

KANO

THE STATE, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY
1967 to 2017



ANNIVERSARY OF THE CREATION OF KANO STATE

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PROFANING THE SACRED IN TIJJANIYYA SUFİ SONGS IN KANO

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INTRODUCTION

The clear division between what is considered sacred and the profane in religious discourse was secularly articulated by Emile Durkheim's theoretical framework of sacred-profane dichotomy. This reflects what Durkheim refers to as "the division of the world into two domains, one containing all that is sacred and the other all that is profane—[such] is the distinctive trait of religious thought" (Durkheim, 1995, pp. 34-35).

Regardless of the religious context of the discourse, this binary pair provide parameters in understanding how Hausa religious poetics in Sufi music performances ignited public debate and controversy in the city of Kano, northern Nigeria, when Sufi brotherhood religious performers started using modernized musical instruments in their performances, and later, started an apparent pantheistic veneration of one of their Sheiks using metaphoric words of ecstasy (*shathiyat*). This was sparked off by the cassette release of 'Rabbi, Rabbi' (My God, My God) performed by Rabi'u Usman Baba in early 2000s. Usman Baba, a Tijjaniyya Sufi order adherent, used a 'modern' music studio, instead of the usual islamically approved frame drum (*bandir*) to perform the song. The synthesizer beat, with faint reggae melodies created an outrage among Tijjaniyya Sufi members in Kano who believed that the sacredness of the song, which praises Allah, has been profaned by the music used.

This opened the floodgates to debates in the use of ecstatic poetics and secular music in Hausa Sufi religious performances, culminating in a series of MP3 songs released by a faction of Tijjaniyya Sufi order singers whose lyrics seemingly glorified Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, the leader of the Tijjaniyya Sufi order of Islam in West Africa, above God. This led to street protests by youth against these singers and the issuing of death sentence on some of them by an Islamic Court in Kano in 2015.

These incidents clearly reflect the undocumented existence of what I call 'blasphemy from below'; for blasphemous (or too profane) cultural expressions were embedded within sacred Islamic religious performances in these instances. This sheds light into receptivity of eddies and flows of transnational Islamic poetics and musics in a modernizing African Muslim community.

International incidents dealing with blasphemy against Islam are often illustrated with violent reactions against the transgressors of the Islamic aniconistic credo acts, often, though not always, non-Muslim who conduct creative activities within the rubric of freedom of expression (see, for instance, Uitz (2007), European Commission for Democracy through Law (2010), Dacey (2012).

These incidents were illustrated, for example, by the fatwa issued on Salman Rushdie in 1989 because of treatment of Islam in his book, the *Satanic Verses*; the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy in September 2005; attacks on satirical weekly news magazine *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris in 2011 and 2015.

Blasphemy refers to acts of uttering profane language, insulting or abusing that which is sacred in religion. In the Islamic context, blasphemy refers to a wide range of acts ranging from apostasy to cursing or slandering Allah, and the Prophet Muhammad. Blasphemy also includes irreverent behavior toward other holy personages and religious beliefs. The terms used to describe blasphemy in Islam include *sabb* (abuse, insult) and *shatm* (abuse, vilification), *la'n* (cursing, malediction) and *ta'n* (accusing, attacking). Consequently, blasphemy within Islamic creative pursuits does not follow the contours of freedom of expression as it does in a secular liberal society. As Asad (2009, p. 21) argued in referring to the Danish cartoons incident:

The conflict that many Euro-Americans saw in the Danish cartoons scandal was between the West and Islam, each championing opposing values: democracy, secularism, liberty, and reason on one side, and on the other the many opposites—tyranny, religion, authority, and violence. The idea of blasphemy clearly belongs to the latter series and is seen by secularists as a constraint on the freedom of speech—on freedom itself—guaranteed by democratic principles and by the pursuit of reason so central to Western culture.

In Islam, blasphemy is domiciled within the domain of a variety of interpretations of the Islamic credo and often reflects the subjectivities of the interpreter, rather than a shared understanding of the community of believers, and there are quite a few cases to illustrate this. This patently unique interpretation, often deviating from the main doctrinal base of the Islamic belief, is what constitutes blasphemy. Bianca Smith (2014), for instance, reports about the series of blasphemy cases in Indonesia, which saw the emergence of Ahmad Moshaddeq, a self-proclaimed prophet of Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyya, and Lia Aminuddin who formed a neo-Sufi perennial group called Salamullah (Peace of Allah). Her case was complicated being a woman, and who also claimed, to be the channel of the Angel Gabriel.

Historically, however, the most famous case of literary blasphemy was probably that uttered by Mansur Al-Hallaj (858-922) most renowned for uttering "I am the Truth" (Ana 'l- aqq), considered heresy by the Abbasid Islamic rulers of his time, and consequently executed in 922.

