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ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT: AN ASSESSMENT OF SHEIKH ABUBAKAR MAHMUD GUMI'S THOUGHT ON POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Islam refers to a comprehensive code that comprises all aspects of Muslim life concerning worldly affairs and the hereafter. In contrast to other religions, the separation of religion and the state is inconceivable for many. In Islam, the Qur'an uses the word *dīn* (religion) to describe both worldly lives and the hereafter, as in chapters: (6:32), (47:36) and (57:20). The secular norms of the separation between religion and politics are not only misleading but wrong. Although the Qur'an is almost silent about the specific legislations and rules concerning governance, it outlines the general principles of governance. The Sunna of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), however, had clearly outlined its concepts. In twentieth-century Nigeria, Gumi carried the flag of reform to revive not only politics but generally Islamic practices. Hence, he became the most outspoken and controversial scholar on political matters of his time. Therefore, this paper assessed Gumi's thoughts, principally about politics and governance in Nigeria. A textual analytical method has been adopted, using both primary and secondary sources to carry out this work. This method assisted us in examining and understanding Gumi's thoughts on this important matter of human life in the context of the modern state of Nigeria. The findings of this paper show that Gumi's view on politics had tremendously assisted in bringing the masses closer to political space. His advocacy on politics brought awareness among the public to dismiss the insinuation that modern politics is not part of Islam.

Keywords: Gumi, reform, politics, governance, assessment, Nigeria.

Introduction:

Islam or *dīn*, (henceforth),¹ refers to a comprehensive code that comprises all aspects of Muslim life in relation to his worldly affairs and the hereafter. In contrast to certain forms of Protestant Christianity, the separation of the *dīn* (religion) and the *daūlah* (state) is inconceivable for many.² According to Gumi, the Qur`ān has used the word *dīn* to describe both worldly lives, and the hereafter, as in chapters: (Q.6:32), (Q.47:36) and (Q.57:20).³ To him, the Western norms of the separation between *dīn* and politics is not only misleading, but wrong. However, Gumi explained that, although the Qur`ān is almost silent about the specific legislations and rules concerning governance, it outlines the general guidelines that could be taken. The *Sunnah* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), however, had clearly outlined its concepts.⁴ It could be suggested that Gumi`s thoughts regarding the non-separation of *dīn* and politics stands alongside Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), and Abū`Alā al-Maudūdī (1903-1979) amongst others. Debates about what kind of political structure Islam demands can be seen in the likes of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the fifth caliph of the `Abbāsīd Caliphate (786-809).⁵ Gumi highlighted that the first community of Islam founded by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) with the notion of “*muākhā*” has presented an exemplary governance and leadership in Islam. Arabs and non-Arabs were morally obliged to join the Madīnan society.⁶ Thus, this paper examined Gumi`s political thoughts to assess his understanding on this important matter of human life and specifically in the context of the modern state of Nigeria.

Abubakar Mahmud Gumi`s Birth, Early Life and Education:

Gumi began his education under the tutelage of his father “*Malam Mahmud Na Gumi*.” He memorized the Qur`ān and some important books of the Maliki school of thought, such as *Risalah* Abi Zaid al-Qairawani, and attended the traditional Islamic school, popularly known as ‘*Makarantar allo*’. The traditional Islamic school in the northern part of Nigeria had experienced from the pre-colonial and post-colonial period to present day two tracks, the first known as *Makarantar allo* (Traditional slate school), and the second *Makarantar ilimi* (Advanced traditional school).⁷

¹ This paper acknowledges the difficulties of using the term ‘religion’ across different faiths and traditions. Hence, the Arabic term *dīn* is preferred to avoid confusion. See, Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

² Hrair, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*, 44.

³ Funtuwa, *Fatawar Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi*, vol. 2, 163.

⁴ Ibid., 163.

⁵ See, al-Ṭabarī Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Volume 2, the Son and Grandsons of al-Mansūr: The Reigns of al-Mahdī, al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rashīd*, trans. by Williams John Alden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁶ Funtuwa, *Fatawar Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi*, vol. 2, 163.

