The history of literary composition in Arabic extends over a period close to eight hundred years in this region. The first known writer in Arabic was a grammarian and poet of Kanem, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Kānemī, who was active c. 1200; at the present time scholars are still using Arabic as the language of their doctrinal polemics, of their Islamic teaching manuals and of the poetry they so frequently write in praise of the Prophet, in praise of Sufi leaders, and to eulogize departed friends, colleagues and patrons. Indeed, in the second half of the twentieth century, in Nigeria in particular, usage of Arabic as a literary language and as a general language of written communication has become more widespread, even as literacy in English or in certain African languages has increased. Muslim scholars have in some cases modernized their teaching methods and facilities and produced generations of students who have gone on to found their own schools; the teaching of Arabic in primary and secondary schools in Muslim majority areas has become commonplace, while several of Nigeria’s universities offer undergraduate degrees and doctorates in Arabic Studies. Considerable encouragement has been given to this process by certain Arab countries—notably Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia—that have sent Arabic teachers to Nigeria and have offered scholarships to Nigerians to study Arabic (and many other subjects) in the countries concerned. The same is true, pari passu, for the other countries of the region, while at Say in Niger an Islamic university has been established with instruction in Arabic. This overview will focus on the historical tradition of Arabic scholarship and the production of Arabic literature (in the broadest sense of that term), as well as its evolution and development in the colonial and post-colonial periods of the twentieth century.

The earliest centres of Arabic-Islamic teaching to emerge in
Central Sudanic Africa were Gazargamu, the capital of the rulers (sing. *mai*) of Bornu from the 1480s, Katsina and Kano, in both of which Wangara (Dyula) merchants and teachers from Mali settled from the mid-fifteenth century (if not before), and Anu Šamman. Kanem-Bornu was undoubtedly the earliest area of Central Sudanic Africa where a teaching and scholarly tradition developed. One of the earliest trans-Saharan trade routes led down from Tripoli through the Fezzan to the state of Kanem just north of Lake Chad and the earliest Islamic and Arabic influences entered the greater Nigerian region by this path.

Bornu, originally a province of Kanem, became the principal territory of the dominant branch of the Saifawa dynasty in the late fourteenth century, and when a new capital was established at Gazargamu, c. 1470, the *mais* attracted scholars to settle there. Originally some of these may have been from the Fezzan, but by the late sixteenth century we have evidence of the establishment of a local scholarly tradition in the historical writings of the Chief Imam Ahmad b. Furtuwa (*fl.* 1575). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several notable Bornu scholars were Fulani, whose ancestors had probably arrived in Bornu and Bagirmi, migrating from Mali, in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Some of them were mobile beyond the confines of Bornu, visiting the Fezzan, Tagidda, Timbuktu, Kano and Katsina. Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*tawhid*) and Arabic language were the principal fields of both study and composition, though there was considerable literary activity in the poetry of eulogy, elegy, satire and pietism. There were also centres of Islamic teaching outside of Gazargamu—the scholarly and Sufi communities (*malemits*) such as Kalumfardo—but these seem to have produced no writings that have survived. The long Bornu tradition of learning and its important school of calligraphy, though rivalled by Sokoto in

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1 A small town in Niger some 40 km north-west of Agades.
the nineteenth century, remains vital to this day, as is evident in the scholarly activities of a man like Sh. Sharif İbrâhîm Şâlih (b. 1941), the Tijâni leader and historian, and the still flourishing production of hand-written Qur’âns.

Both Kano and Katsina attracted scholars from North Africa and from older Islamic centres such as Walâta and Timbuktu in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Both cities were major commercial emporiums whose dynasties had adopted Islam relatively recently, and for both reasons scholars found them attractive places of residence. Kano did not establish itself as a major centre of scholarly writing until the blossoming of the Tijâniyya there in the twentieth century, its best-known author before that being the immigrant Fulâni scholar Abdullâhi Suka (fl. 1660), whose long poem on Islamic praxis and piety, ‘Atiyat al-mu’tî, is still reproduced and studied. Even in the twentieth century many of its best-known scholars have been immigrants to the city or are descended from immigrants: Muhammed Salga (d. 1939), the earliest of the great Tijâni teachers was of Bornu (Barebari) origin, as were his disciples Abû Bakr Mijinyawa (d. 1946), Ahmad al-Tijâni b. ‘Uthmân (d. 1970) and Sani Kafanga (d. 1989), while ‘Umar Falke (d. 1962) was of Tuareg descent from Air, and an ancestor of Abû Bakr ‘Atiq (d. 1974) had come from Katsina. The great Qâdirî leader of Kano, Nasiru Kabara (b. 1925), descends from immigrants who are said to have come from Kabara near Timbuktu.

