

A PRESENTATION OF EXTRACTS FROM SELECTED ARABIC ŞŪFĪ MANUSCRIPTS IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study presents extracts from three Arabic manuscripts amongst Ilorin Şūfī writers. It highlights the major themes in the Şūfī literature generally and then specifically points out samples of works produced on some of the themes. The themes identified and briefly analyzed are Madḥ Nabīyy (Prophetic Eulogy) Madḥ r-Rijāl (panegyric of Şūfī Shuyukh and Masters), a`ṭ-Tawassul wa`l-Istighathah (Fervent plea for help). The manuscripts studied are in both poetry and prose. The objective of the study is to bring into limelight the Arabic manuscripts of selected Şūfīs in Ilorin. The study is based on the analysis of the manuscripts which are in circulation among Arabic scholars and data collected from the private libraries of the Muslim scholars. The research reveals that Ilorin can be projected as a Şūfī city of great potentialities.

Introduction

The Şūfīs were one of the major groups responsible for the spread of Islam in the West African countries, the Qādiriyyah and Tijāniyyah alike. But though their social and political activities have always been recognized in academic circles little is said or written on their literary achievements an area where they have made meaningful, concrete and valuable contribution. A large number of Şūfī scholars are known to be authors of high repute. Such scholars include Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass (d. 1975), of Senegal a great author of multiple works,¹ Shaykh Abū Bakr ^cAtiq (d. 1974) whose number of works has been given as between fifty and one hundred; and about nine and twelve others are ascribed to him.² Shaykh Muhammad Nasiru Kabara (d. 1996) of Kano, Nigeria whose Şūfī works are of multiple themes³ and Shaykh Muhammad Ibrahim Maimasa (d. 1982) of Ilorin, should also not be left out among such writers of manifold works on Şūfī themes.⁴ Some of their works have been published, while there are many others which are still in manuscripts. The

study provides avenue for the readers to glean a brief presentation of *Ṣūfī* themes which have attracted the attention of the Ilorin *Ṣūfī* writers, and which have not been printed or published.

Definition of Words

Manuscript is an English word meaning “a copy of a book, piece of music, etc. before it has been printed” or “a very old book or document that was written by hand before printing was invented”.⁵ *مخطوط Makḥṭūṭ* or *مخطوطة Makḥṭūṭah* is the Arabic word for Manuscript and has been defined as “a very old book or document that was written by hand or a typed or handwritten copy of book that has not yet been printed.”⁶

Arabic is defined as a language spoken in the Middle East and in parts of North Africa⁷ or simply defined as the language that is spoken by Arab people and the religious language of Islam.⁸ Today, the Arabic as the language of the Qur’an as well as the Arabs, has attained the most important language of the Semitic group and is spoken by over 100 million people and understood by many more. It is a language that has twenty-eight (28) letters of alphabet.⁹

Sufism can be defined as the Islamic mysticism or the esotericism of Islam. It has been suggested to have originated from the Arabic word *Ṣūf* (“wool”) indicating the rough woolen or simple clothing which characterized the early ascetics, who preferred its symbolic simplicity to richer and more sophisticated clothing materials.¹⁰

Having considered the definitions of the three words, one may incline to state further that “Arabic manuscripts” were known in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam although it was not widespread in the area by then.¹¹ It can be added that even the early revelations of the Glorious Qur’ān were preserved in Manuscripts i.e. written on various objects and materials such as animal skin and bone among many others.¹² That was the situation of things till the time when the prints were invented.

The words “Arabic *Ṣūfī* Manuscripts” can be defined as any Arabic manuscripts which are of *Ṣūfī* themes such as *Ṣūfī* litanies and prayers which are yet to be printed or published. The words as a concept within the *Ṣūfī* literature consists of both prose or poetry and it can be effectively traced back to the ninth century of Christian era. It was then that a number of *Ṣūfī* literary works began to surface.¹³ Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuals based on esoteric doctrine were initially transmitted by word of mouth or even without a spoken or written word from a qualified or an authorized *Ṣūfī* master to a disciple (*Murid*) in confidence. Based on this, when the *Ṣūfī* literature started, it did not put emphasis on the mystical

