the right to annul his or her

---

Sanusi Lamidu Sanusi, BA-Thesis, Religious Studies, University of Bayreuth, Germany, makes that same observation that Sanusi published a lot in the field of Islam in Nigeria until 2005. She counted eighty publications of his accessible on [www.Gamji.com](http://www.Gamji.com) as well as on [www.nigerdeltacongress.com](http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com)

<sup>708</sup> Sanusi L. Sanusi (2002): “The Hudood punishment in the Northern Nigeria: A Muslim criticism.”, October 1<sup>st</sup>. Prepared for a publication in ISIM NEWS, the quarterly publication of the Institute for the study of Islam in Modernity, Leiden, Holland, pp. 4-7, [www.gamji.com/sanusi30htm](http://www.gamji.com/sanusi30htm). (19.10.2004)

<sup>709</sup> Sanusi (2002), October 1<sup>st</sup>. p. 4.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

statement.<sup>711</sup> Amina's lawyers appealed her penalty since her rights were not considered by the judges who sentenced her to death.<sup>712</sup>

Sanusi goes further by explaining the issue of pregnancy if the woman is divorced or widowed and how the different Islamic schools of law deal with such a situation. In *Mukhtaṣar Sīdī Khalīl* the waiting period called *'idda* of a widow or a divorced woman lasts between two and five years although in the different schools of law it is debatable how long it should last.<sup>713</sup> If a woman gives birth to a child outside that period of time, then it is a case of *zinā* (adultery) confirmed through pregnancy. According to Sanusi, the situation under the Mālikiyya is much more complicated. A woman risks a *ḥadd*-penalty under the Mālikī School of Law when she falls pregnant in the fifth month of the fifth year after the death of her husband or the divorce (in case she did not marry again).<sup>714</sup> Many Islamic scholars deal with this regulation sceptically since neither Allah nor his Prophet fixed a waiting period of five years, as Sanusi points out. Even Imam Mālik did not release a clear statement on the waiting

---

<sup>711</sup> In some Islamic schools of law it is required that the accused person confess/repent committing adultery in front of four different judges. In the Maliki and Shafi Schools, a single confession is required; for more details see Baradie (1983), p. 105.

<sup>712</sup> Amina's lawyers presented twelve points against the judgement. Among others the court did not explain to Amina what *Zinā* is and which implications she faced in the case of adultery; see more details in Babaji and Dankofa (2003), p. 123.

<sup>713</sup> On this problem in Islamic law see Bossaller, Anke, 'Schlafende Schwangerschaft' in *islamischen Gesellschaften. Entstehung und soziale Implikationen einer weiblichen Fiktion*, Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004.

<sup>714</sup> All Islamic Schools of Law fixed the period "six lunar months" for the birth of a baby within the institution of wedlock. In the case of a divorced or widowed woman falling pregnant before these six months, then it can be interpreted as a case of *Zinā*; for more details see Sanusi (2002), October 1<sup>st</sup>, p. 5.

period.<sup>715</sup> In the case of Amina Lawal, she gave birth two years after her divorce. Sanusi reminds us that she should not be condemned to death because of pregnancy or giving birth as long as there is no consensus on the waiting period or on pregnancy as evidence for *zinā*.<sup>716</sup> Sanusi formulates it clearly that “Adultery is committed every day, but only those against whom admissible proof is established are punished by law.”<sup>717</sup>

This viewpoint shows that *sharīʿa* is an ideal project for equality and justice among Muslims. In fact, such promises in a country like Nigeria in which political and ethnic tensions are high are far from becoming reality. Sanusi looks at the *sharīʿa* reimplementation from a social perspective rather than strictly within a religious and legal discourse. Sanusi perceives the *sharīʿa*-debate in his country to be a political issue in which religion is ideologically misused. He speaks of a “political violence” leading to a split in the society. The recently implemented law cannot guarantee justice among Muslims. Women especially are disadvantaged in the project:

“...at the level of ideology it holds that the discourse exhibits tendencies of political violence toward the weaker segments of society. Slicing through the opacity or religious jargon and propaganda, social critics highlight the reality that the poor and the women seem to be on the receiving end of harsh punishments, and that the

---

<sup>715</sup> Mālik spoke of 4, 5, 6 and even 7 years, see *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>717</sup> Sanusi, L. Sanusi (2002): Amina Lawal: Sex, Pregnancy and Muslim Law, September 2002. [www.nigeriadeltacongress.com/articles/amina\\_lawal.htm](http://www.nigeriadeltacongress.com/articles/amina_lawal.htm). (6.12.2004)

<sup>717</sup> Sanusi, Lamido Sanusi (2004): The West and the Rest: Reflections on the Intercultural Dialogue about Shari’ah. Paper presented in the Conference on „Comparative Perspectives on Shari’ah in Nigeria“, Bauchi Road campus, University of Jos, January 15-17, 2004, p. 216.

intensification of the process of religious revival is accompanied by a deepening of contradictions in the social formation.”<sup>718</sup>

In most cases Islamic law has been applied only to the poor. Politicians and the wealthy enjoy the possibility of escaping such a law. The ideal of social justice under *sharīʿa* was thus far from being realized. Sanusi observes that implementation of Islamic law provokes a clash of law, i.e. a clash between Islamic traditional norms and western laws. Many Muslims do not agree with western concepts of equality in the society if they do not conform to Islamic norms.

“A slave is not the equal of a free born, a woman is not equal to a man and a non-Muslim is not equal to a Muslim, even though clear guidelines are given for compassionate treatment of women and slaves, and the protection of certain non-Muslims (who pay the special poll-tax, the *jizya*).”<sup>719</sup>

Sanusi argues that *sharīʿa* understood as a way of life is unproblematic for Nigerian Muslims. The situation became more critical when it came to the application of certain aspects of Islamic law. *Sharīʿa* was criticized because religious discourse was used to achieve ideological and political goals (amongst others) through the state in order to legitimize an existing economical, political, and social system of inequality.<sup>720</sup>

---

<sup>719</sup> Ibid, S. 220.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

Sanusi considers the issue of justice to be a central aspect of *sharī'a*. He asks how amputation can be applied to those who steal a goat and not for corrupt civil servants of the state. He questions how justice can be proven in the case of adultery, especially when “different standards” are applied to men and women? Is that religion or ideology? Sanusi sees more ideology behind *sharī'a* than religion.<sup>721</sup> Furthermore he draws attention to other Islamic countries that have implemented reforms in their law tradition and accommodated legislation to the needs of people without deviating from the tradition. He insists that such a step in Nigeria is more than needed – especially a critical approach towards religion. There is a need to differentiate between those who consciously manipulate religion for ideological objectives and those who tend to establish the law of God.<sup>722</sup>

In a paper on the relationship between politics and Islam, Sanusi warns those politicians who use Islam in northern Nigeria to achieve political goals. He defines the duty of all Muslims is to oppose such “spoiled” politics.<sup>723</sup> For such politicians, *sharī'a* should not only be a sign of harsh sentences and sanctions, but also a way to establish social justice and improve the economic situation of Nigerians. Politicians should not use *sharī'a* to conceal their own corruption, abuse of office, and nepotism.<sup>724</sup>

---

<sup>721</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid, pp. 227-230.

<sup>723</sup> Sanusi, Lamido Sanusi (n.d.): On the Islamization of politics and the Politicization of Islam, [www.gamji.com/sanusi14.htm](http://www.gamji.com/sanusi14.htm). (22.12.2004)

<sup>724</sup> Sanusi, Lamido Sanusi (1999): Issues in constructing corporate Nigeria. Paper presented at the “National Conference on the 1999 Constitution”, organized by the Network For Justice and The Vision Trust Foundation, Arewa House, Kaduna from 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September, p. 8.

Lamidu Sanusi was not the only Nigerian scholar who maintained a critical view of *sharī'a*; there are other critical voices of the *sharī'a* project. This category of scholars stresses that there is no enforcement in Islamic faith (*lā ikrāha fī'd-dīn Qur'ān 2:256*) and that the newly implemented Islamic criminal law cannot favour favor Muslims or protect them: "(...) *sharī'a* rule leaves Muslims helpless before it."<sup>725</sup> A Muslim lawyer from Kano, Suleman Kumo, observes that Islamic judges of *sharī'a* courts are incompetent and corrupt, and abuse of office is common in such courts. These judges, argues Kumo, would even "fail a simple character test".<sup>726</sup>

Lamin Saneh mentions a Muslim from the north named Mohammed Sani who in front of other Muslims in August 2000 openly criticized Zamfara's Governor and his campaign to re-implement *sharī'a* law. These critics were based on the argument that the implementation had more to do with politics than with religion. According to Sani, *sharī'a* comes from Allah and not from the governor.<sup>727</sup>

On 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2000, anti-*sharī'a* demonstrations took place in protest against the introduction of *sharī'a*. Several other riots between Muslims and Christians resulting in loss of properties and lives on both sides happened in the following days. Several mosques and churches were destroyed. *Sharī'a* appears to

---

<sup>725</sup> Saneh, Lamin (2003): Shari'ah Sanctions as Secular Grace? A Nigerian Islamic debate and an intellectual response, in: Transformation, 20/4 October, p. 240.

<sup>726</sup> As quoted in Saneh (2003), p. 240 from Maier (2000), p. 178.

<sup>727</sup> Saneh (2003), p. 240; based on his statement and criticism towards the Governor of Zamfara, Mohammed Sani was arrested and jailed for four months. He accused of violating the loyalty of Zamfara State.

be a violent dispute between Christians and Muslims in the federation, to say the least.<sup>728</sup>

Christians and human rights organizations in Nigeria interpret *sharī'a* as a violation of the constitution and of human rights and see in it a danger for the peaceful coexistence in a multiethnic and multi-religious state like Nigeria. Frieder Ludwig speaks of a sort of “Fundamentalism-thesis” developed and introduced to the debates by *sharī'a* opponents. As an example, Ludwig mentions the chairman of the *Christian Association of Nigeria* (CAN) in Edo State, Archbishop Patrick Ekpu, who points to the OIC controversy and warns against Islamic Fundamentalism in northern Nigeria sponsored by Arabic countries.<sup>729</sup> There are some other opponents of *sharī'a* who consider it a “second Jihad” comparing it to the successful movements of Usman Dan Fodio and the Islamization of northern Nigeria during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>730</sup>

In an *International Religious Freedom Report*, the US Department of State judges the re-implementation of Islamic Criminal Law in Nigeria as an abuse of religious freedom and a cause for interreligious violence. The report states that although Christians in the north were not affected by *sharī'a*, especially in Zamfara State where Christian minorities were only minimally influenced in one way or

---

<sup>728</sup> For more details on the Sharī'a related riots, see Ibrahim, Jibrin (2002): Democracy and minority Rights in Nigeria: Religion, Shari'a and the 1999 Constitution. Paper for the Conference on: "Globalisation, State capacity and self-Determination in Muslim Contexts". Center for Global, International and Regional Studies, University of California-Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2002; also Danfulani, Umar H. D. (2005): The Sharī'a Issue and Christian-Muslim relations in contemporary Nigeria. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, esp. pp. 13-38 reflect on what happened in Kaduna from different perspectives.

<sup>729</sup> For details see Ludwig (2001), p. 266.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

another. Segregation of both sexes in public transport, ban of alcohol, dress codes, closing shops on Fridays, and banning cinema can be considered aspects of such an impact of *sharī'a* on Christians. The US Department of State report points out that the law of the federation does not allow any religious discrimination, but the Northern States of Nigeria violated that law and discriminated against religious minorities.<sup>731</sup>

### **2.3 The Federal Government, the States, the 'ulamā', and grassroots' positions on *sharī'a* re-implementation**

For the Federal Government of 1999<sup>732</sup> under president Obasanjo the *sharī'a* re-implementation was a precarious matter. The democratic process of Nigeria and the transition to democracy was positively appreciated on the national as well as on the international level. The debates related to Islamic Law seemed to divide the country on a religious basis. The president, a born again Yoruba Christian from the south, had no choice but to reduce the tension in the country. At a very early stage of the re-implementation there was no official statement from the government for supporting or opposing *sharī'a*. This is understandable since religion in Nigeria is a complicated issue. The intervention of President Obasanjo was related to the riots of Kaduna in 2000 and the heavy tension between Muslims and Christians in that state. Travelling in person to that area, President Obasanjo was shocked by the

---

<sup>731</sup> US Department of State (2001): International Religious Freedom Report, Nigeria. Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

<sup>732</sup> For an overview on the transition to democracy in Nigeria see Fatunde, Tunde (2000): Nigerias Rückkehr zur Demokratie. Eine Bewertung, in: KAS-AI/00, S. 74-91.

consequences arising from clashes related to the *sharī'a* controversy. He expressed his deep disappointment and wondered during his visit on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2000, if it was really the same Kaduna that he knew from earlier times:

“Are you people sure this is Kaduna? Can this be Nigeria? Are we still in Nigeria at all? I don’t think people who did this could have done it for any religion. I don’t think they did this for any religion.”<sup>733</sup>

He indicated that such acts cannot be grounded in religion and in an official address to the nation on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2000; he described the Kaduna events as “barbarism”. Obasanjo spoke of a “the worst incident of blood-letting” since the Civil War in Nigeria. He all parties involved in the conflicts to engage in dialogue, reconciliation and to respect the federal constitution that guarantees freedom of religion. Furthermore he added that the National Council of States would hold a meeting to discuss the security situation as well the re-implementation of *sharī'a* in the northern states and its constitutionality:

“The Council also reviewed the remote and immediate causes of the disturbances, and noted that the Penal Code currently in force in the northern States is substantially based on Sharia Law, with the modifications that imprisonment is substituted in place of amputation of limbs, as punishment for stealing, and also as punishment for adultery, instead of stoning to death. The Council noted that these modifications are consistent with the human rights principles enshrined in our Constitution, and considered the punishments adequate in the circumstances.