In the seventeenth century Katsina, too, benefited from the immigration of scholars from Bornu, such as Muhammed Masanîn (d. 1667) and Muhammed al-Wâli (fl. 1688), while another of the great scholars of the period, Muhammed b. al-Şabbâgh (called ‘Dan Marina, fl. 1640) probably had Arab ancestry. Like Kano, Katsina was visited by the North African scholar Muhammed b. ‘Abd al-Karîm al-Maghîli (d. 1504) and also by Ayda Āhmad al-Tâzakhî (from Tizakht near Walâta, d. 1529-30), who became qâdi of Katsina, and Makhlûf al-Balbâli (d. after 1534), a scholar of the northern Saharan oasis of Tabalbala. All of these left behind some writings. The subjects on which the Katsina scholars wrote were similar to those of their colleagues in Bornu, perhaps not surprising given the
close connections between the two areas. There was also interest in esoteric knowledge. The Katsina scholar Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Fullānī (d. 1742) was a famed exponent of numerology and talismanology, whose books are still being published in the Arab world.

A real revolution in Arabic-Islamic writing took place in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, associated with the reformist Fulani scholars Sh. ʿUthmān b. Muhammad Fodiye (or Fodio, d. 1817), his brother ʿAbd Allāh (d. 1826) and his son Muhammad Bello (d. 1837). Between them they produced over three hundred works in prose and verse as well as dozens of occasional poems. In addition to writing in Arabic, Sh. ʿUthmān also wrote poetry in Fulfulde, some of which was translated into Hausa by his son ʿĪsā. His daughter Asmāʾ was also a poet in Arabic, Fulfulde and Hausa. His wazir, Giḍaḍo d’an Laima was a talented Arabist and writer, as were his various successors (all descendants of his) down to the present wazir, Junayd b. Muhammad al-Bukhārī (b. 1906), author of numerous works of history and a diwān of poetry. The reformist triumvirate, who founded a large state based on Sokoto, wrote in most of the Islamic disciplines: fiqh (jurisprudence), tawḥīd (theology), taṣawwuf (Sufism), tafsīr (Qur’ānic exegesis), hadīth (Prophetic traditions), lugha (Arabic language), ādāb (manners), waʿz (paraenesis), ṭibb (medicine), and tāʾrīkh (history), often, in fact, writing works that crossed these disciplinary boundaries. Two other generations of writers can be discerned in and around Sokoto in the nineteenth century—the first epitomized by the philosopher, Sufi and historian ʿAbd al-Qādir b. al-Muṣṭafā (d. 1864), a maternal grandson of Sh. ʿUthmān, and the second by another Fulani scholar belonging to a different branch of Sh. ʿUthmān’s clan, ʿUthmān b. Ishaq al-ʿAthūr (d. after 1885), a writer on Arabic grammar and jurisprudence and author of a collection of poems on the Sokoto jihād leaders and their successors. Surprisingly, in the twentieth century Sokoto has produced few Arabic authors of note, with the exception of the wazirs.

Other centres grew up in the late nineteenth and during the twentieth century. Zaria emerged as a teaching centre with an
important school led by ʿUmar al-Wālī and his descendants. Teaching institutions were established in Bauchi and Bida as well as Lokoja on the confluence of the Niger and Benue. Each of these has produced a number of scholar-authors. Scholars of Nupe origin have tended to move on to larger and better endowed centres, migrating either northwards to Zaria or Kano, or southwards to Ilorin, a city established as the most southerly emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 1830s.