⁷ From early age, children begin to learn Qur`anic recitation and the Arabic alphabet. However, *Makarantarilimi*, is an advanced stage of learning that is devoted entirely to Qur`anic studies, and it usually starts during adolescence. For further details, see: Muhammad Sani Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial*

Through this system, Gumi studied introduction to *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and al-Fazzazi`s *Ishrinayah*, a renowned collection of praise-poems on the Prophet (p.b.u.h). In 1933, at the age of nine years, he began his western education at DogonDaji elementary school.

At the western school, Abubakar Gumi demonstrated his utmost competence, for he was shortly appointed, on account of his extraordinary Islamic knowledge, a *Hakimin Sallah* (Religious Prefect) for the students in charge of all their religious activities. Thereafter, based on his impressive performance, he was promoted to standard two after spending only one term in standard one. After spending one year in the elementary school at Dogon Daji, he was transferred in 1936 to Sokoto Middle School, currently named Sultan Ward Primary School Sokoto.⁸ Apart from the regular classes, Abubakar Gumi studied, at a special night school at *Malam Shehu Yabo*’s house, the essential texts of the Maliki School of law, the *Risalah* of Ibn Abi Zaid al-Qairawani and *Mukhtasar al-Khalil*. Finally, after a successful journey that lasted for six years with bountiful achievements at the Sokoto Middle School, Gumi continued his studies at Kano law School. Furthermore, in 1952, Gumi enrolled for a two-year further education at the School for Arabic Studies in Kano, where he got a higher elementary training certificate. In view of his excellent grades, Gumi secured a scholarship to pursue a Higher Diploma in education at the *Bakht al-Rida* Institute of Education in the *de facto* British colony of Sudan from 1955 to 1956.⁹ In the later part of his life, Gumi had become a prominent scholar and a reference on religious matters in Nigeria.

Gumi`s Concept of Islamic Political Thought:

The dominant political system globally is that of the modern nation-state model, which is recognised by the United Nations, is a secular oriented system. Describing the distinct difference between Islamic political thought and western polities, Anthony says, “Islam provided a specific path quite different from that taken by western polities from tribalism to a wider and more structured society.”¹⁰ Gumi explained, the Islamic political system has been formulated based on two elements: *ṭā`ullahwa rasūlih* (sovereignty of Allah and obedience to his messenger) and *ulī al-amr minkum* (the obedience to the leaders among you).¹¹ According to Gumi, in the Islamic political system, nobody, except Allah, enjoys the utmost sovereignty and that obedience to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) signifies obedience to Allah.¹²

Gumi`s view is the same as that of al-Maudūdī, Hassan al-Banna and Muhammad Iqbāl. Iqbāl argues that there is no segregation of politics and religion.¹³ Like Iqbāl, Maudūdī, and al-Banna also

Rule, (Leiden Brill: Boston, 2006), 161-162; AliyuAbubakar, *al-Thaqafah al-Arabiyyah fiNajeria*, (Beirut: *Mu`assasatAbd al-Hafiz al-Bassat*, 1972).

⁸ Ibid, 19.

⁹ AhmadHaruna, op. cit., 13.

¹⁰ Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought From the Prophet to the Present*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2011), 13.

¹¹ Gumi, *al-`Aqīdah al-Ṣaḥīḥa Bi-Muwāfaqat al-Sharī`ah*, 67.

¹² Ibid., 67.

¹³ Iqbāl Muḥammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 152.

believed Islam to be a complete system addressing all aspects of human life.¹⁴

From Gumi's view, this suggests that he had maintained the traditional Islamic political concept founded over the years of Islamic history, beginning with the Prophet Muḥammad's (p.b.u.h) era in Madīnah and continued through various historical Islamic empires which combined Islam with political and economic authority. It is also apparent that Gumi was convinced with some aspects of western polities' structure, as he was actively agitating for participation in the modern Nigerian state among his fellow Muslims during his lifetime. What differentiates the two political concepts (Islamic and Western), is that the later focuses on absolute freedom of human beings, whereas the former focuses on ultimate authority of Allah.¹⁵ Likely, this is among the factors that distinguishes the Islamic political system with modern political concepts such as "the will of the people" and national sovereignty. More so, Islamic political thought placed much emphasis on the authority of Allah, and that *dīn* and governance are not two separate compartments. Whereas the modern democratic system was founded on man-made legislations and normative secular perceptions which side-lined and marginalised the place of Islam in the public and political spheres.¹⁶

