

## EFFLORESCENCE OF ARABIC LITERATURE IN NIGERIA: APPRAISAL OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SHAYKH DAWOOD TIJANI

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**Abstract:** It is impossible to pigeonhole the reputable Shaykh Dawood Tijani into a particular role or to compartmentalize his activities or intellectual contributions to a particular geographical region. The influence of the Shaykh in the promotion of Arabic and Islamic scholarship in Nigeria is enormous. In fact, one can hardly discuss these fields in Nigeria today without reference to the learned scholar. For the purpose of this study, however, we shall be constrained to restrict our focus to his invaluable contributions to Arabic scholarship in Nigeria, through his writings. A prolific writer and sound scholar, Shaykh Dawood Tijani contributed significantly to Arabic literature with well-written books, articles and manuscripts in Arabic, on Arabic language, literature, Islam and related subjects. This study employed both historical and contextual methods, which attempt to reconstruct the significant events of the past through analysis, synthesis and verification, in assessing his intellectual background as well as the concise contents of his writings. It discovered his works as significant contributions to Arabo-Islamic literary productions. The study is expected to serve as a useful material for the literary historians and critics in documenting the Arabic literary activities in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Dawood Tijani, Arabic verses, *Sūfī* , Yoruba *Ulamā'*,

### INTRODUCTION

Arabic scholars in Yorubaland, Nigeria, belong to different categories, including teachers or proprietors, who ensure continuity of Arabic and Islamic education, Imams of *Rātibi* and *Jumu'ah* mosques, preachers, calligraphers, *sūfī* leaders, writers and mendicants (Folorunsho:2003:77). Certain qualities determine the category to which a scholar could be fixed. However, it is impossible to fix Shaykh Dawood Tijani into a single category as he was a teacher, an Imam, a preacher, a *sūfī* and a prolific writer. Shaykh Dawood Ahmad Adekilekun Tijani, a Yoruba Arabic scholar of whom no comprehensive study exists, as far as we know, for researchers into Arabic scholarship in Yorubaland of Nigeria, was an erudite Arabic literary figure who had the honour of being born into a highly religious family and rose to great heights by dint of learning and hard work. This paper attempts to study, albeit briefly, the life of this

scholar, to trace and to evaluate his main academic literary contributions as a way of filling the vacuum created by dearth of information, particularly on the Arabic literary legacies and figures in Yorubaland, which constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria.

This paper examines an aspect of his contributions to Arabic scholarship, namely his works published in Arabic as well as those published in English language on some aspects of Arabic literature for academic purposes. As a prelude to our discussion of his works, the paper traces the evolution and diffusion of Arabic scholarship in Yorubaland. This provides an insight into the educational background of this scholar and the factors that aided his erudition in Arabic. The paper reviews each of the available works concisely, hoping that the works will be given wider attention in future academic endeavours on this great scholar.

## METHOD

The study employed both historical and contextual methods, which attempt to reconstruct the significant events of the past through analysis, synthesis and verification. These methods were used to assess the intellectual background of the Shaykh as well as the genres of his literary compositions. This paper also attempted an examination of the predisposing factors as well as the extent of compliance of the Shaykh with the modern-day style of the Arabic literature of West African provenance

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In all Muslim communities that have embraced Islam, the history of Arabic language is traceable to the advent of Islam in such communities. According to Malik (1995:424), Islam is a major vehicle through which the Arabic language and literature travelled to all nooks and crannies of the world. Hence the history of Arabic in Yorubaland began with the history of Islam in this area. The main factor responsible for the spread of this language outside Arabian Peninsula is Islam. Being the language of the Qur'an and the Islamic branches of knowledge, Arabic has inseparably been interwoven with Islam. It should be noted that wherever Islam spread, encouragement was given to the learning of Arabic by the establishment of both Qur'anic and advanced schools for the study of the Arabic language and Islamic literature especially the theological and legal literature which formed the bases of both spiritual and temporal life of the converts. The case was the same with regard to the history of Arabic in Yorubaland. In other words, Arabic is as old as Islam in Yorubaland (Malik, 1995:425).