In the twentieth century Ilorin emerged as one of the major centres of Islamic teaching in Nigeria, providing an effective bridge between the centres of Hausaland and Bornu on the one hand, and new centres in Yorubaland such as Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode and Lagos on the other. Two Ilorin scholars have been especially active in promoting Arabic and Islamic education, not only within the city but more widely in south-western Nigeria. Muḥammad Jum’a Alabi, known as Tāj al-Adab (b. 1923), founded a number of so-called Adabiyya schools, and his pupils have carried on the tradition. Muḥammad Tukur Kamāl al-Dīn (b. 1907) founded the Ansar al-Islam Society, an educational organization for the propagation of Islam, while his Azhar Institute of Ilorin provides higher education in Arabic combined with some offerings in “secular” subjects. The outstanding Ilorin scholar, however, and one of the greatest that Nigeria has produced in the twentieth century, was Ādam ʿAbd Allāh al-Ilūrī (d. 1993), who established himself at Agege on the outskirts of Lagos in the 1940s and founded an Arabic college there and later started a printing press. Through his voluminous writings on a wide variety of topics (including history), and the many graduates of his college, he made a considerable contribution to Arabic-Islamic education in Nigeria. An Arabist by training and inclination, he was nevertheless cognizant of English language scholarship in certain domains and was not shy to engage with it. The same is true of Sh. Sharīf Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ of Maiduguri (b. 1942), whose voluminous output includes several works of history as well as scholarly treatises on Tijānī Sufism and a biographical guide to Tijānī scholars to whom he claims affiliation through his lines of mystical and scholarly discipleship.

One other modern scholar deserves mention here, not least
for the innovative methods he used to preach his strict interpretation of the Islamic message. Sh. Abū Bakr Gumi (d. 1992) came from Gumi in Sokoto province, but spent much of his career in Kaduna, first as deputy Grand Kadi, and from 1962 until 1967 as Grand Kadi of the Northern Region of Nigeria. He wrote the first complete exegesis of the Qurʾān to be produced in the region since the Diyāʾ al-tawīl of ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Fodiye (1815)—a work entitled Radd al-adh`hān ilā maʿānt Ḩ-ʾūrʾān, which was published in Beirut in 1979 at the same time as his Hausa translation of the Qurʾān. Seven years earlier he had published al-ʿAqidah al-ṣaḥīḥa bi-muwāfaqat al-shariʿa, in which he launched attacks on Sufism and its practitioners that set off a chain reaction of rebuttals and counter-rebuttals in Arabic books (mainly written by Nigerians) published in the Arab world for distribution in Nigeria. In promoting his views he made extensive use of the broadcast media in Hausa and magazine and newspaper interviews in both Hausa and English.3

Hausa, as noted above, was used as a literary language from the early years of the nineteenth century, and took on special importance as the vehicle for spreading the reformist ideas of the Sokoto leaders at the popular level. Other languages of the region also have written traditions, some extending back several centuries. There is evidence of written Kanembu in Qurʾānic glosses in the early eighteenth century, and Fulfulde may have been used even earlier.4 In the twentieth century not only has there been a growing literature of all kinds in Hausa—including written in Roman characters (boko) rather than the Arabic script (ajami)—but works originally written in

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4 The evidence for Kanembu comes from a copy of the Qurʾān, completed in 1669, with glosses in that language for which Bivar has proposed a date of c. 1700; see A.D.H. Bivar, "A dated Kuran from Bornu’", Nigeria Magazine, lxv (1960). The evidence for Fulfulde comes from a work by Muḥammad al-Wālī b. Sulaymān al-Fullānī (fl. 1688), whose al-Manhaj al-farīd is an Arabic version of some Fulfulde commentaries on the Ṣughrā of al-Sanūsī, a work on the Islamic creed.
Arabic by Nigerian scholars and others have been translated into Hausa. Sh. Gumi was responsible for some of these which appeared in bi-lingual versions from the government-run Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, which has published similar translations by others, and also books wholly in Arabic. Nupe was written in Arabic script in the nineteenth century, and Yoruba has been thus written in the present century.