Gumi has the understanding that Islam and governance are one component that formed a believer's life here and, in the hereafter, the link between 'this worldly' matters and the eternal spiritual world.¹⁷ Accordingly, Islamic political thought assumes that human life needs to be regulated, and that without government there would be chaos in social and political life. As human nature requires a political set up to collaborate and engage in divisions of labour to attain their different needs.¹⁸ In the Islamic political system, a believer must assign his sovereignty to Allah, the king of the universe. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) or a caliph was only a vizier and a representative, who would ensure the compliance of humans to the rule of law by following Allah's commandments as revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h).¹⁹

The unprecedented polities founded by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) through revelations had left no vacuum in the political concept of Islam.²⁰ It only remained for the scholars to interpret and explain those revealed laws to their fellow Muslims. Law is held in the sovereignty of Allah; yet, humans can be 'law makers' for peace to prosper, based on the commandments of Allah who has the final and absolute authority and legitimacy.

The consensus in Sunnism was that the period of *al-rāshidūn* saw both the political and spiritual leadership of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), being handed down to each of the four rightly guided. This was

¹⁴Ali Raḥnema, "Hassan Albanna," in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Raḥnema (London: Zed Books, 1994), 125–55.

¹⁵Patricia Crone, "Traditional Political Thought," in *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, ed. Bowering Gerhard, First (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 264–78.

¹⁶Crone, "Traditional Political Thought," in *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, 265.

¹⁷Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, 184.

¹⁸Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 63.

¹⁹Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, 126.

²⁰Salihu, *Bincike Akan Ayukkan Alhaji Abubakar Gumi*, 46.

perceived as the "ideal." After the death of caliph Ali (r.a), and the end of the rightly guided, saw the consensus agreeing that there could be a separation of authority between the '*ulamā*' and the reigning caliph. Thus, after the rightly guided caliphs there is no consensus as to whom has the authority and legitimacy to be the rightful successor. There has been a crisis of authority in Islam allowing for multiple interpretations and competing leaderships hence Gumi's thoughts fall into this larger ongoing debate. Gumi argued, *dīn* and politics are not contrary to each other; and it is the duty of *amīr* or the head of state to enforce the laws as revealed by Allah to his messenger to ensure peace, justice, and security of the society.

Islam and Politics in Gumi's View:

Islam and politics are frequently referred to in Islamic discourse, as "*dīn wa daūlah*," that is, "a religion and state."²¹ According to Gumi,²² the widely accepted secular idea that Islam and politics are two separate components, is deceptive.²³ Gumi's thought were in agreement with that of al-Banna and others, who also claimed that Islam and politics cannot be separated, and whoever believed that they are two different entities is ignorant of Islam.²⁴ Gumi argued, they are two different essentials in human life with established mutual connections, yet, with separate jurisdictions. During the period of Islamic empires of the Umayyad (661-750 CE), and 'Abbāsīd (750-1258 CE), Islam played a remarkable role in ruling the affairs of the state. The emergence of the '*ulamā*' (pious scholars) as advisers and judiciaries of the government bodies, and the establishment of schools of thought as an independent body to regulate Islamic law were the significant parts of experiences to Islamic political thought.²⁵

Gumi opined that a society, need laws and policies to regulate its affairs. By so doing, mischievous habits would be eliminated, and good attitudes would be promoted. This requires a political set up that will oversee its enforcement and compliance.²⁶ To have a serene society or nation free from disorder, the enactment of political power became inevitable.²⁷

The aspect of unification and solidarity between different tribes and ethnicities was pertinent to the situation in Nigeria where the population remained deeply divided by different identity perceptions. Gumi believed the correct implementation of Islamic political thought could unite Muslims in Nigeria just as Islam united the warring tribes of Arabia during the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). Gumi further added that politics without *dīn* leads to various mischievous consequences, such as corruption, embezzlement of public funds and tyranny. He outlined:

²¹John Obert Voll L, Esposito, *Islam and Democracy*, 4.