Galadanchi (1993:17) claims that Arabic language predates Islam in West Africa, pointing to the existence of commercial connections between the people of West Africa and the Arabs prior to the introduction of Islam. This submission confirms the vital role played by commercial interactions in the spread of Arabic in West Africa. The language entered Yorubaland together with Islam, and its efflorescence in the area was due to the spread of Islam

through the activities of traders, preachers and mendicants (Folorunsho:1996:288). Sequel to the spread of Islam to Yorubaland, the rudimentary knowledge of the Qur'an, *hadīth* and the *shari'ah* began to be taught to the adherents of the religion. Abubakre (1992:107) submits that three stages were designed for the teaching and these included the Qur'anic *'ilmī* and advanced stages. Arabic and Islam were taught simultaneously as a pupil who began to read the Arabic alphabet did so with the intention of reading the Qur'an.

At the Qur'anic stage, Fafunwa (1982:60) claims that schools were established by various *mallams*, using various venues such as parlours, verandas, porches of their houses, mosques or shade of trees. Rote learning of the Qur'an was employed at this stage. Pupils were admitted as early as their third year of life. Teaching aid at this age was the wooden board (slate), which had been scrubbed smooth with the aid of some coarse leaves and then painted with a white clay-like substance. Arabic alphabets or Qur'anic verses were inscribed on the board depending on the stage of the pupil. The whole Qur'an was then divided into sixty *hizb* (parts) and pupils were required to memorize one or two of these parts.

The Qur'anic stage was succeeded by *'ilmī* stage, the 'secondary' level of the system which had a much boarder and deeper curriculum. Pupils began by learning the meaning of the verses they had committed to memory. In addition the course of study at this stage included the acquisition of allied subjects such as *'al-sarf* (grammatical inflections), *'al-nahw* (syntax), *'al-mantiq* (logic), *'al-falaq wa 'l-hisāb* (astrology and arithmetic), *'al-jabr wa'l-muqābalah* (algebra), *'al-balāghah* (rhetoric), *'al-fiqh* (jurisprudence), *'al-'aqa'id* (theology), *'al-tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis), *'al-hadīth* (tradition of the prophet) and *'al-sīrah* (biography of the Prophet) (Fafunwa, 1982:60).

Arabic learning was evidently deeper at this stage and it was difficult to find a teacher who had attained perfection in all the stated fields. It was often the inadequacy of locally available scholars that compelled the Muslim Yoruba students to travel out to

Ilorin, Bida and such places in search of reputable scholars in their fields of interest. As noted by Gbadamosi (1978:100), it was essentially these advanced scholars who, on returning to their towns or some other towns or some other Yoruba towns, established Arabic schools. These schools catered the training of students at the secondary and the advanced levels of Arabic studies in Yorubaland. This stage merged imperceptibly with the advanced stage. It was at the advanced stage where specialization in a specific branch of knowledge came up. Fafunwa (1982:60) observes that the stage marked the beginning of the university level when a student would proceed to a university or continue at home learning from local specialists, depending on his area of specialization.

For each of the subjects studied at the 'ilmī or advanced stages, certain textbooks were used. On *Nahw* (syntax) for example they studied textbooks like *Mulhat 'al-īrāb* of 'Abd 'Allāh Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Dāwūd 'al-Sinīhājī, *Kitāb - 'al-ājrūmiyyah* of Ibn. 'Ajrūm, *Kitāb 'al-nahw* of Shaykh Shams 'al-Dīn 'al-Basrī, *Mukhtasar 'al-maydānī* of Shaykh 'al-Maydānī and *'Alfiyyah* of Ibn Mālik. Pertinent to this study also was the *Risālah fī 'al-tajwīd*, a textbook on the Qur'ānic recitation by 'Abd-'al-'Aziz 'al-Naqshabandī. On *hadīth*, our investigation reveals that there were many collections such as *Matiyyat 'al-zād* of 'Abd Allah b. Fūdī and some miscellaneous works on apostolic tradition like *'Arba - 'ūn hadīthan* of Shaykh 'al-Nawawī.