The Sufi Brotherhoods in Kano

Islam has been more or less the religion of Kano since about 1380 when a group of Wangara merchant clerics from Mali came and converted the then king of Kano, Sarki Yaji into the Islamic faith. Consequently, Kano became a terminus for many visiting Islamic scholars for many years. This tradition of scholarship was strengthened by the arrival in Kano of Muhammad b. Abd al Karim al-Maghili, from Algeria, during the reign of the Emir of Kano, Rumfa (1463-1499) Rumfa was perceived as the most radical and intellectual reformer among the medieval Emirs of Kano, carrying, as he did, far reaching reforms in all aspects of his administration. Thus according to Barkindo (1988) by the time Al-Maghili arrived in Kano in about 1490, Rumfa had completed most of his reforms. It would appear, therefore, that al-Maghili's presence in Kano served only as a catalyst towards accelerating an already reformist process of Rumfa.

Perhaps significantly, the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhood—the first to be introduced in what was to become Nigeria later—was brought to Kano by Al-Maghili. As an informant for Priscilla Starrat (1993: 91) recorded:

The Qadiriyya precede the Tijaniyya in this town, in this country of ours, Nigeria. And, indeed, the one who brought the Qadiriyya to this land of ours of Nigeria, the one who came with it was Shaikh Maghili. Shaikh Maghili, indeed, he came with the Qadiriyya, about nine-hundred years ago, more or less.

Abdul-Qadir Gilani (1077-1166) of Gilan, in Iran founded the Qadiriyya although its scholastic roots were established in Baghdad. Although, Al-Maghili was credited with introducing Sufism in present day Nigeria, "it is more likely that the spread of Sufi ideas in the Sahara and the Sudan was one aspect of the general diffusion of Islamic culture spreading out from both North Africa and Egypt at this time." (Hiskett 1975:73).

The Qadiriyya became more established with an influx of Arab merchant migrants from northern Africa to northern Nigerian cities of Katsina, and later Kano and established a strong community in 1880s. Long before the arrival of the Arabs as a forceful community, the Qadiriyya had many followers in Kano.

The Qadiriyya became more widespread after the 1804 Jihad where both the leaders of the Jihad as well as leaders of the new emirates that emerged as a result of the Jihad all embraced Qadiriyya brotherhood. The Arabs who settled in Kano regularized the process through the establishment of regular weekly prayer meetings for new members of the movement. The Arabs also emphasized the use of bandiri (frame drum), which were played every Thursday evening following afternoon meeting. The main mode of delivery of Sufi practices in Kano was through dhikr (remembrance) which was often accompanied by the bandiri performances. The qasida sung during the performances had a way of attracting youth to the group, and subsequently, under Shaykh Nasir Kabara, Qadiriyya became a strong young-focused Sufi order. The bandiri dhikr was introduced in 1953 by Shaykh Nasiru Kabara, and became important means of mobilizing youth towards the movement. As Loimeier (1997: 60) pointed out:

Many of Kabara's young followers are organized in bandiri groups and move from mosque to mosque every evening in order to participate in the bandiri-dhikr. The beating of the bandiri drum is a prestigious and sought-after occupation. It demands great

concentration on the part of the drummer because he only has to know and to command the correct rhythm of the drumming, which speeds up during the chanting of the awrad (litany), but also has to know by heart the different awrad themselves which are recited and given by the respective leader of the bandiri-dhikr and vary from mosque to mosque.

This youth focus provided an opportunity for introducing new forms of religious gospel and lyrical narratives that dovetailed into blasphemy accusations and convictions of death sentence in Kano.

The Tijaniyya Sufi order was founded around 1781 by Sidi Ahmad al-Tijni (1737-1815), who was born in Algeria and died in Fez, Morocco. Tijaniyya reacted against the conservative, hierarchical Qadiriyya brotherhood then dominant, focusing on social reform and grass-roots Islamic revival. It was brought to northern Nigeria in the 19th century by Shaykh Umar Tall (also known as Umar al-Futi), who, while on his way to the pilgrimage in Makkah from Futa Toro in present day Senegal, stayed for some years in the Sokoto, the then seat of the Caliphate of northern Nigeria. While in Sokoto, he was received by the Amir Muminin, Muhammad Bello, who was the son of Shaykh Usman an Fodiyo, the leader of the 1804 Jihad that united Muslim northern Nigeria as a singular Islamic caliphate. During his stay, Shaykh Umar initiated many people to the Tijaniyya brotherhood – easily divorcing them from Qadiriyya, which was the brotherhood, followed by both Shaykh Usman Danfodiyo and his son Muhammad Bello. However, while Tijaniyya gained mass audience in Sokoto, there was no evidence to show that the leadership of the Caliphate embraced the brotherhood, thus retaining their affiliation to Qadiriyya. As Ousmane Kane (2003: 70-71) argued

To acknowledge Muhammad Bello's conversion, whether true or not, would require the Sokoto religious establishment to reject the legacy of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, Usman Dan Fodio and Muhammad Bello, which was found unacceptable. As a result, the politico-religious establishment of Sokoto hardened their positions as qadiri and made the Qadiriyya the official Sufi order of the Sokoto Caliphate.

