THE WRITINGS OF THE SUDANESE TIJĀNĪ
SHAYKH IBRĀHĪM SĪDĪ (1949-1999)
WITH NOTES ON THE WRITINGS OF HIS
GRANDFATHER, SHAYKH MUḤAMMAD SALMĀ
(D. 1918), AND HIS BROTHER, SHAYKH
MUḤAMMAD AL-GHĀLĪ (B. C. 1947)

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The following contribution is intended as an addition to the first volume of Arabic Literature of Africa. It is a compilation of the writings—some of which are mentioned in ALA, I, 301-3—by Ibrāhīm b. Sīdī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Salmā, a Sudanese Tijānī shaykh from the town of al-Fāshir (Darfur) who died on 3 September 1999. Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī had the reputation of being a staunch defender of the teachings of the Tijāniyya ṭariqa. Revered by his followers and denounced by his opponents, he was also one of the most controversial religious personalities in the Sudan and within the Tijāniyya. Shaykh Ibrāhīm’s biography is extraordinary in a number of ways: His life story mirrors many of the political and religious developments in modern Sudan; his family background as well as the geographical range of his contacts with other shaykhs and scholars provide an example for the continuation of the historical links that connected Darfur with the Central and the Western bilād al-Sūdān; his itinerary as a Sufi follows an almost classical pattern, but he managed to translate this pattern into the world of late twentieth-century Sudan. The author of an article published by the Sudanese daily al-Ra’y al-‘amm a few weeks after Shaykh Ibrāhīm’s death even portrayed the deceased as ‘a shaykh of contemporary Sufī

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enlightenment’. \(^1\) Whatever one may think of Shaykh Ibrāhīm—and it should not go unmentioned that quite a few of his contemporaries were of the opinion that his ideas and practices were a distortion of Islam, while others thought of him as an impostor and fabricator who was only interested in increasing his personal prestige—there can be no doubt that Shaykh Ibrāhīm is one of the Tijānī writers whose works deserve further academic study.

This is not the place to deal with Shaykh Ibrāhīm extensively. In a number of earlier publications, I have dealt with some aspects of his life and his rich contribution to Tijānī literature. In an article published in two consecutive issues of *SAJHS*, \(^2\) I have suggested to interpret his work *al-Summ al-zu‘āf* and other writings by twentieth-century Tijānī scholars in the light of the changing configuration within African Muslim communities. My article ‘The history of the Tijānīyya and the issue of *tarbiya* in Darfur’ \(^3\) discusses some of his writings in defence of ‘spiritual education’ (*tarbiya*) as introduced by the Senegalese shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse. In another study, I have examined a short treatise by Shaykh Ibrāhīm on the social rehabilitation of street children. \(^4\)

I have organized the present contribution on the writings of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī according to the *ALA* system. However, I do include a more detailed biographical account than is usually given in *ALA*. As the writings are not easily available, I found it appropriate to give some additional information to

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each of the works listed here.

In his entry on Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī in *ALA*, I, O’Fahey gives the titles of thirteen items, but only three refer to a published version. The other ten titles are taken from a list provided by Shaykh Ibrāhīm at the back of his *Qalā‘id al-marjān* (*q.v.*) where they are said to be forthcoming. Of these ten, I have only seen three. As for the remaining seven titles, it is likely that they do exist as manuscripts; these titles are not repeated in the list below. It is equally possible that some of them later appeared under another title. As Shaykh Ibrāhīm used to pursue a number of book projects at the same time, it may well be that some of the books he intended to write never actually reached the stage of being ready for the press. Moreover, all the writings that were published were printed by Shaykh Ibrāhīm himself. His financial situation did not always allow him to get his books printed. Thus, the following list does not claim to be exhaustive. There are certainly more writings by Shaykh Ibrāhīm that only exist in the form of manuscripts in the *zāwiya* at al-Fāshir.5 This applies particularly to poetry: The late shaykh was a gifted poet who specialized in praise of the Prophet, and who loved to address his more distinguished guests in verse. I am not able to say how many poems he composed, and only a few are published, among them his finest pieces of poetry in praise of the Prophet.

