

Sufi Revival and Islamic Literacy: Tijani Writings in Twentieth-century Nigeria

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This paper provides a provisional account of ongoing research on the literary production of Nigerian authors belonging to the Tijaniyya Sufi order. The research is part of a wider collaborative project launched in 2007 by ISITA (Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa)¹ at Northwestern University, funded by the Ford Foundation and directed by Rüdiger Seesemann, now at Bayreuth University, Germany. The project covers several African countries including—besides Nigeria—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Mauritania. The project is aimed at producing a full catalogue of the literature of the Tijaniyya, whose *‘ulama’* have formed one of the most prolific (in terms of literary production) Islamic religious networks active in the northern and western regions of the continent during the last two centuries.

The Tijaniyya

A Sufi *tariqa* grounded in Sunnism (the founder and many of his associates were Maliki jurists besides being Sufis), the Tijaniyya was established by Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (born in ‘Ayn Madhi, in the Algerian desert in 1737; died in Fez,

Morocco, 1815) after a vision of the Prophet experienced during one of his retreats (*khalwa*) in the Algerian village of Abu Samghun (Bou Semghoun). Like many Sufi orders of the late classical era, the Tijaniyya is established around the principle of the ‘Muhammadan way’ (*al-tariqa al-muhammadiyya*), a spiritual method that emphasises the practice of sending invocations of blessings (*salawat*) on the Prophet as a means of spiritual realisation.² The Tijaniyya is also distinguished by the claim made by its founder Ahmad al-Tijani of being the ‘Seal’ (*khatim*) of sainthood (*wilaya*). The idea of the existence of a spiritual

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station known as the ‘Seal of Saints’ had a prior history in Sufism. It first appeared with al-Hakim al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 910), author of a full treatise entitled *Khatm al-Awliya’* (*The Seal of Saints*).³ The concept also featured prominently in the works of the celebrated Muhyi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240), especially in a number of sections of his *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* (“The Meccan Revelations”) as well as in a treatise known as *al-‘Anqa’ al-mughrib fi khatm al-awliya’ wa-shams al-maghrib* (“The Fabulous Gryphon, on the Seal of Saints and on the Sun rising from the West”).⁴

Although no explicit reference was made by al-Tijani about the coming of the *mahdi* (the awaited messianic figure of the Islamic tradition), it is also generally believed within the order that the manifestation of the spiritual way (*tariqa*) of the Seal is also connected to the approaching of the Last Hour, thereby infusing the order with some kind of a messianic dimension.

During the life of its founder, and immediately after his death, the Tijaniyya spread quickly in North Africa among the literate elites, influencing to a considerable degree the religious, intellectual and political life of countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania and, to a lesser extent, Egypt.⁵ The order also enjoyed some visibility in Palestine⁶ and Turkey.⁷ In West Africa, the Tijaniyya attained exceptional prominence after the military Jihad of al-Hajj ‘Umar al-Futi (d. 1864), a scholar from Futa Toro (today’s Senegal) who had been nominated a *khalifa* (representative) of the order by Muhammad al-Ghali, a companion of Ahmad al-Tijani whom he had met in Mecca. The history of ‘Umar al-Futi, as well as the subsequent history of the order during the colonial time in the region that fell under French control (Mali, Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire), is well known, thanks to the attention that a number of Tijani leaders attracted by being involved first in the anti-colonial fight, and later, in setting the ‘accommodation’ with the Europeans that allowed Islam to continue growing in West Africa under colonial rule.⁸

The Tijaniyya in Nigeria

Due to the influence of the Qadiriyya as the ‘official’ order of the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria, during the nineteenth century, the Tijaniyya remained relatively marginal in Nigeria, if compared to other regions of West Africa. A nucleus of Tijanis was established there by ‘Umar al-Futi, who visited Sokoto in 1830, while he was on his way to Mecca, and then again in 1837, while

on his way back to Futa Toro. ‘Umar befriended the Caliph of Sokoto at that time, Muhammad Bello (d. 1837), and married one of his daughters. The question of whether Bello himself was initiated into the Tijaniyya by ‘Umar, however, has been a subject of contention and, at times, of heated controversy for Nigerian scholars for almost two centuries.⁹