Books studied on *Fiqh* included the *Risālah* of Ibn. Abi Zayd 'al-Qayrawānī, *mukhtasar 'al-khalīl* of Khalīl b. 'Ishāq 'al-Jundī and *Kitāb jumlah 'al-masā'il wa 'al-fatāwī* of 'Ali b. 'al-Husain 'al-Sāmīdī. Others included *Irshad 'al-sālik ilā 'ashraf 'al-masālik* of Ibn. 'Askar 'Abd 'al-Rahmān, *Qawā'id 'al-'islām* of Muhammad b. 'Abd 'al-Rahmān b. Sālim 'al-'Awwal, *Daw' 'al-musallī* and *Qawā'id 'al-salāt* by 'Abd Allah b. Fūdī and Muhammad Bello respectively. Added to the list was *'Arkān 'al-'islām*, a poetical work on *Fiqh* by Muhammad b. Nāsir. On *Tafsīr*, the works studied included *Tafsīr 'al-jalālayn* of Jalāl 'al-Dīn 'al-Suyūtī and Jalāl 'al- Dīn 'al-

Mahallī as well as *Diyā' 'al-ta'wīl fī ma'āni 'al-tanzīl* of 'Abd 'Allah b. Fūdī.

Popular among their textbooks on literature were those on *Madh 'al-nabiyū* such as *'al-Kawākib 'al-duriyyah fī madh khayr 'al-bariyyah* of Sharaf 'al-Dīn 'al-Būsīrī, *Qasīdat 'al-'ishrīniyyāt fī madh khayr 'al-bariyyah* of Fāzāzī and Muhibb 'al- Dīn, *Durr 'al-durār fī madh khayr 'al-bashar* of Muhammad b. Husayn and *'al-Shu'arā' 'al-sittah* an anthology of six of the popular pre-Islamic poets. Also studied were *Maqāmāt* of Muhammad 'al-Qāsim 'al-Harīrī and some poems of unknown authorship such as *Maqāma lāda sidrat 'al-muntahā* and *'al-Karīm yaqbal-* which were attributed to Sayyidah Ruqayyah 'al-Fulātiyyah the grandmother of 'Uthmān b. Fūdī. The textbooks used on history were the ones written on the lives of the prophets like *Qisās 'al-'anbiyā'* and the ones treating the Islamic history in general. For divination, *'Ilm 'al-hisāb* (arithmetic) and *'Ilm 'al-nujūm wa 'al-falak* (astronomy and astrology) were also studied.

Commenting on these works, Gbadamosi (1978:103) observes that:

A survey of these works strongly reveals how dependent Yoruba scholars and Muslims were on external sources for the Islamic education. Many of the books were famous books from the Maghrib (Morocco). Many more were from Sudanese belt and few came in from Kumasi. There was also a significant number of compositions by some notable scholars from Bornu, Kano of course, Sokoto.

According to Bidmus (1972:29), most of these works were in manuscripts. They were copied by interested students either from the peripatetic scholars who took these works along for their teaching careers or from teachers they met at their various towns outside Yorubaland in the process of seeking specialists at the 'Ilmī (advanced) stages of Arabic learning. After copying, the works were studied by the students under the tutelage of the scholars who made the works available. Commenting on the positive effects of this system of textbook copying on Arabic scholarship in Yorubaland, Abdul Rahmon (1989:46-47) notes:

Many of them did not stop at copying of textbooks; instead, after mastering the books, they wrote explanatory notes for the benefits of their own students. Such works in turn became the textbooks tenaciously studied by other students. Gradually many of them started to write abridgments and versifications of prose works, while *tashtīr*, *takhmīs* and *tathlīth* were written on verse works.