The Council unanimously agreed that all States that have recently adopted Sharia Law should in the meantime revert to the status

---

<sup>733</sup> Quoted in Danfulani (2005), p. 24.

quo ante. That is, Sharia, as practiced in Penal Code, continues to be practiced by all States concerned. The Council urges all Nigerians to remain calm and law-abiding. Provocative and inciting utterances will not be tolerated. This position by the Council is a triumph of love of fatherland, triumph of maturity and sustenance of security of the nation and preservation of our corporate existence. There can be no winners in the destructions, all Nigerians are losers. And in peace and cessation of destructions of life and property, all Nigerians are winners. But to respect the feeling of one another and to hasten the process of reconciliation, there is no victory to be celebrated and no loss to be mourned.”<sup>734</sup>

The official position of the then president and his government was moderate in order not to divide the country into pro- and anti-*sharī'a* people – unlike Obasanjo’s opinion on *sharī'a* few months ago before the Kaduna riot.<sup>735</sup> The Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)<sup>736</sup> established in September, 1999, received the support of the president to work for more peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in the country. NIREC recommended that leaders from both religions should take on the duty of quelling tensions, and members of the two different religious communities should converge.

The federal government in Nigeria has no choice but to reconcile conflicting parties over *sharī'a*. At the state level the situation was different. In the southern part

---

<sup>734</sup> President Olusegun Obasanjo's address to the nation on Sharī'a crisis, March 1, 2000; see the entire speech at ([http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/speech/obasanjo\\_sharia\\_address.html](http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/speech/obasanjo_sharia_address.html), accessed 29/05/2011).

<sup>735</sup> During a visit to the USA, when he was asked about the issue of Sharī'a, President Obasanjo answered; “The government simply wished the Sharī'a cancer would disappear into thin air.”; quoted in Danfulani (2005), p. 23; when the Zamfara governor called for the inauguration of Sharī'a, Obasanjo called on the Vice-president, ministers, governors and emirs to boycott the event, see *ibid.* p. 52.

<sup>736</sup> For history and information on this institution see its homepage <http://www.nirecng.org>

of Nigeria *sharī'a* was present in the media but was not problematic since Muslims are in the minority there. Nevertheless, Muslims among the Yoruba for instance find other ways to practice *sharī'a* and have established Independent *sharī'a* Panels as shown by Abdulfattah Makinde.<sup>737</sup> In the northern part of the country the governors were influenced by the masses; public pressure seemed to be higher than they realized. Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru was elected in 1999 and re-elected in 2003 because he implemented Islamic Law. The *sharī'a* factor was also used in Kano by the former governor Ibrahim Shekarau who achieved two mandates (2003 and 2007) before he became one of the leading candidates for the Nigerian presidential elections of 2011. In Kaduna the situation was more complicated and the House of Assembly was divided among Christians who opposed the re-implementation and Muslims who favored it. Governor Makarfi (PDP) seemed to have won the elections of 2003 because of his moderate view on *sharī'a* re-implementation, unlike his rival candidate (ANPP) who played the *sharī'a* card and advocated full implementation.<sup>738</sup> Ludwig also shows how Gombe State chose the way of dialogue between Muslims and Christians in order to reduce tensions and religious clashes (like the riots of 2000 and 2001). This was achieved by establishing a legal system made of Sharia Courts, Customary Courts, and a Magistrate Court:<sup>739</sup> Even though Ahmadu Mu'azu, governor of Bauchi State (1999-2007), was among the first governors who started to implement *sharī'a* in the North, he insisted on patience especially in stoning cases

---

<sup>737</sup> See Makinde, A. (2007). *The Institution of Sharī'ah in Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria, 1890–2005*. PhD-Thesis in Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

<sup>738</sup> See Ludwig (2008), p. 626.

<sup>739</sup> Ludwig (2008), p 627.

and admonished *sharī'a* judges in adultery cases who sentenced pregnant divorced women to death by stoning.<sup>740</sup> Concerning the home state of late President of Nigeria (2007-2010) and former governor of the state (1999-2007) Umaru Yar'Adua, Katsina, Christians seem to have ongoing problems with education within the state and their children face difficulties at the secondary school level in finding a school. In addition, Christian TV-programs and the building of churches seemed to be among the difficulties expressed by representatives of the Christian Association of Nigeria in that state. The re-implementation in Katsina happened under pressure and the governor practiced a moderate policy which in part assisted with pilgrimages of Muslims and Christians to Mecca and Jerusalem, respectively. Also the dialogue between both religious communities was supported by the state.<sup>741</sup>

The *'ulamā'* are important actors in the *sharī'a* -project. In Northern Nigeria Islamic scholars are well-established and highly respected in the society. They have the duty of guiding the *Umma* (Muslim community) when it comes to religious matters. *'ulamā'* are those who have access to the "sources". The Nigerian Historian Haruna Wakili considers the role of *'ulamā'* during the period immediately before the re-implementation of the *sharī'a* in 1999 as "neutral".<sup>742</sup> After that event they became

---

<sup>740</sup> Ibid, p. 629, this happened in 2002 and quoted by Ludwig from Vanguard of 19<sup>th</sup> December 2002 "Mu'azu Cautions Sharī'a judges".

<sup>741</sup> Ludwig (2008) mentions the establishment of a "Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board" in the State as well a Muslim-Christian Forum in order to promote peace and dialogue among Muslims and Christians; see pp. 630-1.

<sup>742</sup> Wakili, Haruna (2009): Islam and the Political Arena *in Nigeria: The Ulama and the 2007 Elections*. ISITA Working Paper No. 09-004, p. 3.

more involved in politics. They insisted on more “sanitization” of the society and politics in the north in order to achieve the goals of *sharī'a* re-implementation.<sup>743</sup>

Wakili shows how *'ulamā'* have the power to influence politics in the north. During the elections of 2007, Islamic scholars were fully involved in calling Muslims to register in the elections and vote for leaders who were “credible, honest and God-fearing.” Although *sharī'a* did not play an important role during the election of 2007 (as it was the case during the elections of 2003)<sup>744</sup>, Haruna Wakili states that “anyone who campaigned against the *sharī'a* in the states surely would not be voted for.”<sup>745</sup> He confirms that the *'ulamā'* are not a homogeneous group in the north and their political orientation was not uniform. Wakili cites the example of Kano, when *'ulamā'* were divided between those who supported governor Shekarau and campaigned for him and those who opposed him. Many Islamic scholars used mosques, seminars and public lectures to mobilize Muslims to vote for him. Other *'ulamā'*, like the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya leaders (Sheikh Qaribullah Kabara and Sheikh Kalifa Rabi'u, respectively) as well as Salafiyya leaders campaigned against Shekarau.<sup>746</sup>

Ordinary Muslims consider *'ulamā'* to be their spiritual guides. Apart from the political campaign related to *sharī'a* at the grassroots level, the expectations were high. *Sharī'a* was for Muslims a chance for changes in many aspects of life. Most

---

<sup>743</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>744</sup> Kogelmann, Franz (2006): The “Sharī'a Factor” in Nigeria’s 2003 Elections, in: Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa. Benjamin F. Soares (ed.), pp. 256-274, Islam in Africa series 6. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

<sup>745</sup> Wakili (2009), p. 8.

<sup>746</sup> See Wakili (2009), p. 9.

ordinary Muslims do not really know much about the implication of *sharī'a*, and what it really means. If you ask about *sharī'a* and how people understand it, in many cases you may get answers like:

"Wonderful! Great achievement and we love it! (...) the implementation was a great achievement for a country like Nigeria. We never dreamed of having *sharī'a* so soon, so even if it is not fully implemented, it has made a great impact in our hearts and those of our children. For the younger ones to know about the presence of *sharī'a* is a great thing."<sup>747</sup>

Or statements such as:

"I so much loved it. It is a great achievement, though there are certain restrictions but I am happy about it and I hope that in the future we will be able to have a caliphate that rules according to Islamic law."<sup>748</sup>

The *sharī'a* application appealed to the feelings of Muslims. *Sharī'a* was introduced as a solution to their problems and was expected to bring change in many directions, especially economically and socially. Many see in *sharī'a* an answer to corruption, political mismanagement, and social injustice. The re-implementation of Islamic Law was valued as an alternative and option for a better life. This may or may not be true, but Muslims generally follow their '*ulamā*' in matters concerning the re-implementation of Islamic law:

---

<sup>747</sup> Interview with J. M. on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008 in Jos; J.M. is one among six women interviewed in Jos by R.M., by a female research assistant. For the reason of protecting the interviewees as well the name of the assistant I prefer not to write the full names.

<sup>748</sup> Interview in Jos with H.H. on 5<sup>th</sup> march 2008.

“The grassroots! You know, the grassroots normally have been guided by these: the *‘ulamā’* and others because the basis of the followers is the grassroots. And some of them see the *‘ulamā’* as their mentors who tell them what is supposed to be even when they don’t have knowledge. There is a lot of ignorance, of course in the grassroots, but then when something appeals their social condition, their economical condition, they welcome it. For instance they welcome a situation by which you will say: “Ok!” There is no more selling alcohol in the entire society; because it is their children, it is their people and brothers and sisters that ... or you say that have a situation where you can abolish prostitution, I mean brothels and other places where you find this, or gambling; all these social vices. Of course the grassroots will proudly welcome that because most of the crimes are related to these people. So this is the base for that, there was a massive support for *sharī’a* implementation.”<sup>749</sup>

This statement is confirmed by several ordinary Nigerian Muslims interviewed throughout my fieldwork in 2007 and 2008. Neither their social status nor their sex played a substantial role in their opinions. The re-implementation was positively perceived at the grassroots level. Was the re-implementation really a challenge for Nigerian Muslims or not? It is impossible to confirm or disconfirm this statement. Did alcohol outlets, brothels and places of gambling really disappear completely from northern Nigeria? Or did they only disappear from the public sphere? To what extent was the success of *sharī’a* so clear that even Islamic organizations claim to have been behind the re-implementation project? In the following chapter, the Izala contribution and perception of *sharī’a* are introduced.

---

<sup>749</sup> Interview with Suleiman Shehu, Journalist, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2007, Kaduna.