During a pilgrimage to Makkah, the Emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero (d.1954) met the Senegalese Tijaniyya leader, Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (1900-1975) who persuaded the Emir to accept Tijaniyya (abandoning Qadiriyya). Shaykh Niasse was able to subsequently visit Kano where he developed a massive following which lasts up to today with his posters and stickers adorning walls of homes and public transport systems. This following became subsequently referred to as Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya—to distinguish it from Tijanniya Umariya of Umar Tall—and based its Sufi practices on extensive networks of study centers and zawiyas (faculties) in almost every quarter of the city. These zawiyas became a focus of Tijanniya Sufi recitations and chants almost every evening. The spread of Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya in Kano and subsequently northern Nigeria was facilitated by a group of ulama known as Salgawa, including Malam Tijani Usman Zangon Barebari (d. 1970), Malam Abubakar Atiq (d. 1974), Malam Shehu Maihula (d. 1988), Malam Sani Kafinga (d. 1989) and Malam Mudi Salga (b. 1932). Initiation into the Tijanniya brotherhood was accompanied by the introduction of some special characteristics: the initiation to tarbiya (spiritual training) and praying with one's arms crossed on the chest (qabd), in contrast to the majority of local Muslims who pray with their arms alongside their body (sabl) – a practice that was become a focal point of confrontation between the followers of the two Sufi brotherhoods.

Sufism, Music and Public Discourse in Kano

The use of the bandir in religious performances in Kano further created a fault-line that divided Sufi adherents in the city, particularly among the youth, and at the same time, served as a unifying factor in the long term. The Qadiriyya performances, established for decades in Kano remained immune to public criticism – from Tijjaniya scholars and others – that frown at the use of musical instruments in religious worship, particularly the acerbic wit of the popular, often bawdy, public square preacher, Muhammad Lawan, aka 'Qalarawi' (tell it like it is). The Tijjaniya do engage in group dhikr, but often in more solemn and somber settings, and without any musical accompaniment.

Thus the simmering tensions between the Sufi groups in Kano and other parts of northern Nigeria became emblazoned by the disdain

with which the Tijjaniya regard the use of musical instruments by Qadiriyya in the latter's performances of dhikr rites. The arrival of Saudi Wahhabi-inspired Jama'at Izalat al Bid'a Wa Iqamat as Sunna (Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunna) changed all that. Simply referred to as 'Izala', the society was established in Jos, Nigeria in 1978 to fight what it sees as bid'a, (innovation), practiced by the Sufi brotherhoods by the simple act of being Sufis. The venom and contempt with which the early Izala adherents treat Sufi brotherhoods simply served to unite the latter to form a common front against the Izala (Bala, 2006).

One clear outcome of this breaking down of barriers between the Sufi youth in Kano was the increasing attendance of Qadiriyya performances by Tijjaniya youth. One of the most prominent Tijjaniya youth to lead this process in the 1980s was Rabi'u Usman Baba, a sha'iri (poet) with considerable lyrical skills. In an interview I held with him on October 1, 2004, he stated his fascination and attraction to the Qadiriyya dhikr performances, and indeed, refused to be swayed by what he considered artificial lines dividing the Tijjaniya and Qadiriyya in the performance of the dhikr. As a young poet in the tradition of the army of sha'irai (poets) in Kano and environs, Rabi'u had written a lot of songs that he used to perform a capella in the late 1970s and early 1980s. His increasing attendance of Qadiriyya majalisi (concerts) started to make him develop interests in using the bandir to accompany his songs. His main justification was that if it was good for the Qadiriyya, it must be good for Tijjaniya also. Further, the Qadiriyya majalisi often attract larger and more animated audiences. Musical accompaniment, therefore, could be an instrument in attracting people, particularly youth, to the religious messages embedded in the songs.

Subsequently, Rabi'u also started performing his own qasida, using the bandir in the fashion of the Qadiriyya. His first composition and subsequent public performance started in 1983 with Isra'in Annabi (The Prophet's Night Journey), followed by Tsumagiya (Whip) in 1985. It was the norm for the Sufi adherents to devote their performances to the patron saints: Syed Abdul Qadir Gilani (1077–1166) for the Qadiriyya, and Shaykh Ahmad Tijani (1737-1815) for the Tijjaniyya. Rabi'u Usman Baba crossed the line in Tsumagiya, by venerating both

the patron saints. He immediately received massive backlash over the poem from both Qadiriyya and Tijjaniya. The latter thought it odd that a Tijjani poet should use the bandir in the veneration of their Shaykh, and include what they perceive as 'rival' Shaykh, which amounts to recognition and might lead to acceptance or desertion of the order. The Qadiriyya were not too keen on Tsumagiya either, seeing it as a transgression – particularly using the bandir – which could be the thin edge of the wedge that opens the door to adherents to also desert the order. Both the two groups considered the song 'blasphemous', although, according to Rabi'u Usman Baba, no one came to explain to him the specific 'blasphemy' committed in the poem. However, more was to come.

There were those who listened to the poem with more open mind and were captivated by its attempts at uniting the Sufi factions in Kano through qasida, and accepted it with gusto – propelling its cassette release to the 'bakandamiya' (epic, masterpiece) status. Its effect – urging unity among the Sufi adherents – became so engaging that Rabi'u Usman Baba opened a recording studio in Kano and named 'Tsumagiya'.