Book production techniques have changed considerably in the twentieth century. The present trend towards printing direct from the author’s draft stands in sharp contrast to the older tradition of hand-writing and copying, though this tradition is by no means dead. Before the 1920s, when the Kano Native Authority (Emir’s) press was set up, all locally written works had been copied by scholars, aspiring students or professional scribes working within calligraphic traditions that stem from North Africa and Andalusia. In Bornu a hand that originated in Kufic hands of Ifriqiyya (roughly modern Tunisia) was the formal calligraphy for copies of the Qurʾān, and the art of Qurʾānic codex was one in which the Bornuans excelled. A variant of it was also the hand of Bornu court scribes, at least in the nineteenth century. On the other side of Nigeria, Sokoto hands of the early nineteenth century (a style Bivar has dubbed “jihādi”) appear related to sixteenth-century Timbuktu hands and in turn to Moroccan and Andalusian calligraphic styles.5

Both of these styles, and many that combine elements of the two, can be found represented in any collection of manuscripts of Nigerian origin. They can also be found in local book-style productions that I have referred to as “market editions”. These form a half-way house between the manuscript tradition and printing proper. They consist of reproductions (lithographic, photographic, xerographic, etc.) of manuscript copies penned especially for the purpose and often carefully checked, which are then reproduced in multiple copies, enclosed in a cover of colored paper bearing the title(s) and the name(s) of the author(s) and the sponsor(s) of the edition (and often also a

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photograph of the author), the whole then being stapled together along the spine and sold in the market place. The production of these market editions is sometimes undertaken by a professional printer (e.g. Oluṣeyi Press or Northern Maktabat Press, both in Kano, or Gaskiya Press in Zaria), while others seem to be more amateur productions without any acknowledgment of publishing responsibility.

The Native Authority Press, Kano, established in the 1920s, was the earliest Arabic printing press in Nigeria, but a few others followed. By 1936 there was an Arabic printing press in Abeokuta and one soon followed in Ibadan (Shukr Allāh Press), and later Sh. Ādam al-Ilūrī’s press at his Arabic Teaching Centre in Agege. At the present time most of the Arabic works written by the major scholars are directly published in one form or another. Writers take or send their manuscripts to publishers in Cairo or Beirut. In Cairo the popular presses have been those of the al-Halabi family, the press of al-Mash’had al-Husaynī and, for the Tijānīs, the press of the Tijānī zāwiya. In Beirut the publishing houses most patronized have been Dār al-ʿArabiyya and Dār al-Fikr.

The Arabic literature of Nigeria falls into a number of broad categories: research and teaching, polemical, devotional and “secular”. What may be called “research and teaching” or “academic” prose consists mainly of works of commentary and explication, treatments (often in verse) of disciplines or sub-disciplines, and “encyclopaedic” works. They belong mainly to the disciplines of jurisprudence, Qur’anic exegesis, Arabic grammar and biography. The jurisprudential literature generally deals with specific areas or problems (masā’il)—ritual purity (ṭahāra), worship (ṣalāt), inheritance (mirāṯ) and sales being the most common. However, al-Najīb b. Muḥammad of Anu Ṣamman (d. after 1596) wrote two complete commentaries on the Mukhtāṣar of Khalīl b. ʿIshāq, while ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Fodiye wrote an Alfiyya on the principles of jurisprudence. Topical problems have also been discussed. In the seventeenth century, for example, the lawfulness of tobacco was the subject of two treatises by Muḥammad al-Wālī b. Sulaymān al-Kashināwī (fl. 1688); in the mid-twentieth century the lawfulness of broadcasting recitation of the Qurʾān
was the subject of an exchange of views between the Senegalese Tijānī leader Sh. Ibrahīm Niasse of Kaolack (d. 1975) and the Emir of Zaria Ja‘far (reg. 1937-59). Qur’ānic exegesis rarely covers the whole of the Qur’ān, but tends to deal with short sūras, such as the Fātiha or Sūrat al-Ikhlās, the exceptions being ʿAbd Allāh b. Fodiye’s Diyyā’ al-ta‘wil, Abū Bakr Gumi’s work referred to above, and a published Hausa tafsīr by Nasiru Kabara (with an Arabic one “in press”). ʿAbd Allāh b. Fodiye also wrote two substantial works on the sciences of the Qur’ān, al-Miftāh li‘l-tafsīr and al-Farā’id al-jalīla. This same author also wrote two large verse works on Arabic grammar, al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ and al-Ḥiṣn al-raṣīn; in similar vein are al-Durar al-lawmī of al-Ṭāhir b. Ibrahīm al-Barnāwī (d. after 1745) and Murwū al-ṣadī, a verse treatment of the Lāmiyyat al-afāl of Ibn Mālik written in 1734 by a certain Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ.