### *3 Izala's contribution to the re-implementation: initiators?*

The re-implementation of *sharī'a* turned out to be a very successful initiative at least in the beginning. Thus, many different groups claimed to be the initiator of the re-implementation of Islamic law in northern Nigeria. But there are different voices and opinions on this issue. One main and highly powerful opponent seemed to be the Federal Government as the statement of Sheikh Jingir, leader of the Izala Council of 'ulamā' in Jos shows:

“As Ahmad Sani Bakura introduced his project to implement *sharī'a*, he asked all people to come to Gusau. We accepted his invitation because at that time it was a problem between him and the government. Some Islamic organizations refused to go because they feared the government. We went there and so did the other faction of our Society [Kaduna branch] as well as the Sufis. All supported the program. We saw what the issue was: who accepted what is called Islam and who refused it. We came together because of politics. In the matter of politics we came together, but concerning *fatwās* and theological questions we are like before: different.”<sup>750</sup>

According to Sheikh Jingir, only the two Izala branches and the Sufi brotherhoods answered the call of the Governor of Zamfara State. But this shows that the most powerful Islamic groups and organizations of northern Nigeria supported the *sharī'a* project from the very beginning. The doctrinal and ideological differences became less important; politics dominated the support of Ahmad Sani's project. Sheikh Jingir did not talk about the initiator of the re-implementation. One

---

<sup>750</sup> Interview with the Izala-leader in Jos in his office, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

gets the impression that it was Ahmad Sani himself, but according to Ustadh Nasir Abdulmuhyi, a prominent representative of the Izala Jos-faction, it was his organization who initiated the entire project:

“The Society was among the first who called for the implementation of *sharīʿa* and thank God, the Governor of Zamfara, was the first who listened to the call of Izala and practiced *sharīʿa*. This is one of the good things done by the *jamāʿa*.”<sup>751</sup>

This statement gives the impression that the main actor of the *sharīʿa* project was the Jos-faction of Izala. The future governor of Zamfara State only reacted “to the call of Izala”. The leader of Izala in Lagos, Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, affiliated with the Jos branch, went even further:

“As we launched into our preaching, he [Ahmad Sani] came to the lecture and spoke of his wish to become a governor: ‘I promise you – my Society; our Society – that if you elect me as governor, then I will implement the Islamic *sharīʿa*. I will do it because this Society [Izala] taught and linked us to what is useful for us and through it we understood that the religion is Islam, and *sharīʿa* is the best thing in life that a human being can reach. *Sharīʿa* is the way of satisfaction of Allah. If you elect me now as Zamfara’s Governor, I will apply *sharīʿa*!’ (...) After that he became governor of Zamfara. The late Sheikh Idris sent him a letter saying: ‘I thank Allah for you, but I want to remind you that you promised Allah to apply his *sharīʿa* and since you have the opportunity to do it, then hurry up. It is a treasure that should not be delayed.’”<sup>752</sup>

---

<sup>751</sup> Interview with Ustadh Nasir Abdulmuhyi, Jos, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006 in his office

<sup>752</sup> Interview with Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, Lagos, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

According to Dalha Abubakar Abdallah, Ahmed Sani looked actively for the support of Izala during his political campaign. He promised Izala to re-implement Islamic law if he was successful and became governor. That means it was a political deal between the politician Ahmed Sani and the religious organization Izala. Implicitly Izala supported him during the election campaign. This becomes clear when the leader of Izala Jos reminded him to fulfill his promise after he was elected governor of Zamfara State. Finally Ahmed Sani delivered and implemented full *sharī'a*. Some leading personalities of Izala even claim him as a member of the movement. Nuhu Tahiru Tajuddeen, head of the administrative council in Kaduna State (Jos branch), said that Ahmed Sani “confessed in front of the Izala, but before that we didn’t know him. As he confessed then we considered him an Izala man. He confessed himself.”<sup>753</sup> This view is also shared by Abdurrahman Lawal Adoro, a former Izala leader from Katsina. When questioned whether Izala was the first organization to call for *sharī'a*, the scholar attested that Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru was an “Izala man”.<sup>754</sup>

These statements show that a number of leaders in the Jos-faction claim that their organization was the initiator of the *sharī'a*-project. It is impossible to prove such statements because many Muslims in Nigeria identified themselves with *sharī'a*, not just the Izala. The leader of *Jamā'at Tajdīd al-Islām* (in Arabic: Society of Revival of Islam - JTI), Sheikh Abubakar Mujahid, pointed out that the re-implementation of

---

<sup>753</sup> Interview with Nuhu Tahiru Tajuddeen, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007 in his office, the centre of Islamic Development, Imam Road, Tudun Wada, Zaria.

<sup>754</sup> Interview in Katsina with Abdurrahman Lawal Adoro, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008, his Office at the University of Katsina, dept of Arabic Studies.

*sharī'a* in Nigeria was achieved through the contributions of many groups: Izala, Sufis, JTI and others:

“(...) the *ṭarīqa* and Izala played the role of sensitizing people. People of the Umma took care of the legal aspect, and JTI tried to find answers to the issues like corruption; the *zakāt* of course it was in our (task) and we looked how to collect *zakāt*.”<sup>755</sup>

Sani Modibbo, former Izala national secretary, confirms that implementing *sharī'a* or transforming Nigeria into an Islamic state was not the initial agenda of the Izala. Instead, the movement was determined to fight *bid'a* and Sufism more than any other thing.<sup>756</sup> This point of view is backed up by O'Brien in her article on *sharī'a* in Nigeria. She writes that the Izala was neither the first group that called people to apply Islamic Law nor the one that monopolized its application:

“Les réformistes d'inspiration Wahhābite connu sous le nom d'Izala et leurs nombreuses branches, dont certaines reçoivent des financements Saoudien, n'ont pas été les premiers à réclamer la charia, pas plus qu'ils n'ont monopolisé son application, au profit des principales confréries soufis, la Qādiriyya et la Tijāniyya.”<sup>757</sup>

The leader of the Qādiriyya brotherhood in Kano, Sheikh Qaribullah Kabara, confirms that the *sharī'a* project was the product of many different initiatives:

“Nobody can come out and say that he is going to apply Islamic *sharī'a* and could not find help. When they came with that, the Qādiriyya was one among many Islamic groups that promoted the

---

<sup>755</sup> Interview with Sheikh Abubakar Mujahid, Zaria, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

<sup>756</sup> Interview in Jos, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

<sup>757</sup> O'Brien, Susan M. (2007): La Charia contestée: Démocratie, débat et diversité musulmane dans les 'état Charia' du Nigeria, in: Politique Africaine 106, p. 48

project and helped in its establishment. We had a meeting at that time. I think the government started calling for *sharī'a* only after we called for it here, in this house."<sup>758</sup>

The Maiduguri based scholar and member of Borno's '*ulamā'* Council, Sheikh Muhammad Ali Gobshiya, observes that if the Izala was the leading organization behind the *sharī'a* re-implementation then Sufis would not have compromised. The scholar points to a statement of Sheikh Tahiru Bauchi, the prominent Tijāniyya leader, who once said that voting for a Christian is better than to vote for an Izala man. That is why Sheikh Muhammad Ali Gobshiya cannot imagine that Izala was the initiator of *sharī'a* in the north.<sup>759</sup>

From the Tijāniyya point of view, it is also unimaginable that Izala was the driving force responsible for the re-implementation. Alhaji Abubakar Imam, a Tijānī and registrar of the *sharī'a* Court of Appeal in Maiduguri, points out that Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh and Tijāniyya leaders started very early on to write about the necessity to re-implement Islamic law. Apart from the several lectures he gave on that matter Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh published a book on the *ḥudūd*-punishments. Alhaji Imam confirms that the Tijāniyya were the first ones who called for *sharī'a*. He confesses that this call may have been misunderstood and confused with criminal law. He clarifies that *sharī'a* cannot be limited to corporal punishment for certain offences. It is

---

<sup>758</sup> Interview with the leader of the Qādiriyya Sufi brotherhood in Kano, House of the Qādiriyya, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007.

<sup>759</sup> Interview with Sheikh Muhammad Adam Gashua,

more than that and has to do with education, economy, and civil service. *Sharī'a* is according to him is to be found everywhere.<sup>760</sup>

The re-implementation of *sharī'a* appears to be a concretization of Izala's world view of an Islamic society based on the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet. The *da'wa* of Izala consists of educating people about their religion and guiding them to follow the right way to become good Muslims. Izala insists on education at every stage of life and establishes schools and mosques to provide its adherents with education. Izala calls on women to wear *hijāb*. It stands for separation of the sexes in the society in all aspects of life. Izala propagates an ideal society without alcohol, gambling, and prostitution. It encourages knowledge about Islam and the Arabic language. It gives an important status to religious scholars. The organization demands for the application of Islamic law in all its aspects and according to the elementary sources of the Islamic religion. Izala regards itself as protector of Islam and Muslims. The organization makes efforts to defend Islamic interests. In Plateau State, which is not a *sharī'a* state, Izala for instance succeeded in changing the times of public administration and schools on Fridays in order to allow Muslims to go perform their prayers. Since colonial times only Sunday is a work-free day in Nigeria.<sup>761</sup> At the beginning of 2007 the design of Nigerian currency was changed. The Jos-faction of Izala realized that the new Naira bills are without Arabic scripture,

---

<sup>760</sup> Interview with Alhaji Abubakar Imām on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008 in his office, Sharī'a Court of Appeal, Maiduguri.

<sup>761</sup> In an informal discussion on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006 with Prof. Muslih T. Yahya in Jos, from the department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, the scholar mentions that Izala in Jos makes efforts that Muslims can stop working by 12.30 in order to go for Friday prayers and come back by 2.30 p.m.

so they sent letter to the President of the Federation, Obasanjo, on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007, expressing their “(...) displeasure and total rejection of the removal of Arabic inscription”. Izala indicates that removing Arabic, as an identity marker of Muslims, may be against human rights and “endangers the interest of some Nigerians on the basis of their religion.”<sup>762</sup>

After Islamic law was introduced Izala was adamant that all aspects of it should be applied in the northern states. Weimann mentions the example of Bauchi State and its governor Mu’azu who was visited by a delegation from Izala urging him to rush in applying Islamic criminal judgements. Aware of the implications of the law in a mixed state like Bauchi, the governor responded that it is the *sharī’a* commission’s duty to deal with that.<sup>763</sup> Also in Jigawa State the Izala warned Ibrahim Turaki, governor of the state from 1999 until 2007, that he should not stop the “divine” law of *sharī’a* from being enforced in a stoning case from the year 2002.<sup>764</sup> Weimann’s explanation of the enthusiasm of Izala in the *sharī’a*-project sounds very plausible: “Yan Izala (...) were quick to espouse the project on the basis of common

---

<sup>762</sup> This open letter entitled “Memo to Mr. President Chief Osegun Obasanjo G.C.F.R. on the recent removal of Arabic inscription from the Nigerian currency notes”, published in the Daily Trust of 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007; a copy of this letter was send to the Senate President, The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Deputy Senate President, The Central Bank Governor, The Sultan of Sokoto, the Emirs (Kano, Borno, Zazzau, Katsina, and Ilorin), the Etsu Nupe, and the AARE Musulmi of Yorubaland.

<sup>763</sup> Weimann (2010), pp. 49-50.

<sup>764</sup> This was a case of rape in 2002 in the state when the accused was found guilty and put to death by stoning after his confession. In 2003 he revealed his confession and appealed the judgment at the *Sharī’a Court of Appeal*. The accused was then freed from charges and sent to psychiatry; see *ibid.*, p. 68.

interests.”<sup>765</sup> The author emphasizes that this interest does not mean an effort for an Islamic state, but rather a kind of establishment of a particular vision of an Islamic “way of life” according to *sharīʿa*.<sup>766</sup>

Historically Izala was founded to fight un-Islamic innovations (*bidaʿa*) in Nigeria. There were social, political, and economic changes that occurred in the federation during the last years that brought Muslims to reflect on their relationship and doctrinal differences in the entire country. Events like ethno-religious clashes in several parts of the north, debates related to the constitution, and the elections in the federation (the leader should be a Christian or Muslim) are just a few examples. In times of clashes the borders between religious groups within the same community all but disappear. For Christians in Nigeria, all Muslims re-implemented *sharīʿa* law and there is no difference between Izala, Sufis or Shīʿa-groups. The *sharīʿa*-project was an opportunity for Muslims to think about common objectives and leave internal debates aside. The re-implementation of Islamic law was an opportunity for Izala to “conquer” more space in a religious field dominated by the Sufi brotherhoods. The *sharīʿa*-project was also a chance for Izala to gain recognition of its ideology based on the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. Izala and *sharīʿa* can be placed side by side since both are calling for the “sanitization” of Islam and offer a solution to Muslims in all aspects of life. If Izala perceived *sharīʿa* positively and of its many leaders claim that the organization was directly and indirectly behind the re-implementation, then what

---

<sup>765</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid.; in a discussion on Sharīʿa-debates in Jos with Prof. Musa Gaiya, a church historian and religion expert in Nigeria, the scholar spoke of “Islamization of the society” rather than an Islamic state; 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

about the Izala-Sufi-brotherhood relationship? Did *sharī'a* law put an end to the long struggle between Izala and the two major Sufi brotherhoods in northern Nigeria? Did *sharī'a* re-implementation really bring change with it? Did it unify the Muslim *Umma*?

#### ***4 Izala, Sufis, and Sharī'a-law: a chance for reconciliation?***

After the long-lasting conflict between Sheikh Gumi and the Nigerian Sufi Brotherhoods which eventually developed into clashes between Sufis and the Izala, internal issues had been increasingly weakening the organization since the beginning of the 1990s. The division of the organization between Jos and Kaduna affected the image of the movement and especially its credibility amongst Muslims in matters of leadership. Most (if not all) Izala leaders confess that the division of the movement has nothing to do with *'aqīda* but rather with orientation within the organization: are *'ulamā'* at the top of Izala or not?