Almost all the writings mentioned in the following are held in the Materialsammlung ‘Islam in Afrika’ located at the University of Bayreuth (Germany), a specialized collection on sources, books, articles, conference papers relating to Islam in Africa. The Tijāniyya collection is referred to as

5 A full-page obituary published in the daily *al-Ra‘y al-ākhar* (Khartoum; 1086, 9 September 1999, 2) mentions that Shaykh Ibrāhīm was the author of ‘more than thirty items on the Tijāniyya order’. Of the 29 writings listed below, only 18 deal with the Tijāniyya (panegyrical and devotional poetry not included). It is likely that my list is incomplete and that there are more writings kept as manuscripts at the *zāwiya* in al-Fāshir.
‘Bayreuth/TIJ [number]’.

To complete the picture of Tijānī writings from the al-Fāshir zāwiya, I have decided to start with two short notes on other Tijānī scholars from the same family, one concerning Shaykh Ibrāhīm’s grandfather Shaykh Salmā, the other concerning his elder brother Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghālī.

MUḤAMMAD SANAMOY b. MUḤAMMAD FĀDIGH b. AHMAD ZARRŪQ, known as Shaykh Salmā, b. c. 1267/1850-1 (Djenné), d. 1337/1918-9 (Mellit/Darfur).


R.S. O’Fahey already gave an account of Shaykh Salmā’s life in ALA, I, which does not need to be repeated. However, it may be added that my informants did not confirm that Shaykh Alfā Hāshim’s library is still extant in the zāwiya at al-Fāshir, as O’Fahey claims. As for the writings of Shaykh Salmā, we only have indications of some titles of his works. The only exceptions are extracts published or quoted by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī (see list below). Awad al-Sid al-Karsani gives three titles by Shaykh Salmā: Kāfī al-kunūz, Kāfī al-kīmiyā, and al-Kanz al-muṭalsam, adding that the manuscripts are kept in a village north of al-Fāshir. Yet, these titles were unknown to Shaykh Ibrāhīm, and he expressed his doubts that manuscripts written by his grandfather could be found outside the al-Fāshir zāwiya.

6 Karsani, ‘Tijāniyya Order in the Western Sudan’, 216.
7 Interview, September 1995.
Mentioned in the foreword by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghālī to Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī’s work *al-Jawhar al-muʿaẓẓam fi madḥ al-ḥabīb al-aʿẓam* (*q.v.*). Manuscript, kept at the zāwiya in al-Ŷashīr.

Booklet in defence of the practice of including the title sayyidunā whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned in the shahāda, the call for prayer or during prayer, that is, *ashhādu anna sayyidanā Muḥammadan (…)* instead of *ashhādu anna Muḥammadan (…)*. It contains a lengthy preface by Shaykh Ibrāhīm (pp. 1-8). Shaykh Salmā’s treatise occupies the second half of the book. As Shaykh Ibrāhīm explains, it is an extract from Shaykh Salmā’s work *al-Kitāb al-karīm* (*q.v.*). 

Mentioned and quoted in Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī, *al-Summ al-zufīf*, 29, 34 (*q.v.*). The paragraphs cited by Shaykh Ibrāhīm deal with the question of the reward for the recitation of God’s most exalted name (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*). Manuscript, kept at the zāwiya in al-Ŷashīr.

Mentioned in the foreword by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghālī to Shaykh Ibrāhīm Šīdī’s work *al-Jawhar al-muʿaẓẓam fi madḥ al-ḥabīb al-aʿẓam* (*q.v.*). Contains an autobiographical section. 
Manuscript, kept at the zāwiya in al-Ŷashīr.