²²Funtuwa, *Fatawar Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi*, vol. 2, 166.

²³This work recognises that secularism takes diverse forms, and that the boundaries between politics and religion vary in different contexts. The emergence of academic comparative studies or various forms of secularism had yet to fully gain academic attention at the time of Gumi's writing. See, Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

²⁴Rahnema, "Hassan Albanna" in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, 25.

²⁵Esposito, *Islam and Democracy*, 4.

²⁶Tsiga, *Whwere I Stand*, 127.

²⁷Funtuwa, *Fatawar Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi*, vol. 2, 166.

Without the corrective force of religion, man would not feel accountable for his own actions, and therefore, would never bother about morality or ethics in his day-to-day relationship with others. Only the fear of Allah could make one really civilized and enable one to exercise discipline in one's conduct.²⁸

Gumi argued that the problems within Nigeria, were a result of the country's departure from Islamic injunctions into secular politics, and that was a missing step to lay the foundation towards building an equitable nation.

Gumi outlines:

By divorcing our government from God, we are at once encouraging selfishness and unfounded ambitions...that is why [Nigeria] lack direction. Leaders find it easy to lie and cheat and cover up all by resorting to cheap sentiments.²⁹

In the light of the above viewpoint, the inference is that Gumi had the conviction that the hardship, disturbances, and difficulties Nigeria found itself in, was a result of separating politics from *dīn*. To him, politics cannot be operated outside God's directives. In other words, it can be argued, Gumi firmly believed that there is no prosperity in politics without involving Islam and following God's commandments in spirit and in form because *dīn* encourages the enforcement of rule of law to ensure justice in moral, spiritual, and political life of human societies. Peace, harmony, and tranquillity are only attainable through equality and justice. Hence, it is wrong to sense that Islam is just a religion of worship and has nothing to do with politics and governance of human life, as both frequently work together. The Prophet (p.b.u.h), had served as a religious leader and a political architect when he founded the Islamic community in Madīnah.

When Nigeria gained its independence from the British, it adopted the western democratic system of rule. New tensions among the Muslim population of the North began to emerge. During that period, Northern Nigeria witnessed the evolution of Islamic organisations, such as Sufi brotherhood and Izala movements.³⁰ These organisations were not involved directly in the affairs of government and were not part of the official state political institutions. Yet, they served as key players when it comes to the matters of election. Here, Gumi did not share with other Muslim thinkers' views on rejecting the nation-state and nationalist structures. For instance, Sayyid Quṭb rejected the nation-state structure and nationalism in Egypt.³¹ Whereas, Gumi accepted the western political structures but rejected the secularisation embodied in the system. Gumi did not boycott the political process, rather, he struggled to see the inclusion of religion in the political journey of the nation. Gumi can be conceived of as a 'reformist',³² who wished to adapt the existing system rather than a 'revolutionary' such as Sayyid Quṭb who sought the destruction of the western nation-state model.

²⁸Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, 126.

²⁹Ibid.,127.

³⁰Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, 261.

³¹Soage Ana Belen, "Hassan Al-Banna and Sayyid Quṭb: Continuity or Rupture," *The Muslim World* 19, no. 2 (2009): 294–311.

³²Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 19.

Gumi's Thought on Politics and Governance in Nigeria: An Assessment:

To further understand Gumi's view towards politics, we will have to analyse his viewpoint on the Nigerian democratic system. It ought to be mentioned that Gumi did not identify himself with any political party, neither did he establish a political movement. Yet, he assisted and participated in making sure that appropriate candidates were elected to various political spaces in Nigeria. To achieve his goal, he emphasised that it is necessary for Muslims to participate fully in the election process and to elect good representatives who would promote and defend their interest politically in central government.³³ He further urged Muslim's to have one political party and not to be divided in various parties, so that they can have a strong political unity to bring about changes that would progress their region.³⁴ Gumi, maintained and considered himself as a reformer. He believes that there is a strong tie between Islam and democracy, for any nation to progress; and that could only be achieved through ballot papers. Here again, Gumi's thought contrasts with some stereotypical Western views, which deem Islam and democracy as fundamentally incompatible.³⁵ It could be suggested, because of his affirmation that change can only be obtained through a democratic process, Gumi abstains to push for a Muslim caliphate and chooses to cooperate and support the military rule and political governments elected to power. This is more in line with Maudūdī's thought on modern political Islam which outlined a model for an Islamised state, unlike for instance al-Banna and Quṭb, who desired a re-created caliphate.³⁶ The issue of what kind of political structure is Islamic is an internal debate.

It is paramount to look at the political set ups during the time of Gumi to examine his attempted political reforms. The most dominant political parties in Northern Nigeria at that time were the NPC (Northern People's Congress) and NEPU (Northern Element Progressive Union). Loimeier outlines that the NPC then was the stronger of the two, and thus more traditional in its leadership style and policies.³⁷ The party was founded in June 1949 and began as a cultural movement forum with a vision of promoting unity and opinion exchange among Western-educated elites in Northern Nigeria. Eventually, the forum turned into a political party just before Nigeria's independence in 1960. It is not a surprise that most of its members were of royal background, such as Sardauna and had a strong relationship with emirs of the North.³⁸

For NEPU, it was a party borne out of the NPC and became independent. Gumi believed that its emergence was a result of

³³Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, 204.

³⁴Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crises of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Newyork: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 245.

³⁵Jung Dietrich, "Globalization, State Formation and Religion in the Middle East: 'Is Islam Incompatible with Democracy?,'" *Distinktion (Aarhus)* 5, no. 1 (2004): 61–78; Islam Md, "Islam and Democracy: Conflicts and Congruence," *Religions* 8, no. 6 (2017): 104.

³⁶Belen, "Hassan Al-Bannah and Sayyid Qutub: Continuity or Rupture" in *The Muslim World*, 297.

³⁷Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 158.

³⁸Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, 76.

suspicion raised by the young members of the NPC, who accused the elite of being corrupt. They accused the leaders of NPC of turning a deaf ear to allow emirs to oppress their subjects.³⁹ They claimed that nothing could progressively be attained in the region without addressing the corruption of the traditional rulers and their courtiers.⁴⁰ The young men, such as Sa'ad Zungur and Gumi's friend, Aminu Kano were the leaders and advocates to address the issue of oppression in the North by the emirs. They gradually succeeded and registered on 8th August 1950 as a political party with a slogan "*cheton talakawa*" (liberation of the poor) from the oppression of the traditional rulers.⁴¹ However, in the early 1950s when Sardauna was working to organise his political party NPC in Northern Nigeria, he met Gumi in Saudi Arabia, during the *hajj* period of the year 1955. Since then, the direct connection and close personal relationship between the two was rapidly developed.⁴² Explaining the nature of his relationship with Sardauna, he outlined in his autobiography.

Since he [Sardauna], became the premier of Northern Nigeria and began to establish contacts with the countries of the Middle East, there was hardly any country that the Sardauna visited without me by his side. I was his Arabic interpreter and principal adviser on religious matters. Wherever he went, I was also there, including his last visit to Saudi Arabia barely two days before he was assassinated. Whatever the Sardauna said to the Arab leaders was transmitted through me.⁴³

Gumi was able to promote Sardauna's foreign policies with the Arab world, in return, he utilised that opportunity to promote his reformative agenda on politics progressively. After Sardauna's assassination, Gumi was therefore in need of another political master for political protection from the attacks of his opponents. Similarly, the death of Sardauna had subjected Gumi to much criticism that he had previously been somewhat sheltered from. Gumi's opposers felt free to attack him because he was no longer shielded by any political force. Loimeier suggests, between 1968-69 Gumi was vigorously attacked, and it became necessary to search for a viable platform to respond to his critics.⁴⁴ However, the struggle for political relevance in Nigeria among the scholars began to become more expedient in nature.⁴⁵

Although, Gumi continuously denied being a politician, he was, very active in the political affairs in Nigeria, especially after the assassination of Sardauna. As he said in his autobiography; "I was hardly affected by the political hustle. Personally, I was never inclined to active politics."⁴⁶

After the assassination of Sardauna, various successive military regimes, have claimed political power and controlled the nation's

³⁹Ibid.,82.