The intrusion of non-traditional entertainment forms created a new chiasma of convergence between the two Sufi groups – and led to more problems for Rabi'u Usman Baba. By early 1990s, a video film industry was created in Kano. Fueled by the ready availability of cheap media technologies, particularly video cameras, young Hausa popular culture purveyors started the video film revolution by recording scripted dramas on VHS video cassettes, editing and duplicating the video films and then selling them. Thus the Hausa video film industry was born in March 1990 with the release of the first Hausa-language video film, *Turmin Danya* (dir. Salisu Galadanci). The film was produced under the aegis of Tumbin Giwa Drama Club.

One of the distinctive features of this new form of entertainment by Hausa youth was the use of Yamaha PSR series of digital arranger keyboard workstations, whose technology allows the composer to emulate the musical nuances of real instruments. These keyboards were used therefore to generate not only the soundtracks of the dramas, but also the song and dance sequences that accompany the narratives.

Hausa video films were based on the Hindi film template, complete with love triangles, forced marriage scenarios and song-and-dance choreographic routines. Thus the keyboards gave young Hausa instrumentalists, considerable freedom from having to learn to use traditional acoustic instruments to compose the music for the films. 'Nanaye' (the new urban sound labeled by the industry) created a whole new music industry and confer on urban Hausa youth the feeling of 'modernity' and sophistication in the creation of what they consider modern Hausa music.

When the Yamaha synthesizer became the undisputed king of Hausa music orchestra, Rabi'u Usman Baba purchased one, the Yamaha PSR-540, complete with a slot for floppy disk storage, bought a drum kit by Lazer, and established Tsumagiya Studios in Kano, and employed a young instrumentalist to compose music for a new career in 'modernizing' Islamic Gospel. Earlier, Rabi'u had a song, Rabbi Rabbi, which he performed with the bandir, but was not particularly popular. He therefore decided to 'remix' it as it were, in a new electronic format, with a deep bass beat, accompanied with a drum machine and over layered with plaintive wind instruments. Lasting 22 minutes, it faithfully reproduced the original bandir composition. It equally reproduced the same venom his earlier Tsumagiya generated from both the Tijjaniya and Qadiriyya adherents who perceived the 'disco' beat as an affront to any poetic composition mentioning the name of the Prophet Muhammad.

There were two reasons for this particular adverse reaction. The first was the dance-hall sample used in the remixed Rabbi Rabbi, thus conferring on the poem a frivolity not associated with even Qadiriyya performances; and thus totally unacceptable to the Tijjaniya. The second reason for the reaction was the fact of associating the 'ki an fiyano' (piano sound) with Church music. Hitherto the only pianos available in Kano were either in dance clubs in Sabon Gari (predominantly Christian residences with clubs and bars) located outside the walled Muslim city, or in Churches, themselves located outside the ancient city. It was therefore considered blasphemous (sa'o) to use this instrument in Islamic religious performances. And yet, despite the venom and criticism, Baba claimed that the remixed

Rabbi Rabbi was his biggest hit. In a follow up interview in 2015, he explained that at a particular concert he had two version of the poem for sale – the bandir original and the remixed electronic version. He sold more copies of the discified version.

Nevertheless, in order to placate the Tijjaniya community, Rabi'u Usman Baba decided to explain and justify his recording with the Yamaha synthesizer. He did this in a poem he recorded with bandir, and which he called Fa'akarwa (Enlightenment). In the poem, Baba points out that youth are already addicted to modern Western pop music, which contains nothing that would benefit a young Muslim. In order to wean young Muslims away from this type of music, and after an extensive study and consultation with learned Tijjaniya Shaykhs, particularly Shaykh ahiru Usman Bauchi, a strong pillar of Tijjaniya in Nigeria, he found nothing wrong with using modern instruments in Islamic gospel. This seemed to placate his audiences and the venom considerably lessened. As few lines in some of the verses indicate:

Tabaraka Rabbana haskake kirji na/	Oh My God, put light in my heart/
Tabaraka Rabbana haskake kirji na/	Oh My God, put light in my heart/
Kasa hasken ? abuli a baki na/	Empower the light of acceptance in my lyrics/
Wa? a zanyi kan masu zargi na/	I am going to sing about my accusers/
Kan kayan sautin zamani ba halal ne ba/	Who accuse me of using modern instruments/
Ni ne Rabi'u. da na Usmani/	I am Rabi'u, a son of Usman/
Ni ne mawa? in nan na addini/	I am the well -known religious poet/
Ni nai sanya sauti na zamani/	I am the one who sings with modern instruments/
Na yabon Annabi don hakan ba haram ne ba/	To praise the Prophet because it is not haram/
Amma wasu jahilai na ta z argi na/	Yet some ignoramuses are busy abusing me/
Amma wasu jahilai na ta zargi na/	Yet some ignoramuses are busy abusing me/
Har wasu na ta zagin iyali na/	Even insulting my family/
Ba su da wata hujja a Qur'ana./	Yet they can't bring Qur'anic verses against it/
Ko Hadisi bare su ce ba halal ne ba/	Or Hadith sayings which say it is haram/
Amma, kuyi min afuwa ya masoya na/	But forgive me, my fans/
Kuyi min afuwa ya masoya na, /	Forgive me, my fans/
Mahassada sun dame ku domin na/	Enemies bother you too much because of me/
Albishirin ku ya ku masoya na/	Glad tidings, my fans/
Rabi'u Usman Baba ban nufi wasa ba/	Rabi'u Usman Baba does not intend frivolity/