MUḤAMMAD AL-GHĀLĪ b. SĪDĪ MUḤAMMAD b. MUḤAMMAD SALMĀ, known as Shaykh al-Ghālī or Sayyidna, b. c. 1946 (al-Ŷashīr)
Seesemann, ‘Sufi leaders and social welfare’.

Shaykh al-Ghālī is the elder brother and successor of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī as the head of the zāwiya at al-Fāshir.

1. **al-Ma‘ānī fī mathānī Sīdī Aḥmad al-Tijānī.**
   A collection of poetry in praise of the virtues of the Tijāniyya order, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī and other shaykhs.

   A brief account of the life story of Shaykh Salmā (copy in Bayreuth/TIJ 110).

**IBRĀḤĪM b. SĪDĪ MUḤAMMAD b. MUḤAMMAD SALMĀ**, known as Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī, b. 1949 (al-Fāshir), d. 3 September 1999 (al-Fāshir)


Shaykh Ibrāhīm has been one of the most charismatic and most controversial personalities within the Tijāniyya Sufi order during the twentieth century. A descendant of a family whose roots lie in present-day Mali, he lost his father at the age of seven. He was brought up by one of his maternal uncles in the town of Mellit. He later returned to al-Fāshir to continue his religious studies with his paternal uncle Aḥmad al-Tijānī b. Muḥammad Salmā (d. 1985, known as Shaykh Manga). After taking his degree from al-Fāshir Secondary
School, he went to study at the Bakht al-Ruḍā College near the town of al-Duwaym (Gezira Province). In the early 1970s, he began to work as a teacher in different towns of Darfur (Zalingei, Geneina, Nyala). After a few years in government service, he decided to withdraw from his teaching profession and to dedicate himself to the work for the Tijāniyya order. Shaykh Ibrāhīm spent several years with his two Sufi masters, ʿĪsā b. ʿUmar al-Fallātī from Geneina (Western Darfur) and ʿUmar b. Abī Bakr al-Mallāwī from al-Qadārif (Blue Nile Province). He received ʿijāzas from both teachers that connected him with his grandfather Shaykh Salmā (who in turn had an ʿijāza issued by Muḥammad al-ʿArabī b. al-Sāʾīḥ, a famous nineteenth-century Tijānī shaykh) and with the Senegalese Tijānī leader Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse.8 In 1979, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī established his zāwīya next to the mosque erected by his late father in the Tijānīyya neighbourhood of al-Fāshir.

Shaykh Ibrāhīm was one of the most active Sudanese Tijānīs in the promotion of the teachings of the Senegalese shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse. These activities earned him severe criticism from other Tijānīs who regarded Shaykh Niasse’s practice of ‘spiritual education’ (tarbiya) as an innovation, claiming that this kind of tarbiya was not known at the time of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī. In the early period of his career as a shaykh, Shaykh Ibrāhīm concentrated his efforts on defending tarbiya against the attacks by other Tijānīs. At that time, he was seen by many other Sudanese Tijānīs as having the potential to become the supreme leader of the order in the country. A turning point in his career came in late 1984 when Shaykh Ibrāhīm wrote his famous—or, as his opponents would put it, infamous—book al-Summ al-zuʾāf. This polemic reply to the book al-Takfīr akhtār bidʾa tuḥaddid al-salām waʾl-waḥda bayn al-muslimūn fī Nayjīriyya by sharīf Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ,9 a Tijānī shaykh from Maiduguri (Nigeria),

was at the roots of a prolonged controversy within Tijānī circles in Nigeria, Chad and the Sudan. As a result, the followers and scholars of the Tijāniyya order in Darfur were divided into two camps, either in support of, or in opposition to, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī. Although the descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī from ʿAyn Māḍī, Fez, Nouakchott and Dakar took the side of the author of *al-Summ al-zuʿāf*, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī had lost the recognition he formerly had by most Sudanese Tijānīs as one of the leading representatives of the Tijāniyya at the time.