⁴⁰Ibid.,82.

⁴¹Ibid.,83.

⁴²Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 154.

⁴³Tsiga, *Where I Stand*,203.

⁴⁴Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 159.

⁴⁵Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 261.

⁴⁶Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, 199.

affairs. Gumi had repeatedly raised his voice for, and against several administrations. For instance, after the military coup against General Ironsi on 27 July 1966, General Yakubu Gowon, a Christian from the North became head of state, and eventually he started to introduce his government policies on Nationalisation of public assets. For those policies, Gumi extensively criticised and accused the Gowon led administration of corruption and economic mismanagement, and consequently condemned Gowon as the "Christian missionary boy from Pankshin."⁴⁷ According to Usman, it was because of Gumi's criticisms of Gowon's administration at a time when corruption and moral decadence prevailed among the leaders in Nigeria, that Gumi was able to boost his popularity in Nigeria.⁴⁸

By 1978-79 Gumi had well entrenched his voice in the political space of Nigeria. It could be argued that it was the reason that made Gumi publicly support his old friend Shehu Shagari in the election campaign of 1979. When the Shagari-led administration after a short period of time proved to be as corrupt and inefficient as the Gowon regime had been, and Gumi failed to address and criticise the corruption in Shagari's government.⁴⁹ This could be proven by Gumi's extensive support and campaign for President Shagari's re-election in the election campaign of 1982-83. To facilitate and maximise a victory for President Shagari, Gumi advocated for the participation of Muslim women in the elections of 1983.⁵⁰ According to Williams, the election of 1979 was the first federal elections in which the women in the North were qualified to vote.⁵¹ Presumably, Gumi's ideas on women's participation in politics could have been partially drawn from the Iranian revolution because the Iranian system combines Islam and democracy into a theocracy.

To see the victory of Shagari, Gumi granted an interview in 1982, to *Gaskiya tafi kwabo* daily newspaper, where he appealed to Northern Muslim men to allow their wives to be registered for general elections and to permit them to exercise their constitutional right to vote. He urged all Muslims to vote for Muslim candidates.⁵² Literally, it is ostensible in this appeal that Gumi had put his voice on an important principle of political process, which is campaigning for political candidates. The real vulnerability of Gumi's appeal was not with identifying himself with partisan politics, by urging Muslim voters to vote specifically for President Shagari and other Muslim candidates, but the religious implication of his argument when he argued that "*Siyasa tafi muhimmanchi da Sallah*" (politics is more important than prayer). The interview took place during the voter registration campaign, one year before the general election, concerning the mixing of men and women in

⁴⁷Usman Yusuf Bala, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987* (Kaduna, 1987), 83.

⁴⁸Ibid.,33.

⁴⁹Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 166.

⁵⁰Muhammad, *The Selfless Reformer*, 88; Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 169.

⁵¹Williams David, *President and Power in Nigeria: The Life of Shehu Shagari* (London: Totowa, 1982), 47.

⁵²Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 169.

political registration and voting.⁵³ His argument, however, was often misunderstood and quoted out of context among the public who then violently criticised him based on misquotations. The local Sufi traditionalists considered his argument as a sign of his turning against a fundamental of Islam. In this regard, it is important to examine his argument, and his interview ought to be quoted, as follows:

Gaskiya tafi kwabo: God bless you. What about the legality of men and women mixing, especially as the time of election draw nearer?

Gumi: Well, it is said that if the Muslims rest, the unbelievers will make war on them. So, it is a duty for men and women to arise and take up arms. If a woman takes up arms, isn't there a mixing of the sexes in this situation? ...Well, [by analogy to this], it is correct to cast a vote. Now since this will be beneficial to oneself and, moreover, beneficial to the Muslim community, it is Satan who prevents them from going out. It is not like going to a party where men and women mix, as at a wedding party... It is Satan who persists in saying that the bringing together of men and women in the polling place is not appropriate... [If] man's wife covers her body properly, well there is no problem. If you hear somebody say that this is a gathering of men and women, we don't want it, this is Satan who urges the unbelievers, men and women, to oppress the Muslims. I personally will go out with my wives, with our children following. If this is not done, even to the point of letting unbelievers predominate, then what is our position?