dimension, rather, it concentrated on accessibility and conformity with Islamic orthodoxy.¹⁴ It must be added that when the idea of writing began, it was only the write-ups of the *Ṣūfī* masters (*Shuyūkh*) who wrote within the *Ṣūfī* tradition that afforded the opportunities to the outsiders to glimpse the inner beauty of Sufism.¹⁵ Such earlier *Ṣūfī* works include those listed by Peter J. Awn. They are: *Kitab al-ri'āyah* (Book of Consideration) written by Abū Abd Allah al-Hārith bn Asad al-Muhāsibī (d. 857 CE), *Kitab at-Ta'arruf* (Book of Introduction) written by Abū Bakr Muhammad al-Kalābādhī (d. 990-995 CE) and *Kitab al-Luma'* (Book of Concise Remarks) written by Abū Nasr Abd Allah bn ʿAli as-Sarraj (d. 988 CE)¹⁶

However, there is a suggestion that traces the *Ṣūfī* literature to the pre-Islamic period, and Addiy bn Zayd is cited as a poet who composed ascetic poems.¹⁷ Considering the divergent views on the history of *Ṣūfī* literature, one is tempted to observe that its literature cannot be traced to pre-Islamic period. Added to that is the fact that the Glorious Qur'an is a comprehensive work that contains various aspects of Islam and Islamic thoughts including the esoteric aspects of Islam which inspired the *Ṣūfīs* of all generations to embark on literacy production. Putting this into consideration, we tend to believe that the Qur'an can be regarded as the earliest *Ṣūfī* work of reference. Whatever may be the time when the *Ṣūfī* literature began, *Ṣūfī* masters wrote on different aspects of *Ṣūfī* themes which are yet to be published or printed.

Themes of *Ṣūfī* Works

The themes of the *Ṣūfī* works or literature are to be deduced from the teachings and doctrines of Sufism itself. The major themes of the *Ṣūfī* literature include the following:

- (i) *Al-hubb al-Ilāhī* (Divine Love)
- (ii) *Al-Madā'ih an-Nabawiyyah* (Prophetic Eulogy)
- (iii) *Al-Haqīqah al-Muhammadiyyah* (The Doctrine of Muhammadan Reality)
- (iv) *Hubb ahli 'l bayt* (Love of Members of Prophet's Household)
- (v) *Hubb ar-Rijāl wa al-'Ulamā'* (Love of *Ṣūfī* Leaders and Scholars generally)
- (vi) *Wahdat al-wujūd* (The Doctrine of Unity of Being)
- (vii) *Wahdat ash-Shuhūd* (The Doctrine of the Unity of Experience)
- (viii) *Al-Akhlāq as-Ṣūfīyyah* (*Ṣūfī* Ethics)
- (ix) *Al-Adhkār wa ad-Da'awāt* (Litanies and Supplicatory Prayers)

- (x) *At-Tawassul wal-Istighāthah* (Fervent Plea or Request for Help and Assistance).¹⁸

The list is not exhausted as the themes of *Ṣūfī* literature include the Biography of *Ṣūfī* masters and history of *Ṣūfī* Orders.

The City of Ilorin

Ilorin is a city and an emirate in North Western Yoruba land of Nigeria. It was traced back to 16th century C.E.¹⁹ The city can be considered an incomplete Islamized city in the periphery of Sokoto caliphate and an emirate in Northern Nigeria.²⁰ The city is situated in Northern most part of Yoruba land, and now, it is part of what is called “Middle Belt” states. The city prior to the nineteenth century C.E. was a small town within the empire of Old Oyo, and became prominent in the early nineteenth century as a result of what O’ Hear considered as the headquarters of Afonja, the Army General who rebelled against the empire and contributed in bringing about the downfall of the empire.²¹ Afonja was reported to have invited Shaykh Alimi, a Fulani Muslim Leader with the aim of assisting him against the rulers of Old Oyo Empire.²² Added to that, Ilorin, according to Stefan Reichmuth is one of the largest Muslim cities in Nigeria.²³ It is believed that Islamic scholars as well as Islamic learning played a crucial role in the emergence of a Muslim emirate in Ilorin after 1800 and considered as the second largest town in the Sokoto Caliphate after Kano till 1870.²⁴

