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MICHELE PETRONE, University of Copenhagen

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by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,
Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg and Siegbert Uhlig

Editorial

The present issue of AETHIOPICA, like the preceding one, is partly monographic, with a section containing the proceedings of the Panel on Islamic Literature in Ethiopia: New Perspectives of Research, from the '19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies', held in Warsaw, Poland, on 24–28 August 2015.

Starting from this issue, the annual bibliography on Ethiopian Semitic and Cushitic linguistics held from its inception in 1998 for eighteen years by Rainer Voigt is handed over, on Voigt's own will, to a pool of younger scholars, with the substantial support of the AETHIOPICA editorial team. I would like on this occasion to express the deep gratitude of the editorial board of AETHIOPICA and of all scholars in Ethiopian Semitic and Cushitic linguistics to Rainer Voigt for his fundamental and valuable contribution.

Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
ÄthFor Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
AethFor Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*ibid.*, 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (*ibid.*, 2012ff.).
AION *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'*, Napoli: Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
EAE S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
EI² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I–XII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–2005).
EMML Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
JES *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Manchester 1956ff.
NEASt *Northeast African Studies*, East Lansing, MI 1979ff.
OrChr *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
PICES 9 A.A. GROMYKO, ed., 1988, *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, Moscow, 26–29 August 1986*, I–VI (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, Central Department of Oriental Literature, 1988).
RSE *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli 1983ff.
ZDMG *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig–Wiesbaden–Stuttgart 1847ff.

Ethiopian Tiḡāniyya in Context*

MICHELE PETRONE, University of Copenhagen**

Introduction

The presence of *ṣūfi* orders in East Africa is attested since the beginning of the diffusion of Islam in the region. In many areas (Ethiopia, Somalia) the most powerful and active *ṭarīqa* is still the Qādiriyya, in its different local nuances.¹ In Ġimma area the Tiḡāniyya, originally founded in Morocco at the end of the eighteenth century by Aḥmad al-Tiḡānī (d. 1814), found a significant number of followers. Cerulli gives evidence of the presence of the order, stating that there are some Tiḡānīs in the area (formerly known as Hirmata) and also in the reign of Gomma. He noted that: 'It may appear remarkable to find establishments of the Tiḡāniyya of southern Oran (Algeria) at Ġimma, but it was brought here by a *ṣayḥ* coming from the Sudan'.² Unfortunately he does not give the name of any local master. Tiḡānīs, while present in the region, appear to have been living quite separately from the other orders or, in some cases, to hide their belonging to the Tiḡāniyya. This is due to a double faced element: they are prohibited to visit masters of other *ṭuruq* with the intention of seeking their *baraka* and spiritual influence. This led to an at least skeptical attitude of the other orders (and in general of other Muslims) towards them. On the other hand, this prevented the Tiḡāniyya from splitting in different sub-orders, as it happened for the Šādiliyya or the Qādiriyya.

* This paper has been presented during the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies, 24th–28th August 2015), *Ethiopia: Diversity and Interconnections through Space and Time* within the panel devoted to 'Islamic literature in Ethiopia: new perspectives of research'. For this publication the title has been slightly changed from the original one, that was *Textual Traditions of Arabic Grammars in Jimma: Regional Continuity and Specificity of Scholarship*, for the inclusion of new manuscript material collected during the second field mission to Gibe region of the project *Islam in the Horn of Africa* (see *infra*).

** I would like to thank the *Islam in the Horn of Africa Project* for providing an invaluable support to my research. I would also like to thank my colleagues Adday Hernández-López, Irmeli Perho and Sara Fani for their help and their comments.

¹ A basic source for the history of Sufism in Ethiopia is still Trimmingham 1959; for analyses focused on particular contexts see, among others, Braukämper 2002; Hussein Ahmed 2001.

² Cerulli 1930–1933, II 193.

Trimingham, in his classic *Islam in Ethiopia*, gives some scant information about the presence of the order among the Oromo³ of western Ethiopia. He remarkably points out the role of West African Tiġānīs in the diffusion of the *ṭarīqa* in Dambidollo among the Banū Šanqūl (Beni Shangul) and then to Gimma. He gives account of the role of al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf b. Ḥalīfa (d. 1956?) in actively spreading the Tiġāniyya in the region.⁴ Unfortunately he had not the possibility to obtain information about al-Faqīh Aḥmad b. ʿUmar (al-Faki Ahmad Omar, d. 1953?), a master and a healer (*abbaa qalichcha* in Afaan Oromo) from Bornu who settled in the region of Asosa. Minako Ishihara, in her anthropological inquiries about the Tiġānī rituals in western Ethiopia, gives a very first account of the biography and role of ‘al-Faki’ as principal figure of the *ṭarīqa* in East Africa. Her studies have been until now, based solely on local informants. Nonetheless she points out the existence of two biographies of this figure, namely the *Ġalāʾ al-Fikr* of Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān (Sheekota Abba Mechcha of Dedo, d. late 1970’s?)⁵ and the *Bāb al-Wuṣūl* of al-Ḥāġġ ʿAlī b. Aḥmad (Hajj Abba Ganda d. 1974?).⁶ Her biographical sketch of Aḥmad b. ʿUmar can be considered as the first academic work making reference to written Tiġānī sources, following a methodology that successfully conjugates anthropological approach with literary inquiry. The Arabic literature of Africa mentions only Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān, whose works are the only ones—among those authored by Ethiopian Tiġānīs—which have been printed.⁷

From this very first overview, the secondary sources about the Tiġāniyya in Ethiopia appear to have been based on a limited corpus of written sources. The large number of manuscripts already digitized by the *Islam in the Horn of Africa: A Comparative Literary Approach* in Ġimma and Agaro areas can contribute to provide more data about tradition of Muslims of Ethiopia, framed in a literary analysis. To accomplish this task, it is necessary to take into account the relations of the local Tiġāniyya with other branches abroad, both personal (between masters and disciples) and literary. As far as it has been possible to verify, no attempt has been made to connect the presence of Tiġānīs in Ethiopia to the larger movement of expansion of the *ṭarīqa* east-

³ Trimingham 1959, 236, 238, 240, 246.

⁴ *Ibid.* 246.

⁵ On him see O’Fahey, 2003, 53. The *Ġalāʾ al-Fikr fī Tarġamat al-ʿĀrif biʾLlāh Sayyid Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Barnū [sic] al-Tiġānī* has been published in Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1373/1953.

⁶ Manuscript in possession of *ṣayḥ* ʿAbd al-Salām of Addis Abāba. Abba Ganda is one of the main disciples of Aḥmad b. ʿUmar; see Ishihara 1997, 391–402 and Ishihara 2010, 81–89.

⁷ See note 5 above.

wards, following the migration waves of the *fallata*⁸ who settled in Dar Fur.⁹ A very first account of these events has been given by Günther Schlee,¹⁰ in his study about the migration of Fulbe groups to nowadays Sudan.