Gaskiyatafi kwabo: Well, what appeal do you make to the men to let their women go to vote?

Gumi: I appeal to them in a harsh voice to know their religion. This religion, if you do not protect it, it will not protect you. This is what makes me say that [*Siyasa tafi muhimmanchi da Sallah*] politics is more important than prayer. If a man does not say his noon prayer, he acknowledges [the seriousness of] this, and [so] he does not apostatise. But if he acknowledges [the seriousness] of politics, and yet he does not vote, unbelief comes to him. I hope you see the difference! With politics, one stands for prayer and worship together, whereas prayer is only part of this. With politics, one protects men's blood and their well-being... With politics, one protects the manliness of men, so if you say that you will not do it, who is going to protect us?... It is a necessity that every man takes his women and children above the age of eighteen to register so that we can dominate over the non-Muslims.... If you give up politics, you give up religion. It is necessary that you make your children do it. If you fix that which must be fixed, then you will progress with it...

Gaskiya tafi kwabo: So now I understand that you are appealing to the masses to unite to obtain progress by voting well, especially if it is for the sake of religion.

⁵³Allen, "Three Islamic Voices in Contemporary Nigeria" in *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse*, 231.

Gumi: Very true, [it is] necessary. He who refuses his duty to vote refuses his religion completely. May God protect us.

Gaskiya tafi kwabo: Thank you very much, may God help the people to understand.

Gumi: Yes, thank God.⁵⁴

Apart from the above argument to strengthen the political participation of Muslim women, Gumi repeated yet another controversial appeal and argued, in an interview with the same newspaper on the 12 May 1983, that "*al-intikhābāt aham min al-ḥajj*." (Voting is more important than going for pilgrimage).⁵⁵ He called for Muslims to hold back from going to pilgrimage at that particular time, as the elections for parliament and president were fixed at the month of *ḥajj*. Here again, Gumi was accused of nepotism by his political and religious opponents. They elucidated his appeal as a vivid attack on yet another pillar of Islam.⁵⁶ Although Gumi has been religiously and politically criticised, his appeal has been warmly honoured especially among the women who contributed enormously to a decisive victory which swept the Shagari led administration back to power, albeit briefly.⁵⁷ Shagari's second term in office came to an end with the coup of Generals Buhari and Idiagbon on 31 December 1983.⁵⁸

When Gumi made such appeals, the question of women going to vote raised a seemingly religious upheaval, and it was among the issues being treated with the utmost caution by scholars. Women first participated in the voting process in Northern Nigeria in the year 1979, thus, the matter was still afresh in people's mind and became of concern to all classes of people in society. Coming at a time when people were astray about Islamic rulings not only on women's voting but, generally, on various religious matters, such as leaving home to acquire knowledge. More than any other social class, Muslim women have been deprived their rights by men, and as such they suffered spiritually, materially, and politically as men dominated the political and theological scene. The issue of the mixing of the sexes is one issue that has arisen since the time of Usman bin Foduye, when he criticised the mixing of men and women in ceremonies, such as, weddings and child-naming ceremonies.⁵⁹ To get his opinion heard, Gumi used both radio stations, such as Radio Kaduna and prints, such as *Gaskiya tafi kwabo* newspaper, to reach out to all classes of people. Learned elites were usually the patrons of newspapers and articles, whereas

⁵⁴ Gumi, quoted in Allen, "Three Islamic Voices in Contemporary Nigeria" in *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse*, 232-34.

⁵⁵Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 169.

⁵⁶Ibid., 168.

⁵⁷Allen, "Three Islamic Voices in Contemporary Nigeria" in *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse*, 235; Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 168.

⁵⁸Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, 168.

