

**SUFISM... WHICH SIMPLY CONNOTES  
THE SCIENCE OF REALIZING THE ETHICAL  
AND SPIRITUAL VALUES OF ISLAM...**

*An Interview with Yusuph Dauda GAMBARI, Ph.D*

**doi** : 10.30546/ijis.2023.4.70

|                  |                  |                   |                          |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Received:</b> | <b>Accepted:</b> | <b>Published:</b> | <b>Available online:</b> |
| 28 March, 2023   | 01 May, 2023     | 13 May, 2021      | 20 May, 2021             |



64

**To contact Dr. Yusuph Dauda GAMBARI, Ph.D.,**  
Lecturer I  
Department of Religions, University of Ilorin,  
Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria  
Mobile: +2348067088674  
*Email: yusuph.dg@unilorin.edu.ng*

**Interviewed by:** **Dr.Rabiu IYANDA**  
*Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria*  
*International Multicultural Network Country*  
*Representative in Nigeria*

**Ilahe M.KURSHUN**  
*Azerbaijan Wisdom Sciences Center, Turkiye*

## The Interview

- **Let's start with a brief self-introduction.**

I am Yusuph Dauda Gambari, a lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. I hold my PhD in Sufism and my research, basically focused on appraising Sufism in the light of *Salafiyyah* scholars' criticisms to determine the veracity and appropriateness of their claims.

- **Could you tell us about the Sufism in Africa?**

Africa continent is the home of Sufism across ages. Many of the great men of *Tasawwuf* lived, studied, died, and were buried in Africa, in the places like Egypt, Morocco, Mali, Mauritania, Algeria, and Libya among others. The *Tijaniyyah* order was founded in Africa by Shaykh Ahmad Tijani (d.1815) in Fes, Morocco. *Qadiriyyah*, *Ikhalsiyyah*, *Shadhaliyyah* and *Sanusiyyah* and a host of others are Sufi orders with numerous impacts on African Muslims. Sufis were responsible for the spread and consolidation of Islam in many African countries. West African nations like Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Mauritania among others have a strong historical base in Sufism. The *Tijaniyyah* has the largest followers in West Africa courtesy of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass Al-Khawlakhi (d.1975), a Senegalese. His annual *Mawlidu-Nabiyy* celebration is well attended by a mammoth crowd across the Muslim world.

- **Please tell us more about the Sufism in Nigeria.**

Nigeria is a country of over 200 Million people, over half of which are Muslims and are majorly Sufi adherents of either *Tijaniyyah* or *Qadiriyyah* as the two main Sufi orders in the country, though there are some other minority *Turuq*, like *Ikhlasiyyah* and *Rifa'iyyah* among others. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century *Jihad* of Uthman bin Fudi (d.1817) which culminated in the establishment of the Caliphate of Sokoto was a *Qadiriyyah* staged one because the leader was a staunch *Qadiriyyah* member. Daily activities of Nigerian Muslims revolve around Sufism. They celebrate *Mawlidu 'n-Nabiyy* in colourful ways. There is always an annual national holiday to mark and celebrate *Mawlid*. Many Nigeria could not differentiate between Sufism and Islam. They see both as synonymous. They hold *Zawiyah* regularly across the cities and embark on *Khalwah*. Many Sufi scholars have authored different works on Sufism in Arabic language and the two major languages in the country, namely: Hausa and Yoruba languages. Sufism is entrenched in the Nigerian Universities' curriculum and there are Sufi scholars across the North and Southern parts of the country.

- **Could you tell us about your thoughts on the study of Salafism and Sufism?**

*Salafiyyah* refers to a body of Sunni Muslims intending to practise Islam according to the understanding of the people of the *Salaf* (the first three

generations of Islam). This covers the generation of the companions, their successors and those that followed them. They are technically called *As-Salaf 'ş-Şalihūn* (the pious predecessors). The Salafis hold them in high esteem in religious matters. The Salafis are also known and referred to by different names like *Ahlu-Sunnah*, *Ahlul-Hadith*, and *Athariyyah* among others.

Sufis on the other hand referred to adherents of Sufism, which simply connotes the science of realizing the ethical and spiritual values of Islam. It deals essentially with the soul and how best to nurture it to attain the pleasure of Allah. Sufism encapsulates the psychological teachings of Islam and directs every feeling and thought to Allah. Sufism is therefore to have a heartfelt connection with Allah.

As stated earlier, my interest is to determine the veracity of *Salafiyyah* scholars' claims about Sufism. It is for this reason that I had my MA. Dissertation on Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328), with the title "A Study of Sufism in the Thoughts of Ibn Taymiyyah" while my PhD Thesis is "An Examination of Selected *Salafiyyah* Scholars' Discourse on Sufism". The thesis focused essentially on some contemporary *Salafiyyah* scholars like Shaykh Uthaymin (d.2001), Shaykh Ibn Baz (d.1999) and Shaykh Nasirudin Al-Bani (d.1999). The discussions in my research were carried out along with the submissions of Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (d.1349) and Ibn Abdulwahhab (d.1792) on Sufism. These are major scholars that the contemporary *Salafiyyah* scholars claimed inspiration from their views on Sufism.

66

The findings revealed that neither Ibn Taymiyyah nor the other two scholars condemn Sufism outrightly as claimed by many contemporary *Salafiyyah* scholars, but they upheld some Sufi doctrines and practices and praised some Sufis in their respective works.

The sworn enemies of Sufism are the three identified contemporary *Salafiyyah* scholars and many of their claims are borne out of misrepresentations, assumptions and over-generalization. Studies have shown that they do not understand what Sufism is all about.

So, there are many areas that one can explore on Sufism in Africa, especially in Nigeria where I base and I will be willing to partner with you in this regard.

- **Thank you for your interest and for interviewing us.**
- **My regards!**

#### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.