Ilorin as a city has been recognized as one of Islamic cities in Nigeria since the third decade of the nineteenth century of Christian Era²⁵ together with the other emirates that form Sokoto Caliphate.²⁶ That does not suggest that Islam was not known in the area prior to that time. As a matter of fact, one is given to know that by 1817 when Shaykh Alimi (d. 1823) arrived at Ilorin, there was a group of Muslims in the area, under their leader called Tahir Solagberu.²⁷ That notwithstanding, it can be stated that *Ṣūfī* masters as an institution contributed to the spread and understanding of Islam and Islamic knowledge in the area. The *Ṣūfīs* operated under different umbrella organizations. The *Ṣūfī* groups in the city include *Qādiriyyah*, *Tijāniyyah*, *Rifā’iyyah* and *Ikhhlāsiyyah*.²⁸ Members of these *Ṣūfī* groups i.e. Orders adopted different means in propagating the teachings of Islam in general and their *Ṣūfī* Orders in particular. One of the means adopted is through writing.

Themes of Arabic *Ṣūfī* Manuscripts of Ilorin

Going by the title of this paper “Arabic *Ṣūfī* Manuscripts in Ilorin,” it can be explained as Arabic works written by *Ṣūfī* scholars of Ilorin on various *Ṣūfī* themes which are still extant in manuscripts. Some of these works are prose while others are in poetry. The survey conducted on the Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts in Ilorin revealed that the manuscripts available in the city are of different ages and of different themes. One cannot state with certainty who initiated the Arabic *Ṣūfī* Manuscripts in Ilorin. That notwithstanding, one of the oldest available Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts of Ilorin scholars is *Hidāyat al-Khayrāt wa kāshif al-kurbāt fi dhikr as-Salat al-Munir ‘alā an-Nabiyy al-Mukhtār*. Meanwhile, reference has to be made to some of the Arabic *Ṣūfī* works which are still in manuscripts. They cover Poetry and Prose aspects of the *Ṣūfī* themes.

Poetry: The Arabic *Ṣūfī* poetical works which are available in manuscripts in the hands of the *Ṣūfīs* in the city of Ilorin include the following:

Al-Madh an-Nabawī (Prophetic Eulogy): - One of the *Ṣūfī* themes that attracted attention of many *Ṣūfī* writers is the panegyrics of Prophet Muhammad. Perhaps, what accounted for such is the spiritual status of the Prophet in the mind of the *Ṣūfīs*. The Ilorin *Ṣūfī* masters both past and present are very much conversant with the works of other writers of the same theme such as Imam Busayrī (d. 1296 C.E) author of the two celebrated works *al-Burdah*³⁰ and *al-Hamziyyah*³¹ on the panegyrics of Prophet Muhammad. One of the major works of Arabic manuscripts of the *Ṣūfī* scholars in Ilorin on this theme is *al-Qaṣīdat an-Nūniyyah* (An Ode Rhyming in *Nūn*) composed by Shaykh Muhammad Maimasa al-Nafawi (d. 1982). The Ode is made up of sixty-two stanzas. Here is a three- line extract from it.

1. حمدا الى ابد شكرا بلا عدد * إذ خصنا برسول الله ذي الحان
2. محمد ساد كل الأبياء ومن * يدعى بعالم من جن وانسان
3. هو الظهير لنا في هذه الدنيا * وشفيعنا في غد من كل فتان

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Meaning:

1. (I am expressing) Ever-lasting commendation as well as uncountable gratefulness (to Allah) for chosen for us, A Messenger of Allah, a Compassionate.
2. (Prophet) Muhammad (you have) led all other Prophets and all what are contained in the universe, be it demon and sprite or man.
3. He was our helper in this world and intercessor in the hereafter against all calamities

In another three stanzas he continues as follows:

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1. لوقيل لى اى شىء أنت تعشقه * حتى لقيت ضنا جسم كجيعان
 2. أقول سيدناذا الجاه والكرم * محمد الهاشمى ثم عدنان
 3. هو الرسول الذى أرجو اللقاء به * دينا وأخرى بأذن الله منان

Meaning:

1. Were I asked of whom I loved and desired dearly now and forever till the time my body will be emaciated.
2. I will say: Our honourable and noble leader, Muhammad of Hāshmiy family and a member of °Adnān clan.
3. He is the Messenger whom I desire to meet here in this world and the hereafter with the permission of Allah the Benefactor.