The aim of this article is to make a step forward in the knowledge of the diffusion of the Tiḡāniyya in Ethiopia, starting from the pioneering contributions mentioned above. To achieve this purpose it will be focused on the literary legacy of the *ṭarīqa* in Ethiopia, considering local production as a mirror for both local interests and approaches to Sufism and for connections with other parts of the Islamic world where the order is present. The Tiḡāniyya is the case study because of its diffusion in almost all Muslim countries without any significant fragmentation, both doctrinal and in the *silsila*.¹¹ This ensures a wide circulation of texts among the members of the *ṭarīqa* and a large mobility of pilgrims and *zuwwār* among different *zawāya*.¹² Also members of other *ṣūfi* brotherhoods move from *ḥaḍra* to *ḥaḍra*, both in Ethiopia or elsewhere, but they move in different doctrinal and ritual contexts. Tiḡānīs, on the other hand, found themselves almost always at ease in their *zawāya* all over the world, reciting the very same *awrād* and, possibly, the same devotional poems. This uniformity is not unquestionable and there are several local traditions and global trends in the Tiḡāniyya, both literary and doctrinal.¹³ Nonetheless all Tiḡānīs share a set of ideas about the Seal of Sainthood and the status of their *ṭarīqa*. This constitutes a common background that makes them feel like belonging to a single and unique brotherhood. On the other hand, the prohibition of taking the *wird* from other *ṭuruq* and of paying visit to the tombs of non-Tiḡānī saints helped to keep it separated from other brotherhoods. Nonetheless, in Ethiopia Tiḡānī texts have been found outside their own collections.

Geography and history of the sites

The present article is based on the materials collected during the first and third missions of the *Islam in the Horn of Africa* project, in, respectively, November–December 2014 and February–March 2016. The most part of the material has been collected during the latter period and is almost still under analysis.

⁸ Fulbe speakers who were fleeing from the conflicts with colonial rule and among locals (like the *ḡihād* of ‘Umar al-Fūti or the expansion and fall of the Sokoto caliphate).

⁹ See Seesemann 2000, 393–437.

¹⁰ Dereje Feyissa and Schlee 2009, 157–180.

¹¹ Chain of transmission of the initiation.

¹² Sing. *Zāwiya* (lit. ‘corner’); it is the place where *ṣūfis* meet to perform rituals and listen to lessons of their masters. *Ḥaḍra* (lit. ‘presence’) is a synonym word, mainly used in the Horn.

¹³ About three of these trends and their fundamental unity see Seesemann 2009, 299–333.

The first Tiḡānī collection I have come across is the one of Shekota Tije (d. 1930's?). Maḥmūd al-Qurarī (his Arabic Muslim name) entered the Tiḡāniyya during his pilgrimage but, due to the prevalence of the Qādirī order, he decided to conceal his spiritual affiliation. He married the sister of King Abba Jifar II and was part of his court, but, at a certain point of his life, decided to retire in Tije (few km north of Agaro). Because of his choice to conceal his belonging to the Tiḡāniyya, he did not write anything related to Sufism, while he appointed three deputies (*ḥalīfa*) who had to spread the order in different areas. Moreover, his personal library has been split among his inheritors and disciples and disciples of his disciples. At this moment all the manuscripts that we have been able to trace back to him (mainly basing on evaluation of oral sources) do not bear texts directly related to sufism.

The only collection linked to Shekota Tije containing *ṣūfi* manuscripts is the one found in Bulado (5 km north from Agaro), in the hands of Abba Saalam, son of Abba Gulli who was his disciple. The importance of this site relies primarily on the fact that it testifies for the belonging of Shekota Tije to the Tiḡāniyya and pre-dating its presence in the region before the coming of al-Faqīh Aḥmad b. ʿUmar.

The *silsila* of Shekota Tije, as reported in manuscript in Bulado, connects him to the broader context of the Tiḡāniyya in the region.¹⁴ The text of the *silsila* reports:

اما سند الطريقة التجانية
 لمن اخذ عن الشيخ مشايخ العلماء
 وقدوة الكبراء العالم التحرير
 العالم العلامة والحبر البحر الفها
 مة العارف بالله الحاج محمود ابن
 الشيخ ابي بكر القرارى وهو عن الحاج
 على ابن السيخ عثمان وهو عن الشيخ
 الحاج الشهير ابن اسحاق وهو من العالم
 التقى على ابن يحيى المعروف في قرية
 كشنا وهو من العالم الشريف محمد ابن
 عمر التقى وهو عن احمد الغربى
 وهو عن مؤولو فل العالم الولى وهو [2r]
 عن الشيخ محمد الحافظ وهو عن
 احمد التجانى وهو عن

¹⁴ AGL0017, ff. 2r–2v.

رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم
ورضى الله عن شيخنا وجميع
صحابه والمسلمين آمين

فى سنة
١٣٨٥ هـ

About the chain of transmission (*sanad*) of the Tiḡāniyya for those who take the path from the master of the masters of savants example for the greatest ones, the learned writer the most erudite scholar, whose ink is like a sea of understanding, the knower through God al-Ḥāḡḡ Maḥmūd b. al-Šayḥ Abū Bakr al-Qurārī who [took it] from al-Ḥāḡḡ °Alī b. al-Šayḥ °Uṭmān who [took it] from the famed Šayḥ al-Ḥāḡḡ Ibn Ishāq who [took it] from the savant the pious °Alī b. Yaḥyā well known in the village of Ḡašnā who [took it] from the noble savant Muḥammad b. °Umar al-Taḡī who [took it] from Aḥmad al-Ġarbī who [took it] from Mawlū[d] Faḷ, the savant, the saint who [took it] [2r] from šayḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiḡ who [took it] from Aḥmad al-Tiḡānī who [took it] from the Prophet of God, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and God’s contentment may be on our master and all his companions and [all] Muslims, amen

On year AH 1385

This *silsila* appears to be quite problematic, as part of the names are not identified and others appear non-coherent with the history of the Tiḡāniyya as narrated in other sources. Sheekota Tije seems to have taken his initiation to the order from al-Ḥāḡḡ °Alī b. °Uṭmān from al-Šayḥ b. Ishāq from °Alī b. Yaḥyā from the village of Gashna (a village not far from Addis Abāba)¹⁵ from al-Šarīf b. °Umar al-Taḡī, who, according to local informants, is not Ethiopian, while the ones preceding him are. This would mean that al-Qurārī (alias Sheekota Tije) was initiated by other Ethiopians who took the *bay‘a* from Muḥammad b. °Umar al-Taḡī, a still unidentified figure of the Tiḡāniyya that belongs to the line of Mawlūd Fāl.¹⁶ If the information about the village of Gashna is correct, the presence of a member of the *ṭarīqa* in

¹⁵ Informant Abba Saalam.

¹⁶ He was one of the most important propagators of the Tiḡāniyya in West Africa, who took his initiation from Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiḡ al-Šinqīṭī. On him see Bousbina 1997, 184 n. 6 and al-Azimī, 2000, 473–476.

the surroundings of Addis Ababa is also interesting.¹⁷ Nonetheless Abba Saalam asserts that al-Qurārī took the *ṭarīqa* from al-Minhāgī in Mecca.

This document is not a formal *iğāza*, but a simple transcription of the *silsila* and the *nisba* of Sheekota Tije made probably some years after his death. It reveals an interest in preserving the history of this branch of the Ethiopian Tiğāniyya by his disciples, in this case Abba Gulli, who is the author of almost all the works found in his manuscripts collection, one of the smallest, but most meaningful of the whole area of Agaro.