Considering the fact that this song was performed with the bandir, and it was apologetic though unrepentant, it went a long way in placating his fans, and at the same time provided him with a justification to continue using the Yamaha synthesizer in future compositions.

Noting the success generated by Rabbi Rabbi, a Qadiriyya poet, Bashir andago, decided to also switch-over from the bandir to the Yamaha synthesizer by remixing his extremely popular song, Sannu Uwar Sharifai (Hail thee, the mother of righteous), dedicated to Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. The Qadiriyya, as noted earlier, were already using musical instruments in their performances. Due to their link to the Sudanese Sufi groups who perform with conventional Western instruments, the introduction of the Yamaha synthesizer therefore became catalytic to the Qadiriyya embracing it wholly in their performances.

Eventually the furor about using the piano in Islamic gospel died down, and when the community of sha'irai noted the greater acceptance of electronic versions of their poems, they also embraced the Yamaha synthesizer – thus boosting the music industry. I did ask Baba if there were attempts to perform Islamic songs with kalangu (talking drums). His response was that it was considered more blasphemous to use such traditional instruments in Islamic gospel because of the association of these instruments with 'ro o' (praise-singing, griot tradition). The 'piano', therefore, became forced on the sha'irai who desire to reach larger audiences with their compositions.

This new mode of religious advocacy, which I see as postmodernist Sufi performance, was taken up with gusto by Tijjani Sufis much younger than Rabi'u Usman Baba, whose early Rabbi Rabbi sound positively staid compared with the more disco beats of latter Tijjani poets. A vivid example was Kabiru Maulana, a Tijjani poet attached to the Shaykh Harazimi zawiya in the city of Kano. His early cassette releases pushed the envelope in that they were pure electronic synthesizer sound with upbeat rhythm, which accompanied his poems, one of which was Mustapha Habibi Rasullulah. Maulana differed from Baba also in another critical respect – backing vocals. The early compositions by Baba did not contain backing vocals ('yan amshi') typical of Hausa traditional call-and-response performances. Where he

did include backing vocals, these were supplied either by pre-teen girls drawn from the Madrasas around his zawiya (such as in *Ya ʿan Amina Baban Zarah*), or adult males (such as in *Babu Tantama*).

Maulana chose a different path. His songs were supported by backing vocals supported by teen girls, and in call-and-response mode as typical of the song and dances routines of the massively Hausa video films. Additionally, Maulana also adapted the song soundtracks of selected commercially successful Hausa video films and converted them into Tijjaniya Islamic gospel, maintaining the melody of the original song. This intertextual device, according to Maulana, was adopted to wean young girls from listening to popular music considered unholy ('sharholiya'), and indeed, blasphemous. Maulana as Muhammadul Sangaya adapted *Sangaya*, one of the most significant songs in Hausa video film industry to 'Islamize' it. Thus riding on back of Rabi'u Usman Baba, and seeking to provide greater legitimacy in using the Yamaha synthesizer for Islamic gospel music through intertextual adaptation of secular songs, Maulana and others who followed in the 2000s redefined the rules of music in Sufi poetic performances in Kano and environs. Consequently, both the Qadiriyya and Tijjaniya poets took up the Yamaha synthesizer, with each group issuing a string of cassette releases of previously bandir poems. These include Auwalu Umar Gawuna, Bashir Dan Musa, Muhammad Sani Funtuwa, Nura Abdulkadir, Sherif Saleh Jos. Despite the popularity of the synthesizer music among the Sufi performers in Kano, there were some who still remained 'old school' and prefer to compose their poetry with the bandir. These include Kabiru andogarai, a Qadiriyya adherent. By and large, however, the Tijjaniya poets remained the stronger advocates of the modernized form of Islamic gospel in northern Nigeria.

Glass Houses, Stones, and Throwers

As I indicated earlier, a Tijjani poet, Kabiru Maulana took the bold steps of adapting a popular culture song, *Sangaya*, into a Tijjani qasida. A filmmaker, Sani Garba, himself a Qadiriyya poet, decided to also intertextually remix a Qadiriyya poem as a song soundtrack for his film, *abi'a*. The poem was *Ya Mahmuda ʿaunar Ta Shiga Rai Na* (Oh Muhammad, I am filled with longing for you). Recorded with bandir

and performed by the late Rufa'i Ayagi, who was one of the most revered Qadiriyya poets in Kano, it became one of the most iconic Qadiriyya poems in Kano. It was made more appealing by the backing call-and-response refrain voiced by pre-teen girls.