Through the nineteenth century, while the Qadiriyya continued to hold semi-official status in Sokoto, capital of the Caliphate, the Tijaniyya gradually penetrated among the political and scholarly elites of other emirates such as Kano, Katsina and Zaria. The latter was considered to be the centre of excellence in northern Nigeria for the study of Arabic literature and grammar, and it is here that the first Tijani poems (*qasa’id*) in Hausa were written by Malam Shi’itu b. ‘Abd al-Ra’uf (d. ca. 1864), a scholar born in ‘Yandoto (Kano) into a family of Tunisian origins. He later settled in Zaria, where he became a major Tijani propagandist. Among his students was the thirteenth emir of Zaria, ‘Ali b. ‘Abd al-Qadir (d. 1924), known

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as Aliyu Dan Sidi, whose elegant religious poetry of the *wa’azi* (admonition) genre, originally written in Arabic script Hausa, has been published many times in Latin script by the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company (NNPC; first edition 1980, most recent edition 2010). The most outstanding Nigerian Tijani author of the nineteenth century, however, was ‘Umar al-Wali (d. 1897), also based in Zaria, who was a learned theologian, a mystic, a grammarian and an exceptionally skilled poet. His writings, all in Arabic, include poems on astronomy, jurisprudence, theology and on such abstruse grammatical issues as the conditions that require the elision (*ibdal*) of the Arabic letter *hamza*, a topic he deemed worth dedicating an entire poem of 414 verses!¹⁰ Though ‘Umar al-Wali wrote on virtually every subject, he was especially known for his works on Sufism, among which feature a 582-verse poem on the diseases of the

soul called *al-Matlab al-nafis*,¹¹ as well as what is probably his most influential work, *Mablagh al-amani* (also known as *Alfiyyat al-tariq*),¹² a poem of five hundred verses on Tijani doctrines and practices; this poem is still taught today by local scholars to their students.¹³

In Kano, the main commercial centre of Hausaland, the Tijaniyya rose to prominence in the early twentieth century, under Emir ‘Abbas (r. 1903-1919). The history of the Tijanis in the city of Kano has been extensively documented by John Paden in his important monograph.¹⁴ In the early 1920s, a dynamic network of the order formed around the students of two influential local scholars. The first of these was Abu Bakr Mijinyawa (d. 1946), who was considered to be a specialist of Sufism and who wrote, among other works, a long poem on the Tijaniyya known as *Sullam al-diraya*.¹⁵ The second was Muhammad Salga (d. 1938), who was a jurist known for his reformist attitude, and who has a number of short legal treatises to his credit, as well as some works on the Tijaniyya. Both Mijinyawa and Salga had been disciples of a Tijani mystic from Morocco, Muhammad al-‘Alami (d. 1922). Al-‘Alami had visited Kano and taught there, popularising the teachings of the Marrakesh scholar Mahammad al-Nazifi (d. 1944) and bringing copies of the latter’s long poem (usually published in two volumes) on the Tijaniyya, known as *al-Yaquta al-farida*. It is mainly because of the popularity of al-Nazifi’s writings, as well as because of the messianic climate created in the region by the colonial conquest, that Kano scholars at that time nurtured the expectation that the appearance of a ‘flood’ (*foyda*) was imminent. According to a saying attributed to the founder of the order Ahmad al-Tijani and often quoted by al-Nazifi in his writings, in fact, a ‘flood’ was destined to appear and to trigger a sudden increase in *ma’rifa* (knowledge of the divine) as well as an unprecedented popularisation of the Tijaniyya.¹⁶

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A few years after the death of al-‘Alami, the emir of Kano Abdullahi Bayero (d. 1953) returned from his first pilgrimage to Mecca with the firm conviction of having met the depository of the predicted flood (*sahib al-foyda*) in the person of the Senegalese scholar and mystic Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975), whom he had encountered during the pilgrimage rites. The association of Abdullahi

Bayero and Ibrahim Niasse paved the way for the formation of an organic link between the network of Kano Tijani scholars who had formerly studied under Mijinyawa and Salga, and the Senegalese Sufi, whose cause as the “depository of the Tijani flood” was enthusiastically embraced by the students of

Salga starting from the late 1940s.¹⁷ Such a link between Niasse and the scholars of Kano, from then on known as ‘*Asimat al-foyda*’ (“The capital of the [Tijani] flood”), in turn, accounts for the fast spread of the *foyda* movement in Nigeria and the neighbouring countries.