### **Dawood's Acquisition of Arabic Education**

Shaykh Dawood was a product of the educational process described above. He started learning the Qur'ān and rudiments of the Arabic language under the tutelage of his uncle, Shaykh Jamiu Abdul-Qādir Adekilekun (d.2004) at a very early stage of his life. He passed through the various stages of Arabic learning under the watchful eyes of his uncle, the only scholar who had the honour of training Shaykh Dawood in various aspects of Arabic language and literature prior to his admission to the University of Ibadan for his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Arabic language and literature in the year 1977.

Shaykh Dawood attended Young Tajudeen Primary School, Ojoro-Ede between 1954 and 1957. He did not attend any secondary school yet as a private candidate, he attempted GCE O'Level and A'Level examinations respectively in the year 1975 and passed with distinctions in both examinations. He graduated from the University of Ibadan with First Class Honours in Arabic language and literature in 1980. A careful consideration of his educational career shows that Shaykh Dawood acquired his erudition in Arabic studies through diligence and determination

### **The Arabic Writings of Shaykh Dawood Tijani**

The contributions of Shaykh Dawood to Arabic language and literature are so enormous, beyond the coverage of just a paper. As a prolific writer, Shaykh Dawood had about forty works in books, chapters in textbooks, monographs, technical reports, articles in learned journals and conferences on various aspects of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Furthermore, he has more than five

thousand lines of poems written in Arabic and Yoruba languages respectively. Most of these poems have been published while some are still in manuscripts. His unpublished writings include:

- (1) A 77 – line *Qasīdah* composed to record his experience as a member of Election Petition Tribunal of the Governorship and House of Assembly Elections at Maiduguri, Bornu State Capital in 1992.
- (2) A 117 – line *Qasīdah* composed to commemorate a workshop organized by the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Centre for Islamic Information of Alhaji Abdul Rasheed Adesokan.
- (3) A 77 – line *Qasīdah* composed to commemorate the performance of some Qur'ānic memorizers who performed creditably well at the Qur'ānic memorization competition hosted by the University of Ibadan Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University Mosque in 1989.
- (4) A 84 – line *Qasīdah* composed to document the disastrous fire out break that burnt the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of the University of Ibadan, emphasising the loss suffered by the Department
- (5) A 82 – line *Qasīdah* composed to congratulate Imam Mudaththir Abdul Salam on his appointment as the Chief Imam of Ibadan in 1988.
- (6) A 79 – line *Qasīdah* composed to congratulate Professor SHA Malik on his promotion to the rank Professor at the University of Ibadan.
- (7) A *Qasīdah* composed to congratulate Professor D.O Shitu Noibi on his promotion as Professor of Islamic Studies of the University of Ibadan.
- (8) *Qasīdatun Nūniyyah*, this 107 – line *Qasīdah* was written to celebrate the importance of knowledge. It was composed to emulate Shaykh Qasim Alaga who went to seek for knowledge and wrote 4 lines of poem to establish the need to seek for knowledge. According to Dawood Tijani, this long *Qasīdah* was composed to celebrate his own grandfather Shaykh Dhul Qarnayn Adekilekun who after acquiring knowledge from his father Imam Nuh Adekilekun travelled outside his domain to acquire advance knowledge in Arabic language and

Islamic studies. He actually became the 1<sup>st</sup> indigenous *Mufassir* of Ede and he was addressed 'Grand Shaykh' Alfa Agba during his life time.

### **His translations of some Arabic works into English and Yoruba languages respectively.**

It is noteworthy that some of his major contributions to Arabic literature were excluded from his study. These were his long essay submitted to the University of Ibadan for the award of first degree entitled *Ka'b b - Zuhayr: The Man and His Poem*. So also was his doctoral thesis submitted to the same University of Ibadan entitled *Sufism in the Arabic Works of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass Al - Khawlakhiyy*. It is our observation that these works should be published for the benefit of Arabic scholars, researchers and students whose area of interest is Arabic works of West African provenance.

