

## OBITUARIES

Two distinguished Nigerian Muslim scholars have died within the past four months: the leader of the Nigerian Qādiriyya Alhaji Nasiru Kabara, and the Wazir of Sokoto Alhaji Junaidu. Both were prolific authors and revered teachers.

Alhaji Nasiru Kabara, who died on 4 October 1996 (21 Jumādā I 1417), was known in Arabic as Muḥammad al-Nāṣir b. Muḥammad al-Mukhtār b. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Kabarī al-Tinbukṭī al-Kanawī, and he claimed *sharīfian* ancestry through his mother, a daughter of Aḥmad al-Ṣaqallī who is said to have settled in Timbuktu in the sixteenth century. On his father's side he traced his ancestry back to the Kabara-farma °Alū who was one of the leaders of the revolt against Askīya Muḥammad Bunkan in 1588. The date of his birth is disputed, but it was probably in 1916. He was educated under various Islamic scholars in Kano and was initiated into the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* by one of them, Ibrāhīm Na-Tsugune; as early as 1936 he received an *ijāza* for the Sammāniyya *ṭarīqa* and he maintained close ties with the Sudanese Sammāniyya throughout his life. In 1953 he travelled to Baghdad, and there met with the 'Grand Khalifa' of the Qādiriyya and was made his representative for West Africa.

In addition to being a widely acclaimed leader of the Qādiriyya, Alhaji Nasiru was active in teaching. For some years in the early 1960s he was Principal of the Shahuḥi Judicial School, and it was there that I had the privilege of meeting him in 1961. It was due to his kindness and courtesy that I was able to list some of the manuscripts in the Shahuḥi Library—which was subsequently burned down—and produce my first little publication.<sup>1</sup> Many well-known northern

1 'Arabic Manuscript material bearing on the history of the Western

Nigerian personalities are to be numbered among his students including the former Grand Kadi Abubakar Gumi, three emirs of Kano—<sup>c</sup>Abd Allāh Bayero, Muḥammad Sanūsī and Ado Bayero, and the former Head of State General Murtala Mohammed.

His literary output was formidable. I have listed 146 Arabic titles in *ALA* II, and this does not include most of his individual poems collected in several *dīwāns*. I have also listed nine works in Hausa, but this is certainly only a small fraction of what he wrote. Not surprisingly, most of what he wrote concerns Sufism, and especially the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa*. However, he also became embroiled in local polemics, and wrote such works as *Qam<sup>c</sup> al-fasād* (1956) on the question of the position of the hands in worship, *al-Qanābil al-dhurriyya*—‘Atomic Bombs’—an attack on <sup>c</sup>Īsā Wālī’s views on polygyny and the status of women (1956), and *al-Naṣīḥa al-ṣariḥa* (1972), his reply to Abubakar Gumi’s celebrated book attacking Sufism—*al-<sup>c</sup>Aqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa*.

I narrowly missed meeting with Alhaji Nasiru again on my last visit to Kano in August 1995 when I was garnering last-minute additions and corrections for *ALA* II. I was summoned to his house to meet him late one evening, but whilst waiting for him to appear a heavy rain fell, and that effectively prevented him from emerging; the next day he had to leave Kano to attend a funeral, and the following day was the day of my departure. However, I was able to benefit from the kindness and sharp memory of some of his sons, so his Arabic literary and scholarly *œuvre* is recorded—I hope fairly completely—in *ALA* II. Very little of this has yet been subjected to scholarly analysis and study. It will be a fitting tribute to Alhaji Nasiru if scholars, both Nigerian and foreign, explore the rich legacy he left in prose and verse.

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Alhaji Junaidu died on 9 January 1997, on the eve of the

Sudan: a collection of manuscripts belonging to the Kano Native Authority’, *Supplement, Bulletin of News* [Historical Society of Nigeria], vii/1, 1962, 1-9.

month of Ramaḍān 1417, in his ninety-first year. His full name and genealogy was Muḥammad Junayd b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī b. Aḥmad b. °Uthmān—this latter ancestor being better known as Giḍ'ad'o d'an Laima, the wazir of Muḥammad Bello. The position of wazir has, in fact, been held uniquely by lineal descendants of Giḍ'ad'o d'an Laima for the past 180 years. His studies were undertaken in Sokoto with a number of teachers, the principal of whom was Abū Bakr Bubē. When this shaykh of his died in 1932 Alhaji Junaidu wrote a touching elegy for him in Arabic, which I have published and translated in a recent volume on the Islamic *qaṣīda*.<sup>2</sup>

From 1939 to 1943 Alhaji Junaid taught at the Sokoto Middle School and at the Girls' Secondary School, and in 1946 became principal of the Kadi School of Sokoto where future Islamic juristic personnel were trained. In 1946 he became adviser on religious affairs to the Sultan of Sokoto Abū Bakr, and in 1948 became his wazir. He was a deputy in the Northern Region House of Assembly from 1951 to 1966, and travelled on several occasions to the Arab world on various missions. In 1971 he was awarded an honorary D.Litt. by Ahmadu Bello University. He was also first president of the Jamā'at Naṣr al-Islām.

While Alhaji Junaidu will certainly be remembered for his various roles in public life, his own scholarly inclinations led him to derive most pleasure out of his teaching and writing. He taught several generations of Sokoto students, and was generous with his time to both local and foreign researchers who sought his wisdom on the history of the 'Sokoto Caliphate'. Murray Last, whose book of this title was dedicated to 'the Waziri', was the first of many to be received by him with courtesy and openness, and to be permitted to share the treasures of his library. Despite my years in Nigeria in the 1960s, I did not visit Sokoto until 1987, but then had the great pleasure of being introduced to Waziri

2 See S. Sperl and C. Shackle (eds.), *Qaṣīda Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1996, II, 120-5.

by his son Dr Sambo Wali Junaidu. Waziri was already blind and suffering from a speech problem, but we conversed in Arabic for half an hour and he presented me with a number of his publications, and—the most treasured item—a handwritten copy of his corpus of poetry. In August 1995 I visited him again to ask permission to dedicate *ALA II* to him. Despite his extreme frailness he sat and conversed with the group I came with for some minutes. His mind was as sharp as ever, and he answered without hesitation a question I had about one of his poems. Before we left he offered a *du‘ā*<sup>3</sup> for us, and it was a touching farewell.

Alhaji Junaidu’s scholarly legacy is diverse. My tally is 49 works with titles in prose and verse and 54 poems.<sup>3</sup> A total of fifteen of his works have been published in Nigeria (possibly more), but almost none of them has been translated into English. The principal theme of his writings is the history of Sokoto and its region, and especially the history of Shaykh ‘Uthmān b. Muḥammad Fodiye and his descendants, the ‘sultans’ of Sokoto; but he has also written accounts of his travels and some works on the Fulfulde language. His poems also speak of his travels, and elegize departed friends. There are also many in the form of prayers, or bemoaning the lamentable state of affairs of his day and age and calling for God’s mercy and pardon. He was born when colonial rule had only just begun, and he lived through a century of extraordinary turbulence and change—through the establishment of British rule, through the *zamanin siyasa*, when ‘politics’ ushered in a new order in Northern Nigeria, through the first flush of Nigerian independence, the Civil War, military regimes, the oil boom and the following slump. Through it all he remained true to his calling as a scholar and to his vocation as man of faith and piety. Above all he retained his dignity, his courtesy and his sense of humour. With him an era comes to an end. One can only hope that his spirit will live on.

John O. Hunwick

3 See *ALA II*, 196-211.