The content of the Ode is replica of what other *Ṣūfī* scholars in other part of the country have composed. Typical example is *Shaykh* Abū Bakr °Atiq of Kano (d. 1974). In one of his Odes of panegyrics on Prophet Muhammad entitled: *Miftāh al-Aghlāq fī Madh̄ Habib al-Khalāq* (Key of the locked on the eulogy of friend of the Creator) states thus:

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1. قل ما تشافى مدحه من بعدان * وصفته بعبودة المخلوق
 2. قل عبده وخليله وحبيبه * وصفيه هو فاتح الأغلاق
 3. هوسيد الرسل الكرام وخيرهم * هو أصل كل الخلق بالإطلاق

Meaning:

1. You may eulogize him in whatever way you like so long as you describe Him as the Servant of the Creator.
2. Say! He is His servant, His bosom friend and affectionate, His refined Servant and Opener of all the locked (gates)
3. He is the Leader of all the venerable Apostles and best of them. He is the root of all the creatures in general.³⁵

***Madh̄ ar-Rijāl* (Panegyric of the *Ṣūfī* Masters)**

Another aspect of *Ṣūfī* themes that features in the works of *Ṣūfī* authors in Ilorin is the panegyrics of the *Ṣūfī* Saints. One of the *Ṣūfī* Saints that attracted attention of writers in the recent years is *Shaykh* Ibrahim Niyass. His name features in the works of both *Ṣūfī* guides and the novices. Reference has to be made to *Shaykh* Abū Bakr Salahudeen Agbarigidoma (d. 2001) who composed poems on the visit of *Shaykh* Ibrahim Niyass (d. 1975) to Ilorin on 11th November 1963. The Ode consists of nineteen stanzas, parts of the Ode read thus:

1. باسم اله العرش كنت مبدعًا * لإظهار ما فى القلب مما يفرز عا
2. وللشيخ إبراهيم كنت موجعا * لقلبي وإنى كنت فيه مجزعا
3. وكنا أناسا جاهلين شمسه * ولكننا الآن صرنا مطلعًا

4. وذلك إبراهيم كـولـخـى داره * عمت صيته شرقا وغربا بأجمعا
5. لقد طلعت من ارض كـولـخ شمسها * وعت جميع الأفق نورًا مطلقًا

Meaning:

1. With the name of Allah, the Owner of the throne I commenced expressing what caused my mind to be terrified.
2. It was Shaykh Ibrahim (Niyass) that made my mind to be grief as he had made me to become anxious
3. We are the people who are ignorant about his shining sun, but now, we are familiar with it and cognizant of it.
4. That is (Shaykh) Ibrahim, Kaolack is his domain. His voice has reached in a comprehensive manner both East and West.
5. Surely! His shining sun had appeared in the land of Kaolack and its light has reflected throughout the horizon with full curiosity.

In the same vein, another Ilorin *Ṣūfī* scholar, Shaykh Ahmad Abdullahi Folohunsho Fagba (d. 2008 CE) composed panegyric poems in honour of Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass during the said visit. Here is an extract from the Ode.

غوٲ غياٲ زمان أبوبشر جميعا * كـولـخ مـولـد شـيـخ ونـسـبـه عـدنان
من شك فى برهام لابد كالمجنون * ومنكرى برهام سلك فى الخسران
كن مجتهدا بمال وجسم ثم بروح * إلى لقاء شريف خليف شيخ التجانى
من كان فى الاسلام لم يلق شيخ خليل * وإنه مفقود ليس له برهان

Meaning:

1. Succor of the age, father of men, Kaolack (Senegal) is his birth place (yet) his lineage is traced to ^٢*Adnān* (the lineage of the Prophet)
2. He who doubts (the spiritual status of) Shaykh Ibrahim, surely he is an insane, He who denies (the sainthood of) Shaykh Ibrahim has gone astray.
3. (Oh my brothers and sisters) strive with your wealth, body and soul to welcome the noble person (*Sharif*) the Vicegerent of Shaykh (Ahmad) at-Tijani.
4. He who professes Islam and has never met the great Shaykh (Ibrahim Niyass), such person is nonentity, so he has no excuse (for not knowing him).³⁷

In addition to those scholars mentioned above, Shaykh Abdul Karim Balogun Gambari (d. 2005) has an Ode which he composed to welcome the month of *Rajab* in which the Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass (d. 1975) was born. The Ode is made up of twenty-six stanzas. Here is an extract of the Ode.