Wanting to use its iconic power and in attempt to cross-over to using Islamic gospel songs as meters for Hausa video film songs, Garba, who was familiar with the song, adapted the meter in a dance sequence in his film, *abi'a*. He called the song *Ya Matana Ga Nasiha Zan Muku Babba* (Oh my wives, listen to my words of counsel). The lyrical delivery of this rendition rhymed almost perfectly with the original Islamic gospel version. It also caused a massive negative reaction from the community of Sufi poets, led by Rabi'u Usman Baba.

The objections were based on the 'blasphemous' use of the meter (actually, the song's hook, in this case) in a secular, and distinctly, non-Islamic entertainment context. Rabi'u Usman Baba's reaction, and the only recorded one I could obtain in the field, was in the form of a poem he released on tape in 2004, *'Yan Wasan Hausa* (Hausa filmmakers). In the performance, which was massively endorsed by the Sufi community of performers in Kano, Baba, berates the Hausa filmmakers' use of religious template in their singing. As a verse from the poem condemns,

Rufa'i Ayagi na mutuwa suka ? auki wa? en sa	After Ayagi's death, they took his song/
Wa? en sa, suka ? auki wa? en sa	His song, they took his song/
Rufa'i Ayagi na mutuwa suka ? auki wa? en sa	After Ayagi's death, they took his song/
Wani shai? ani ya juye yabon suna yi da farkar sa!	Some devil of a fellow changed into into a love song! /
Wani shai ? ani ya juye yabon yana yi wa farkar sa!	Some devil of a fellow changed into into a love song! /
Burin su dai tun da ya mutu su dakushe hasken sa	Their intention is to fade his memory/
A gaya tuku, Rabi'u na son aminin sa bai kau ba!	Well, tell them, Rabi'u, his close associate, is still alive/

In other verses of the poem, he went out of his way to emphasize his indifference to the film industry as a whole, or the plot elements of the Hausa video films. He stated that his main grouse is the way Rufa'i Ayagi's poem was used as a meter in a film video song. He was especially piqued by the fact that the protagonist in the video was performed by a male, singing to two women. Baba used the pejorative word 'farkar sa' (his prostitute) as a way of emphasizing that no matter the sermonizing context of the video song, the women being sung to were not married to the male protagonist in reality and as such, they were little more than onscreen prostitutes who flaunt themselves before males.

A war of words then erupted, and was captured in the popular culture magazine, *Fim*, of October 2004. Sani Garba, the Qadiriyya singer who used Ayagi's song, which itself was a Qadiriyya anthem from a staunch Qadiriyya poet, was incensed that Rabi'u Usman Baba, a Tijjaniya poet, could insert himself into the incidence. In my interview with Sani Garba in November 2004, he pointed out that both he and the late Ayagi belong to Qadiriyya, and he therefore saw nothing wrong with using Ayagi's song in his film. The war of words also brought back issues of blasphemy. While Rabi'u Usman Baba was accused of blasphemy by using a Yamaha keyboard synthesizer to sing praises of the patron saints of both Qadiriyya and Tijjaniya, the same Baba is now accusing filmmakers of blasphemy because they use the harmonic hooks of a religious poem! The filmmakers point to the fact that Kabiru Maulana, a Tijjaniya poet, had previously adapted Hausa video film songs, using their harmonic hooks as templates for Islamic gospel – a fact, which did not attract any demands for royalty or condemnation from the film industry. The community of Tijjaniya poets I talked to in November 2004 argued that by adapting Hausa video film songs to Islamic meters, they are 'Islamizing' them, and weaning off children from reciting the original which were all about love – a patently prohibited subject of discussion to anyone not married. And by 'secularizing' Islamic gospel songs to suit Hausa video films, the filmmakers are committing blasphemy because they are placing the entire Islamic song into a frivolous and 'kufir' (unbeliever) status – and that was not acceptable.

The Kano State Censorship Board, an agency charged by the Kano State government to serve as popular culture regulator stepped in to stop the bickering. Yet more was to come, and in even more deadly fashion.

Words of Death, Lyrics of Ecstasy

The furor generated by the intertextual rendering of a religious poem meter in a secular entertainment context marked the beginning of new forms of blasphemous words in Hausa religious performances. As noted earlier, this started with the use of a musical accompaniment, and later dovetailed into words.

With increasing acceptance of modern musical instruments as part of Islamic gospel, the Tijjaniya youth became more forceful in creating a whole category of Hausa Islamic gospel genre, but this time centered around the figure, personality and teachings of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass (1900–1975), the founder of the Ibrahimiyya segment of the Tijjaniya. The followers of his teaching refer to themselves as Faydah Tijjaniya (Tijjaniya flood). In Kano the Faydah were split into two—those who remained true to Shaykh Ahmad Tijjani, and 'Ha i a', those who created new forms of narrative reverence for Shaykh Ibrahim Niass, even while venerating Shaykh Ahmad Tijjani. This narration was sustained through lectures at majalisi (which led to death sentence in one case), but mainly through reverential songs released virally via Bluetooth technology.