In dealing with internal problems Izala was concerned with education, preaching, and especially with convincing Muslims in northern Nigeria of being the authentic "Izala" founded by Sheikh I. Idris. This new orientation in Izala allowed Muslims to speak of different groups in Izala: that of Jos connected with the founder and known for its strictness compared to other Islamic groups, and that of Kaduna which is more compromising when it comes Sufis and other Muslims, and even another group of Izala members who did not belong to either of these two

branches.<sup>767</sup> The concentration on their own problems led to a reduction of the tension between Izala and Sufi. Violent clashes that were the case in the 1970s and 1980s were reduced. Clashes over religious space in mosques and in the public sphere were reduced to verbal struggles. Nevertheless, differences still existed and borders became more visible (different schools, mosques, activities, interests).

The re-implementation of *sharī'a* was neither planned nor prepared. It was motivated by politics and part of an electoral campaign of one single governor with the intention "to gain popular support and to secure his own political survival developed into a chain reaction throughout the predominantly Muslim-inhabited northern states of Nigeria."<sup>768</sup> Sufis, Izala, and many other Islamic groups had no choice but to cooperate. The northern governors called all Muslims to contribute to the *sharī'a* project and asked the *'ulamā'* to set up the outlines of such an undertaking. No religious leader should be excluded except if he/she is against *sharī'a*. Opposing *sharī'a* means opposing Islam and that can be related to social isolation. *sharī'a* – as shown above – is an identity marker for Muslims in northern Nigeria. It was seen as a chance for Islamic law after years of oppression. *Sharī'a* was related to change and reform of the society. *Sharī'a* became a unifying issue

---

<sup>767</sup> Prof. Musa Gaiya speaks of an Izala A, B, and even C. Under the third group he categorizes those Izala members who studied abroad and adapted a modern model for society, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Under this third wing of Izala I consider those members who are still related to both groups without taking part to in group or the other. Among them is Alhaji Abba Damburno, from Jos, who considered himself a father to both the Jos and Kaduna factions; interview on 24 December 2006.

<sup>768</sup> Kogelmann, Franz (2006): The 'Sharī'a factor' in Nigeria's 2003 Elections, in: Soares, Benjamin F. (ed.): Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa, pp. 257-8.

despite the heterogeneity of the Nigerian society and existence of other religious groups in the *sharī'a* states.

The publications of Philip Ostien<sup>769</sup> show that most (if not all) of the northern states were not ready to reinstate Islamic Law. This was confirmed by the difference between the *Penal Codes* and *Penal Codes Procedures* in the twelve *sharī'a* states. Outsiders may get the impression that *sharī'a* was easily implemented and consider the northern region as religiously unified. Problems emerged later with the first stoning cases that demonstrated the complexity of the *sharī'a* issue.<sup>770</sup>

The re-implementation processes of *sharī'a* was initiated by establishing *sharī'a* Implementation committees in each state with the duty to advise and prepare a report with the recommendation of the best way to implement Islamic law and how to codify it in conformity with the federal constitution. In these committees we find Sufis (Qādiriyya, Tijāniyya, etc.), Emirs, Salafis, Izala, independent scholars, Izala, JTI, Islamic judges, professors, and other experts.<sup>771</sup> At a later stage the different institutions that emerged from *sharī'a* re-implementation like the *zakāt*-board, Council of *'ulamā'*, or *hisba*-board were comprised of representatives from different religious groups.

---

<sup>769</sup> Ostien (2007).

<sup>770</sup> As an example see Ostien, Philip (ed.) (2007): "Sharī'a implementation in....", Vol. V, Two Famous Cases; this volume deals with the cases of Amina Lawal and Safiya Hussaini who were put by Sharī'a Courts to death. The book provides all documents related to the two cases and shows that the reimplementation of Sharī'a was far from being "properly" applied.

<sup>771</sup> For more details on the structures of these committees and their reports in Bauchi, Zamfara, and Kebbi states as well for all memoranda related to the reimplementation-process see Ostien, Philip (ed.) (2007): "Sharī'a implementation in....", Vol. II, Sharī'a Implementation Committees reports and related white papers.

For some scholars the re-implementation was more of a political than a religious project. Sheikh Khaled Aliyu, an independent scholar based in Jos observes that the re-implementation was politically colored. He speaks of a “marriage” (Arabic: *zawā*) between Izala and politicians. Izala was looking for higher influence and politicians for more voters. That is why Izala was ready to compromise.<sup>772</sup> This is almost congruent with Sheikh Muhammad Haris, an established Tijāniyya leader in Jos who saw a lot of *fitna* behind the *sharī'a* re-implementation. The leader confirms that verbal attacks between Sufis and Izala are still going on.<sup>773</sup> Some other scholars are more optimistic, like Sheikh Alhassan Said who sees an advantage in the re-implementation, mainly; the possibility of a dialogue among the different Islamic groups: “those who implemented *sharī'a* brought all of us together. We meet, speak and negotiate.”<sup>774</sup>

A few scholars have indicated mixed feelings towards *sharī'a* and reunification of Muslims including Izala and Sufis. Ustaz Ibrahim Ahmad Makari, a Tijānī scholar based in Zaria, indicates that there was great hope linked to the *sharī'a* project. According to him, hundreds of gatherings (Arabic: *majālis*) were set up as a result of the re-implementation. He expected that the project could result in reforms within the Muslim society in the north, but there were a lot of politics behind *sharī'a*. *Intafā al-ḥamās* (in Arabic: enthusiasm is over) – this is how he phrased it. He mentioned that self-interest hindered the project from achieving its goals. In Kano for e.g. he views

---

<sup>772</sup> Interview in Jos on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

<sup>773</sup> Interview Jos, 3 December 2006.

<sup>774</sup> Interview in with the Izala Sheikh who is affiliated to the Kaduna branch, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

those who implemented Islamic law as selective and did it for their own advantage. In addition, in the Council of *'ulamā'* in Nigeria, although Tijāniyya, Qādiriyya, and Salafiyya are represented, the representatives of these groups were far from solving problems of ordinary people – as Ustaz Makari points out. In Zamfara State identity was defined through a long beard and a particular type of dress. Makari concludes that maybe five percent of *sharī'a* was realistically achieved because politicians mainly appealed to the emotions of the people. Makari ensured that the future would be more promising since there is an agenda to unify all Muslims in northern Nigeria.

Regardless whether the Izala initiated the *sharī'a* project or another Islamic group was responsible for the most dramatic change in the judicial system of Nigeria since independence, in the aftermath of the re-implementation the conflict between Izala and the Sufi brotherhoods seemed to have been relegated to the background. Whether this challenge can be understood as reconciliation between Izala and Sufi cannot be easily answered.

## Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to look at the *sharī'a* re-implementation in Nigeria from the perspective of an Islamic organization like Izala. The application of Islamic law is an integral part of the movement's ideology. According to my knowledge, this aspect has not been studied before, since the re-implementation of Islamic law is a very recent development in the history of northern Nigeria. Izala has been studied in the context of its relationship to Sufis.<sup>775</sup>

The Izala-Sufi controversy seems to take on another dimension. The violent clashes between Izala and Sufis that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s were reduced during the 1990s and from the beginning of the new millennium. This can be explained by the fact that the Izala movement was concentrated on its own internal problems (division, struggle for leadership, financial issues) on the one hand and on the other it underwent a process of institutionalization and became a well established and recognized Islamic organization in northern Nigeria. However, it is debatable as to whether the series of violent clashes between Christians and Muslims since the re-implementation of Islamic law in 1999 led to a reduction of tensions within the Muslim community or not i.e. intra-religious conflicts were replaced by inter-religious ones.

In order to understand the current religious situation it is necessary to go back to the history of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. A historical overview on Islam serves as a back-ground for what is going on today. This can be simplified in the following picture: Nigeria with its current borders did not exist until the coming of the

---

<sup>775</sup> Loimeier 1997, Kane 2003, Umar 1983 and 1983.

British. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Sokoto Caliphate dominated the Muslim north with its emirates, and in the southern region African Traditional Religions as well as Christianity dominated the religious landscape. For many Muslims of the north the colonial domination, despite indirect rule, was a period of massive intervention in Islamic affairs. The fact that the highly developed and in Muslim eyes holy Islamic law enjoyed only the same status as other “native laws and customs” was regarded as a devaluation of *sharīʿa*. In addition, the reform of certain aspects of the Islamic legal tradition according to western norms and values was also an important event. This led to a conflict of laws that continued until the re-implementation of *sharīʿa* in 1999. Izala emerged from an intra-Islamic conflict between Sheikh Gumi and the Sufis. The organization became the major actor amongst reform-oriented Nigerian Muslims since it attacked the well-established tradition of Sufis in the country. Sufism in the Nigerian context also means that certain religious traditions were affiliated with political and economic power. The Qādiriyya Sufi brotherhood is traditionally linked to the house of Usman dan Fodio whereas the Tijāniyya Sufi-brotherhood challenged this position for a long time.

The ostensible reason for the establishment of Izala was to purify Islam from all innovations. For several years Izala attacked Sufism on this matter, but it was also a struggle over the interpretative authority in Islamic issues which is directly linked to questions of power. After the division of the movement discourse on *bidʿa* became part of the internal struggle of the movement. One interesting finding of this study is

that the organization that was established to fight innovations found itself within the same discourse fighting an “internal *bid‘a*” (see chapter on *bid‘a*).

The re-implementation of *sharī‘a* was a project for all Muslims and all Islamic groups were invited to take part in it. Izala has had to cooperate with other Muslim organizations despite their religious orientation - even with Sufis. *Sharī‘a* re-implementation was positively perceived by Izala, furthermore many Izala leaders claim to have been the driving force behind the project. This could be interpreted as a new orientation of the organization from attacking Sufis to cooperating with them as part of the whole *sharī‘a*-project. This was necessary for the movement to overcome its own problems and regain more space and prestige among Muslims.

The field of *sharī‘a* generally and that of Izala specifically is complex and multifaceted. If we go back to history (see the introductory chapter) this was always the case in the region that constitutes Nigeria today. In fact the religious field cannot be separated from the political one. The motivation of Nigerian politicians to re-implement Islamic law could be manifold: it could be part of a political campaign to collect as many votes as possible; it might even be out of religious zeal or simply because the masses are demanded it. However, those politicians need religious actors to achieve their goals. These major actors or “mobilizers” as Bourdieu calls them are the most important category in this study: Islamic scholars.

The Muslim community of Nigeria holds Islamic scholars in very high esteem. They enjoy a high social prestige and have influence over the society. To become an Islamic scholar is a great deal of work, and necessitates particular skills and intensive

knowledge. Apart from memorizing the Qur'ān, studying the tradition of the Prophet, knowing Arabic (as a holy language) and mastering the most important sources of the Islamic tradition, Islamic scholars must also attend a university and obtain an academic degree and travel abroad to seek knowledge. Along the way, they generally build useful personal networks. Preaching, writings books, participating in on-going discourses and providing access to the sources are the ways to achieve social recognition.

The struggle for “symbolic power” among Islamic scholars in Nigerian religious and political fields is stronger now than it ever has been before. Izala did not ‘miss the boat’ because they were able to read the writing on the wall and learned to understand the ‘rules of the game’. As a result of this learning process Izala changed its former strategy of direct confrontation. The new “religious field” in which Izala is operating necessitates adjustment to the new dynamics of the field(s). This adjustment was prescribed by an intensive competition with other groups. Izala accommodated itself to the necessity of the time: it is a protector of the *sunna* at the local level and for those who follow its doctrine. At the same time it is part of the Muslim *Umma* and the *sharī'a* project. By being part of these, Izala moves within the religious field but can also shift to the political field in the north, which is characterized by an on-going struggle for space, power, and acknowledgement. Through “invading” the religious and political field Izala has to make an offer in the “religious market” of Nigeria.

In discussing the history of the Izala, most of its leaders narrate a victorious event that depicts the triumph of the founder, Sheikh Ismaila Idris (1937-2000) over the Sufis and even over the Nigerian state. Being an individual aware of the situation of Muslims in his country, Sheikh Idris started his *da'wa* by preaching the oneness of God. Before he restricted his activities to preaching he was an Imam in the Army. The growth of a movement around Sheikh Idris at its initial stage influenced him to think of an official organization that protects him and his followers from Sufi attacks and state confrontation. The registration of Izala in 1978 was not possible due to vigorous opposition. It took place only in 1985. Until that time, Izala acted under the umbrella of a different Islamic organization which is Jamā'at Naṣr al-Islām (in Arabic: Society for the Victory of Islam; JNI).