All the other sites visited belong to the line of al-Ḥāğğ Yūsuf (Sheekota Chekorsa, d. 1937) and his disciples. Abba Jamaal (d. 1992) and Abba Jihaad (d. late 1990's), founders of the main Tiğānī collections digitized during the 2016 mission, were both his sons and settled in different areas around Ğimma.¹⁸ The former's collection is in Haro (30 km north from Ğimma) and has been kept and enriched by Abba Dura (Muḥammad Awwal Badrū, d. 2011?), his local deputy and master of his son Anwar Abba Jamaal.¹⁹ Abba Jihaad was the brother of Abba Jamaal and settled in Jimmate (20 km from Agaro), where his collection is kept by his son Muḥtār. Here are also found works of Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān (Shekota Abba Mecha, d. 1953) who was based in Dedo, 40 km south of Ğimma and 90 km far from Jimmate.

These sites represent the main branch of the Tiğāniyya in the Ğimma area, linked to al-Ḥāğğ Yūsuf, who can be considered as the main agent of the diffusion of the order in Ethiopia. This line of transmission of the *ṭarīqa* is not separated from the one of 'al-Faki' Aḥmad b. 'Umar, as al-Ḥāğğ Yūsuf married one of his daughters and obtained a *tağdīd* from him. From the point of view of the texts preserved, these collections can be then considered as a good sample of the Tiğānī literature produced in Ethiopia and covering different areas of influence, both local and coming from contacts with other branches of the order outside the country.

With very few exceptions, Sufism in the Horn of Africa in general and specifically in Ethiopia is considered as a local phenomenon, lacking effective contacts and links with other *ṣūfīs* in the Muslim World. Exceptions are or-

¹⁷ Another hypothetic reading of كئسنا is Katsina, which could fit better in the history and the framework of the Tiğāniyya in Sub-Saharan Africa as we know it. Also this option waits to be verified *in loco* with informants from Katsina in Nigeria. In general, it has been impossible to verify these names including the one who took the *ṭarīqa* from Mawlūd Fāl.

¹⁸ Abba Jamaal is buried 20 km south of Ğimma, near a mosque where also Shekota Chekorsa used to teach. Abba Jihaad is buried near Jimmate.

¹⁹ For more detailed analysis of the genealogies of the Tiğāniyya, we suggest to refer to the article of Minako Ishihara in this volume.

ders originating from Yemen²⁰ and the figure of Uways al-Barāwī (Baraawi),²¹ who travelled to Baghdad to obtain the *taqdim*²² to the Qādiriyya.²³ The case of the Tiḡāniyya in Ethiopia, as presented in previous studies, appears to be analysed mainly as a localized foreign order, following an inward path: Aḥmad b. ʿUmar was from Bornu and apparently entered the *ṭarīqa* while he was in Ḥiḡāz to perform Pilgrimage, as al-Ḥāḡḡ Yūsuf also did. This perfectly represents the beginnings of the order in Ethiopia. Nonetheless manuscripts collections digitized during recent missions bear evidence that there have been ongoing relations between Ethiopian masters and other exponents of the Tiḡāniyya, mainly from North and West Africa.

Biographical and Historiographical Works

In Arabic literature produced in Islamic contexts, historiographic writing includes (and in some cases coincides with) a series of biographies of notable people. Ethiopian Arabic literature does not make an exception. This kind of production is not extensive among the Tiḡānīs and in most cases it tends to be more hagiographic, especially when it is focused on local masters and saints.

Ishihara mentioned two biographies of Aḥmad b. ʿUmar.²⁴ These two texts are focused on a single personality and lie in the middle ground between life account and hagiography; they give a limited amount of information about events and dates, but they linger on prodigious events which should demonstrate the sanctity of ‘al-Faki’. Abba Jamaal wrote another work on the same subject, collecting information from the works of Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān and of Ḥāḡḡ ʿAlī. The text is called *Kaṣf al-Ḥuzn bi-Dīkri Manāqib al-Ustād Abī al-Ḥasan*²⁵ and it seems to have been written as a compendium of the two existing biographies of al-Faki. It keeps the same characteristics of the previous ones and confirms the deep rooted veneration of Ethiopian Tiḡānīs for Aḥmad b. ʿUmar.

Besides these hagiographies focused on a single local saint, there is the *Nuzhat al-Abṣār fī Tarḡamat al-Tiḡāniyya al-Abrār fī Ġimma wa Mā*

²⁰ For a thorough analysis of the links between the two shores of the Red Sea see Bang 2003 and Gori 2006.

²¹ See Said S. Samatar 1992, 48–74.

²² *Muqaddam* is a master who is able to give the authorization to other *ṣuyūḥ* to initiate new disciples. In some cases, this coincides with the opening of a new branch of the *ṭarīqa*, but it is not a *condicio sine qua non*; see ‘ma³dhūn’, in *EP*² online (http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei2glos_SIM_gi_02707; last accessed 14/06/2016).

²³ See note 21 above.

²⁴ Ishihara 1997.

²⁵ The text is in manuscript JMT0073, ff. 20r–36v, in Jimmate collection.

Ḥawlabā min al-Aqtār,²⁶ written by Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān. It is a collection of 47 biographies of Tiġānīs from Ġimma region written in poetry. Most of the biographies bear very few data about the lives they describe, giving more place to eulogies and honorific titles. The biographies appear to be organized according to a sort of spiritual ranking, which starts with al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf, then Aḥmad b. °Umar and °Alī Abba Ganda. This trend is visible in the sequence of epithets the author uses to introduce the subject of the biography, from *al-°ālim al-°allāma* (the most erudite savant) or *al-quṭb al-akbar* (the greatest pole) to *al-°ābid al-zāhid* (the devote ascetic), denoting a decrease in spiritual rank which is not perfectly uniform, but rather constant.

The subjects are not only Ethiopian. Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān lists also West African and ‘Maghribi’ Tiġānīs like °Abd Allāh al-Fūṭī, or Aḥmad b. Ibrahīm al-Šinqīṭī. About the first one he says that he visited Shonke (al-Šunkiyyā), where he transmitted the *awrād* of the Tiġāniyya (*laqana*).²⁷ During Pilgrimage he met al-Šinqīṭī, a descendant of Muḥāmad b. Al-Muḥṭār.²⁸ In fact, several biographies include elements that connect Ethiopian Tiġānīs with events and people outside their country, like the one of Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb b. Muḥammad Dākīr al-Gundarī, who seems to have witnessed the *ġihād* of the Second Mahdī in Sudan²⁹. The general impression that the reader of these biographies gets is that they were composed not only to collect the memories of the local Tiġānīs, but to harmonize them with a larger movement of diffusion of the order. The resulting image is of a vital group of masters and *murīds* that were actively part of the Tiġānī community, actively seeking for *taġdīd*, books and *asrār* (lit. ‘secrets’)³⁰.

The counterpart of this international dimension can be found in an untitled history of Ġimma area, preserved in a manuscript of the Haro collection. The text is incomplete, but can be attributed to Abba Dura, considering also its content. It is not a *ṣūfi* work, nor a Tiġānī one. But it

²⁶ The text is quite diffused in South Western Ethiopia, mainly in Xerox copies of the manuscript. The manuscript bears page numbers and an index. The copy used here is a Xerox copy made at Addis Abāba under the permission of the local *ḥalīfa* of the Tiġāniyya.