1. أهلاً وسهلاً بالشيخ برهام * أهلاً وسهلاً خليفة التجاني
2. ابو عبد الله وقورا حليما * ومحمد النذير والشيخ التجاني
3. ومحمد قريش ومحمدياس * أهلاً وسهلاً خليفة التجاني
4. جاء بالعلم علم الشريعة * علم الحقيقة علم رباني
5. أحيا الستة سنة المولانا * بشير نذير جدالتجاني
6. ووضع اليدين على الأخرى * صلاة النبي جد التجاني

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Meaning:

1. You are welcome Oh Shaykh Ibrahim, you are welcome the (vicegerent) of (Shaykh) Tijani
2. Father of Abdullah (who is also father of) Muhammad Nadhir, Shaykh Tijani
3. (Father of) Muhammad Quraysh, Muhammad Yāsin. You are welcome the vicegerent of Shaykh Tijani
4. He brought (us) with the knowledge, the knowledge of (Islamic) jurisprudence, (and) the knowledge of reality, i.e. gnosis.
5. He revived six traditions of our Leader, Prophet Muhammad Glad-tiding giver and Warner against falsehood, the great grandfather of (Shaykh) Tijani.
6. Putting one hand upon the other (*Qabd*) (such is) the prophetic prayer, i.e. the great grandfather of Tijani.

Another *Ṣūfī* Ode composed by Shaykh Abdur-Rahman Mayaki (b.1933) on the same theme can be added to that. Part of the Ode reads thus:

1. بشرى لنا أهدانا الله فيضته * طريقة الذكر وقبض ورضوان
2. وذاك برهامنا انياس قدوتنا * مامل برهانه في نهج عرفان
3. يا صاحب الكرم والإطلاق شيمته * بيده جعل تلقين قران
4. أتيت حقازمام الأولياء معا * والاتقياء وعبد ثم سلطان

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Meaning:

1. (This is) Glad tiding for us, Allah has guided us to his spiritual flood the path of remembering of Allah, the spiritual flood and that of everlasting blessing.
2. That is our Ibrahim Niyass, our spiritual model. There is none like our Ibrahim in guiding (novice) to gnosis.

3. O you noble man of nobility, a man of good character and good humour, through him (many people learnt) the mode of studying al-Qur'an.
4. (Oh Shaykh Ibrahim) you have actually been granted the control over the saints together with the pious, devotees as well as leaders.

Apart from the *Ṣūfī* masters that eulogized Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass, there are some novices who toe the footsteps of their masters by composing panegyrics in honour of Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass. One of such is Qasim Ibrahim, a native of Ede, in Osun State of Nigeria, based in Ilorin and a current Ph.D. student in the Department of Arabic, University of Ilorin. Here is an extract of his Ode.

ياأبا إسحاق شيخ العلماء * ياأبا إسحاق نور الكولخي
 نجل عبد الله فخر الأصفياء * مصرع الحق أنا الكولخي
 شيخ إبراهيم كولاخ غوثنا⁴⁰

Meaning:

O father of Ishaq و Leader (Shaykh) of scholars. O father of Ishaq light from Kaolack. Son of Abdullah, the pride of righteous, the speaker of truth, our father, from Kaolack, Shaykh Ibrahim Kaolack, our succor.

Meanwhile, that does not suggest that no other *Ṣūfī* leaders received similar attention. As a matter of fact, *Ṣūfī* masters and novices of both past and present appreciated and continue to appreciate the *Ṣūfī* leaders and therefore eulogized them. There are multiple works of Arabic manuscripts written by Ilorin *Ṣūfī* masters in honour of *Ṣūfī* leaders such as Shaykh Nasiru Kabara of Kano (d. 1996), and Shaykh Ahmad Rufai Nda Salati (d. 1966) among many others. A typical reference can be made to the work of Shaykh Muhammad Maimasa (d. 1982). And a similar one composed in honour of Shaykh Muhammad Bello Eleha (d. 1935) by Abdul Ganiyy Ali Harazim Eleha.