Izala is autonomous when it comes to financial resources. The leader(s) of Izala developed a three-tiered structure for the organization starting from the local, to the state, and then national level. At every stage, there is a council of *'ulamā'*, an administrative unit, and First Aid Groups. To sponsor its projects, Izala relies mainly on donations from its members and supporters at all levels. This is a strategy initiated by the founder.

To show the effectiveness of Izala in collecting donations, the Jos branch of Izala collected 10,924,296 Naira (approximately 50,000 Euro) and 665 bags of grain in 2009 through the newly-established *zakāt*-board.<sup>776</sup> The philosophy of Izala is to take the initiative itself before waiting for any other assistance.

---

<sup>776</sup> Interview with Sheikh Jingir published at [www.peoplesdaily-online.com](http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com) of 3/12/09

When it comes to education, Izala leadership is proud to mention its achievements in that sector. The organization realized that educating people is an effective way to propagate its doctrine. The Izala initiated nursery, primary, and secondary schools. Izala also maintains Saturday and Sunday schools. According to their own sources the number of schools is 5,191 with more than 3.4 Million students. They also have a diploma section with three branches in Jos, Bauchi and Gombe<sup>777</sup> Most (if not all) schools are registered and programs and examinations are under the supervision of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The education of women is an important part of the Izala educational-project. Members of the Society are invited to permit their wives to go to schools. Educated women are asked to teach their relatives and neighbors. This strategy succeeded in such a way that many Izala schools today are attended by small girls and married women. One of my interviewees says proudly: “we even pushed traditional Sufis to send their wives to schools.”

The last aspect of the “offer” of Izala introduced by the leaders is the fact that they attracted many Sufi followers who left their *ṭarīqa* and joined the movement. Izala stands for *tawḥīd*, and for combating witchcraft and innovation. Their organization has branches in all thirty-six Nigerian states. They even propagate their doctrines in neighboring countries (Republic of Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and even Sudan).<sup>778</sup>

---

<sup>777</sup> Interview with Sheikh Jingir published at [www.peoplesdaily-online.com](http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com) of 3/12/09

<sup>778</sup> In several Interviews, the leaders of the Jos faction confirmed having branches in all Nigerian states. As part of that, Izala is also active in neighboring countries (Republic of Niger, Chad,

The Izala also identifies both Jos and Kaduna as main headquarters. Why?

In the mid 1980s, the Izala suffered from an internal crisis on the level of leadership.

The issue can be summarized by problems associated with guiding the society as well as monetary matters. Through this division the attitude towards Sufism changed.

When asked about the reasons for the division, the Jos and Kaduna-factions will give different answers. Sheikh Ali Abdallah, member of the Council of *'ulamā'*, in the Kaduna-faction explains that money and struggle for leadership divided the movement.

In summary, the Izala succeeded in establishing itself as an organization propagating the oneness of God and inviting people to come back to the religion of Islam on the basis of the Qur'ān, *sunna* and the tradition of the pious predecessors. Izala leaders themselves claim the failure of the movement to unify all Muslims. It fails because of its style of leadership and harsh attitude towards others. Money issues and theological differences led to the division of the movement.

In absence of any reliable statistics on the approximate number of Izala followers, the number of members of the movement is not known. To become a member of Izala or leave the organization is possible at any time. Registration is not required but loyalty plays a crucial rule.

If we come back to the definition of religious organizations offered by Stark and Bainbridge,<sup>779</sup> we read: “religious organisations are social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and exchange supernaturally-based general compensators”. In this context Izala as a religious “firm” offers a way of achieving the reward of Allah and as a means of reaching *al-janna* (paradise). The organization claims to have the best access to Islamic sources and invites adherents to follow its path. Izala is also aware of the “religious market” in Nigeria. As an organization, it struggles not only inside the Muslim community but also outside. Competition against other Islamic organizations is required. What Izala is offering is their brand of Islam; i.e. authenticity and purity of religion. The organization is exclusive to those who accept its offer. What makes it attractive to people is its efficiency and its obvious credibility in establishing schools, mosques and hospitals. Also the strictness of Izala in defining religion played a crucial role in giving it an identity among Muslims. Izala (especially in Jos) are known as hardliners and if we apply the model suggested by Introvigne<sup>780</sup> for Turkey, the Izala belongs to the category “strict”. Of course, this emphasis can be discussed and may be revised in the Izala context.

The strictness of the founder of Izala and the *‘ulamā’* surrounding him made the organization attractive to people. As proof of success the actual leader of the Jos-faction says: “Our records speak for us”. But that same strictness and attachment to

---

<sup>779</sup> Stark, R. and W. S. Brainbridge (1980): Towards a Theory of Religion: Religious Commitment, in: Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol. 19 (2), pp. 114-128.

<sup>780</sup> The Model developed for Turkey by Introvigne (2005) includes five different “niches” (ultra-strict, strict, moderate-conservative, liberal and ultra-liberal). This is problematic for the Izala context although the organization aligns with his category “strict”. Surprisingly in the same category we find Sufis as well as Wahhabis.

a particular doctrine led to the division of the movement. Even the several attempts to unify the different factions failed. As we have seen the same Izala is divided into two “firms”: one in Jos, related to the founder and his doctrine. To attract more followers this firm developed the strategy claiming that they are more authentic. The other group is established in Kaduna and is convinced that the division was necessary to save the organization’s initial and authentic goals. The level of success of Izala can be measured in accordance with the model suggested by Stark. In this context he proposed ten necessary points for a religious movement to be successful.

First, Izala seems to be successful in retaining “cultural continuity with the conventional faith”. Izala is a continuation of the project of purification of Islam initiated by Sheikh Gumi and Sheikh Idris. Izala sees itself as the ideal protector of the *sunna*. It places itself within the tradition of pious predecessors that goes back to the first centuries of Islam.

Second, Rodney stark assumes that new religious movements can be successful to the extent that their doctrines are non-empirical. Stark gave the example of the Jehovah’s Witnesses who “suffered very marked decline in missionary activity” after their expectation of the end of the world did not take place. The point here is that a successful religious movement has a non-empirical doctrine. In fact, this can also be proved for the Izala case. I showed earlier that *bid‘a* or innovation is an “open system of meanings”. Fighting innovation in Islam and establishing the *sunna* are the two elements of Izala doctrine. Izala offers a unique way to achieve reward in the afterlife. This dogma cannot be proven empirically.

Third, religious movements succeed if they maintain a medium level of tension with their surrounding environment- they are strict but not too strict. Indeed Izala maintained a medium level of tension with its surrounding environment. There are several markers of Izala. These vary from the way of praying to dress code of the movement. The movement opposes for e.g. wearing of amulets and justifies this by the fact that such a practice does not exist in the fundamental sources of Islam on one hand. On the other hand, Izala does not oppose non-Izala attending their schools at different levels of education. This illustrates a 'medium' aspect of strictness of the movement.

Fourth, legitimate leaders of religious movements have adequate authority. This requires clear doctrinal justification and participants recognize themselves as members of this system of authority. In the case of Izala this assumption can be opposed by the fact that the movement was divided into two factions. The leadership of Sheikh Idris seems not to have been effective enough so that it could be recognized by all Izala members. In fact, many Izala people questioned the legitimacy of his leadership and formed another group with a new authority and more "legitimate" leaders.

Fifth, religious movements can generate a highly motivated, volunteer religious force willing to proselytize. This is absolutely applicable to Izala. Members of the movement are highly motivated. Their activities and contributions within the movement are not paid. Each member considers himself an Izala-representative who can transmit its message and propagate its doctrine.

Sixth, the level of fertility that offset the level of mortality required for any religious movement to survive. This point can also be identified in Izala since it produced and still produces leaders and members able to guarantee the continuation of the movement's doctrine.

Seventh, Rodney Stark assumes that religious movements prosper so that they compete against weak, local religious organizations within a relatively unregulated religious market. This can be empirically proved with Izala. Since its establishment in 1978 Izala has been competing with other Muslim groups in northern Nigeria. This competition has led to the recognition of Izala as part of the religious landscape. Izala rejects ignorance about Islam and asks Muslims to intensify their knowledge in this field. Izala invites people to reject any affiliation with Sufism and join the movement's struggle for a "purified" Islam. By doing that, Izala is in a continuous competition for legitimacy with other Muslim groups.

Eighth, new religious movements will succeed to the extent that they sustain strong attachments, while remaining an open social network which is able to maintain and form ties to outsiders. This proposition can also be affirmed in the Izala context. Izala offers a religious and social service to its followers. At the same time Izala is an open social network. Its goal is to bring newcomers and "converts" non-Muslims and integrate them into its doctrine. Izala maintains "bonds" of networks to non-Izala. This happens either through education (at schools receiving pupils from different groups and orientations) or through social interaction with other Muslims/non-Muslims. This openness is necessary for the movement to be attractive to outsiders.

Ninth, a religious movement continues to grow so that it can maintain sufficient tension with its environment. This is applicable to Izala, since the movement maintains a certain level of strictness towards other groups. The level of strictness has decreased since the first years of the establishment until today. The movement still defines its own identity and religious orientation, but seems to be more accommodating to others. This can be seen as a way of adaptation to the necessities of the religious environment in northern Nigeria.

Tenth, a religious movement has to socialize with the young sufficiently, well as to minimize both defection and the appeal of reduced strictness. In fact, youth are the target of Izala. The movement is integrated in a particular type of education at Izala schools. These schools and institutions are known for high levels of competition. Graduates especially recognize the Izala strictness of achieving its goal of establishing an Islamic education based on the Qur'ān and *sunna* and far away for any innovation. Izala is known - even by outsiders of the movement - by its strictness in achieving goals.

Rodney Stark listed these ten points for any religious movement willing to achieve a certain level of success. At the same time, he expects failure of any religious movement for varying reasons, like division or the appearance of new leadership with new ideas or approaches related to authenticity. Stark argues that most religious movements share one aspect which he called "eventual failure". In fact, Izala faced this failure when it was divided into two major groups during the life time of its founder, Sheikh Idris. For many years the conflicting Izala parties

struggled over legitimacy and authenticity. Both sides kept the same name and the same structure and continued preaching to people in the name of the “authentic” Izala that calls Muslims to the right path of Islam. Surprisingly, Izala found its way to reunification in 2011.<sup>781</sup> This may confirm Stark’s theory that failure remains “eventual”.

Several aspects of the “modes of religiosity theory” (see introductory chapter) introduced by Whitehouse can be proven in the Izala context. The two basic elements of his theory (remembering and motivation) are part of Izala’s doctrine. Izala insists on revivalism of the *sunna* of the Prophet. This revival should happen via studying this tradition and making it an indispensable part of the daily religious routine. The organization offers an easy access to this tradition: it proposes the relevant Quranic verses and *ḥadīth* quotations. It produces books and preaches to the adherents. Izala develops its educational curricula according to its needs. Having this ideology repeated to adherents in schools, mosques, in media, in writings, CDs and in audio-cassettes, the doctrine can be preserved indefinitely. The motivation of Izala members (like any Muslims) is to achieve the reward of Allah. These elements can also be found in the context of Sufi brotherhoods insisting on the survival of their sheiks and their *ṭarīqa*. Memorization is part of their doctrine and daily repetition of litanies keeps this doctrine alive. Members of Sufi groups have the same motivation (reward, paradise) as Izala, but differ in their methods for reaching such a goal.

---

<sup>781</sup> I did not conduct research on the reunification of the movement. I accomplished my PhD project before that event took place. The reunification after many years of division may be an interesting topic for future research on Izala.