²⁷ *Nuzha*, p. 12.

²⁸ About him see Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Tiġānī n.d., 104–106. The text seems to affirm the contrary, defining Muḥammad b. Al-Muḥṭār as his descendant, which would be inconsistent with the fact that Aḥmad b. Ibrahīm and Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān met during Pilgrimage.

²⁹ *Nuzha*, p. 46. The text makes reference to the second Mahdī in Sūdān as affiliated to the Tiġāniyya, while the person who led him into the *ṭarīqa* was a certain Ḥasana l-Kūrānī.

³⁰ Sing. *sirr*, meaning esoteric texts and practices that require a special authorization. For some of examples of these texts, see *infra*.

has been produced in a Tiḡānī environment and shows the diverse interests of local *‘ulamā’*. In the introduction Abba Dura says:

لقد تأسفت غاية الاسف لعدم تاريخ بلادنا واجدادنا السالفين ما يكون تذكرة
لاولادنا واجدادنا تنبهت لذلك وشمرت [sic] غيظا لفقد من يذكرها
ويؤرخها[...]

I felt a deep regret for the lack of an historical account about our country and our ancestors that will keep the memory of them for our sons; I realized it and I got angry because of the loss of those able to remember and tell this story ...³¹

Abba Dura was clearly aware of the problem of the loss of information and of the necessity of writing it down to preserve the memory of the history of Ḡimma. The copy of this manuscript (which is hapax) is dated AH 1410/1990 CE.³² Manuscript collections bear evidence of a still ongoing intellectual activity in Ḡimma region during the *Därg* period,³³ that continued also after 1987. Nonetheless the process of secularization of Ethiopian society and the institution of a national educational system contributed to the creation of a gap between traditional and modern systems of transmission of knowledge. The conclusion of the work, after the date, is pretty explicative of the attitude of the author and of the atmosphere of that period:

ونحن تحت نير الشيوعية الان الله تعالى برحمته ولطفه اذهب عنا نير
الشيوعية بالكلية وصرف عنا مؤسسه منغستو هيل ماريم آخر السنة
المذكورة شهر كنبوت ١٣ فخرجو من الله التمام من الديموقراطية قريبا

We are now under the yoke of communism. Oh Almighty God, with your grace and benevolence remove from us this yoke completely with the regime of Mängəstu Ḥaylä Maryam; the end of the mentioned year, thirteenth of the month of Kanbūt. We hope from Allāh the completion of democracy soon!

The introduction continues explaining the methodology of inquiry, mainly based on oral sources. He asked young *‘ulamā’* to go to different regions to collect information from the elders among the Oromo still alive who wit-

³¹ HDR0056 f. 2r.

³² In most cases manuscripts report the Islamic and the Ethiopian date, which in this case is 1983.

³³ The *Därg* was the Socialist regime that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1987; see Bahru Zewde 2001.

nessed some of the events of the past. He also lists his main informants: °Abd al-Karīm Abbā Ġabal (still alive), al-Ḥāġġ °Abd al-Wahhāb (unidentified), the Prince al-Ḥāġġ Muḥammad Kamāl Abbā Bilkū Abbā Ġūbir (d. 1988);³⁴ they went around Ġimma region to collect informations about the history of the Oromo in Ethiopia.³⁵

The plan of the work, as exposed at the end of the introduction:³⁶ a first section about the Oromo reigns that ruled the *Iqlīm al-Ḥabaša* during the Ġāhiliyya; the second regards the first Oromo kingdoms in the Ġimma region; a third part about the virtues of Abbaa Ġifaar II (d. 1932), ruler of Ġimma. This subdivision is barely traceable in the text, but it is still representative of its contents.

The work includes different disparate elements. It opens with a poem of Abba Jamaal about the names of the kings of Ġimma region, beginning with Diggo (Diġġū) Abbā Šābū ‘founder of the kingdom’.³⁷ The chronicle ends in late 1980’s, with Abba Jobir, still considered ‘our governor’, *sulṭānuna*.³⁸ The text also gives some notes about the Oromo computation of time³⁹ (not actually used in the work) and then analyses the various migrations and movements of the Oromo tribes in the Horn of Africa in general and in Ġimma region in particular.⁴⁰ Then it proceeds to list the different kings of Ġimma, ending again with Abba Jobir. The whole work is a valuable source for the history of Oromo in Ġimma, mainly because it bears a local point of view. It is also noteworthy the involvement of both Abba Jamaal and Abba Dura in historiography and the latter’s interest for democracy as a way out from *Dārg* regime.

Apologetic works

The Tiġāniyya has been object of polemics⁴¹ in different parts of the Islamic world. It seems that Ethiopia is not an exception, as Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān wrote an apologetic work called *al-Madfa‘ al-Raššāš ‘alā al-Munkir al-Faḥḥāš*.⁴² The work (in verses) is structured as a collection of generic spiritual

³⁴ He is probably the son of Abba Jobir Abba Dula, last sultan of Ġimma.

³⁵ HDR0056 f. 2r.

³⁶ HDR0056 f. 2r.

³⁷ The reference is probably to the Diggo group who, at the end of the eighteenth century conquered the region around Jiren; see Lewis 1965, 44–46.

³⁸ HDR0056, f. 5r.

³⁹ HDR0056, ff. 5v–6r.

⁴⁰ HDR0056, ff. 6r–10v.

⁴¹ See Hunwick 2003, 5 and Seesemann 2000.

⁴² It is found in the Jimmate collection, MS no. JMT0170. It has been copied by Muḥammad Amīn b. Abī al-Faḍl al-Tiġānī on 11 Dū al-Ḥiġġa 1410/5 July 1990.

advices and as an exaltation of the Tiġānī approach to the *taṣawwuf*. The author explains the approaches to Sufism of al-Ġazālī and al-Šādīlī and the concept of the Seal of the Saints.⁴³ The latter is a very sensitive point upon which there is still a certain form of misunderstanding among Tiġānīs and other *ṣūfī* groups. And also in this case it seems to have been the issue around which the polemic has been developed. Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān says, while speaking about the *ḥatm al-awliyā*.⁴⁴ Here, after comparing the Seal of Saints with the Seal of the Prophets he condemns those who consider that there will be no saint after the Seal of Sainthood, and so do not consider Aḥmad al-Tiġānī (or Ibn ʿArabī) as the *ḥatm al-awliyā*. But, according to the author, this is true only for Jesus, who will seal the *walāya ʿamma* at the end of times, not for the other Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood.⁴⁵ He attributes the misunderstanding of this concept to the ignorance of the terminology of Sufism (*iṣtilāḥ al-qawm*) that defines subtle realities. Also in the section called *Wasf al-Munkir* (Description of denier) Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān does not give more clues helping identifying the object of his criticism. The characteristics he mentions are true also for different forms of negation of *ṣūfī* practices and doctrines. He describes this denier as someone who perverts the meaning of a discourse because of his scarce understanding of it, mainly where savants and pious men are not there to correct him. He is also a person incapable of receiving the abundant flood of benefits that comes from the saints, as he ‘choked with the water of Euphrates river’.⁴⁶ This denier is compared to a dog who, while ‘seeing the full moon, instead of enjoying its light, starts barking’.⁴⁷

This description clearly gives the idea of a harsh dispute, but also local informants were not able to give reference to a specific person or book which Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān was opposed to. No trace of this work has been yet found in other countries. But the intended public of this work seems to have been outside Ethiopia: at the end of the work the author gathered some short biographies of different masters of the Tiġāniyya, mainly not local ones. The impression is that Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān wanted to join numerous other Tiġānī authors who wrote a confutation of an accusation to the *ṭarīqa* or an apology of its merits. The titles include the *Ġuyūš al-Tulla*^c of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh Niyāss⁴⁸ and the *Ġayš al-*

⁴³ Ff. 7v–9v and 9v–10v respectively.

