

# Sarkin Kano

## Ibrahim Dabo (1819-1846)

Ibrahim Dabo was appointed Sarkin Kano on Tuesday 23rd/24th Dhul Qa'ada 1234 AH (September 21, 1819) by Sarkin Musulmi Muhammad Bello (Ado-Kurawa 1989:50 and Last 1966: 468-469). He was perhaps the youngest member of the Emirate council before his appointment as the Sarki. He had a reputation of sound Islamic scholarship at Gulu where he established a mosque, which has remained as a legacy of his remarkable scholarship. He returned to Kano from Gulu to join the contingent of his elder brother Mallam Jamo during the Jihad campaigns in Kano. According to some sources Dabo was also reported to have lived in Kanwa where the Dagaci has named the house Dabo lived as Gidan Dabo. He succeeded Jamo as a member of the council during the reign of Sulaiman.

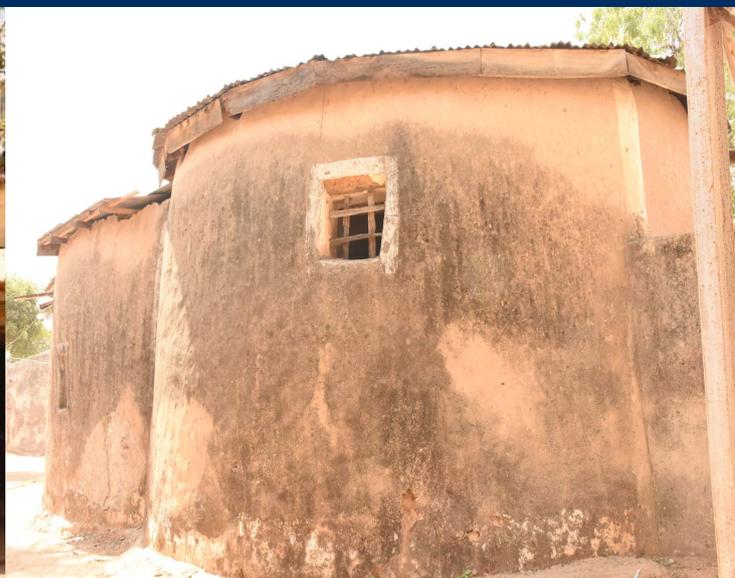


Before his appointment as the Emir he had a distinguished career as a scholar and later Imam of Galadanci Mosque where he succeeded his brother Dahiru. Sarkin Kano Sulaiman had also dispatched them to Zaria to assist the Emir of Zazzau his battle against rebels. Dahiru lost his life and Ibrahim Dabo continued until they were able to defeat rebels and returned home. This earned him the confidence of Sarkin Kano Sulaiman. He remained loyal to Sulaiman while other chiefs were not. This made Sulaiman to bequeath to Sarkin Musulmi that Ibrahim Dabo should succeed him.