However, Shaykh Ibrāhīm did stick to his point of view, and he dedicated himself totally to working for the Tijāniyya order in the way he understood it. Of the 29 items listed below, six address his opponent *sharīf* Ibrāhīm ʿṢāliḥ directly. In one or two other works, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī gives his interpretation of Tijānī doctrine. To him, being a Tijānī meant to translate the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī into a comprehensive way of life, as reflected in Shaykh Ibrāhīm’s favourite motto ‘*al-Tijāniyya liʾl-ḥayāt’*, which can be roughly translated as ‘the Tijāniyya order is to be lived’. Accordingly, he stressed the importance of (physical) work and demanded absolute obedience from his disciples. The ‘real’ Tijānī was supposed to replace ‘personal egoism’ by total commitment to the service of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī, the Tijāniyya order, and the wider society.

As mentioned above, Shaykh Ibrāhīm’s practices often gave rise to controversy. His disciples were never to appear in front of him wearing shoes. During the meetings in the *zāwiyya*, the performance of mystical poetry was often accompanied by the sound of a lute played by one of the disciples. For many years, Shaykh Ibrāhīm refused to attend the Friday

10 See Seesemann, ‘*Takfīr Debate*’ and ‘Der lange Arm des Ibrāhīm ʿṢāliḥ’.
11 See *al-Irshādāt al-ahmadiyya (q.v.)*, 35-40; further Seesemann, ‘Islam, Arbeit und Arbeitsethik’ and ‘Sufi leaders and social welfare’.
prayers in the neighbouring mosque because of a disagreement with the imam, his cousin Muṣṭafā Manga (d. 1997). The introduction of a different wording of the call for prayer—a practice he justified in his *Mugaddimat risālat al-Ifāda fī wujūb al-siyāda* (q.v.)—earned him the fierce opposition of most scholars in Darfur, Tijānīs and non-Tijānīs alike.

Shaykh Ibrāhīm rarely travelled outside the Sudan. Apart from performing the *ḥajj*, he visited Northern Nigeria in 1984. In 1997, he intended to make the overland trip from Darfur to Mauritania and Fez via Northern Nigeria, Niger and Mali in order to visit other Tijānī centres as well as the hometown of his paternal grandfather Shaykh Salmā. Yet, at the instigation of the Chadian followers of *shārif* Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ, the government of Chad decided to expel him a few days after his arrival in N’Djamena. He was not able to undertake the trip again, and he died of kidney failure in September 1999—probably a kind of ‘occupational disease’, since he had carried out long fasting exercises as a part of his mystical practices.

In the last years before his death, Shaykh Ibrāhīm claimed for himself the title of a *shārif* Hasanī. He based this claim on a genealogy given by his grandfather Shaykh Salmā in one of his writings. He explained the fact that he did not publicize his *shārifian* pedigree earlier by pointing to Shaykh Salmā’s dislike of pretentiously displaying a noble genealogy.

   An outline of the correct behaviour of the disciple towards his master and the descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī. Other chapters are in defence of the Senegalese Tijānī shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse.

12 Seesemann, ‘Der lange Arm des Ibrāhīm Sālih’.
The last work of poetry by Shaykh Ibrāhīm in 114 verses. He recounts his daylight visions of the Prophet and describes his personal re-enactment of the mi‘rāj, that is, the Prophet’s journey through the seven heavens. The qaṣīda is published as a cassette; here, it is performed by Muhammad al-Ṣādiq Ahmad al-Māhī, a disciple of Shaykh Ibrāhīm, whose performance is accompanied by the lute. Opens: Ḥal atā ḥīnūn min al-dahri * min Allāhi ʾalayya.


A qaṣīda rāʾiyya of 63 verses about visiting the Holy Cities in the Hijāz. Opens: Bi-Makkata baytun lalāʾiluhu munīru * nuʿazzimuhu nashtāquhu wa-naẓūru.