Furthermore, as at the time of his death, he was working on the following titles. (1) Collection and critical study of Arabic dirges and elegiac verses of Nigerian authorship. (2) A critical study of some ascetic poems of selected Nigerian poets. (3) A collection and translation of short Yoruba stories to standard Arabic language.

These works were excluded from our review of his works as they were at various stages of completion and were not suitable for review at these stages.

This paper examines his major contributions to Arabic language and literature published in academic journals as well as his monograph prepared for the External Studies Programme of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. These works could be categorized into three, namely; (1) His Monograph. (2) His Writings on Arabic Threnody (3) Review, Translation and Appraisal of Some Arabic Works. Each of the three categories is reviewed as follows:

#### **1. His Monograph**

Shaykh Dawood produced a monograph on *ALL (Arabic Language and Literature) 202: Arabic Reading* for the External Studies Programme of the University

of Ibadan in 1988. The monograph is divided into units embracing variety of topics. Writing on the main features of each of the works designed for the External Studies Programme, The Senior Assistant Registrar of the University of Ibadan, Michael Omolewa(1988:x) states in the foreword to Shaykh Dawood's '*Arabic Reading*'.

The various writers have attempted to develop their course content in different disciplines, thus shedding light on the overriding concepts and principles in their subject areas. They have also attempted to link the wide variety of the experiences of the clientele with the lectures presented. In doing this, elements of dialogue, sometimes interspersed with good humour have been adopted. The course developers are guided by the need to pace teaching-learning situations in such a way as to reduce fatigue, boredom and other problems of stress for the programme's clientele. The writers have been guided by those andragogical principles of learning which put the adult learners' characteristics first.

The quotation above vividly describes the 84-page monograph of Shaykh Dawood. It is well graded with suitable illustrations, simple diction and freedom from archaic expressions.

#### **2. His Writings on Threnody**

The Arabic term *Rithā* or *Marthiyah* is variously translated as bewailing, bemoaning, lamentation, regret and elegiac poetry. *Rithā'* is not only a means by which the memories of the deceased are recollected, it is also a medium of extolling the virtues of the deceased which had ceased with his demise. In addition, it recollects the irresistible power of fate and the powerlessness of mankind in general in the face of death. From these definitions, it can be deduced that elegiac elements are often mixed with praise and this feature is observable in Arabic elegies over the ages. Arabic elegy has certain features, which are given with varying emphases in different poems. Such features include tears, weeping, wailing, mentioning of the good qualities of the deceased, especially valour and generosity and the mysteries of life and death. This assertion is attested to by

Farrūkh(1969:83) when he states that elegy is a song of praise for the dead. Oseni (1987:68) shares the same view with Farrūkh on the definition of elegy as a song of praise for the dead. Furthermore, Abdullah quotes Ibn Rashiq 'al-Qayrawānī as stating that:

There is no difference between elegy and praise, except that elegy indicates it is intended for a dead person by using 'was' or 'with his death we lost so and so', and similar expression to make it known (that) the person is dead (Abdullah,2004:375).

Traditionally, Arabic elegy could be classified into three different but interrelated categories. They are; *Nadb*, *Ta'bīn* and *'Azā'* (1) *Nadb*: This, in relation to the theme is the expressions of the pain and sorrow caused by the death of a dearly esteem person. It is observed that an elegist at times, do employ method by expressing his own pain and agony as if it is another person who is in pain and not him (Tijani,1993:60)

(2) *Ta'bīn*: This is the act of eulogizing the deceased. It is nearer to the praise of the dead person than the expression of personal sorrow. The poet usually engraves a multiplicity of encomium in the minds of the peoples so as to immortalize the name of the dead (Oseni (1983:59) .