The *Foyda* Tijaniyya as a Revival of Islamic Literature in Nigeria

In only a few years, the new network of Kano-based Tijani scholars known as the “people of the flood (*foyda*)” (in Hausa ‘*yan faila*’), building on its association with a group of dynamic traders of the same city, was able to link up with most earlier Tijani networks in the country (Borno, Nguru, Zaria, Yola, Nupeland, Ilorin) and beyond (Chad, Ghana, Cameroon, Niger) and to absorb them within a common agenda: spreading the news that the awaited *foyda* had occurred at the hands of the Senegalese Ibrahim Niasse, and transmitting the latter’s method of spiritual training (*tarbiya*), which was claimed to guarantee the aspirant the attainment of *ma’rifa* (divine knowledge) in an exceptionally short time. As the very idea of the *foyda* was based on deeply traditional ideas about the association between piety, Islamic religious practices and knowledge, and as the bulk of the

Nigerian supporters of the 'flood' was drawn from the traditional class of clerics and literates who animated private circles of students of Islamic knowledge, the revival of Sufi practices associated with the *fayda* network in Nigeria indirectly generated also an authentic boom of Islamic literature, the likes of which the region had not experienced since the times of the celebrated Jihad of Shaykh Usman Dan Fodio (d. 1817).

Virtually the entire corpus of twentieth-century Tijani literature from Nigeria has been produced by scholars associated with the *fayda* network. Among the most active writers, one can quote the Kano-based Abu Bakr al-'Atiq (d. 1974), Ahmad al-Tijani b. 'Uthman (d. 1970) and Muhammad al-Thani Kafanga (d. 1989) who, together with the less prolific writer, but very eloquent preacher 'Uthman al-Qalansuwi (Mai Hula) (d. 1988), are considered to be the four 'pillars' of the *fayda* in Kano. Other active writers from other parts of Nigeria include the following: Yahudha b. Sa'd (d. 1964) and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Nufawi (d. 1963), both of whom were based in Zaria (Kaduna state); Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Qadir (d. 1986), known as *Balarabe*, and 'Ali b. Sa'id (d. 1997), both from Gusau (Zamfara state); Muhammad Ghibrima al-Daghiri (d. 1975) of Nguru (Yobe state); Mudaththir b. 'Abd al-Salam (d. 1991) of Ibadan (Oyo state); Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Agbarigidoma (d. 2001) of Ilorin (Kwara state); Yusuf b. 'Abdallah (b. ca. 1913) of Lokoja (Kogi state); finally Ahmad Abu'l-Fath al-Yarwawi (d. 2004), Abu Bakr al-Miskin (b. 1918) and Ibrahim Salih al-Husayni (b. 1937), all based in Maiduguri (Borno state). Many of the writings by these scholars have already been included in vol. 2 of the encyclopaedic work *The Arabic Literature of Africa* (henceforth ALA II).¹⁸ In the following pages, however, in attempting a cursory description of this type of literature, I will refer preferentially to titles that have been uncovered during my research in Nigeria and which were not originally included in ALA II.

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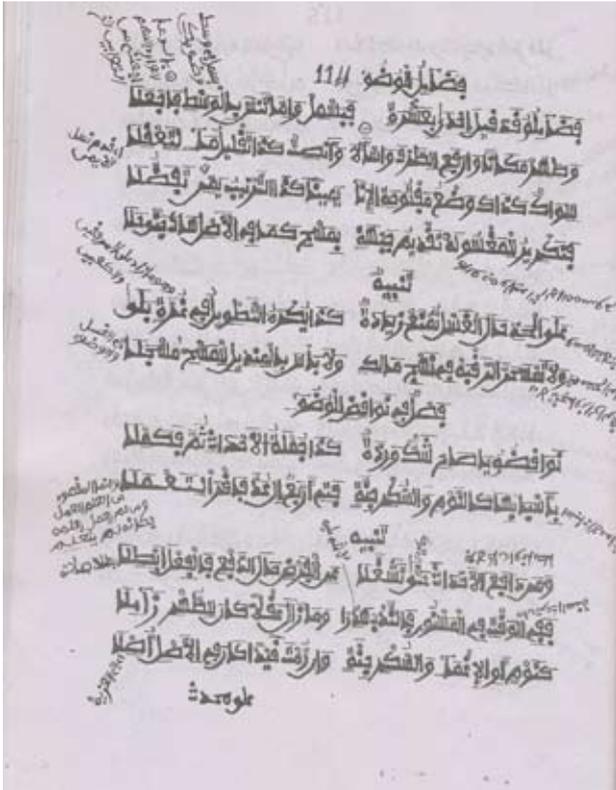
Types and Purposes of Tijani Literature