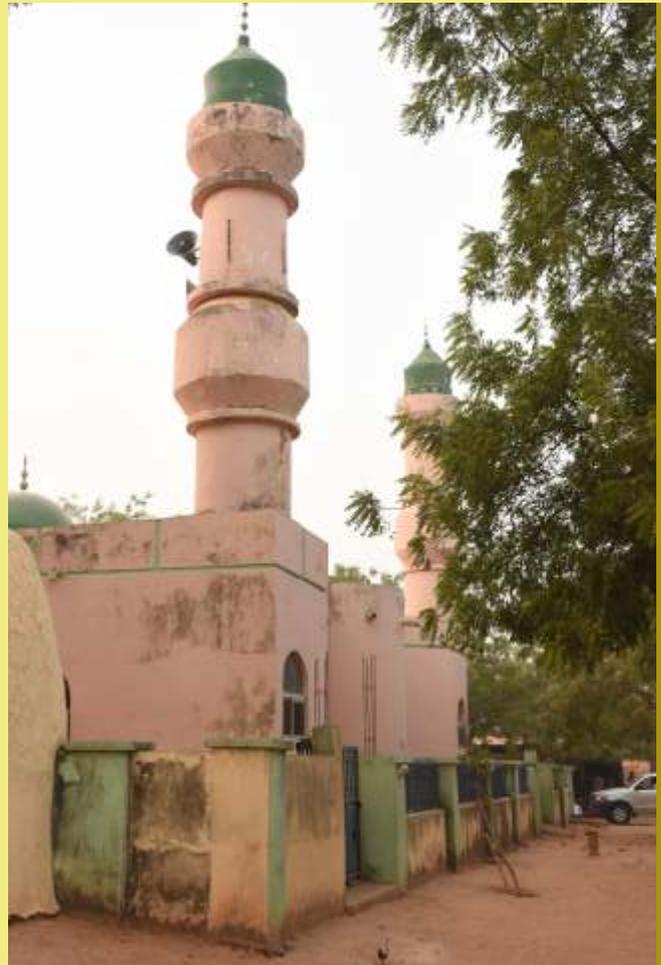


One of the history sources suggested that the elder members of the Emirate Council unanimously nominated Ibrahim Dabo for the Emirship. Contrary to the above version that it was Sarkin Kano Sulaiman who left a will that the Sarkin Musulmi should appoint Ibrahim Dabo but never Dabo Dambazau or Mandikko son of Mallam Bakatsine. The Sarkin Musulmi therefore sent a message to Mallam Jibril who was the most respected amongst the surviving Jihad leaders informing them that Ibrahim Dabo should be appointed. It was in deference to this honor that Dabo decided to make the Yolawa to head the Electoral College or Kingmakers Council (Adamu 2007b: 12).

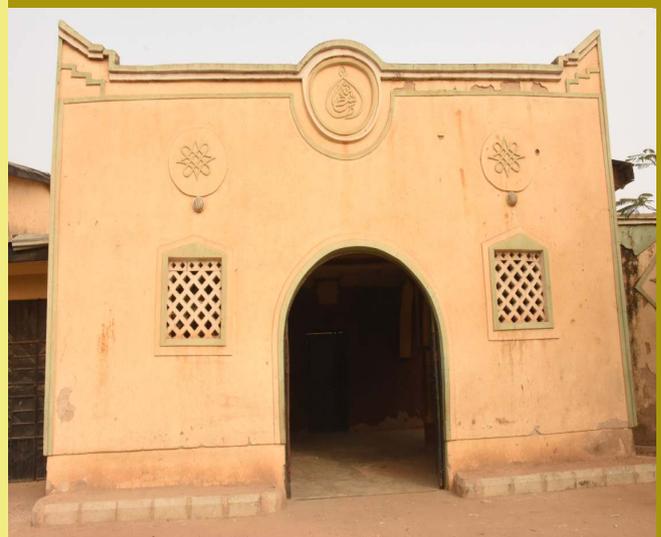
Ibrahim Dabo was confronted by serious dissent immediately he assumed the Emirship of Kano the most serious was that of Dantunku, who refused to pledge allegiance to the new Sarki. Dantunku was regarded as a rebel by Muhammad Zangi the official historian of the Jihad in Kano, but Murray Last the historian of the Sokoto Caliphate described the latter's treatment of Dantunku's uprising as less than fair (Last 1966 and Ado-Kurawa 1989). Adamu (2007a: 128-129) extensively documented the animosity amongst the Jihadist during the reign of Sulaiman and its spill over to the reign of Ibrahim. H. A. S. Johnston, the colonial official and writer also observed that during "Sulaiman's reign the rivalry between the Fulani clan leaders had made their rule in Kano very precarious, and may have been a factor in Ibrahim Dabo's decision to reorganize the administration" (Fika 1978: 18-19).