(3) *'Azā'*: This is the act of bearing patiently, consoling oneself, receiving condolence or comfort. It is a step above the level of praising the dead. (*Ta'bīn*) Oseni (1983:59)

Stylistically, *Ta'bīn* (commemoration) and *'Azā'* (consolation) are the main categories within which a large number of elegies composed by Nigerian scholars fall. This is because of their background, which forbids wailing and lamenting over the death of a Muslim(Abdul Rahmon,1989:41)

Elegy has been occupying a very prominent place in Arabic poetry since the pre-Islamic era up till the present period. It is pertinent to note that most of the exponents of elegy, especially in the classical period were women, as noted by Nicholson (1976:126):

...it is proper to observe that the poetry of Arabian women of the pre-Islamic period is distinctly masculine in character. Their songs

are seldom of love but often of death. Elegy was regarded as their special province.

A point worthy of observation is the preponderance of elegiac theme in the Arabic poetry of Nigerian '*Ulamā'*. This is however, not unexpected as it has rightly been observed while describing the Arabic works in Yorubaland, which is an integral part of Nigeria:

...that a great deal of Arab poetry among Islamic scholars in Yorubaland should have been devoted to praising and mourning members of their own community does not come as a surprise. Right from the nineteenth century, Muslims can be seen as participants in that rich oral culture of praise which forms a basic element of public life in Yoruba society (Abubakre and Reichmuth,1979:19)

Nigerian Arabic scholars, including Shaykh Dawood, do not see anything wrong in showering encomia on a dead person and also praying for him. This they do by composing elegiac poems for the dead. Their patronage is, perhaps, due to the following reasons, among the others: (1) Elegy / dirge is part of socio- cultural activities of some tribes in Nigeria. (2) Elegy serves as a means of performing a religious duty of remembering and discussing the good deeds of a deceased (Tijani,1993:21)

The preponderance of elegiac theme in the writings of Shaykh Dawood could be seen as a consequence of the perception of Nigerian Arabic scholars about elegiac compositions as noted above. It is interesting to note that elegy consumes the lion share of his works published in academic journals. Of his works under this category are:

المراثي في الأدب العربي النيجيري دراسة تمهيدية.

(1) (*Arabic Dirges in Nigerian Arabic Literature- A Preliminary Study*) (Tijani,1992:26)

The article is a preliminary study of the Arabic dirges and elegiac verses in Nigerian Arabic literature. The article appraises the contributions of Nigerian elegists who write in Arabic. It also examines the influence of Arabic elegists on their work. The article concludes that the contribution of

Nigerian Arabists is highly significant and that these compared very favourably with the works of their counterparts from the Arab world.

الميزات الرئيسية والإضافية في القصائد الرثائية عند علماء بلاد نيجيريا وآدابها

(2). (*Major and Minor Devices in the Elegiac Poems of Nigerian Authorship*) (Tijani,1993:23)

The article examines the major and minor motifs for the composition of threnody by Nigerians. Motifs like *Nadb*, *Ta'bīn* and *'Azā'* are classified on major ones praising the dead person which falls under *Ta'bīn* are again classified on minor in the paper. Inclusion of words of admonition and prayer for the dead person is also considered as minor devices.

الخصائص اللغوية أو اللغووية في القصائد الرثائية في الأدب العربي النيجيري

(3). (*Linguistic Features of Arabic Dirges of Nigerian Authorship*) (Tijani,1994:75-89)

The article examines the linguistic features of Arabic dirges and elegiac verses of Nigerian authorship, like the use of idioms and local aphorisms, reference to local stories, anecdotes etc. The article discovers that although the Nigerian writers of elegy have been greatly influenced by the works of their Arab counterparts, there are still many features that make their works distinct.

(4) *Arabic Dirges and Elegiac Verses of Nigerian Authorships: Motivation for their Writing.* (Tijani,1996:87ff)

The article examines those other factors that motivate Nigerian elegists to write their poems, aside from wailing and lamenting the death of a dear person. Some of these factors are to document a historical event during the life time of the dead one or to record the list of the dead one's contributions.