The genres of the Tijani literature of the Nigerian *fayda* network fully reflect the activities of their writers not only as promoters of a particular Sufi group, but as scholars animating a comprehensive revival of traditional Islamic knowledge. Manuals, commentaries or abridgments of Islamic law (always in the Maliki jurisprudential tradition, although occasionally at variance with the majority position in the Maliki *madhhab*) and theology (Ash'ari school) feature prominently. Polemical writings in defence of the Tijani doctrines are also well represented, as well as works related to the local history of the order. Most of the Tijani

scholars were locally trained in traditional Islamic religious literature, in which writing in verse, in the form of the classical Arabic *qasida*, had always occupied a central place; consequently, these writings include an impressive amount of poetry in several languages

(mainly Arabic, but also Nigerian languages such as Hausa and Kanuri). This poetry covers topics such as eulogy (there are literally thousands of poems in praise either of the Prophet Muhammad, of Sh. Ahmad al-Tijani, of Sh. Ibrahim Niase and of local figures of the order), elegy (always providing important biographical information on the scholars elegised), satire and invective (providing exceptionally useful information on local conflicts in which the Tijanis participated), travelogues, occasional poems and countless versifications of classical treatises of Islamic law or theology studied in local circles.

Such a literature, which continues to be written today, is entirely classical in style and traditional in function and purpose. From the point of view of style, poems in the classical metres of Arabic poetry and treatises in the rational, analytical prose of classical Islamic religious literature constitute most of the writings. In terms of their purpose, many of the writings are either didactic (aimed at being used as a support for teaching



A page from Malam Abu Bakr Gonimi's versification of Abu Hasan al-Shadhili's 'Izziyya.



A page from Malam Rabi'u Dantinki's 'Jami' al-Nawafi'.

the classical corpus of Islamic knowledge), or devotional (aimed at being recited privately during night devotional vigils, or publicly at communal religious occasions). As such, this literature largely mirrors the life of the Tijani *zawaya* (pl. of *zawiya*, “centre of religious activities” of a given Sufi order), where time is cadenced by a regular succession of moments of study and devotion, both individual and communal. In such a context, the writing of commentaries, abridgments and versifications of books of the traditional curricular corpus of Islamic knowledge is meant as a didactic support for the study of these subjects, which takes place at specific times of the day in the *zawaya* or in the houses of the scholars. The writing of poems in praise (Arabic *madh*; Hausa *yabo*) of the Prophet, of Ahmad al-Tijani and of Ibrahim Niase, also has a particular purpose, as they are meant to be recited publicly during the yearly

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communal celebrations of their birthdays, which are, respectively, in the nights of the months of Rabi‘ al-Awwal, Safar and Rajab. The celebration of these birthdays attracts huge crowds to the many *zawaya* scattered through the country and serves to renew, periodically, the allegiance of the members of the order to the spiritual *silsila* (chain of transmission) connecting them to Ibrahim Niase, to Ahmad al-Tijani and from the latter, to the Prophet. These celebrations also mark the presence of the order in public, and provide an arena for showcasing the literary skills of the many poets who cultivate the *madh* genre, both in Arabic and Hausa.

Almost all of the scholars of the *fayda* network



The four 'pillars' of the Fayda Tijaniyya in Kano. From left to right: Shaykh Tijjani Usman, Shaykh Sani Kafanga, Shaykh Abubakdr Atiku, Shaykh Usman Maihula.