Turning now to biography, Muḥammad Bello’s Infāq al-maysūr contains material on scholars before the 19th century and material on the author’s father Sh. ʿUthmān, though the bulk of it is a history of the state-building jihād movement in which Bello, his father and his brother ʿAbd Allāh were all major participants. Bello also wrote a large biographical/hagiographical work on four Sufi saints, Miftāḥ al-sadād, and one on pious Muslim women, al-Naṣīḥa al-wadī‘a, which was rendered in Fulfulde verse by Asmā‘ bt. Sh. ʿUthmān, and translated into Hausa. Post-jihād writers in the next two or three generations also wrote works of biography on the jihād leaders and their successors, and that tradition has been continued in the twentieth century by the present Wazir of Sokoto, Junayd. In the twentieth century Tijānī writers have written pious biographies of other Tijānīs, both individually and collectively. Prominent among such works are al-Fayd al-ḥāmi of Abū Bakr ʿAtīq of Kano (d. 1974) and the massive Kitāb al-istidhkār of Sh. Sharīf Ibrahīm Ṣāliḥ of Maiduguri, which constitutes the richest source of Sufi and scholarly biography for the region to date.6

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6 The first volume of his work is currently in press in Cairo.
Works that fall into the teaching category embrace both those aimed at the advanced student—including the fellow scholar—and those aimed at the beginner. Early on, textbooks were written which have remained in use down to recent times: *Mazjarat al-fityān*, a homilectic poem by Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh of Katsina; *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, a versification by Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Barnāwī (d. 1755) of al-Akhḍārī’s work on religious duties, and his *Shurb al-zulāl* on the lawful and unlawful (*al-ḥalāl waʾl-ḥarām*); *Sullam al-ṭullāb* on Arabic grammar by Sulaymān b. Muhammad al-Wālī al-Kashināwī (fl. 1730), and his *al-Manhaj al-farīd*, a text-book on *tawḥīd*.

The writers of the *jihād* naturally produced a great many works that are of a didactic nature, and often, too, ones that are subtly or not so subtly apologetic. Sh. ʿUthmān’s writing ranges from basic introductions to topics, such as his *Uṣūl al-ḥādīn* or *Ulūm al-muʿāmala*, to erudite treatises such his *Bayān wujūb al-hijra ʿalā ʾl-ʿibād*, a manual of *jihād* and the administration of an Islamic state, or his major works on observance of the Prophetic Sunna, *Bayān al-bidaʿ al-shayṭāniyya* and *Iḥyāʾ al-sunna*. His brother ʿAbd Allāh also wrote manuals of government such as *Diyāʾ al-ḥukkām* and *Diyāʾ al-siyāsāt*, while Muhammad Bello penned no less than three epistles of administrative theory for the Emir of Bauchi, Yaʿqūb.

The Islamic teaching tradition is a strong one in Nigeria and the need for texts for students was always great. Importing manuscript copies from North Africa or Egypt was expensive, though sometimes scholars would make copies of books when they stopped in Cairo and other cities en route to or from Mecca. The less expensive option was generally to copy them locally, even though paper carried across the Sahara was itself not cheap. Evidently responding to local needs, teachers then made summaries of certain of these external texts, or worked material from several texts into a new work; they also versified some of them, using the didactic meter (*al-rajaz*), or made their own verse treatments of certain subjects to facilitate rote learning. These versifications were sometimes amplified in commentaries by later generations.

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7 The first volume of his work is currently in press in Cairo.
While a not inconsiderable portion of the literature produced by the *jihād* leaders was polemical—not least the literature accusing the Hausa rulers of sliding into “unbelief”—the most virulent polemical literature has been produced in the twentieth century, either among Şüfis or between Şüfis and their opponents. First, there was the dispute among the Madabo and Salga Tijānī scholars of Kano over funeral rites and the holding of memorial gatherings, which began in the 1930s and continued into the 1950s. Then in the 1950s and 1960s the Tijānī practice of clasping the hands one over the other across the lower chest during worship (a position called *qabd*) aroused the ire of Qādirīs (and others) who considered it contrary to the Sunna.\(^8\)