Led by Rabi'u Takalafiya, a Tijjaniya poet in Kano, the new form of narrative reverence for Shaykh Ibrahim Niass, centered on lyrics rather than music, started appearing on MP3 files shared via Bluetooth technology of smartphones in Kano markets in 2013. Earlier, by mid 2000s, cheap smartphones had flooded Nigerian lower end consumer electronics market. The compact audio cassette was rapidly replaced by microSD memory cards which had greater ease of use, portability and technical superiority over the old cassette tapes. The fact that music was performed on Yamaha synthesizers that have USB slots makes it easier to transfer the final mixdown track into microSD memory device fitted into an USB adapter, which is attached to the keyboard console.

The first series of Tijjaniya songs that began to appear among Smartphone handsets in Kano was in February 2013 when a song, *Shehu Ba A Haifa Ba* (Shaykh was not born, he is divine) was released

Shehu baka haifa ba haihuwar ka karya ne/ Lamyaliɗ walam yulad yake shehu Barhama/	Shehu you did not beget; your birth is an illusion He neither begets nor is born, that is Shaykh Barhama
Kai duka qulhuwallahu Inyas take ta nunama/	The utterance 'Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One' is referring to Barhama
Ita tace fa shehu guda ne Inyas tanata aunama/	This ayat confirms it refers to Inyass
Dan kagane shehu tace haihuwarsa a'ama/ Kuma tace fa Barhama shi ya haifa karyane/	So you that you can understand, his birth is false It also says Barhama did not beget

The central focus of this category of Tijjaniya songs was Shaykh Ibrahim Niass, rather than Shehu Ahmad Tijjani. 'Barhama', a version of Ibrahim, is the preferred name given to Shaykh Ibrahim Niass by his followers as a mark of respect.

The Qur'anic verses quoted were from Surat Al-Ikhlās (The Purity, Q122), declaring the absolute oneness and purity of God. Ascribing this purity, the exclusive reserve of God, to Shaykh Ibrahim Niass pushes the metaphoric "words of ecstasy" (shathiyat) scenario to a new level. However, this particular song did not generate any furor since it was the first in the series. By the time the second appeared, the 'shathiyat' lyrics, as I refer to them, have started gaining public attention, including international audiences. This was ignited by the release of *Barhama Nake Bautawa, Dan Shi Ya Halicce Ni* (I worship Barhama, because he created me) performed by Rabi'u Takalafiya also in February 2013. A few lines in the song state:

Ni dai Barhama nake Bautawa/ Don shi ne ya halittan/	I worship Barhama/ He is my creator/
Shi ke bani abin da na ke so, ba zan ? i fa? i ba/	He gives me all I want; I won't deny it/

This caused an instant uproar and was considered extremely blasphemous. This is because this particular song seems to suggest the poet worships Shaykh Ibrahim Niass. On the surface of it, this contradicts every credo a Muslim has, since a Muslim should only worship Allah; joining Him with any other in the form of worship is Shirka (leaving Islam).

The Tijjaniya community also moved swiftly to distance itself from Takalafiya, the singer. The Kano State Censorship Board, noting the public outcry, arrested the singer on 31st May 2013, on the charges of not submitting his song for censoring before public release as required by the law. The charges did not stick simply because there was, paradoxically, no 'public' release of the song in the conventional sense. The Censorship Board covers only tangible media used exclusively to distribute creative works – cassette tapes, DVDs, CDs. Takalifiya's song, and others that follow, were virally released through social media and shared via Bluetooth technology. They remain thus intangible. Takalafiya was also profiled by the Writers in Prison Committee of London-based PEN International (2014, p. 33). While the case fizzled away without conviction, it did little to deter Takalafiya as an artist for he kept producing more songs on Barhama theme, although less worshipful. Those who come after Takalafiya, though, followed the same strain of reverential worship towards Niass expressed through their lyrics. An example was *Baba Uban Allah Inyassi* (Niass, the father of God) which was released in June 2014 by Mustaphal Gaus from the zawiya of i. A few verses read:

Babu abin da ba Allah ba/	There is nothing that is not God/
Komai ya zo gun gausi ba/	Whatever comes to Gausi (Niass)/
Za ka ji ya ce Inyassi fa/	It will say 'Inyass'/'
Kaji uban Allah, Inyassi/	So you hear about the father of God, Inyassi/
Wai wasu sun ce min ? arya ne/	Some say this is a lie/
Allah Shi dai wai bai da uba ne/	God has no father/
Bai da uba, to Shi shege ne/	If so, was he born without one? /
Yana da baba nai, Inyassi/	He has a father, Inyassi/
Shaykh Barhama ya wuce Allah/	Shaykh Barhama is beyond God/
Kar ka ce masa Manzon Allah/	Don't call him a Messenger of God/
Shaykh Tijjani raba mu da Illah/	Shaykh Tijjani save us/
In ta fa? ar Barhama Inyassi/	I am uttering Barhama Inyass/
Barhama Gausi kai kayi farko/	Barhama Gausi you created the first/
Kai kayi ? arshe kar kayi shakku/	You created the last, no doubt/
Siffar komai Barhama ta ? auko/	Every figure reflects Barhama/
Komai dole ya ce Inyassi/	Everything must say 'Inyassi'/'

This song serves to further emphasize the unrepentant perspectives of the new Tijjaniya youth singers concerning the Tawhid (oneness of God) and put them in direct collision course with not only civil authorities, but also mainstream adherents of the Sufi credos who consider Niass as mere mortal.