(photo courtesy of Abdulla Mai Masallaci Foundation, Kano)

have at least one poem of the *madh* genre to their credit, which makes a complete census of this type of literature virtually impossible. Among the emerging scholars of Kano who are extremely prolific today in writing the Arabic verse, and whose writings are absent from ALA II, one may mention 'Abd al-Wahid Muhammad al-Nazifi al-Qarmawi. Born in 1966, a son of Malam Karami, brother of the celebrated Shaykh Abu Bakr al-'Atiq, al-Qarmawi has published several dozen works, mostly in verses. These range from long compositions such as *al-Hiba al-ilahiyya fi madh sayyidina Muhammad khayr al-bariyya*, a poem of about a thousand verses in praise of the Prophet (publ. Kano, 2004, 76 pp.) also known as *al-Alfiyya*

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al-nazifiyya, to shorter ones such as *Tahsil al-murad fi madh ghawth al-'ibad*, one of his many poems in praise of Ibrahim Niasse (publ. Kano, 1995, 9 pp.). Hundreds of *madh* poems which, like al-Qarmawi's, were not included in ALA II, are presently being catalogued in my survey, and many continue to be written every year. A successful poem of the *madh* genre must display the author's knowledge of the details of the life of the person eulogised. In the case of the eulogies dedicated to the Prophet, to Ahmad al-Tijani and to Ibrahim Niasse, a sound poem is also expected to contain subtle allusions to the spiritual essences (*haqa'iq*) which the esoteric cosmology of the 'people of the *fayda*' associates with the three figures seen, respectively, as the 'Master

of existence' (*Sayyid al-wujud*), the 'Seal of saints' (*Khatim al-awliya'*) and the 'Depository of the flood' (*Sahib al-fayda*). At times, some of these poems can display a particular literary skill of their authors, which makes them unique. This consolidates the recognition that the authors of those poems enjoy within the scholarly community and, at the same time, contributes to the belief that the poem in question is endowed with a particular 'blessing' (*baraka*) that makes its recitation uniquely beneficial in the process of spiritual ascent (*suluk* or *sayr*) of the aspirant. This is the case, for example, of a *Qasida mimiyya* (poem rhyming in the Arabic letter *mim*) written by Uba Sufyan b. Muhammad al-Awwal al-Badawi (known as Shaykh Uba Sufyan Dorayi) and published in the collection *Qasa'id al-madh fi'l-Nabi* by the author (publ. Cairo, no date, not in ALA II).¹⁹ This 50-verse poem contains only words which do not feature any dotted letter of the Arabic alphabet (*ba', ta', tha', ya', shin, zayn* etc.).²⁰ This considerably limits the word choice of the author, making the poem a veritable display of the skills of a virtuoso of Arabic lexicography.

Another typical characteristic of classical Islamic religious literature is the writing of poems for didactic purposes. Using simple meters and rhyming patterns such as the *rajaz* (rhyming AA, BB, CC etc.), didactic poems are meant to help students to memorise a given subject. Among many such didactic poems composed by scholars of the *fayda* network, one may quote a long composition, of more than a thousand verses, detailing all the characteristics of the reading (*qira'a*) of the Qur'an by Warsh as transmitted by Nafi', which used to be the most popular qur'anic reading in West Africa. Written by Muhammad al-Rabi' b. Yunus Dantinki (d. 1952) and titled *Jami' al-nawafi' 'ala qira'at al-Imam Nafi'*, this erudite poem has been published recently in a carefully edited and annotated edition (Kano, 2010, not in ALA II).

In many cases, a didactic poem is not an 'original' one, but a versification of an existing prose work

which is normally taught in the traditional circles. Virtually all manuals of Maliki jurisprudence and Ash'ari theology have been versified at some point by one or another of the scholars of the *fayda* network. One such example is an Arabic versification of Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili's (d. 1258) introductory text of Maliki jurisprudence known as *al-'Izziyya*, by the prolific Borno scholar Muhami al-Din Gonimi (not mentioned in ALA II). The latter has also to his credit many more poems in Arabic and Kanuri, including harshly satirical attacks (*hija'*) directed to the Nigerian Wahhabi-inspired movement known as *Izala*, which have made him legendary.²¹

Just as a prose work of the traditional corpus is often versified, the opposite can also happen, and prose commentaries are at times produced in order to explain an existing didactic poem. This is the case, for example, of *Al-Thamar al-qurbi wa-l-fakih al-mutribi bi-sharh Manzumat al-Qurtubi*, a commentary by the Zaria scholar Usama b. Yusuf b. Yahudha on an introductory manual of Maliki jurisprudence by the medieval scholar Yahya al-Qurtubi, written in 1989 and published in 1992 (Zaria, 80 pp., not in ALA II).