Much of Tijānī literature in Nigeria is polemical and is concerned with defending the doctrines of the *ṭariqa*, its founder Sh. Ahmad al-Tijānī and its chief West African exponent Sh. Ibrāhīm Niass against accusations of unorthodoxy, first by the Qādirīs and later (since the 1970s) by those espousing the austere Sunnism associated with the Wahhābīs.\(^9\) Defence of the Tijānī shaykhs also takes the form of extravagant praise for them, and West African Tijānī literature is replete with poems in praise of the *ṭariqa*’s leaders. Literature extolling the Qādiriyya and its founding saint ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī has been a feature of local Şūfi writing since the days of Sh. ʿUthmān b. Fodiye and Muḥammad Bello, both of whom wrote in this vein. In the modern period the field has been left almost exclusively to Sh. Nasiru Kabara of Kano (b. 1925) who has written more than a hundred works on aspects of the *ṭariqa*’s history and practices including many long mystical poems, some of which are included in his *Subuḥāt al-anwār*. Nasiru Kabara also played a role in the Qādiriyya-Tijānīyya dispute over the position of the arms in prayer, and in a parallel

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\(^8\) In fact it is the practice of all the Sunni law-schools except the Mālikīs, who let the arms hang by the side (*sadl*).

\(^9\) E.g. Sh. Abū Bakr Gumi and those who belong to the so-called *Izāla* movement (*Izālat al-bidʿa wa-iqāmat al-sunna*—“Eradication of Innovation and Revival of the Sunna”)
dispute over whether one could leave one ṭarīqa for another. Inter-ṭarīqa disputes were set aside in the 1970s when Abū Bakr Gumi launched his general attack on ṭarīqas. The Ḍarūrī Nasiru Kabara was in the forefront of the Sūfī defense with his Qam‘ al-fasād, while Tijānīs such as Sh. Sharīf Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ have added powerful voices in defence of Sufism.

A not inconsiderable portion of the Arabic writings of this region falls under the broad heading of devotional and pietist literature. First, there was a constant emphasis on proper observation of Islamic commands and prohibitions—the “commanding of good and the forbidding of evil” (al-amr bi‘l-ma‘rif wa‘l-nahy ‘an al-munkar)—and the scrupulous emulation of the Prophet through his sunna. The way to salvation was considered to be through right conduct, in both ritual and social acts, as well as in moral conduct—avoidance of lying, back-biting, hypocrisy, jealousy, and practice of such virtues as generosity, forbearance, humility, asceticism, etc. Such themes can be found in this literature in almost every time and place, and are given expression most frequently through verse compositions: Muḥammad Mūdī al-Fullānī of Katsina (fl. 1772) wrote 210 verses on the avoidance of moral vices with the title Šarf al-‘inān ‘an ṭarīq al-nīrān; Asmā’ bt. Sh. Uthmān (d. 1864) wrote Tanbih al-ghāfīlin, a verse work on acts leading to salvation; ′Abd Allāh b. Fodiye wrote Sabīl al-najāt (“The Path of Salvation”), and nearly a century later Muhammad Jum‘a Alabi wrote his poem Subul al-najāt in imitation of it. ′Abd Allāh wrote several ascetic works in prose, among them Mātiyyat al-zād ilā ‘l-ma‘ād, as did Muḥammad Bello whose Jalā‘ al-ṣamam on “spiritual sicknesses” and his Jalā‘ al-ṣudūr on the transitoriness of the world may be taken as typical examples of the genre.

Another avenue for expressing personal piety, while creating a work of a devotional nature for the community was the writing of poems in praise of the Prophet and the “treatment” of some of the classic works of this genre. Poems extolling the Prophet’s virtues and reminding Muslims of the model he provides for them, such as the ‘Ishrīnīyyāt of al-Fāzāzī, or the Burda of al-Būšīrī, or the more “secular” praises of Ka‘b b. Zuhayr’s “Bānāt Su‘ād” are studied, recited and imitated. They

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are also elaborated in the takhmîs form and commented upon. In the same category we may include poems in praise of Sî Ahmad al-Tijānî, both in Arabic and Hausa, as well as praises of other Şûfî figures. Indeed, there is a rich parallel pietist literature in verse in both Hausa and Fulfulde which is as yet little studied.10