⁵⁹Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, 89; Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, 77.

the masses were the usual listeners of radio in Nigeria.⁶⁰ Highlighting the suitability of Gumi's methods, Christelow states:

Gumi's style is one very much suited to [Northern Nigerian] wide audience. It is oral and didactic, with simple, emphatic arguments, usually repeated with a slight variation to make sure that they get across. It is a style with strong roots in traditional Islamic teaching and preaching, and which has been skilfully adapted to electronic amplification on radio sermons and talk shows.⁶¹

The remarkable thing in Gumi's appeal, is how he was able to simplify and present his arguments with mixture of Islamic and modern tunes thus appealing to the pious masses and western influenced youth. His method of argument by analogy of women taking up arms alongside men to defend Islam, is one example to prove that. Furthermore, Gumi in his appeal attempted to reconcile a modern political value with an Islamic one. This could also be traced from his comparison of mixing the sexes in defending Islam with the mixing of the sexes in voting processes. Although, the expression of his argument that politics is more important than prayer, at first glance, or when quoted out of context, might be alarming. Gumi considered Islam in such danger that voting to ensure the correct continuation of Islamic practice became paramount. Gumi could be interpreted as suggesting politics was more important than prayer simply due to the contemporary circumstances of Nigeria where Islam in the public sphere was so at risk that political participation was necessary to ensure the continuation of Islam in the region. Without granting political protection to Islam, Gumi may have feared that Islam would be eradicated in time and thus prayer would cease anyway. Politics became emphasised to ensure the community would be able to continue the practice of Islam for generations to come. Thus, politics became important to enable not only prayer, but Islam for following generations.

He further added that politics is all about the protection of six necessities of human life: preservation of what he called *diyānah* (worships), *rayuwa* (life), *dukiya* (wealth), *nasaba* (lineage), *hankali* (sane), and *mutunchi* (reputation).⁶² According to him, politics and governance is all about the protection of these necessities, and that could only be achieved by two things. Firstly, by ensuring good politicians are elected to office; secondly, by establishing good legislation to maintain law and order in society.⁶³

Therefore, it is of no doubt that Gumi's appeal regarding Muslim women's participation in political processes was a significant step in the consolidation of women's involvement in political processes, not only to vote, but also to be elected into various political offices in Nigeria with equal rights.

Conclusion:

Sheikh Gumi was one key figure who engaged himself fully to reform Islam in Nigeria generally and politics in particular. From Gumi's perspective, Islam is a holistic system which intertwined

⁶⁰Allen, "Three Islamic Voices in Contemporary Nigeria" in *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse*, 235.

⁶¹Ibid., 235.

⁶²Ibid., 164.

⁶³Ibid., 164-66.

worshiping God, human socio-economic and political affairs. He maintained that Islam has provided blueprints and guidelines on morality, economic, social, and political life of humankind. To him, Islam is one single unit with various branches that made it universal. In Gumi's eyes, religion and politics are one component and inseparable. Gumi explained that Qur'ān vividly expounded both worldly matters and religious worship, thus separating religion and politics was not only misleading but wrong in Islam. Here, Gumi's standpoint regarding the non-separation of religion and state stands alongside Hassan al-Banna, Abū al-'Alā al-Maudūdī and Iqbal among other Muslim modernists.

Gumi's political reforms reflects his methodology in dealing with contemporary challenges, which combined a reformist and modernist interpretations of Islam and its applicability based on the principle of *maṣlaḥa 'āmah* (public interest). Even though, the dominant political system globally is that of modern-state model, which is recognised by the United Nations is secular oriented. Yet, Gumi believed and accepted some Western politics, as he was actively engaged in the Nigerian political system. Gumi had the conviction that human life needs to be regulated and that without a system to regulate it, there will be chaos in human social and political life. Gumi never competed for any political office, but he participated in making sure that right people were elected to various political spaces in Nigerian politics. Gumi assumed that in modern times, change is only obtainable through democratic process. He abstained to push for the emergence of a caliphate but opted to co-operate with diverse military rulers and political governments in power. Gumi's advocacy for political participation has impacted the advancement of political mobilisation of Nigerian women politics, Muslim unity and other related matters.

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