Occasionally, extremely complex, multi-layered authorships are involved. Through versifications, abridgments and commentaries, in fact, certain popular works can make a journey that involves a time-span of centuries and a space of thousands of miles. This is the case, for instance, of *Al-Nawafih al-'itriyya* (publ. Cairo, 2006, and mentioned in ALA II, p. 406) by Muhammad Ghibrima al-Daghiri (d. 1976), a Tijani scholar from Nguru (today's Yobe state). This work is an abridgment of a pre-existing commentary by the Nigerian Muhammad Dan Masani (d. 1664, ALA II, pp. 29-32) on a famous poem in praise of the Prophet known as *al-'Ishriniyya*, rendered in the form of pentastichs by the eighteenth-century Mauritanian Ibn Mahib, from an original poem composed by the Moroccan al-Fazazi (d. 1230)!

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Often, poetry in the classical style is also composed by adding a certain number of verses to an existing poem, usually one that enjoys wide readership and popularity. One such technique is known as *tashtir* (lit.: 'halving'). It consists of breaking up the verses of an existing poem by dividing the two hemistichs of each verse, and placing in between them two new hemistichs, so that a new, full couple of verses is composed out of each verse of the original poem. This technique is made possible by the fact that, according to the rules of classical Arabic prosody, each verse is normally made of two hemistichs of equal length. A remarkable example of this technique by one of the scholars of the *fiyda* network is *al-Hamziyya al-alfiyya* ("The Hamziyya in a thousand [verses]," publ. Kano, 2009, 83 pp.) by Ahmad al-Rufa'i b. Abi Bakr Nawali. Based in Kano, Nawali is a descendant of Zaria's major nineteenth century's scholar 'Umar al-Wali, and a poet of extraordinary literary skills in his own right. His many works (the writer of this paper has listed up to seventy!) do not feature in ALA II. His *Hamziyya al-alfiyya* is a *tashtir* of the celebrated *Hamziyya* (poem rhyming in the Arabic letter *Hamza*) by the Egyptian Muhammad al-Busiri (d. 1294). As the 'original' *Hamziyya* is more than five hundred verses long, its *tashtir* by Nawali is a long composition exceeding a thousand verses (hence the title "The Hamziyya in a thousand"). It must also be noted that, as the *Hamziyya* features the enjambment of a word between the two hemistichs of each verse, the process of producing a *tashtir* of this poem is particularly complex and requires a very sophisticated knowledge of the Arabic language. The author of the *tashtir*, in fact, is forced not only to complete the verse that he has 'halved' with two new hemistichs which will not disrupt the flow of meaning of the original poem (as he would normally do in the *tashtir* of any poem), but also has to complete each

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word that he has 'halved' twice, creating from it two separate new words. This is shown by the following example (in bold, the hemistichs added by Nawali):

1. Busiri's *Hamziyya*:

Innamā maththalūka ṣifātika li'l-nā- /
-si kamā maththala al-nujūma al-mā'u

They [i.e. the other Prophets] showed your qualities to mankind,
just as water reflects the stars.

2. Nawali's *Tashtir*:

Innamā maththalūka ṣifātika li'l-nā- /
-siki kay taqtadiya bika al-'ubadā'u

Maththalū hakadhā bahāka bi-lā ba'- /
-si kamā maththala al-nujūma al-mā'u

They showed your qualities to the ascetic,
so that the pious one could emulate you.

Likewise they showed your majesty devoid of defects,
just as water reflects the stars.

Here the two syllables *nā-* and *-si* of the word *nāsi* (mankind), enjambed between the two hemistichs in the original poem, are now used to form the two separate words *nāsiki* ('ascetic') and *bā'si* ('defect') in the new composition.