A collection of poetry in praise of the Prophet, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī and other shaykhs of the Tijāniyya order, some of it in Sudanese colloquial Arabic. Most students of Shaykh Ibrāhīm know the poems by heart and perform them regularly during the meetings in the zāwiya. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq Ahmad al-Māhī has composed melodies to some of the poems.


5. al-Dalāʾil al-qatʿiyya al-mukhtāra li-taʾkīd man ʾal-shaykh al-Tijānī murīdahu min al-ziyāra.

On why a Tijānī is not allowed to visit a dead or living shaykh who is not affiliated to the Tijāniyya order.

Completed 13 Şafar 1405/7 November 1984.


6. al-Fayḍ al-mawhūb min ḥadrat sayyidinā Aḥmad al-
Versification of a work by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī’s master ʿĪsā b. ʿUmar al-Fallāṭī (d. c. 1985, Geneina) on the merits and the superiority of the mystical path founded by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī. In ALA, I, this work is mentioned as forthcoming and described as ‘an arrangement of a work by Ahmad al-Tijānī’.

Discusses the correct interpretation of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī’s famous statement about ‘the scales of the Sharīʿa’: ‘If you hear something that is attributed to me, weigh it on the scales of the Sharīʿa. If it does correspond [to the Sharīʿa], apply it. If it does contradict [the Sharīʿa], abandon it.’ Cf. Seesemann, ‘Takfīr Debate: Part II’, 76.
Completed 3 August 1997.

Polemical writing directed against sharīʿ Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ, the author of *al-Takfīr* (see above). Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī compares some of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ’s statements to the book *al-Hidāya al-hādiya ilā ʿl-tāʿīfa al-Tijāniyya* (there seems to be an edition published by the Muslim World League in Mecca in 1393/1973, but I have not seen it), whose author Muḥammad Taqī ʿl-Dīn al-Hilālī is a well-known opponent of the Tijāniyya from Morocco.
As the title indicates, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī is of the opinion that the statements in *al-Takfīr* match the position of *al-Hidāya al-hādiya*. Accordingly, he identifies Shaykh Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ as a Wāḥhābī. See further Seesemann, ‘Takfīr Debate: Part II’, 104-6.
Publ. with *al-Summ al-zu‘âf* (q.v.), 46 pp. (copy in Bayreuth/TIJ 100-2).

   In defence of the practice of *tarbiya* (‘spiritual education’) as introduced by Shaykh Ibrâhîm Niasse from Senegal. Includes the responses by Śiddi Ibn Sâlim, a descendant of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijânî, to a number of questions about *tarbiya*. See Seesemann, ‘History of the Tijânîyya’, 421-2.
   Completed Dhū ’l-Ḥijja 1401/October 1981.

    An arrangement of a work by ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz ʿAbdussî (not identified) on the virtues of the Prophet’s companions.

    Once again, Shaykh Ibrâhîm Śiddî addresses the book *al-Takfîr* by *sharîf* Ibrâhîm Şâliḥ. This time he tries to refute the position of his Nigerian opponent by quoting from writings by Muḥammad al-Thânî Kafanga, a leading Tijânî shaykh from Kano. On Kafanga and his writings, see *ALA*, II, 304-7; on the events that followed the publication of *al-Takfîr* in Nigeria, see Seesemann, ‘*Takfîr* Debate: Part I’, 63-8.
    Completed 7 October 1984.

Written to justify the claim of the Senegalese Tijānī shaykh Ibrāhīm Niassse to the spiritual position of the šāhib al-fayḍa, that is, the personification of the channel through which the fayḍa (‘spiritual effusion’) of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī flows. Completed at the end of Dhū ’l-Ḥijja 1412/June 1992. Publ. n.p. [Khartoum] (by the author), n.d. [c. 1992], 72 pp. (copy in Bayreuth/TIJ 94).