It all came to a head on 15th May 2015, during a Tijjaniya majalisi when a youth preacher, Abdul-Aziz Dauda, known as Abdullahi Inyass, was invited to give a talk on Shaykh Ibrahim Niass. His lecture lasted

some 14 minutes during which he extolled the virtues of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass and drew attention of his audience to the need to stay in the house of Tijjaniya and not to wander off into any other Sufi brotherhood. He also reaffirms his 'Ha i a' status within the Kano Tijjaniya brotherhood. He also preached against going to schools—insisting that whatever education or knowledge one desires, would be found within the fold Shaykh Ibrahim. The climax of the speech was his affirmation of the love for Shaykh Ibrahim, and his statement that they (ha i a) can only love a person when they see the soul of Shaykh Ibrahim in them. He was in the midst of saying that even the Prophet Muhammad could not stop them (this was uttered in a manner derogatory to the Prophet Muhammad), when the speech ended because there was an uproar from the audiences who were shocked by this statement. In the melee that followed, Abdul Inyass escaped, eventually returning to Abuja where he was based. By Friday 17th May, 2015 the story had spread throughout Kano and many Imams condemned Abdul Inyass during their Friday Sermon. This further heightened public interest in the case. On 20th May 2015, Shaykh Dahiru Bauchi, and Shaykh Isyaka Rabi'u the two recognized Tijjaniya order leaders issued a statement distancing Abdul Inyass from Tijjaniya teachings.

In order to douse tension in the State, the Hisbah moral police passed on intelligence information to the Nigerian Police Force that eventually led to the arrest of Abdul Inyass in Abuja, and deportation to Kano. Since the authorities had announced that he would be taken to court on 22nd May 2014, hundreds of people led demonstrations to the Shari'a court in Rijiyar Lemo in Kano to demand justice, namely that he should be killed for blasphemy. Once it was realized that he was not actually in the court, the irate mob burnt down the court buildings.

Abdul Inyass and the organizers of the majalisi were eventually taken to Islamic Shari'ah court in Kano on the charges of blasphemy on 27th June 2015. He was found guilty of contravening Section 110 and 382b of the Sharia penal code law, and sentenced to death by hanging. He was eventually moved to Abuja for safety reasons, although there were many calls for his execution in Kano. His lawyers filed an appeal against the death ruling. In January 2016 an organization calling itself

the Association for Tijjaniya Sufis of Nigeria issued a press release signed by Professor Abubakar Abubakar Yagawal, based in Sokoto, supporting the death sentence on Abdul Inyass. The release also tacitly expelled Abdul Inyass from the brotherhood.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the changing patterns of Sufi religious poetic performances in northern Nigeria, and how first music, and later words and lyrics became increasingly sources of controversy and seeming blasphemy against Islam. It would appear that the perception of blasphemy within Kano Sufi brotherhoods follows a shifting, and often unclear pattern. As Rabi'u Usman Baba argued in my interview with him, those who opposed his use of modern electronic instruments in religious performance have not provided an Islamic ruling that prohibits the use of such instruments, to an extent that their use is considered 'sabb' (sabbā, blasphemy). The Qadiriyya were of course used to charges of 'sabb' due to their use of the bandir as a musical instrument. However, the use of Yamaha synthesizer by the Tijjaniya becomes blasphemy by association, since the piano is seen as a Church and dance hall instrument; its use in religious performances confer frivolity to an otherwise somber process. The public criticism that trailed this switch-over from acoustic to electronic music generation reflects the tendrils of perception that can striate in different Muslim communities.

Words as distinct conceptual expressions or as metaphors uttered or written within the mists of ecstatic immersion ('shauqī') are decidedly more tangible manifestations of what can be perceived as blasphemy. In Hausa Sufi practices, this ecstasy is reflected in the ultimate love of the Shaykh, and particularly for the Haqīqī Tijjaniya, Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse. Indeed, the incident that led to the death sentence on Abdul Inyass was based on his preaching so much love for 'Barhama' that he relegated the Prophet Muhammad to a derogatory status in relation to the Barhama. Lyrics substituting God for Barhama were also roundly condemned, but did not lead to prosecution because the singers simply faded to black, although often leaving a phone number at the end of their songs for 'Qarin bayani' (further explanation).

As Carl W. Ernst (1985) demonstrated, the Islamic world is full of historical examples of how words of ecstasy led to charges of blasphemy and in a few cases, death. Persian Sufi mystics Mansur Al-Hallaj and Ayn-al-Quzat Hamadani, were killed at various periods due to their blasphemous utterances. Thus, reactions to blasphemy from both within and outside the Muslim world, is an integral part of human understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal.

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