Whitehouse gives two types of religious modes: a doctrinal and an imagistic one. All aspects of the doctrinal mode of religiosity are identifiable in Izala as well as among Sufi-groups (rituals, long-term-episodic memory, religious leaders, hierarchy and orthodoxy). The initial assumption that Sufism may be categorized under the imagistic mode of religiosity can be disproved. Sufi brotherhoods like any other Islamic groups experienced reform(s). Among the practices in Sufism that were rarely performed (imagistic modes of religiosity) became part of the doctrine itself. The use of drums (*bandiri*) was introduced by late Sheikh Nasiru Kabara, the Qādiriyya leader in Kano, and became a crucial element in the Qādiriyya-doctrine.<sup>782</sup> Two crucial aspects proposed by Whitehouse when it comes to imagistic modes of religiosity are: low frequency and high emotional arousal. This assumption can be rightfully observed during celebrations like the birthday of the Prophet or that of the *ṭarīqa* founder Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī. These celebrations take place once a year and are widely distinguished with a lot of emotions. Nevertheless, the theory can be contradicted by the fact that the daily and weekly practices of Sufis are performed frequently with high emotional arousal. Tijānī’s recite their litanies (Arabic: *awrād*) twice a day. They participate daily in so-called *wazīfa*, or congregational recitation of a Tijānī formula. Also the Qādiriyya followers organize the so called *ḥaḍra* (in Arabic: congregational ritual) and *dhikr* either on Thursdays or Fridays. The use of drums and the repetition of religious songs either in the *zāwiya* or in the mosque go together

---

<sup>782</sup> For the *bandiri* performance in mosques by the Qādiriyya, see Larkin, Brian (2004): *Bandiri Music, Globalization, and Urban Experience in Nigeria*, in: *Social Text* 81, Vol. 22(4), pp. 91-112; also Buba, Malami and Graham Furniss (1999): *Youth Culture, bandiri, and the Continuing Legitimacy Debate in Sokoto Town*, In: *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 27-46.

with a very high level of emotion. Whitehouse identifies “emotional bonds between participants”<sup>783</sup> resulted from the high emotional arousal in the context of the imagistic mode. In fact, these “emotional bonds” can be observed on a daily basis during the congregational meetings of Sufis. I would argue that these emotions are related to the doctrinal conflict between Sufis and Izala. Any religious practice performed can be a place for showing emotions and distancing from other groups. During my field work I observed that Sufis organize from time to time *walīma* (in Arabic: gatherings like marriage or birth). In many cases, it is accompanied with food and celebrations. The Izala group also initiated such a *walīma* as an answer to the Sufi brotherhoods. Izala makes a point to only recite the Qur’ān. This is also a way to show high emotions and distance from Sufi practices.

---

<sup>783</sup> Whitehouse (2002), p. 307.

## *Bibliography*

Internet Sources as well daily or weekly journals quoted in footnotes are not mentioned again in the bibliography.

Abdulkadir, Muhammed Safiyyu (2006): A literary survey of Arabic Sermons of J.I.B.W.I.S. in Bauchi Metropolis. Bauchi State, MA-dissertation in Arabic, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. (2007): Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life, London: Hurst & Company.

Abun-Nasr, Jamil (1993): Islamisches Recht im nigerianischen Rechtssystem, in: Abun-Nasr, Jamil (Hg.): Muslime in Nigeria: Religion und Gesellschaft im politischen Wandel seit den 50er Jahren. Münster, Hamburg: Lit-Verlag.

Abun-Nasr, Jamil (1993): Muslime im Nationalstaat Nigeria, in: Abun-Nasr, Jamil (Hg.): Muslime in Nigeria: Religion und Gesellschaft im politischen Wandel seit den 50er Jahren. Münster, Hamburg: Lit-Verlag, pp. 1-40.

Adam, Jamila (2005): The role of J.I.B.W.I.S in the development of Arabic and Islamic culture in Jos; BA-dissertation in Arabic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Adesoji, Abimbola (2010): The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria, In: *Africa Spectrum* 45 (2), pp. 95-108.

Alburnawi, Ali Mustafa Abubakar (1990): Risāla ilā al-Ikhwa al-Muslimīn fil Radd ‘ala Qawl al-Sheikh al-munḥarif ‘an al-Kitāb wa al-Sunna (Letter to Muslim brothers as an answer to the Sheikh who deviated from the Sunna), Maiduguri.

Alhassan, Idris A. (2003): The role of School of Higher Islamic Studies Sarkin Mangu Jos in advancing the spread of Islamic culture, and Arabic language for the year 1989 to the year 2001, BA-dissertation in Arabic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Al-Husseini, Ibrahim Saleh (1986): *Almughīr ‘ala Shubuhāti Ahl al-Ahwā wa Akadhīb al-munkir ‘ala Kitāb al-Takfīr (The Agressor)*, Beirut: Almaktaba al-Ibrahimiyya publications.

Alidou, Hussein D.: (2005): *Engaging modernity: Muslim women and the politics of agency in postcolonial Niger*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Aliyu, Tanimu (n.d.): *Ignantaccen Tarihin Jama‘atu Izalatil Bid‘ah Wa’Ikamatis Sunnah*, Jos: Abdulazeez Printing Co.

Al-Munjid fil-Lugha wal A‘laam (1986), Beyrouth: Dar al-Mashreq.

Anwar, Auwalu (1989): *Struggle for Influence and Identity: The ‘ulamā’ in Kano, 1937-1989*, M.A. Thesis (History), University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Batran, Abd al-Aziz Abd-Allah (1973): A contribution of the biography of Sheikh Muhammad (‘Umar-Amar) al-Maġīlī al-Tilimsāni, in: *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14. p. 381-394;

Bawa D. Muhammad Anka (2002): *Izalah-Tariqah relationship in Zamfara: A Study in perspective*, MA-Dissertation in Islamic Studies, Usman Dan Fodio University Sokoto, Nigeria.

Bello, Ahmad (2008): *The Role of Jama‘at at-Tajdīd al-Islami and its role in spreading the Arabic and Islamic culture in Bauchi*”; BA-Dissertation in Arabic Studies, Ahmadu Bello University.

Ben Amara, Ramzi (2005): *Die Entwicklung der Šarī‘a-Frage in Nigeria Ende der 1990er Jahre*, MA-thesis in Religious Studies at the University of Bayreuth.

Bossaller, Anke, 'Schlafende Schwangerschaft' in islamischen Gesellschaften. Entstehung und soziale Implikationen einer weiblichen Fiktion, Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1977): *Outline of a theory of practice*, Cambridge: University Press

Bourdieu, Pierre (1986): *The Forms of capital*, In: Richardson, John (eds.): *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.

Brigaglia, Andrea (2004): *Testo, tradizione e conflitto esegetico: gli `ulamâ' contemporanei e gli sviluppi dell'esegesi coranica nella società nord-nigeriana (Kano e Kaduna), 1960-2002*, 2004, Ph.D. dissertation, Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'.

Brigaglia, Andrea (2005): *Two published Hausa Translations of the Qur'ân and their doctrinal background*, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 35 (4)

Brigaglia, Andrea (2007): *The Radio Kaduna 'Tafsîr' (1978-1992) and the construction of public images of Muslim scholars in the Nigerian media*, In: *Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 27, pp. 173-210.

Brigaglia, Andrea, "The Fayda Tijāniyya of Ibrahim Nyass: Genesis and implications of a Sufi doctrine", in: *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 14/15, 2001, pp. 41-56.

Brigaglia, Andrea (2012): *Ja'far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria*, In: *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, Vol. 11, pp. 35-44;

Brigaglia, Andrea (2012), *A Contribution to the History of the Wahhābī Da'wa in West Africa: The Career and the Murder of Shaykh Ja'far Mahmoud Adam (Daura, ca. 1961/1962-Kano 2007)*, In: *Islamic Africa*, 3, 1, 1-23.

Buba, Malami and Graham Furniss (1999): Youth Culture, bandiri, and the Continuing Legitimacy Debate in Sokoto Town, In: *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 27-46.

Bunza, Umar Mukhtar (2005): The North African factor in 'tajdeed' tradition in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria, In: *The Journal of North African Studies* 10:3/4, pp. 325-338.

Charlick, Robert B. (2004): Islamism in West Africa: Niger, In: *African Studies Review* 47 (2), pp. 97-107.

Christelow, Allen (2002): Persistence and transformation in the politics of Sharī'a-Nigeria, 1958-2002, in: search of an explanatory framework. Paper presented at the Conference on Muslim Law in Post-Colonial Africa, Centre for Contemporary Islam, University of Cape Town, 11-14 March 2002.

Clarke, Peter (1988): Islamic Reform in contemporary Nigeria: methods and aims, in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (2), pp. 519-538.

Connolly, Peter (1999) (ed.): *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London and New York: Cassell; also Whaling, Frank (1995) (ed.): *Theory and methods in Religious Studies. Contemporary approaches to the Study of Religion*, Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Crowder, Michael (1964): Indirect Rule: French and British Style, in: *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 34 (3), pp.197-205.

Dan Fodio, Usman (n.d.): *Ihyā al-Sunna wa Ikhmād al-Bid'a* (Revival of the sunna and Upheaval of Innovation), Al-Fikr-Distribution.

Danfulani, Umar H. D. (2005): *The Sharī'a issue and Christian-Muslim relations in contemporary Nigeria*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksel International.

Danfulani, Umar, Ludwig, F. and P. Ostien (2002): The shari'a controversy and Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, *Jahrbuch für kontextuelle Theologien*, Frankfurt/London 2002, 70-95.

Echtler, Magnus (2008): Changing rituals - The New Year's festival in Makunduchi, Zanzibar, since colonial times, PhD thesis, University of Bayreuth.

El-Masri, F.H. (1963): The life of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio before the *jihād*, In: *Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria* 2 (4), pp. 435-448.

Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition. Glossary and Index of Terms to Volumes I-IX (2000): „bid'a“, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, p. 52.

Engler, Steven (2003): Modern Time: religion, consecration and the state in Bourdieu, In: *Cultural Studies* 17(3/4), pp. 445–467.

Falola, Toyin (1999): *The History of Nigeria*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press

Falola, Toyin and M. Heaton (2008): *History of Nigeria*, Cambridge: University Press.

Fatunde, Tunde (2000): Nigerias Rückkehr zur Demokratie. Eine Bewertung, In: KAS-AI/00, pp. 74-76.

Fierro, Maribel (1992): The treatises against innovations- (kutub al-bida'), In: *Der Islam* 69, (Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients), pp. 204-246.

Fwatshak, Sati U. (2003): Shari'a Enforcement in Northern Nigeria: The Hisba and the Publics. Paper presented at the conference on: "The Shari'a debate and the shaping of Muslim and Christian Identities in Northern Nigeria". Bayreuth, Germany. 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July, 2003, pp. 1-23.

Gerhard, Tobias (2010): Counter-discourse in global news media? How Aljazeera English covers sectarian violence in Nigeria, MA, Central European University, Department of International Relations and European Studies, Budapest, Hungary.

Goldziher, Ignác. (1971): *Muhammadanische Studien II*, Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag. (First published 1890).

Grégoire, Emmanuel (1993): Islam and identity of merchants in Maradi (Niger), in: Louis Brenner (ed.), *Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 1993, London, Hurst, pp. 106-115.

Gumi, Abubakar (1972): *Al-‘aqīdah Al-saḥīḥa Bi Muwafiqah Al-Sharī‘a (The Right Belief Is Based on the Sharī‘a)*, Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari.

Gumi, Abubakar. With I. A. Tsiga (1992): *Where I Stand*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books.

Gurama, Muhammad Nuhu (2000): *Leadership tussles in an Islamic organization: A case Study of the Jamā‘at Izala Al-Bid‘ah Wa Iqamat Al-Sunnah (J.I.B.W.I.S.)*, MA-Dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Gurum, H. M. and Bello A. M (2005): Like father like son? Dr. Gumi’s misconception, in: *JIBWIS Journal*, pp. 21-22.

Gwarzo, Tahir Haliru (2006): *Islamic civil society associations and the state: A Kano State case study 1994-2004*, PhD in Political Science, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.

Gwarzo, Hassan Ibrahim (1972): *The life and teachings of Al-Maghili with particular reference to the Saharan Jewish community*, PhD, SOAS, London.

Hackett, Rosalind (2011): Millennial and Apocalyptic Movements in Africa. From Neo-Traditional to Neo-Pentecostals, in: Wessinger, Catherine (ed.): The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 616-674.

Harbom, Lotta and Peter Wallensteen (2010): Armed conflict 1946-2009, In: Journal of Peace Research Vol. 47 (4), pp. 501-509.

Higazi, Adam (2007): Violence urbaine et politique à Jos (Nigeria), de la période coloniale aux élections de 2007, In: *Politiques Africaine* 106, pp. 69-91.

Hill, Jonathan N. C. (2010): Sufism in Northern Nigeria: Force for counter-radicalization? - [www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil](http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil), pp. 1-65.

Hiskett, Mervyn (1980): The Maitatsine Riots in Kano, 1980: An Assessment, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 17(3), pp. 209-223.

Hock, Klaus (1996): Der Islam Komplex. Hamburg: Lit Verlag, p. 14.

Hunwick, John (2005): Islamic Revival in Africa: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. In: Kamari Maxine Clarke (2005): Local practices, Global controversies: Islam in Sub-Saharan African Context, pp. 25-42.

Hunwick, John O. (1974): al-Mağīlīs replies to the questions of Askia Al-Hajj Muhammad, ed. and transl. with an introd. On the history of Islam in the Niger Bend to 1500, Brit. Thesis Service, Betchworth. - London, Univ., Dissertation.