⁴⁴ JMT0170, f. 10v.

⁴⁵ See Chodkiewicz 1986; Radtke and O’Kane 1996; Urizzi 2004–2005.

⁴⁶ The reference to the flood, in this case, cannot be framed into any Niassene context and it has to be understood as a general metaphor for the benefits coming from God through his saints.

⁴⁷ JMT0170, ff. 12r–12v, *passim*.

⁴⁸ See Kane 2000.

Kabīr of Muḥammad al-Ṣaġīr b. Anbūḡa, the *Qam° al-Ta'aṣṣub wa Ahwā° A°dā° al-Tiġānī b'l-Mašriq wa al-Maġrib* of Muḥammad Munāšū al-Tūnisi, the *Kašf al-Balwā fi Radd al-Fatwā al-Manšūra °alā Maġallat al-Taqwā* of Aḥmad Sukayriġ, the *Turyāq li-Man Fasada Qalbhuh wa Mizāġuhuh* of al-Aḥsan al-Ba°qīlī.⁴⁹ He mentions also a work of a woman, Ḥadīġa bt. Aḥmad Fāl al-Šinqīṭī called *al-Sayf al-Yamānī fi al-Dabb °an Sīdī Aḥmad al-Tiġānī*.⁵⁰ All these works deal with different disputes or confutations, or as is the case of the work of al-Ba°qīlī, do not address a specific issue, but refute diverse wrong approaches to the Tiġāniyya and to Sufism in general. It has to be noted that Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān does not mention other, more famous works, like the *Ġawāb al-Muskit* Muḥammad Akansūs.⁵¹

There are no attestations of this works outside Ethiopia, but the copy analysed here contains also a *taqrīza* of Aḥmad al-Nūr b. Al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf.⁵² This 'review',⁵³ unfortunately, does not give any clue about the context of the polemic. The *Madfa°* seems then to be more an attempt to be part of a larger apologetic literary movement than an answer to local issues against the Tiġāniyya. An attempt that, apparently, had no actual success. What is anyway interesting about this text is the knowledge that Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān had of this apologetic tradition and his will to join it.

Tawassul and its context

As in other places of Ethiopia the invocation of *tawassul* ('intercession') of the saints is particularly diffused and gives birth to local literary production.⁵⁴ These invocations are part of the practices of different orders and *šūfi* groups. Tiġānīs are prohibited to visit *awliyā°* (saints dead or alive) belonging to other orders to look for their *baraka* ('blessings') or their intercession. This does not prevent them to seek the intercession of the saints of their *ṭarīqa*. In Ethiopian manuscript collections there are several invocations for *tawassul* involving Tiġānī saints, both local and foreign. The presence of such texts is quite normal in non-Tiġānī contexts, where the visit to saints belonging to other orders and seeking their intercession is considered a meritorious act. For Tiġānīs the *tawassul* through their 'own' saints is permissible but it is not conceived as a fundamental part of the practices the

⁴⁹ Published in Dār al-Bayḏā°, Maṭba°a al-°Arabiyya, n.d.

⁵⁰ These titles are all mentioned in JMT0170, ff. 24r–25r.

⁵¹ See Akansūs n.d.

⁵² JMT0170 f. 27r–27v. The *taqrīza* has been written on 24 Ša°bān 1400/8 July 1980 by °Abd al-Karīm b. °Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tiġānī.

⁵³ See Rosenthal 1981.

⁵⁴ For an example see Petrone 2015; see also Wagner 1975, 63.

murīd is asked to perform. For instance, none of these poems is reported in the manuals of the Tiḡāniyya I have been able to consult and are also absent from the main pages of the websites of the order on the web.⁵⁵

Among the manuscripts found in Ġimma there is a collection of opinions about the permissibility of the *tawassul*, taken from different sources like the *Kitāb Adab al-Safar* from the *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* of al-Ġazālī⁵⁶ and the *Mafātīḥ al-Faraġ*,⁵⁷ which is itself a collection of traditions and opinions of the *ʿulamāʾ* about different aspects of the practice of invocation of God's help, including the *tawassul*. This collection of opinions seems to be quite recent, because a quotation is made with the question and answer format using brackets, typical of recent publications about *fiqh* matters. The collection is unfortunately not complete (both lacunose and apodous), but the opinions reported point to the possibility to look for the intercession of the saints. Their presence in Ġimma, among Tiḡānī manuscripts, attests the existence of a (possibly rather recent) problem concerning the *ziyārat al-qubūr* (visiting the tombs) and seeking intercession saints, involving new forms of Islam that consider this practice unlawful.⁵⁸

The presence of *duʿāʾ al-tawassul* in Tiḡānī collections can also help defining the horizons of local devotion and also the contacts with and the knowledge of foreign saints of the *ṭarīqa* that are considered worth of asking mediation. The structure of these texts is almost always quite simple, starting with an invocation to God, asking for forgiveness, spiritual and material benefits. This request is addressed through the mediation of Aḥmad al-Tiḡānī, some of his first disciples and *ḥulafāʾ*. The list then continues with the names of masters from later generations that may include local ones, defining the boundaries of intercession. These boundaries are defined by different factors: *sanads* of the initiation to the Tiḡāniyya, people met during *ḥāġġ* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and other occasions, authors of books that arrived in Ethiopia, fame of single masters. The invocation is closed by a series of final requests.

⁵⁵ Nonetheless there are examples of *tawassul* found on Tiḡānī websites, involving only Aḥmad al-Tiḡānī: *Tawassul fi Ġanāb Šayḥunā al-Tiḡānī* (<http://www.tidjania.fr/amdah/412-atawassol>; last accessed 24/06/2016); there is also a *Qašīdat al-Tawassul* written by the Sammānī Šahyḥ al-Burī (d. 2005) asking the intercession of al-Tiḡānī (<http://cb.rayaheen.net/showthread.php?tid=4304>; accessed 24/06/2016).

⁵⁶ Al-Ġazālī 2005, 713–738.

⁵⁷ Al-Ġazālī n.d.

⁵⁸ On the diffusion of these currents in Ethiopia see Østebø 2011.