Ibrahim Dabo entered *Khalwa* (seclusion or spiritual retreat) in which he sought divine guidance against the dissents and rebellions that characterized the beginning of his reign and it was after this seclusion that he established *Ribats* at Panisau, Ungogo and Dawaki. Later he also defeated Dantunku after several battles. He was nicknamed *Saifullahi* or Sword of Allah because of his victory over all the incited rebels who revolted against his leadership (Ado-Kurawa 1989: 51-53). *Galadima* Sani, the younger brother of Sarkin Kano Sulaiman, incited most of the rebels. According to the Kano Chronicle, *Galadima* Sani, “tried to raise a revolt and incite all the towns to disaffection”. This was perhaps due to *Galadima* Sani's ambition and partly due to Sarkin Kano Ibrahim Dabo's determination to effect some administrative changes. Sarkin Kano Dabo later secured the loyalty of Sani through diplomacy and his magnanimous disposition (Said 2012: 75).



Kano was invaded by Shehu Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno during the reign of Ibrahim Dabo. This invasion was a major threat to Kano Emirate in particular and Sokoto Caliphate in general. The Borno forces led siege on Garko after serious battle the broke the town defensive wall but it was already dark therefore they retreated until next morning and when they returned it was already reconstructed overnight. This astonished the Borno forces. They later retreated without unexpectedly as they learnt al-Kanemi was withdrawing as well from his location near Garko.





The invaders came as far as the outskirts of Kano city, where they enslaved freeborn Muslims who were coming out of the city for firewood and other things. This was confirmed in a letter al-Kanemi wrote to Mai Ibrahim. These acts of al-Kanemi were for territorial aggrandizement. Sarkin Musulmi Muhammad Bello ordered Sarkin Bauchi Yakubu to assist Kano. Sarkin Bauchi directed his chief Madaki Hassan to confront the Borno forces he informed him that they were very powerful but Sarkin Bauchi rebuked this angered him and he went on to fight and lost life. Sarkin Bauchi was very remorseful when he confronted the Borno forces he appreciated Madaki Hassan's predicament and regretted losing him. Sarkin Bauchi Yakubu routed the Borno forces and one of the major insignias of Borno, its *Tambari*, were seized by the Bauchi forces (Hogben 1966:107 and 336).



The revolts and invasions that characterized his early reign and the cultural orientation of the Kano society enabled Ibrahim Dabo to reintroduce authoritarian rule and some of the pre-Jihad traditions particularly the regalia of Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Rumfa which were not in conflict with the Shari'ah. It has been suggested that he was permitted by Sarkin Musulmi to reintroduce such pre-Jihad traditions. Ibrahim Dabo was encouraged in the pursuance of this policy by *Shamaki Nasamu* and *Dan Rimi Barka* the two most powerful pre-Jihad slave officials inherited from the overthrown Kutumbi Dynasty (Fika 1978: 19).

Ibrahim Dabo established an efficient administration after subduing his opponents and rebels. This was achieved diplomatically, since force was only used when it was indispensable. Muhammad Zangi Ibn Salih summarized these administrative successes of Sarki Ibrahim Dabo in his *Taqyid al-akhbar* as follows: "He established justice, instructed people to do good and prevented them from doing evil. He killed the

highway robbers, amputated the hands of the thieves and destroyed the houses of the fornicators. It reached the extent that people no longer closed their doors at night and animals moved freely without shepherds except during the rainy season. Allah opened the routes during his reign and a lady could travel from Kukawa to Kwara without any harassment” (Ado-Kurawa 1989: 53). This was corroborated by Clapperton's account of the state of the Sokoto Caliphate when he visited the area during the reign of Sarkin Musulmi Muhammadu Bello: “The laws of the Qur'an were in his (Bello`s) time so strictly put in force... that the whole country when not in a state of war, was so well-regulated that it is common saying that a woman might travel with a casket of gold upon her head from one end of the Fellata dominions to the other” (Clapperton 1829: 206).

Sarkin Kano Ibrahim Dabo died on Friday 9th Safar 1262 AH (9th February 1846). He had governed Kano for twenty-seven years, three months and sixteen days (Ado-Kurawa 1989: 53

and Last 1966: 468-9). He was a scholar as noted earlier and one of his works *Kaffal-ikhwani* has been