Ibrahim, B. Yusuf (2003): Application of the Sharī'a Penal Law and Justice System in Northern Nigeria: Constitutional issues and implications, in: Ezeilo, J. Ngosi; Ladan, M. Tawfiq and A. Afolabi-Akiyode (Eds.): Sharī'a Implementation in Nigeria: Issues and challenges on Women's Rights and Access to Justice. Enugu/Port Hartcourt/Abuja: (WACOL); Lagos: (WARD); Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Ibrahim, Jibrin (2002): Democracy and minority Rights in Nigeria: Religion, Sharī'a and the 1999 Constitution. Paper for the Conference on: „Globalisation, State capacity and self-Determination in Muslim Contexts“. Centre for Global, International and Regional Studies, University of California-Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, 7th to 10th March 2002.

Ikime, Obaro (1970): The establishment of Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, In: *Tarikh* 3 (Indirect Rule in British Africa), Historical Society of Nigeria.

Introvigne, Massimo (2005): Niches in the Islamic Religious Market and Fundamentalism: Examples from Turkey and Other Countries", *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*: Vol. 1(1), pp. 1-23.

Isichei, Elizabeth (1987): The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 17 (3), pp. 194-208

Isichei, Elisabeth (1983): A History of Nigeria. New York: Longman Group Limited,

Jallo, Muhammad Ibrahim (n.d.): "*Riṣālātān Maftuḥatāni ila za'im al-Jamā 'a al Ismā'iliyya, ash-Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir* (Two open letters to the leader of the Jama'a al-Isma'iliyya [named after Sheikh Ismaila Idris, the founder], Sheikh Sani Yahya Jingir

Kalu, Ogbu (2003): 'Safiyya and Adamah: punishing adultery with Sharī'a stones in twenty-first-century Nigeria', In: *African Affairs* vol. 102, no. 408, pp. 389-408.

Kane, Ousmane (1993): Les mouvements islamiques et le champ politique au nord du Nigeria: le cas du mouvement Izala à Kano, thèse de doctorat, IEP, Paris.

Kane, Ousmane (1994): Izala: The rise of Muslim reformism in Northern Nigeria, in: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Accounting for fundamentalisms: The dynamic character of movements*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 490-512.

Kane, Ousmane (1999): La polémique contre le soufisme et les ordres soufis en Afrique de l'Ouest post-coloniale, in: Frederick de Jong & Bernd Radtke (eds.) *Islamic mysticism contested: thirteen centuries of controversies and polemics*. Leiden: E.J. Brill. pp. 324-40.

Kane, Ousmane (2003): *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A study of the Society for Removal of Innovation and reinstatement of Tradition*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Kogelmann, Franz (2006): The "Sharī'a Factor" in Nigeria's 2003 Elections, in: *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*. Benjamin F. Soares (ed.), pp. 256-274, Islam in Africa series 6. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Kramer, Roberts S. (2009): Mahdi, in: Esposito, John (eds.): *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic world*, pp.448-450

Lamaison, Pierre and Pierre Bourdieu (1986): *From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu*, p. 110-120.

Larkin, Brian (2004): Bandiri Music, Globalization, and Urban Experience in Nigeria, in: *Social Text* 81, Vol. 22(4), pp. 91-112.

Last, Murray (1967): *The Sokoto Caliphate*. London: Longman Group Limited.

Lawal Adam, Abdurrahman (1992): *the Conflict between the Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Waiqamatis Sunnah (JIBWIS) and the Sufi Orders in Jos and the stand of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (J.N.I.)*, MA-Dissertation, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Layish, Aharon (2004): The Transformation of the Sharī'a from Jurists' Law to Statutory Law in the Contemporary Muslim World, In: *Welt Des Islam* 44 (1), pp. 85-113

Lewis, Bernard (1953): some observations of the significance of Heresy in the History of Islam, In: *Studia Islamica* 1, pp. 43-63.

Loimeier, Roman (1988): Das Nigerian Pilgrimage Scheme, In: *Afrika Spectrum*, 23, 2 (1988) 201-14.

Loimeier, Roman (1992): Die Dynamik religiöser Unruhen in Nord-Nigeria, In: *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 27 (1), pp. 59-80

Loimeier, Roman (1997) Die radikale islamische Opposition in Nordnigeria, In: *Afrika Spectrum*, 32, 1, 5-23.

Loimeier, Roman (1997): Islamic Reform and Political Change: The Example of Abubakar Gumi and the 'Yan Izala Movement in Northern Nigeria, in: David Westerlund (ed.). African Islam and Islam in Africa. Encounters between Sufis and Islamists, London, 286-307.

Loimeier, Roman (1997): Islamic reform and political change in Nigeria. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Loimeier, Roman (2003): Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa, In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 33, 3, 237-62.

Loimeier, Roman (2005): De la dynamique locale des réformismes musulmans. Études biographiques (Sénégal, Nigeria et Afrique de l'Est), in M. Gomez-Perez (ed). L'Islam politique au sud du Sahara. Identités, discours et enjeux. Karthala, Paris, 29-48.

Loimeier, Roman (2007): "Yesu Hakusulubiwa –Jesus wurde nicht gekreuzigt": Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Vergleichs religiöser Reformbewegungen; Paper presented at the University of Leipzig, 11/10/2007.

Lord Lugard, Frederick D. (1965): *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London.

Lubeck Paul M. (1985): Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine explained, In: *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 55 (4), pp. 369-389.

Ludwig, Frieder (2008): Christian–Muslim Relations in Northern Nigeria since the Introduction of Sharī'a in 1999, in: *Journal of the academy of Religion*, Vol. 76 (3), 602-637.

MacDonald, D. B. (1913): „Bid‘a“, in: *Enzyklopädie des Islam*, Leiden: Brill & Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, pp. 742-3.

Maier, Karl (2000): *This House has fallen. Nigeria in crisis*. London: Penguin Books.

Makinde, Abdulfattah (2007). *The Institution of Sharī'a in Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria, 1890–2005*. PhD-Thesis in Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Masquelier, Adeline M. (1996): Identity, alterity and ambiguity in a Nigerien community: Competing definitions of 'true' Islam, in: Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (ed.), *Postcolonial identities in Africa*, London, Zed Books, pp. 222-244.

Masquelier, Adeline M. (1999): Debating Muslims, disputed practices: Struggles for the realization of an alternative moral order in Niger, In: Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (ed.), *Civil society and the political imagination in Africa: Critical perspectives*, 1999, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 219-250.

Masquelier, Adeline M. (2009): *Women and Islamic revival in a West African town*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Meunier, Oliver (1998): Marabouts et courants religieux en pays hawsa: dynamique de l'islamisation de la ville de Maradi à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et durant le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, In: *Revue Canadienne d'Études Africaines* 32 (3), pp.521-557.

Meunier, Olivier (1997): Les Routes de L'Islam. Anthropologie politique de l'islamisation de l'Afrique de l'Ouest en général et du pays hawsa en particulier du 8<sup>ème</sup> au 19<sup>ème</sup> Siècle. Paris: Editions L'Hartmann.

Meunier, Olivier (1998): Les voies de l'islam au Niger dans le Katsina independant du XIX<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Paris: Publications Scientifiques du Museum.

Muhammad, G. Bala and M. Sani Umar (2002): Religion and the Pan-African ideal: The Experience of Salafi Islam in the West African Sub-Region; In: *African Journal of International Affairs*.

Muhammed, Sadis Muhammed (2001): Late Sheikh Ismaila Idris Bin Zakariyya- His contribution to the development of Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'a Wa Iqamatis Sunnah (J.I.B.W.I.S.) in Nigeria, BA-dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Murtaza, Muhammad Sameer (2005): Die Salafiya, die Reformer des Islam: eine Darstellung der Biographien und des politischen Denkens von Gamal Al-Din Al-Afgani, Muhammad 'Abduh, Muhammad Rasid Rida und Hasan Al-Banna, sowie der Muslimbruderschaft in ihrer formativen Phase 1928 - 1932, Nordersted.

Nasiru Kabara, Qaribullah (n.d.): "al-Mir'āt a-l-ṣāfiya fi Bayāni Haqiqat a-l-Tasawwuf wa ba'di Rijālihi dhawi al-Maqāmāt al-‘aliya", Darul Qādiriyya Publications, Kano, Nigeria.

O'Brien, Susan M. (2007): La Charia contestée: Démocratie, débat et diversité musulmane dans les 'état Charia' du Nigeria, In: *Politique Africaine* 106, pp. 46-68.

Oba, A. A. (2002): Islamic Law as customary Law: the Changing Perspective in Nigeria, In: *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 51 (4), pp. 817-850.

Oduyoye, Modupe (2000): The Shari'a Debate in Nigeria. October 1999-October 2000. Ibadan: Sefer, pp. 98-113.

Ogbondah, Chris W. (2000): Political Repression in Nigeria, 1993-1998: A Critical Examination of One Aspect of the Perils of Military Dictatorship, In: *Africa Spectrum* 35 (2), pp. 231-242

Olayiwola, Abdulfattah O. A. (1997): The polytomy of Islam in Nigeria- Emanation, implication, and possible rectification, PhD-thesis at the School of Postgraduate Studies, Islamic Studies, Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Onuoha, Freedom C. (2010): The Islamist challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained, In: *African Security Review*, Vol. 19 (2), pp. 54-67.

Ostien, P., Nasir, Jamila M., and F. Kogelmann (eds) (2005): Comparative perspectives on Shari'ah in Nigeria. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.

Ostien, Phil (2006): An Opportunity missed by Nigeria's Christians: The 1976-78 Shari'a Debate revisited, in: Soares, E. Benjamin (ed.): Muslim-Christian encounters in Africa, pp. 221-255.

Ostien, Philip (ed.) (2007): Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006: A Sourcebook. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.

Ostien, Philip (2009): Jonah Jang and the Jasawa: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria, In: *Muslim-Christian Relations in Africa*, pp. 1-44.

Ostien, Philip and Albert Dekker (2010): Sharia and national law in Nigeria, in: Otto, Jan Michiel (ed.): Sharia Incorporated: a Comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present, Leiden: Leiden University Press, pp. 553-612.

Paden, John (1986): Ahmadu Bello. Sardauna of Sokoto, Zaria: Hudahuda Publishing Company

Qadri, Yasir (1981): The Tijāniyyah in Nigeria: A case Study, University of Ibadan.

Reynolds, Jonathan T. (1999): The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa). Islam and the politics of legitimacy in Northern Nigeria 1950-1966, San Francisco: International Scholars Publications.

Reynolds, Jonathan (2001): God and bad Muslims. Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, In: The International Journal of African Historical Studies, Vol. 34 (3), 601-618.

Rigachikun, Yusufu Muhammad Sambo (2005): Ayyukan Majalisar Malamai Da Siffofin Mai Wa'azi Da Manifofin Kungiyar J.I.B.W.I.S Ta Kasa, Kaduna: Al-Amana Printing Press

Robson, J. (1960): bid'a, in: The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition. Leiden: Brill & London: Luzac & Co.

Rosander, Eva Evers and David Westerlund: (1997): African Islam and Islam in Africa. Encounters between Sufis and Islamists. Athens, Ohio, Ohio Univ. Press.

Saneh, Lamin (2003): Sharī'a Sanctions as Secular Grace? A Nigerian Islamic debate and an intellectual response, In: *Transformation*, 20/4 October.

Sani, Abul-Mumin (1994): The image and legacy of late Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi, unpubl. BA-Dissertation, Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Sanusi L. Sanusi (2002): "The Hudood punishment in the Northern Nigeria: A Muslim criticism", October 1<sup>st</sup>. Prepared for a publication in ISIM NEWS, the quarterly publication of the Institute for the study of Islam in Modernity, Leiden, Holland.

Sanusi, Lamido Sanusi (1999): Issues in constructing corporate Nigeria. Paper presented at the "National Conference on the 1999 Constitution", organized by the Network For Justice and The Vision Trust Foundation, Arewa House, Kaduna from 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September.

Schulze, Reinhard (1990): Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zur Islamischem Weltliga, Leiden: Brill.

Seesemann, Rüdiger (2004): Nach der "Flut" Ibrāhīm Niasse (1900 - 1975), Sufik und Gesellschaft in Westafrika; University of Bayreuth, Habilitation.

Shehu, Balarabe I. (2001): The Light of Truth, Kano: Gidan Dabiro Pusblisher.

Sodiq, Yushau (1992): A History of Islamic law in Nigeria: Past and Present, in: *Islamic Studies*, 31 (1), pp. 85-108.

Sounaye, Abdoulaye (2009): Izala au Niger: une alternative de communauté religieuse, in: L. Fourchard, O. Goerg and M. Gomez-Perez (ed.), *Les lieux de sociabilité urbaine dans la longue durée en Afrique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 481-500.