The collection of Abbā Gulli preserves a manuscript containing a *duʿāʾ al-tawassul*⁵⁹ following the structure outlined above. The names reported belong to the main figures of the Tiġāniyya, like Ibn al-Miṣrī or al-ʿArabī b. Al-Ṣāʿih. The order in which the names are displayed is generally hierarchical (from the Prophet to Aḥmad al-Tiġānī, to contemporary Tiġānī saints) and it does not correspond to any published collection of biographies, like the *Kaṣf al-Ḥiġāb*⁶⁰ and the *Ġāyat al-Amānī* of Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Tiġānī.⁶¹ It is not possible to identify every single person, as some people’s names are only alluded to or partially reported. The end of the list, anyway, reports the names of Aḥmad Sukayriġ (d. 1944) and Alfā Hāshim (d. 1931),⁶² among the main figures of the Tiġāniyya of the first half of the twentieth century. The text does not report the names of masters belonging to a later generation of the Tiġāniyya (who were possibly still alive when the *duʿāʾ* was composed missing), like Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Miṣrī (d. 1978) and Ibrāhīm Niyass (d. 1975).

The same text is found in Haro⁶³ where it bears the title *al-Duʿāʾ a-Mustaġāb wa al-Tawassul al-Mustaṭāb bi-l-Tiġāniyyin al-Anġāb* and here the copyist adds that the invocation contains also some *abiyāt* (‘verses’) with special functions,⁶⁴ taken from some other poems (*qaṣāʾid*), like the *Minyat al-Murīd* of Ibn Bābā al-Šinqīṭī (died before 1850).

The re-use of other Tiġānī texts in a different context means that the author⁶⁵ of the *duʿāʾ* felt free to take parts of a basic poem of the *ṭarīqa* for both literary and spiritual purposes. Quoting a verse of an existing poem is a common way to pay homage to the previous tradition. In this specific case it seems to have also spiritual functions, as stated in the note to the

⁵⁹ AGL0016, ff. 7v–11v. The manuscript contains also the *Muzdawwiġa al-ḥusnā fī-l-istiġāta bi-Asmāʾ Allāh al-Ḥusnā* of Yūsuf al-Nabahānī (ff. 2r–5v) and a version of a *qaṣīda* of Aḥmad b. ʿAṣūr al-Samġūnī (fl. 1850–1875; see Sukayriġ, 1961, 383–384). The *Kaṣf al-Ḥiġāb* reports the whole poem, but its printed version cannot be considered the source of the manuscript version, due to a large amount of differences between the two versions (four verses added at the end, different wording of other verses, other scribal variants).

⁶⁰ Sukayriġ 1961.

⁶¹ Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Tiġānī n.d.

⁶² See Hunwick 2003, 223–225.

⁶³ HDR0073, ff. 22v–25r. Another version of the same text is found in Haro (HDR0052, f. 5).

⁶⁴ HDR0073, f. 22v.

⁶⁵ These texts are pretty simple from a literary point of view. Nonetheless they have been composed and written by individuals in a defined community. In this sense also a simple *duʿāʾ* has to be considered an authorial work.

title.⁶⁶ The context of the *tawassul*, nonetheless, puts this text in a completely Ethiopian context.

In the very same manuscript in Haro⁶⁷ there is a marginal note in prose called *du[°]ā al-tawassul wa al-tadarru °wa al-taḥaṣṣun*, reporting part of the *silsila* also found in the collection of Abbā Gulli.⁶⁸ They are followed by other names found in the previous *du[°]ā* and the text is closed with the request of intercession from the Prophet and from Aḥmad al-Tiġānī. The recourse to the chain of transmission of the initiation is a literary device to unite, in the same invocation, the most prominent figures of the order with those who are part of the local ‘spiritual environment’. This method to localize the *baraka* and the *tawassul* is confirmed by another example found in Jimmate,⁶⁹ where the invocation is based entirely on local masters. It is a draft where part of the text has been ruled out and some names are not readable or difficult to identify.⁷⁰ The invocation is apodous and acephalous, but every name is preceded by the particle *bi*, as usual in the formulas of intercession ‘through’ someone.

All these invocations combine local and foreign saints, disregarding their belonging to the *silsila* of affiliation to the Tiġāniyya of local masters. They represent an effort of localization of the *baraka* and of internationalization of the Ethiopian Tiġāniyya. This twofold attitude is evident in these devotional texts and it is present also in the other texts analysed here (in the insertion of non-Ethiopians among the hagiographies of local saints as in joining the apologetic practice of other authors). The attempt to reconstruct a larger framework for their *ṭarīqa* is paralleled by some forms of exchange with and recognition from other Tiġānī groups from Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa.

Circulation of Books and Texts

There is a movement of books and texts clearly directed towards Ethiopia. We have already seen the re-use of parts of the *Miṣṣat al-Murīd*, that can be considered as a simple example of how Ethiopia was part of a larger process of expansion of the Tiġāniyya and, in general, of transmission of knowledge.

⁶⁶ Also the *Burda* of al-Buṣīrī (d. 1291) is used in rituals; for a discussion of its talismanic function see Stetkevych 2006.

⁶⁷ HDR0073, f. 25v.

⁶⁸ This *du[°]ā* mentions only °Abd al-Qādir al-Minhāġi and Muḥammad Gannūn, at the very beginning (HDR0073, f. 25v); see also AGL0017, 2r.

⁶⁹ JMT0163, f 5.

⁷⁰ The readable names are: Ḥāġġ Zakariyyā al-Zāhī (Zāhir?), al-Fūti °Abd Allāh, Aḥmad b. °Urfa Abū al-Ḥasan, ṣayḥ Yūsuf Faḥr al-Harar, Aḥmad al-Nūr, Ṣayḥunā Muḥammad, Ṣayḥunā Abū Ibrāhīm (Abbā Ibrāhīm?), Muḥammad al-Nūr al-Ḥabīb, Ṣayḥunā al-Bābī; Ḥāġġ Ḥabīb Sayyidinā Maḥmūd (Abū Sulaymān?).

Some Tiġānī manuscripts have been found also in collections not belonging to members of the *ṭarīqa*, like the manuscript WRK0010 found in the Warukko collection.⁷¹ On the upper paste-down, glued to the cover, it is reported an ownership statement of *ṣayb* Nāṣir, our guide in the region of Agaro and keeper of the Warukko collection. On f. 2r there is another ownership statement, probably older than the first one, reporting the name of al-Ṣayḥ Nūr al-Ḥāġġ Muḥammad al-Ṣayḥ ʿUmar al-Ṣayḥ al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf. The manuscript reports also a donation/ownership statement saying:

هذا الكتاب للشيخ محمد النور الوالي إعطاء للشيخ نور ابن الحاج محمد
ابن الشيخ عمر ابن الحاج يوسف

This book belongs to *ṣayb* Muḥammad al-Nūr al-Wālluwī donated by Nūr b. al-Ḥāġġ Muḥammad b. al-Ṣayḥ ʿUmar b. al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf

This statement shows how this book was given as a gift from a *ṣayb* from Wāllō to a descendant of al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf. This does not mean that the book was copied in Wāllō. But it is noteworthy that a *ṣayb* from that area had not only the possibility to locate a Tiġānī book, but he was also able to contact (we do not know how and why) a descendant of a Tiġānī master to give him the book.