A versification of an unidentified work by Muḥyīʾl-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī; maybe a chapter of his Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam. See ALA, I, 302.
Foreword to Shaykh Muḥammad Salmā, al-Ifāda fī wujūb al-siyāda (q.v.). See above for a description of the contents (copy in Bayreuth/TIJ 90).

18. al-Nadhīr al-‘aryān li’l-hadhr min dasā’is šāhib al-Takfīr fī ẓariqat al-Tijān [sic].
Adresses a number of issues raised in al-Takfīr and other publications by sharīf Ibrāhīm Šāliḥ and criticizes the latter’s position as not being in accordance with the true teachings of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Tijānī.
Completed on the first Friday of Ramaḍān 1405/24 May 1985.

Polemical poem of 310 verses against sharīf Ibrāhīm Šāliḥ, written as a follow-up to al-Summ al-zu‘āf (q.v.).
Completed 21 Rajab 1405/13 April 1985.

Another polemical writing against sharīf Ibrāhīm Šāliḥ (cf. al-Hidāya al-hādiya above). Here, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī compares some of the statements made by the sharīf in al-Takfīr to the book Zawāl al-ḥayra bi-qāti‘ al-burhān ʿammā nasharathu jaridat al-Zuhrā‘ taḥt ʿunwān Aynā ḥumāt al-Qur′ān (Fez 1358/1939; see Abun-Nasr, Tijaniyya, 195) by the famous Moroccan Tijānī shaykh ʿAbd al-Skīraj and concludes that Shaykh Ibrāhīm Šāliḥ’s statements do contradict the opinion of Skīraj.
A short prayer (istighātha) of 32 verses, to be read after the ważīfa. Opens: Yā shaykhānā yā khatmu yā Tijānī * yā quṭbanā ’l-maktūma dhā ’l-tadānī.

A short treatise on the correct behaviour of the disciple towards the descendants of Shaykh Āḥmad al-Tijānī.

Traces the practice of tarbiya as introduced by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse to the teachings of Shaykh Āḥmad al-Tijānī.
Completed 12 Rabī‘ II 1402/7 February 1982.

A didactical poem (urjūza) on the basic teachings of Shaykh Āḥmad al-Tijānī and the correct practice of the recitations (awrād, adhkār), with special reference to the participation of women in Tijānī ritual.
Publ. al-Fāshir (by the author), n.d. [c. 1985], 50 pp. (copy in Bayreuth/TIJ 97a).

Qaṣīda nūniyya of 85 verses, composed towards the end of May 1995 on the occasion of the departure of Sīdī ʿAdnān, a descendant of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī living in Dakar. Opens: Yā șāḥībī daʾāʾīʾ l-malāmu daʾānī * Sa-asīru fī darb al-fattāʾ l-rabbānī.

Polemical qaṣīda nūniyya of 63 verses attacking the opponents of the Tijānīyya order. Opens: Rabbī yā Qahhāru faʾhlik * kulla man ʿādāʾ l-Tijānī.

27. al-Sahm al-ṣāʾib al-muwajjah ilāʾ l-madī Jidda al-kādhīb.

The most famous book by Shaykh Ibrāhīm. Because of the accusations raised against the influential Nigerian Tijānī shaykh Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ of having forfeited his membership in the Tijānīyya, al-Summ al-zuʾāf caused a major scandal; see further Seesemann, ‘Takfīr Debate’ and ‘Der lange Arm des Ibrāhīm Sāliḥ’; see also Karsani, ‘Beyond Sufism’, 142. The highly controversial book is officially banned in Chad, and only a few copies exist in Nigeria. In the Sudan, it can only be found with Tijānīs who are affiliated with Shaykh Ibrāhīm Sīdī.
Completed 8 Dhūʾ ʾl-Ḥijja 1404/3 September 1984.
THE WRITINGS OF İBRÂHİM SİDİ


A short account by Shaykh İbrâhîm of his program for the social rehabilitation of street children. For a detailed discussion, see Seesemann, ‘Sufi Leaders and Social Welfare’.

Bibliography