Considering the quality and quantity of the works available on the above *Ṣūfī* themes, one is made to understand that the *Ṣūfīs* in Ilorin both masters and novices have continued to demonstrate their affection for their leaders and masters. This attitude of theirs replicates what other *Ṣūfī* masters in other places have equally demonstrated in honour of their *Ṣūfī* leaders in line with *Ṣūfī* teachings. A typical instance to be cited is the case of Shaykh Tijani °Uthmān of Kano (d. 1970). He was reported to have composed an Ode in honour of Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass. Maigari considers his as one of the disciples of Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass in Nigeria

who demonstrated his sincere love for him as it reflected in his poems composed in honour of the Shaykh.⁴¹

Tawassul wa `l-Istighāthah (Fervent plea for help)

Another aspect of *Ṣūfī* teachings which features in the *Ṣūfī* manuscripts of Ilorin *Ṣūfī* writers is *Tawassul* (Fervent plea for help). A large number of *Ṣūfī* writers have works which are based on *Tawassul*. A particular reference has to be made to Shaykh Muhammad Maimasa. His works on *Tawassul* are on different personages. Apart from the ones he has on the Noble Prophet, Muhammad b. Abdullahi, he has some on Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jaylānī (d. 1166 CE) the founder and Saint of the *Qādiriyyah Ṣūfī* Order. He also composed poem of *Tawassul* in respect of Shaykh Nasiru Kabara (d. 1996) the Chief of the *Qādiriyyah* in West Africa, Shaykh Ahmad Rufai Nda Salati (d. 1966) the Representative of Shaykh Nasiru Kabara in South West of Nigeria and the spiritual mentor of Shaykh Maimasa. It has to be added that Shaykh Maimasa did not restrict his works on *Tawassul* to the leaders of his *Ṣūfī* Order, i.e. *Qādiriyyah*. Rather, he composed poems of *Tawassul* through Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani (d. 1815) the founder of the *Tijāniyyah Ṣūfī* Order.

Here are some poems of *Tawassul* of Shaykh Maimasa.

1. صل صلاة سلم سلاما * إلهى على جد الشيخ الجيلان
2. فيارب هب لى دخول الجنان * بجاه حبيبك الشيخ الجيلان
3. وسيلة عبد حقير ذليل * إليك إلهى بالشيخ الجيلان
4. ولكن الله غفور رحيم * لعبد مريد للشيخ الجيلان
5. وإن لم أكن جيداً صالحاً * وشخىي المجيد الشيخ الجيلان
6. وهب لى إلهى بنور العلوم * فنور بجاه الولى الجيلان
7. وهب لى إلهى علوماً * ثلاثة * لكيلا أكون كمن حازفان
8. فعلم الشريعة وعلم الطريقة * وعلم الحقبقة بجاه الجيلان
9. وما زلت أبغى زياد الثلاثة * من العلم أيضاً طهر جنان
10. بعلم اليقين وعين اليقين * وحق اليقين ليرقى مكانى

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Meaning:

1. O my Lord! Let your mercy and blessing be on the great grandfather of Shaykh Jaylānī
2. O my Lord! Grant me the entrance of paradise (I supplicate) with the honour (done) to your friend Shaykh Jaylānī
3. (He, Shaykh Jaylani) is the means adopted by a poor, small insignificant servant toward you oh my Lord.
4. Allah is surely All-Forgiving and Merciful to a servant, a spiritual disciple of Shaykh Jaylānī

5. If I have not been good and righteous, I hold to a committed and dedicated, spiritual guide; Shaykh Jaylāni
6. O my Lord grant me the light of knowledge, various aspects of knowledge, I supplicate with the honour done to the Saint, Jaylāni
7. My Lord bestow on me three forms of knowledge, so that I will not be a loser.
8. Knowledge of Islamic Jurisprudence, Knowledge of Spiritual path and Knowledge of real truth. (I ask) in honour you have done to Jaylāni.
9. I continue seeking additional three forms of knowledge that will purify my heart
10. The Certainty of Knowledge, and Certainty of Sight, and Certainty of the Reality.