The last category is what I have termed “secular” writing, not because it is in any sense neutral towards the discourse of religion, but because the disciplines treated in this literature do not belong to the traditional religious sciences of Islam. The disciplines concerned are the physical and mathematical sciences, logic and history.11 In the sciences, while there is a little writing on mathematical calculation, especially as it relates to horology (‘ilm al-mawāwqît), and a few works of astronomy/astrology, there has been more interest in, and knowledge about, medicine. The earliest work in this category is a small work on hemorrhoids by al-Tâhir b. Ibrâhîm al-Fallâhî of Bornu (fl. 1745), and others on this topic were written by Muhammad Bello, who also wrote on the treatment of intestinal worms and on the use of senna as a purgative. He also wrote a treatise on diseases of the eye, Maṣūḥ al-lujâyyn, and two works on Prophetic medicine (ṭibb nabawî), in which field al-Ḥasan, another son of Sh. ʿUthmân, as well as a grandson, ʿUmar b. Muhammad al-Bukhārî, and a great-grandson, Ḥayân b. Saʿîd, also wrote.

If we disregard—as I think we must—claims for the antiquity of composition of such anonymous histories and king-lists as the “Kano Chronicle”, then the earliest example of chronicle dates to the 1570s when the Chief Imam Ahmad b. Furṭuwa wrote histories of the first twelve years of the reign of his patron Mai Idrîs Alômâ of Bornu (reg. c. 1564-96) and of his campaigns in Kanem, though he claims that the inspiration

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10 But see Hiskett (1975).
11 Arabic grammar and stylistics might also be included. However, despite their apparently “secular” nature, they are, because of the sacred nature of the Qurʾān—the touchstone of grammatical correctness and stylistic perfection—part of the formal Islamic teaching curriculum.
for this latter work was an earlier chronicle about the Kanem campaigns of Mai Idris Katakamarbe (reg. c. 1497-1519). Battle victories were also celebrated by ‘Abd Allāh b. Fodiye in his Tazyīn al-warāqāt, written in 1813, using the vehicle of his occasional poems to create a framework for his account of the jihād. His nephew Muḥammad Bello, under the guise of a general history of “Takrūr” gave a detailed account of the jihād in his Infaq al-maysūr (1812), while Bello’s own nephew, ʿAbd al-Qādir wrote a short history that traced briefly earlier kingdoms of the regions, chronicled eighteenth century Gobir, and gave annals of the jihād down to 1824. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many accounts were written of the jihād and of the reigns of the successive rulers of the Sokoto Caliphate, the fullest being the Dabīt al-multaqaṭāt of the Wazir Junayd which has been translated into Hausa under the title Tarihin Fulani. Local histories have also been written. Kano has been especially fortunate, but many other states and peoples have had their chroniclers. In recent times there have been more ambitious historical projects. Ādam ʿAbd Allāh al-Ilūrī wrote both a history of the Yoruba and a history of Nigeria, while Sh. Sharīf Ibrāhīm Ģālī has published a history of the Kanem-Bornu empire.

It is, of course, impossible to make useful generalisations about the Arabic writing of Central Sudanic Africa. The use of Arabic as a literary and scholarly language has a historical depth of more than seven centuries and shows no sign of diminishing. Recent years have witnessed a revived interest in Arabic education from the Primary through the university level, while increased contact with Arab countries has exposed younger scholars to new forms and styles. While the old categories of Islamic knowledge (fiqh, tawḥīd, hadīth, taṣawwuf, etc.) will not disappear, there is likely to be more writing which is discursive in nature rather than closely bound to texts of the past. New themes reflecting contemporary problems will be broached. Already in the last years of his life Ādam ʿAbd Allāh al-Ilūrī was writing on such subjects as

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12 See Chapter 15.
“Islam and the Challenges of the Fifteenth Century of the Hijra”\textsuperscript{13} and “Human Rights in Divine Dispensations and in the Laws of the Age”\textsuperscript{14}. Muslims may also choose to express themselves on religious matters increasingly in their mother tongues, especially in Hausa and Yoruba, while some are already writing books in English or French. Any attempt to describe or document Islamic literature in this part of Africa in future will certainly have to take account of these trends.