The two main texts contained in this manuscript are the *Kitāb al-Sirr al-Abḥar fī Awrād al-Qutb al-Akbar Sīdī Aḥmad b. Maḥammad al-Tiġānī* by Muḥammad ʿUlwān al-Ġawsaqī al-Tiġānī,⁷² copied on Šawwāl AH 1327/October 1909 CE and a prayer on the Prophet called *Kitāb ḡāmiʿ al-asrār wa al-anwār* by Ibn Yarki Talfi al-Muḥṭār⁷³ (d. 1863). The former is a basic manual of the Tiġāniyya.⁷⁴ The latter is a long prayer on the Prophet authored by a complex figure: Yarki Talfi, whose name has been transcribed in the manuscript as Yarkī Čalaqo.⁷⁵ He studied in Timbuktu and then settled in the Diina of Ḥamdallāhi as spokesman of its governor Aḥmad Abū Bakr. After the latter's death Yarki Talfi abandoned the Qādiriyya and joined al-Ḥāġġ ʿUmar al-Fūtī and the Tiġāniyya. His name is present in the above

⁷¹ This collection is located few km north from Agaro and is kept by *ṣayb* Nāṣir, a descendant of the Awwalini dynasty of Gomma. Both *ṣayb* Nāṣir and his fellows belong to the Sammāniyya.

⁷² He was a contemporary of Aḥmad al-Tiġānī and his *ḥādīm*.

⁷³ About Yarkoy Talfi see: Hunwick 2003, 233–236; Hall and Stewart 2011, 174; Diakité 2015.

⁷⁴ The work has been printed in Cairo in 1958. Al-Ġawsaqī is also the author of the *al-Nafḥa al-quḍsiyya fī al-sīra al-aḥmadiyya*. These two texts have been published in Cairo on 1958 (3rd edition) together with the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* of al-Ṭaṣfāwī and the *Futūḥāt al-Rabbāniyya* of al-Šinqīṭī.

⁷⁵ See WRK0010, ff. 1r, 34r, 36r. The name is transcribed in Arabic as يركى ظلق.

mentioned *du^cā al-tawassul* as Wadī^cat Allāh or as Ibn al-Muḥtār,⁷⁶ being then included in the *diwān* of the Ethiopian Tiġāniyya.

The introduction of the *Ġāmi^c al-Asrār* explains the merits (*tawāb*) of the prayer on the Prophet contained in the text, comparing it to the value of the *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ*, the main prayer of the Tiġāniyya. This particular *taṣliyya* is considered by Tiġānīs as the most powerful and valuable among the *ṣalawāt al-Nabī*. The comparison is made using the same words and numbers found in Tiġānī texts to explain the merits of the *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ*.⁷⁷ The use of the *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ* as a term of comparison cannot be found, anyway, in the literature of this *ṭarīqa*. The description of the merits of the *Ġāmi^c al-Asrār wa al-anwār* continues listing the number of prayers of angels, human beings and other creatures that correspond to a single recitation *bi^l-ḥudūr* (with due concentration) of this prayer. The *ṣalāt* is rather long (ff. 37v–139r) and it is subdivided in 7 *awqāf* (sing. *waqf*). In each one the prayer on the prophet is based on a different element (the Names of God or the letters of the Arabic alphabet in the order of *abġad*). The text was copied on the 26 Dū al-Ḥiġġā AH 1367, corresponding to the 29 October 1948 CE.

The *Kitāb Ġāmi^c al-Asrār* appears to be rather problematic regarding both the orthodoxy of the claims made in it and its presence in a context like Ethiopia. One can imagine that the manuscript containing this and other texts has been brought by *ṣayḥ* Nūr al-Walluwī to the descendants of al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf⁷⁸ and the book, being not used for ritual practices, found its way outside the collections of the Tiġāniyya.⁷⁹ The text is not frequently found in other areas of the Islamic world⁸⁰ and its presence in Ethiopia can be due to different scenarios: Nūr b. Al-Ḥāġġ Muḥammad b. Al-Ṣayḥ ʿUmar b. Al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf could have asked for the *Sirr al-Abḥar* and the text of the *Ġāmi^c al-Asrār* was copied together with it. Or he can have asked for the latter text to be copied, due its peculiar nature. The manuscript can have simply arrived in Ethiopia as it is now.⁸¹

⁷⁶ HDR0052, f. 5; HDR0073, 23v (Ibn al-Muḥtār, who can be also identified with Muḥammad b. Al-Muḥtār b. Aḥmad, d. 1930; he received his *taqdīm* from Muḥammad Gannūn, who is present in the Ethiopian *silsila*; see Trimmingham 1959, 98.

⁷⁷ For more details, see Wright 2005, 104–108.

⁷⁸ At the date when the manuscript was copied al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf was still alive and it seems unlikely that the book has been donated to one of his descendants and not to him at a date close to the one of copying. This would imply that its coming to Ġimma region has been after the death of al-Ḥāġġ Yūsuf (1953), possibly in the 1960s.

⁷⁹ Tije is near Warukko and there is the possibility that the descendants of Shekota Tije had this book among the others which belonged to their ancestor.

⁸⁰ A search in the West African Arabic Manuscript Database gave no result; ALA reports only one copy of this text at the CEDRAB (Hunwick 2003, 233).

⁸¹ The script and codicological inquiry did not give any clues about its provenance.

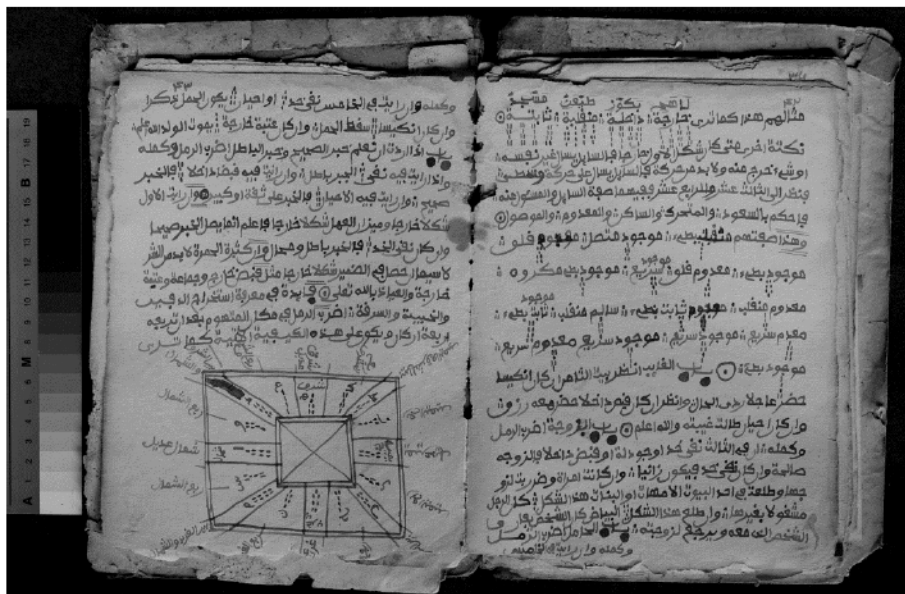


Fig. 1: Manuscript of Bornuan origin, found in Jimmate (south-western Ethiopia, JMT00116, ff. 23v–24r)

There are further two manuscripts whose origin can be traced outside Ethiopia with a certain degree of certitude. The first is a copy of *al-Mursid al-Mu'in 'alā al-Darūrī min 'ulūm al-dīn* of the Moroccan *ṣūfī* 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. 'Ašīr (d. 1631), a well-known poem on Maliki *fiqh*, found in the Ġimmate collection.⁸² Considering that the prevalent *madhhab* in Ethiopia is the Šāfi'i, it seems likely that local masters of the Tiġāniyya sought for this text to have a better idea of the juridical school followed by Aḥmad al-Tiġānī. The text is written in a beautiful *magribī* script and it can have been sent as a present or it can have been acquired during a trip to Maghreb or during *ḥāġġ*. Another manuscript from the same collection⁸³ reports a long text about ritual and magic use of letters, including also *'ilm al-raml* (geomancy),⁸⁴ written in a clear and embellished hand in the typical style of Bornu.⁸⁵ The text does not appear to be directly linked to the Tiġāniyya. Anyway its esoteric nature prevents from thinking that it arrived in Jimmate

⁸² JMT0169, 11 folios.