This form of *Tawassul* is identical with the one composed by Shaykh Nasiru Kabara of Kano in a work entitled: *At-Tawassulayn al-^cAzīmayn*.⁴³ The *Tawassul* is made in respect and honour of Prophet Muhammad and Shaykh ʿUthman Dan Fodio (d. 1817). Meanwhile, *Tawassul* is a common terminology adopted by the *Ṣūfīs* for supplication fervently and seeking proximity to Allah in the name of everything they consider holy. The justification for the doctrine according to them is traceable to the Glorious Qur’anic passage:

O ye who believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him. And seek the means of approach to Him, and strive hard in His cause (as much as you can), so that you may be successful. (5: 35)⁴⁴

The above cited Qur’anic verse to justify the doctrine is however viewed differently in some circles. For instance, Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilūrī (d. 1992) cites *Ibn Taimiyyah* (d. 1328 CE) who was reported to have categorized *at-Tawassul* into three. They are:

- (1) Making plea to Allah by one’s righteous duties put forward for the sake of Allah
- (2) Making plea to Allah through other people, seeking Allah’s forgiveness as well as supplication to Almighty Allah.
- (3) Making plea to Allah through an unseen personage by mentioning his name during the course of prayers or by swearing by his name.⁴⁵

Of all the three categories of *Tawassul*, the last type has generated controversy between two major schools of thought i.e. the *Ṣūfī* and the non-*Ṣūfī*.⁴⁶ The *Ṣūfīs* and non-*Ṣūfīs* have divergent views on the doctrine based on their individual differences, orientation and perception of issues and the controversy will remain permanently among the two groups.

Prose

The major *Ṣūfī* themes of Arabic manuscripts of Ilorin written in prose include the followings: The *Ṣūfī* Litanies and Prayers as well as biography of *Ṣūfī* masters or history of *Ṣūfī* Orders.

Al-Ad-^ciyah wa`l-Adhkār (Ṣūfī Prayers and Litanies)

History has it that Shaykh Muhammad Bello Eleha (d. 1935) was one of the *Ṣūfī* scholars that popularized the *Tijāniyyah* Order not only in Ilorin but in the South - West of Nigeria at large. He was believed to have been blessed with charisma (*Karamāt*). For instance, it has been claimed that by mere stretching his hand into his inner room he would bring out any kind of food his visitors desired for their entertainment.⁴⁷ He has a prayer book which he personally wrote. In the book, blessing and salutations of Allah are requested for the Noble Prophet, Muhammad bin Abdullahi and other Prophets as well as Saints. The book is entitled: *Hidāyat al-Khayrat wa kāshif al-kurbāt fī dhikr as-salāt al-munīr ^cala an-Nabiyy al-Mukhtar*. The work consists of three hundred and twenty pages. It remains in manuscript till today. The work is similar in term of subject-matter to the celebrated *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt*⁴⁸ written by Shaykh Jazūli.⁴⁹ It is also identical with the ones entitled: *at-Tibb al-Fā'ih wal wird as-Sahih* written by Shaykh Muhammad b. Abdul Wahid An-Nazīfi⁵⁰ and *Jihāz as-Sarih* and *was-Sa'ih was-sabih wal-^cĀkif al-Fātih fī Tawajuhāt* written by Shaykh Muhammad Gibrim b. Muhammad of Nguru,⁵¹ Yobe State of Nigeria. Composing prayers or specified litanies by *Ṣūfī* masters is an accepted norm within the *Ṣūfī* circle. Availability of such Arabic *Ṣūfī* prayer manuals in manuscripts composed by Ilorin Sufi masters is a testimony of their compliance with *Ṣūfī* teaching and proof of their wealth of ideas and originality in thought.

Similar to the work of Shaykh Eleha is an identical prayer composed by Shaykh Abū Bakr Salahuddeen Agbarigidoma (d. 2001) in which he sought Allah's special favour for the noble Prophet, Muhammad (SAW). Part of the prayers reads thus:

اللهم صلى صلاة محسنة على سيد المحسنين

Meaning:

Oh Allah, bestow a beautiful Salutation on the leader of the benevolent men.