### 3. Review, Translation and Appraisal of Some Arabic Works

النقد الأدبي للقصيدة المشهورة بجمل لى مسيرة

(1) (*A Literary Appraisal of the Poem popularly known as Hal-lī Masīrah*) (Tijani,1995:88-112)

The article examines the poem as one of the compositions of Sheikh Uthman b.Fudi aimed at praising Prophet Mohammed. It traces the historical development of panegyric from the era of Prophet Mohammed up till its patronage by Arabic writers outside the Arabian Peninsula. It examines the life history of its composer 'Uthmān b.Fūdī and subjects the poem to literary appraisal.

(2) *A Translation and Appraisal of Shaykh Ibrahim Khawlakhi's Rūhu-l-'Adab*(Tijani,1986:14-40)

*Rūhu-l-'Adab* is one of the most popular short poems written on Tijaniyyah *sūfī* order by Shaykh Ibrahim Kawlakhi of Senegal. The paper embraces the translation and literary appraisal of the poem. By this paper, Sheikh Dawood intends to afford the general readers the opportunity of knowing something about the *sūfī* doctrines as contained in the poem.

(3) *Aspects of Sufi Themes in West African Arabic Poetry: An Introductory Survey* (Tijani,1988:84-99)

The paper attempts an analytical and conceptual definition of *sūfī* literature and examines some of the major themes in *sūfī* works of West African authorship. *Sūfī* themes identified were extensively discussed with relevant illustrations. The paper intends to fill what is considered a vacuum in discussing Sufism in West Africa. While acknowledging the efforts of the scholars and researchers who have written on Arabic literature in West Africa, he attempts to justify own writing by stating that:

These researchers have brought out their findings and have published some of the results of their works on various aspects of Arabic Literature in West Africa. However, in all these efforts, not much has been done to carry out an in-depth study of *sūfī* themes in West African Arabic Literature, the gap which this article aims at filling(Tijani,1998:85).

It is remarkable that two of his papers could not be located though they were

conspicuously cited on the Curriculum Vitae collected from the family in the course of production of this work, The works are: *Shaykh Abubakr b. Al-Qasim: The Precursor of Literary Arabic Studies in Ibadan* (written in Arabic) and *Arabic Curriculum and Syllabus Growth and Development in Nigerian Educational System*.

### An Appraisal of His Works

#### Language and Diction

The Arabic writings of Dawood Tijani are free from obscure words and complex constructions. These portray him as possessing a rich repository of vocabularies in Arabic. Obscure expressions could be traced to ambiguity of thoughts, misuse of language, possession of limited lexical items and inability to choose accurate words for an expression (Allam, nd:53). All these factors had no effect on Dawood Tijani. The works portray him as highly skillful in descriptive ability. His proficiency in Arabic language is evidenced in the effective use of the language. The works are free from unnecessary rhetorical embellishments. The works fulfill the modern-day styles of writing, as applicable to the Arabic works of West African provenance

#### Compliance with Grammatical Rules

The prominent role which grammar plays in both written and spoken Arabic can hardly be over emphasized. Quoting Ibn Khaldūn in his *Muqaddimah*, Lawal (1995:56) states:

With grammar, the original meaning becomes clear. Hence, the subject (of a verbal sentence) is distinguished from the direct object and the subject (of a nominal sentence) from the predicate. But for grammar, the basis of communication would be lost... as a result of its ignorance, there would be defect in understanding the sentence.

We are convinced that Shaykh Dawood was aware of the significance of grammar and we appreciate his efforts in avoiding grammatical flaws in his works, especially the ones studied in this paper.

### CONCLUSION

Shaykh Dawood's path to erudition in Arabic and Islamic Studies was narrow in the beginning and he got it widened through determination and hard work. His intellectual background derived its root from the traditional system of Arabic education which was prevalent during the early stages of his life. He had a taste of western education at the primary level and without secondary education, he was able to gain admission for his Bachelor's degree after his success in both O' and A' Levels examinations as a private candidate. He was an erudite scholar and a prolific writer. He wrote extensively on Arabic and Islamic studies. An aspect of his writings which establishes his ingenuity received our attention in this paper.

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