Spickard, James V. (1998): Rethinking religious social action: What is "rational" about rational choice theory?, In: *Sociology of Religion*. Vol. 59 (2), pp. 99-115.

Stark, Rodney and R. Finke (2000): *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stark, Rodney (1996): Why Religious movements succeed or fail: a revised general model, In: *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 11 (2), pp. 133 – 146.

Stark, Rodney and W. S. Brainbridge (1980): Towards a Theory of Religion: Religious Commitment, In: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 19 (2), pp. 114-128.

Sulaiman, Muhammad Dahiru (1993): Shiaism and the Islamic movement in Nigeria 1979-1991, In : *Islam et sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 7, pp. 5-16.

Suleiman, G. Ibrahim (2005): Mallam Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and the Question of Shi'ism, B.A.-Dissertation in Islamic Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria.

Swartz, David (1996): Bridging the study of culture and religion: Pierre Bourdieu's political economy of Symbolic power, In: *Sociology of Religion* 57 (1), pp. 71-85

Tabiu, Muhammed (2001): Shaṛī'a, Federalism and Nigerian Constitution. Paper presented at the International Conference on Shaṛī'a 14<sup>th</sup> April, organised by the Nigerian Muslim Forum, London, United Kingdom.

Tal, Madina L. (1991): Un Islam militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle: La Tijānī yya de Saïku Umar Futiyu contre les pouvoirs traditionnels et la puissance colonial.

Talbi, Mohammed (1960): Les bid'ā, In: *Studia Islamica* 12, pp. 43-77.

Tariq Ramadan (2009): *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taschner, Barbara (2006): *Die Scharia in Nigeria anhand der Texte von Sanusi Lamidu Sanusi*, BA-Thesis, Religious Studies, University of Bayreuth, Germany.

The JIBWIS Journal 2005, Vol. 1 No. 3,

Transparency International (2009): *Global Corruption Report 2009. Corruption and Private Sector*. Cambridge: University Press,

Triaud, Jean-Louis and David Robinson (ed.) 2000: *La Tijāniyya: Une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique*. Paris: Karthala.

Umar, M. Sani (1983): *Islamic Revivalism Today. The Example of Jama'atu Izaltul Bid'ah Wa Iqamitis Sunnah*, BA-Thesis, Jos Univeristy; Umar, M. Sani (1988): *Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Nigeria*, MA-Thesis, University of Kano.

Umar, M. Sani (1993): *Changing Muslim identity in Nigeria from the 1960s to the 1980s: from Sufism to Anti-Sufism*, in Brenner, Louis (ed.): *Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 154-178.

Umar, Muhammad S. (2001): *Education and Islamic Trends in Northern Nigeria: 1970s-1990s* In: *Africa Today*, Vol. 48 (2), pp. 127-150.

Umar, Muhammad Sani (2001): *Education and Islamic trends in Northern Nigeria, 1970s-1990s*, *Africa Today* 48:2, pp. 127-150.

Umar, Muhammad Sani, (1993): *Changing Islamic identity in Nigeria from the 1960s to the 1980s: From Sufism to anti-Sufism*, in: Louis Brenner (ed.), *Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, London: Hurst.

Wakili, Haruna (2009): *Islam and the Political Arena in Nigeria: The 'ulamā' and the 2007 Elections*. *ISITA Working Paper* No. 09-004

Weimann, Gunnar J. (2010): *Islamic Criminal Law in Northern Nigeria. Politics, religion, judicial practice*; PhD-thesis at the University of Amsterdam

Whitehouse (2002): 'Modes of Religiosity: a cognitive explanation of the sociopolitical dynamics of religion', In: *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 14 , 2002, pp. 293-315.

Whitehouse, Harvey (2004): *Modes of Religiosity: A cognitive theory of religious transmission*, Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

World Bank (1996): Report No. 14733-UNI Nigeria Poverty in the Midst of Plenty The Challenge of Growth with Inclusion. A World Bank Poverty Assessment, May 31.

Yandaki, A. Isyaku (1990): A history of the Izalah movement in Northern Nigeria up to 1989, MA-Dissertation, University of Sokoto, Nigeria.

Yassari, Nadjma (2004): Islamisches Recht oder Recht der Muslime- Gedanken zu Recht und Religion im Islam, in: Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaften, 103, p. 103-121.

Zakzaky, Ibraheem (1999): Application of Sharī'a in the contemporary world: Lessons from some Muslim countries; a Paper presented to the national Conference on the Application of Sharī'a organised by the Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of law, Bayero University and RAMNAN Law Consult, Kano, Bayero University, 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999.

## Abstract (English)

### The Izala Movement in Nigeria: Its Split, Relationship to Sufis and Perception of Sharia Re-Implementation

Ramzi Ben Amara

#### Abstract

The religious landscape of Northern Nigeria is very heterogeneous. Nevertheless two Sufi Brotherhoods, the Tijāniyya and the Qādiriyya dominated the religious field until the 1970s. This situation changed in 1978 with the appearance of *Jama'atul Izalatzul Bid'a wa Ikamatis Sunna* (Society for Removal of Innovation and Reestablishment of the Sunna). This reform movement was established to fight the so called *bida'* (in Arabic: non-Islamic innovations) on the basis of the tradition of the Prophet. The long Islam tradition in Nigeria has to be “purified” and the model of *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (in Arabic: the pious predecessors) should be followed. This created numerous tensions between Izala and Sufi Brotherhoods.

In 1999 and during the process of transition to the Fourth Republic Nigeria, Islamic Penal Law was re-implemented by the Governor of Zamfara State Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakuru. This step was followed by eleven northern states. This meant amongst others the introduction of *ḥudūd*-punishments – corporal punishments like lashing, hand amputation, or stoning to death. The re-implementation provoked a debate in and outside Nigeria. Many observers raised questions related to the constitutionality of Sharia-laws, human rights, religious freedom and to the democratic process. Opinions on this process were divided.

Almost all Islamic organizations of Nigeria stood for the re-implementation of Islamic Law. Izala was among those who supported that project. Sharia goes side by side with Izala doctrine of “islamizing the society”. Izala was ready to compromise within the Sharia context and a kind of “domestication” of the long-going Izala-Sufi struggle seems to have taken place. During the Sharia-reimplementation, no Islamic organization (except of Shiite movement) risked opposing Sharia. Islamic Law was started by a single politician within a political campaign and after him the masses pushed in eleven states to have Sharia re-implemented.

Izala claimed being behind the Sharia re-implementation. One could ask if this was a re-orientation strategy of the movement especially after the end of its conflict with Sufi. Do Izala really contributed to the re-implementation of Sharia law?

On the basis on solid fieldwork in Northern Nigeria including participant observation, interviews with Izala, Sufis, and religion experts, and collection of unpublished material related to Izala, three aspect of the development of Izala past and present are analysed: its split, its relationship to Sufis, and its perception of Sharia re-implementation. "Field theory" of Pierre Bourdieu, "Religious Market theory" of Rodney Start, and "Modes of Religiosity theory" of Harvey Whitehouse are theoretical tools of understanding the religious landscape of northern Nigeria and the dynamics of Islamic movements and groups.

## Abstract (German)

### Die Izala Bewegung in Nigeria: Ihre Spaltung, Beziehung zu Sufis und Sichtweise der Reimplementierung der Scharia

Ramzi Ben Amara

#### Zusammenfassung

Die religiöse Landschaft Nordnigerias ist sehr vielfältig. Dennoch war bis in die 1970er Jahre die islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft Nordnigerias durch die beiden großen Sufi-Bruderschaften, Qādiriyya und Tijāniyya, geprägt. Diese Situation änderte sich 1978 grundlegend mit der Gründung der *Jama'atul Izalatzul Bid'a wa Ikamatis Sunna* (Gesellschaft zur Beseitigung der unzulässigen Innovationen und der Errichtung der Sunna). Hierbei handelte es sich um eine islamische Reformbewegung deren Ziel die Bekämpfung unislamischer Neuerungen (Arab.: *bid'a* / *bida'*) sowie die Errichtung einer islamischen Gesellschaft auf Grundlage der Tradition des Propheten war. Diese religiös legitimierten Ansprüche wandten sich direkt gegen die Glaubenspraxis der Sufi-Bruderschaften. Die in Nordnigeria etablierte Glaubenspraxis sollte gereinigt und eine Gesellschaft nach Vorbild der urislamischen Gemeinde errichtet werden. Die Sufi-Bruderschaften befanden sich in der Defensive und versuchten geeint, die von der Izala Reformbewegung initiierte Debatte über islamische Werte und Normen abzuwehren.

Mit der Wiedereinführung des islamischen Strafrechts im Jahr 1999 kam es zum weitreichendsten Eingriff in das nigerianische Rechtssystem Nigerias seit Wiedererlangung der staatlichen Unabhängigkeit. Sämtliche zwölf Staaten Nordnigerias führten sukzessive das islamische Strafrecht ein. Hierbei handelte es sich um eine vollständige Einführung des islamischen Strafrechts d.h. auch die bereits unter den Briten abgeschafften koranischen Körperstrafen waren wieder Teil des Strafrechts auf bundesstaatlicher Ebene. Diese Entwicklung führte zu Verwerfungen mit der nicht-muslimischen Bevölkerung der betroffenen Bundesstaaten. Aber auch unter muslimischen Intellektuellen stieß die

Wiedereinführung von Teilen der Scharia nicht immer auf ungeteilte Zustimmung. Zu überstürzt, zu sehr vom politischen Ränkespiel beeinflusst oder einfach als Angriff auf internationale Menschenrechte lauteten einige der Argumente der Gegner der Einführung des islamischen Strafrechts.

Nahezu alle islamischen Organisationen Nigerias standen hinter dieser Entwicklung. So auch die Izala Bewegung, die zu diesem Zeitpunkt zwar immer noch die mächtigste islamische Reformbewegung war, doch durch eine Aufspaltung in zwei Fraktionen geschwächt war. Diese Aufspaltung hatte eine Reihe von Gründen. Vordergründig ging es um gegen Mitglieder der Führungsebene gerichtete Vorwürfe, sie würden unislamischen Neuerungen Vorschub leisten. Letztendlich handelte es sich jedoch offensichtlich um einen Machtkampf innerhalb der Führung dieser Reformbewegung.

Die Tatsache, dass sich im Grunde kaum eine islamische Bewegung der Welle der Scharia Wiedereinführung widersetzen konnte, mündete zumindest vorübergehend in eine Beilegung des Konflikts zwischen den Sufi-Bruderschaften und der Izala. Mit wenigen Ausnahmen beteiligten sich die islamischen Organisationen an einer mit der Wiedereinführung des islamischen Rechts einhergehenden Islamisierung des öffentlichen Lebens von Nordnigeria. Unklar ist jedoch welche Gruppe diese für viele überraschende Entwicklung initiiert hatte bzw. wessen Verdienst die Wiedereinführung der Scharia war.

Letztendlich entwickelte das Scharia Projekt eine enorme Eigendynamik, die den gesamten Norden Nigeria überrollte. Die Gouverneure waren durch öffentlichen Druck gezwungen, ebenfalls die Scharia in ihrer Gänze einzuführen. Die gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen wurden zwar geschaffen, doch die eigentliche Umsetzung ging in den einzelnen Bundesstaaten sehr unterschiedlich vonstatten und war vom Willen der politischen Entscheidungsträger abhängig.

Ihrem Selbstverständnis nach würde die Izala Reformbewegung die Wiedereinführung des islamischen Rechts gerne für sich reklamieren. Sicherlich hat sie einen Einfluss auf diese Entwicklung nehmen können, doch ob sie nun entscheidend war oder gar die Fäden im Hintergrund gezogen hat und das Scharia Projekt orchestriert hat, bleibt fraglich. Zu viele Akteure waren und sind daran beteiligt.

Die methodischen Grundlagen dieser Arbeit sind historisch-philologischer sowie sozialwissenschaftlicher Natur. Neben der Auswertung von Medienprodukten, unveröffentlichter akademischer und grauer Literatur, waren das Rückgrat dieser Dissertation zwei intensive Feldforschungen. Mit einer Reihe von religiösen Führern unterschiedlicher Provenienz, wie Izala Mitglieder, Mitgliedern von Sufi Bruderschaften oder unabhängige muslimische Intellektuelle wurden Leitfadeninterviews geführt. Den theoretischen Rahmen bildeten insbesondere die Feldtheorie von Pierre Bourdieu, die Theorie zu religiösen Märkten von Rodney Starks sowie Harvey Whitehouses Theorie zu „Modes of Religiosity“.