Tārikh at-Tariqah (History of the Order)

Another Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscript available in Ilorin is the one written on a *Ṣūfī* Order. A typical reference can be made to a leaflet on the *Rifā'iyah Ṣūfī* Order authored by Shaykh Fasāsi Ahmad, the *Khalifah* of the Order in Nigeria. The work contains a brief history of the Order starting with the founder of the Order, Shaykh Ahmad Rifai (d. 1183), its *Khalifah* in Nigeria how and when he was initiated into the Order and the Litanies which are recited during the rites of the Order. The work remains in manuscript. The work is replica of the *Ṣūfī* teaching. Identical with that is a work written by Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass on his *Ṣūfī* Order, i.e. *Tijaniyyahi* entitled: *Al-Bayān wat-Tabyīn 'ani `t-Tijāniyyah wat-Tijāniyyīn*⁵² wherein the biography of Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani and some of the teachings of the *Tijaniyyah Order* are explained. These are some of the *Ṣūfī* teachings and doctrines which are available in the Ilorin Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts.

Recommendation

Having considered some of the Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts authored by Ilorin *Ṣūfī* writers, one is made to believe that Ilorin Arabic *Ṣūfī* writers had projected Ilorin city where *Ṣūfī* literature are recognized and it also portrays the city as a *Ṣūfī* city, where future of Sufism can be positively projected. Therefore, for the benefit of incoming generation, one needs to recommend that these Ilorin Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts remain a source of inspiration not only to the *Ṣūfīs* but also the Academic Researchers. There is need to recover and preserve all the available Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts along with other Islamic literature in Ilorin. This is a great challenge that requires both the individual and collective efforts of all the *Ṣūfīs* as well as non- *Ṣūfīs*. The institutions of higher learning such as University of Ilorin, Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin and a host of others should lead by creating a Bureau for the Collection and Preservation of Arabic manuscripts, those of *Ṣūfī* inclusive.

The *Ṣūfīs* themselves should endeavour to see that the Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts of both the past and present scholars are collected and preserved. Those who keep personal collections of the manuscripts

should be urged to release them for photocopying, while the existing and recovered ones should be well preserved to prevent a total damage or deterioration. The challenge may involve the royal fathers, *Ṣūfī* scholars, governmental agencies, philanthropists and non-governmental organizations such as Bureau of Ilorin Culture and Heritage. The efforts made by one Ahmad Abu Bakr Abdullah who wrote a book entitled *Ilorin Arabic Manuscripts*⁵³ ought to be commended and recommended for others to follow. And finally efforts should be made to get some of the Arabic *Ṣūfī* Manuscripts published for the benefit of the incoming generations as well as for the benefit of knowledge and learning.

Conclusion

Ilorin as an Islamic city in Nigeria hosts some *Ṣūfī* Orders among which are: *Qadiriyyah*, *Tijaniyyah*, *Rifāʿiyyah* and *Ikhilāsiyyah*. These *Ṣūfī* Orders have been producing scholars of high repute who author books and have poetical compositions to their credit. This paper examined the works of these *Ṣūfī* writers which are not yet published but remain in manuscripts. The main literature themes which these manuscripts cover are *Madh Nabīyy* (Prophetic Eulogy), *Madh ar-Rijāl* (Panegyric of the *Ṣūfī* Saints/Masters). Those *Ṣūfī* masters eulogized include Shaykh Ibrahim Niyass. Concept of *Tawassul* (Fervent plea for help) also featured where an Ode composed by Shaykh Muhammad Maimasa interceding with the honour done by Allah for Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jaylani. All the aforementioned are manuscripts based on poetry. There are other manuscripts which are in prose. They cover the *Ṣūfī* Litanies and the history of a *Ṣūfī* Orders. The study of these manuscripts reveals that Ilorin city is a *Ṣūfī* city where Sufism is recognized and has *Ṣūfī* scholars which consequently projects the positive future for the Sufism.

However, considering the volumes of Arabic *Ṣūfī* manuscripts in the city, it is hoped that such manuscripts would be recovered, preserved and possibly printed not only for the incoming generations but for the best interest of knowledge and learning. It is believed that by so doing the labour of our forefathers will not be in vain, and it will link the present with the past and consequently give us the picture of the future.

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