Another similar technique is known as *takhmis* (lit.: "rendering into pentastichs"). It consists of adding three new hemistichs to the two that compose each verse of the original poem (which usually rhymes AA, BA, CA, DA etc.), in order to compose a new poem made of five equal pentastichs

and now rhyming (AAA) AA; (BBB) BA; (CCC) CA; (DDD) DA etc. Of the many *takhmis* (pl. of *takhmis*) composed by scholars of the *fiyda* network, two

interesting examples can be quoted. The first is *Fayd Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim fi takhmis diwan mawlana al-Shaykh Ibrahim*, a multi-volume rendering in pentastichs of the collection of poetry in praise of the Prophet written by the Senegalese Ibrahim Niasse and known as *al-Dawawin al-sitt* ("The six Divans"),²² by the same Ahmad al-Rufa'i Nawali author of the above *tashtir* (unpublished MS in author's private library). The second is *Takhmis al-dawawin al-sitt* by Hamza b. Salman Agbarigidoma, a scholar from Ilorin (publ. Ilorin, no date, not in ALA II), also a *takhmis* of Ibrahim Niasse's *Dawawin*.

Concluding Remarks

The *fayda tijaniyya* scholars are not the only dynamic Islamic network in the recent history of Nigeria. The Izala network has been very influential in the political, social and educational spheres, and its founder Abu Bakr Gumi (d. 1992) has some writings to his credit.²³ Izala, however, focused mainly on grass-roots preaching and modern education, shunning (when not directly opposing) the very circles of Islamic knowledge and Sufi devotion which used to provide traditional scholars with the skills and motivations to write. This is why Izala's impact on the literary history of the country has been negligible when compared to its numerical strength and its social and political impact.

Other notable examples of writing in classical Arabic include the output of the leader of the Qadiriyya in Kano, Muhammad al-Nasir al-Kabari (Nasiru Kabara, d. 1996),²⁴ as well as circles which were not explicitly linked to a Sufi tariqa. Examples include the *Adabiyya* network animated by Muhammad Jum'a Alabi (d. 1923) and his students in Ilorin,²⁵ and the *Markaziyya* network of 'Abdallah al-Iluri (d. 1992) and his students, mainly based in Lagos.²⁶ None of these, however, was as

widespread geographically and as prolific in terms of its writings as the network of the *fayda tijaniyya* scholars. The latter, therefore, can be rightly considered as the most remarkable phenomenon in the literary history of Nigeria after the Sokoto jihad led by Shaykh Usman Dan Fodio and his associates in the early nineteenth century. The number of titles produced by Usman, his brother 'Abdallah, his sons Muhammad Bello, Muhammad al-Bukhari, al-Hasan, Ahmad al-Rufa'i and Abu Bakr al-'Atiq, as well as his daughters Khadija, Maryam and Asma'u, together with their close associates and the first two generations of successors, can be assessed at about four hundred and eighty, always using ALA II as a reference. As for the Tijani writings, at the present stage of the project the writer of this paper is already able to add at least five hundred writings to the several hundred titles provided in the already rich list of ALA II.

The two 'booms' of Islamic literacy in Nigeria (the one promoted by the nineteenth-century jihad of Usman Dan Fodio and the one inspired by the twentieth-century *fayda tijaniyya*) took place in profoundly different epochs. The '*yan faila* benefitted from the introduction of printing and photocopying facilities in Nigeria and by the development of a modern transport system; these new developments helped in triggering a boom in the mass consumption of literacy that, at the time of Dan Fodio, would have been simply unthinkable. From the point of view of the social historian, the '*yan faila* network can be considered a manifestation of early modernity in Nigeria.

More work needs to be done before a full account of the rise of the *fayda* network in Nigeria can be sketched. As this paper has argued, however, the Nigerian *fayda* was—or at least, it was perceived to be—a 'flood' of literacy just as much as it was a 'flood' of divine knowledge (*ma'rifa*).

At the present stage of the project the writer of this paper is already able to add at least five hundred writings to the several hundred titles provided in the already rich list of ALA II.