⁸³ JMT0116.

⁸⁴ See Savage-Smith, Emilie, 'Geomancy', in: *EI³* online, 2016 http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/geomancy-COM_27406?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=raml; last accessed 26/06/2016.

⁸⁵ I thank prof. Andrea Brigaglia for identifying the Bornuan style of the handwriting.

without a kind of permission (*iḡāza*) or control from a *šayḥ* or a savant. The manuscript includes also a loose folio of annotations in blue ballpoint pen made by Abba Jihad,⁸⁶ showing that he actually studied this text.

The hypothesis that the latter manuscripts came with Aḥmad b. ʿUmar is fascinating, but there are no evidences supporting it. Nonetheless its presence in Ethiopia, in a Tiḡānī collection, is a clear proof that there have been direct or indirect relations between central and west Sudanic Africa.

A last external element found in Ethiopian Tiḡānī collections is the *Kitāb al-Sirr al-Akbar wa al-Nūr al-Abhar* of Ibrāhīm Niyāss, copy completed on AH 1397/1977 CE.⁸⁷ It has been copied by Muḥammad Amīn b. al-Ḥāḡḡ Yūsuf on January 4, 1977,⁸⁸ probably from an apograph written near Kaolack, the city in Senegal where Ibrāhīm Niyāss was based. Unfortunately, the *iḡāza* is not reported and there is no information about the place of copy.

This text is considered to have a highly esoteric content and the reader requires a special permission (*iḡāza*) from a Tiḡānī master. It covers different topics related to the different ways the *murid* can tread the mystical path, according to the particular favour God bestowed on the disciples of the *Ḥatm al-Awliyāʿ*. The description of the *sulūk* under this particular light implies a particularly open attitude towards the best guarded secrets of the Tiḡāniyya.

It is interesting to note that almost all the cases analysed here belong to the collection of Jimmate, a remote village in the area of Agaro. The *šayḥ* who founded this collection, Abba Jihad, seems to have had a particular relation with western regions of sub-Saharan Africa and that he had the possibility to obtain an *iḡāza* for the *Sirr al-Akbar* from an authorized master. Local informants, anyway, did not confirm any connection or meeting with masters of the Niassene group of the Tiḡāniyya.

⁸⁶ Confirmed by his son, Muḥtār, current keeper of the collection.

⁸⁷ JMT0167, written in blue ballpoint pen on ruled paper, 28 folios. There is some other information about the date of composition and of copying of the apograph of the text, but is unclear (probable error in copying). The apograph seems to have been copied on 1383 in Kūs, a village near Kaolakh, by the hand of ʿAbd Allāh for his master al-Fāḍil Aḥmad. The original was written by the hand of Ibrāhīm. The place of copy can be the same of the other one, or maybe it has to be referred to the composition of the work, see JMT0167, f. 27v.

⁸⁸ The colophon reports also the dates according to the Islamic and Ethiopian calendars (f. 27): ١٩٧٧ يناير ٤ ١٩٦٩ تھساس ٢٧ ١٣٩٧ ١٣٩٧ ٧ الساعة في توفيقه وحسن الله بعون تم: (٢٧). التجاني يوسف الحاج ابن امين محمد بيد

The literary context

In the previous pages I have presented some texts, of different genres and coming from different places in southwestern Ethiopia. Some of these texts belong mainly to a local context, giving an idea of the spiritual and literary need of the community of the Tiḡāniyya (at least those that can be conveyed by a written text). Some others clearly link Ethiopian Tiḡānīs with the rest of Islamic world in different ways: re-elaborations of existent texts, works coming from abroad or, in two cases, manuscripts clearly not written *in loco*.

Ethiopian Tiḡāniyya can be then considered, from a literary point of view, well rooted in the local dimensions of ritual practices, like the use of *tawassul* and also rather autonomous in developing them. It seems to have also the consciousness of its historical role as promoter of Islamic learning, at least in Ġimma area. Local authors perceived themselves and their disciples also as part of a larger movement of people and ideas. In their works they tried to integrate the foreign elements coming from meetings during *Ḥāḡḡ*, people who travelled in Ethiopia (like the case of ʿAbd Allāh al-Fūtī who passed through Šonke) or through acquired books (both manuscript and printed). This attitude seems to expressly counterbalance the strong local dimension the Sufism is inclined to, at least among those who were able to read Arabic and were interested in learning more about the Tiḡāniyya. A large part of the Ethiopian followers of this *ṭarīqa* (but the discourse is valid also in other contexts) probably did not know Arabic well enough to be able to read these texts.⁸⁹ Anyway the poetic form of some of them may suggest that they could be also memorized and recited (at least the *duʿā*). So the context that emerges from the literature of Ethiopian Tiḡānīs is the one sought and built by an *élite* for themselves. The large majority of the disciples remained more focused on the devotional piety and on the attachment on ‘al-Fakī’ and his successors, with a very different mode of access to the history and the doctrines of their *ṭarīqa*, obtained only through oral sources. The scarce knowledge of Arabic⁹⁰ and the absence of production of local literature, directly connected to the brotherhood, in Amharic or Afaan Oromo are then characteristic of a popular and devotional approach to the Tiḡāniyya. The importance of the literary aspect, mainly produced in Arabic, cannot be, anyway, outweighed.

⁸⁹ These observations are based on the knowledge of Arabic found among the elder Tiḡānīs we have met. Only few of them were able to actually read Arabic and, among them, even less were able to understand the meaning of what they were reading. This is true for both rural and urban contexts.

⁹⁰ Migration to Saudi Arabia for work is now changing this situation, as many Ethiopian Muslims are now able to speak and read Arabic fluently.

It widened the horizons of the *madad* ('spiritual influx'), rooting the popular devotion in a broader context of intellectual exchange and activities.

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Summary

The presence of the Tiġāniyya in Ethiopia is well attested since the mission of Enrico Cerulli in early twentieth century.⁹¹ Since then the studies about the presence and diffusion of this order in Ethiopia have been based mainly on oral sources and fieldwork. The aim of this study is to present a very first overview of Tiġānī literature in Ethiopia as found in the recent missions of the *Islam in the Horn of Africa Project*.

Local literary production shows that Ethiopian masters and authors aimed to show to their disciples and readers a broader picture of the *ṭarīqa*, counterbalancing the local dimension of devotional piety.

⁹¹ Cerulli 1930–1933, II 193.