Notes

- 1 www.isita.northwestern.edu.
- 2 For a general discussion of the development of this practice, see Valerie Hoffmann, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The development of a Sufi practice," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (1999), 99-140. For a study of the Tijaniyya as a 'Muhammadan way,' see Zachary V. Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and the Tariqa Muhamadiyya* (Atlanta: African American Islamic Institute, 2005).
- 3 Translated into English by Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane in *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi* (Richmond: Surrey).
- 4 A discussion of the theme of the seal of sainthood is provided in Michel Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi*, transl. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).
- 5 For an overview of the history of the Tijaniyya, see Jamil Abun Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
- 6 For a biography of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam with details on his affiliation to the Tijaniyya, see Abdullah Schleifer, "'Izz al-Din al-Qassam: Preacher and Mujahid," in Edmund Burke (ed.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (London & New York: IB Tauris, 1993).
- 7 On the Tijaniyya in Turkey, see Cathlene Dollar, "An 'African' *Tarika* in Anatolia: Notes on the Tijaniyya in Early Republican Turkey," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 11 (2012), pp. 30-34.
- 8 David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities* (Ohio University Press, 2000). For a history of the Tijaniyya in West Africa during the colonial time, see the rich collection of essays edited by Jean-Louis Triaud and David Robinson, *La Tijaniyya: Une Confrérie Musulmane à la Conquête de l'Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).
- 9 Yasser A. Quadri, "Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah relations in Nigeria in the 20th Century," *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 16, 1 (1984), pp. 15-30.
- 10 John Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, vol. 2, *The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 364.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Malam Ahmad al-Rufa'i b. Abi Bakr Na-Wali, a descendant of 'Umar al-Wali living in Yakasai quarters in Kano, often teaches this work to his students (personal observation by author, Kano).
- 14 John Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
- 15 ALA II, p. 271.
- 16 See Andrea Brigaglia, "The *Fayda Tijaniyya* of Ibrahim Nyass: Genesis and Implications of a Sufi Doctrine," *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 14-15 (2000-2001), pp. 41-56.
- 17 Rüdiger Seesemann, *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 18 ALA II, pp. 284-6 (Ahmad al-Tijani b. 'Uthman); Ibid., pp. 287-30 (Abu Bakr al-'Atiq); Ibid., pp. 304-7 (Muhammad al-Thani Kafanga); Ibid., pp. 370-2 (Yahudha b. Sa'd); Ibid., p. 372 ('Abd al-Qadir al-Nufawi); Ibid., pp. 397-8 (Abu Bakr al-Miskin); Ibid., pp. 381-2 (Yusuf b. 'Abdallah); Ibid., pp. 400-3 (Ahmad Abu'l Fath al-Yarwawi); Ibid., pp. 406-7 (Muhammad Ghibrima al-Dagiri); Ibid., pp. 407-15 (Ibrahim Salih al-Husayni); Ibid., pp. 461-6 (Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Agbarigidomo); Ibid., pp. 506-7 (Mudaththir b. 'Abd al-Salam). Some of the above lists in ALA II (as, for example, Abu Bakr al-'Atiq's) do not need much updating. In other cases, however, ALA II lists only a small part of an author's writings. This is, for instance, true in the case of Yusuf b. 'Abdallah, for whom I have listed about a hundred more works, mainly poems.
- 19 Although this particular writing is not quoted, its author is mentioned at p. 315 of ALA II, where his name Dorayi (the quarters of Kano where he resides) is misspelt as Turi.
- 20 I thank Malam Bashir Buhari al-Rumi (Kano) for drawing my attention to this detail.
- 21 See, for example, his long invective against Izala titled *Bint yawmayn* (n. p., n. d.).
- 22 Ibrahim Niasse's "Six Divans" has become the most popular piece of Arabic poetry in northern Nigeria, surpassing Busiri's celebrated *Burda* and Fazazi's *'Ishriyyat*. Recordings of recitations of the *Diwan* in different styles of melody are marketed everywhere, and several partial translations in Hausa have also been published: one, in three volumes and in Roman characters, by Ibrahim Abdullahi Salga (printed by Yahaya Alh. Garba); another one, in two volumes and partially in *Ajami* characters, by the most famous woman scholar of the Kano Tijaniyya Hasana Ahmad Sufi (n. p., 2005-2007).
- 23 ALA II, pp. 551-55.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 321-39.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 466-71.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 516-34.