

Nana Asma'u: A Model for the Contemporary Nigerian Sufi Women Scholars

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Abstract

Nigeria has continued to produce many women who are recognized as great scholars. One of such women was Nana Asma'u (d. 1864), the daughter of Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817). She was a Sufi woman scholar of Qādiriyyah order, who lived a life of emulation in many respects. She had a remarkable influence on the people of her age, rather her impact on different aspects of human life continued to be felt in society. This article examines her life and her contribution to the sociopolitical, economic, and educational progress of her people. The objective of the research is to draw attention to the life achievements of this Sufi sage with the hope that the present Nigerian Muslim women especially the Sufis will seek guidance from her. The study is based on the interpretative approach in line with the disciplines of history and Sufism. It concludes that Nana Asma'u used her knowledge and Sufi inclination to better the lots of her society by establishing welfare projects, which made her influence last to the present age and that the Sufi scholars especially the women scholars can emulate her and make Sufism attractive by not restricting their activities to the rituals alone.

Keywords

Nana Asma'u, Qādiriyyah, Sufi order, Usman dan Fodio, women Sufi scholars, *Yan Taru*.

Introduction

Sufis have been recognized as one of the instrumental factors for the penetration and understanding of Islam in the north and west African countries. Other factors include the itinerant scholars who preached Islam in the region, Muslim community leaders, and Muslim merchants

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who took their goods across the region.¹ Of all the main Sufi orders in the region, Qādiriyyah and Tījāniyyah are more prominent. The Qādiriyyah is the oldest Sufi order in Nigeria. It was founded by the renowned Sufi master ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166 CE) in Baghdad. It then spread to other parts of the Muslim world, including Nigeria.² The major focus of the order is on training its adherents in Islamic law, sciences, and mysticism.³ The other main Sufi order in the region is Tījāniyyah. It was founded by Aḥmad al-Tījānī (d. 1815) in Fes and was widely accepted immediately after its inauguration.⁴ Certain scholars played an important role in spreading Sufism in the region. They include Madabo Ward, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī,⁵ and ‘Umar b. Sa‘īd al-Fūtī (d. 1864), among others.⁶

The Qādiriyyah and Tījāniyyah Sufi orders produced many women scholars and Sufi masters who contributed to the progress of Islam in African lands and had a positive impact on society. They included Qādiriyyah women scholars like Khadījah (d. ca. 1750), a native of Northern Senegal and a teacher of the renowned *mujāhid* of Futa-Toro ‘Abd al-Qādir, Aishah Kunta of Timbuktu, and Sayyidah Fāṭimah bint Aḥmad.⁷ The Sufi scholars of the Tījāniyyah order include Sayyidah Khadījah al-Qāri’ah and Sayyidah Sakīnah among many others.

As for the Sufi women scholars of Nigeria, one can mention the mother of Usman dan Fodio, Hauwa’u bint Muḥammad, his paternal grandmother Maryam, and his maternal grandmother Sayyidah Ruqayyah.⁸ Another Sufi woman scholar was Umm Hāni’ who predicted

¹ Ādam ‘Abd Allāh al-Ilūrī, *al-Islām fī Nayjīriyā wa ’l-Shaykh ‘Uthmān bin Fūdīw al-Fulānī* (Cairo: n.p., 1381/1971), 39-40.

² Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 11.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ ‘Abdurrahman I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1984), 219.

⁵ Al-Ilūrī, *al-Islām fī Nayjīriyā*, 43.

⁶ Yasir Anjola Quadri, “An Examination of the Emergence of Tijaniyyah in Nigeria,” *Journal of the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (1983): 76.

⁷ Jean Boyd and Beverly B. Mack, *The Collected Works of Nana Asma’u, Daughter of Usman dan Fodiyo (1793-1864)* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publishers, 1999), 3.

⁸ Sa’adiya Omar, “Women and Scholarship: Brief Account of Key Women Scholars of the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria,” in *Religion and Human Capital Development: Essays in Honour of Prof. Yasir Anjola Quadri*, ed. Yahya Oyewole Imam et al (Ilorin: Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2017), 246. Also see A. F. Ahmed, “Notes on Some Arabic Verses of Hausaland Composed between 1680 and 1730,” *al-Fikr* 11, no 1 (1984): 41.

the birth of Usman dan Fodio.⁹ In Degel, there was a renowned Sufi woman scholar called Sayyidah Āminah bint Muḥammad.¹⁰

In addition to the above-mentioned women scholars, many other women imparted knowledge to their womenfolk and children. They included Usman dan Fodio's wives such as Maymūnah (the mother of Asma'u), 'Ā'ishah bint Gabdo known as Iyya Garka, and Ḥawwā' bint Ādam known as Inna Garka.¹¹ One can also mention the daughters of the Usman dan Fodio such as Khadījah (b. 1783), Fāṭimah (b. 1787) Ḥafṣah (b. 1789), Nana Asma'u (d. 1864), Ṣafiyyah (b. 1803), and Maryam (b. 1810).¹² These daughters of Usman dan Fodio were famous scholars who authored many works on different branches of knowledge such as law, medicine, politics, and theology among many others.¹³ The present study focuses on the life and works of Nana Asma'u bint Usman dan Fodio. She was a reformer, a sage, and a Sufi woman scholar who greatly contributed to the religious, social, and educational progress of her community.

The Qādiriyyah Sufi Order and Sokoto Caliphate

Sokoto caliphate was a Muslim empire founded by Usman dan Fodio in present-day Northern Nigeria in the early nineteenth century (i.e., 1809)¹⁴ and its impact was felt throughout west Africa. It was perceived as the largest pre-colonial entity in Africa. Its objective was to establish a society based on the universal concept of justice, devoid of rancour, chaos, and pagan religious practices.¹⁵ It lasted for about one century and came to an end in 1903 during the reign of Muhammadu Attahiru I (r. 1902-1903) whom the British overthrew.¹⁶

Qādiriyyah is the oldest Sufi order in Nigeria as it preceded other Sufi orders. However, it is difficult to fix the exact date of its advent. This is because of the controversy about the personalities who spread the

⁹ I. A. B. Balogun, *The Life and Works of 'Uthman Dan Fodio* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1981), 27. Also see Omar, "Women and Scholarship," 246.

¹⁰ A. F. Ahmed, "The Dominance of Qadiriyyah Order in Sokoto Caliphate," *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies* 9 (1992): 7.

¹¹ Omar, "Women and Scholarship," 246.

¹² Jean Boyd, "The Role of Women Scholars in the Sokoto Caliphate," A seminar paper presented at the Department of Islamic Studies, Bayero University, Kano, 1984, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, rev. ed. (London: EPP Books Services, n.d.): 433. Also see Balogun, *'Uthman Dan Fodio*, 1.

¹⁵ Omar, "Women and Scholarship," 246.

¹⁶ Chinedu N. Ubah, *Islam in African History* (Kaduna: Baraka Press, 2001), 210.

Qādiriyyah Sufi order in the country. For instance, A. F. Ahmed opines that the Qādiriyyah order reached Bornu between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE.¹⁷ ‘Abdurrahman Doi views that ‘Umar al-Kuntī (d. 1553) contributed immensely to the spread of Qādiriyyah order in western Sudan including Hausaland.¹⁸ Ādam ‘Abd Allāh al-Ilūrī holds that Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī of Tilmisan (d. 1504) was the first Sufi master who spread the Qādiriyyah order in western Sudan.¹⁹ Moreover, some scholars opine that the Qādiriyyah order reached Kano by 1400s CE through the efforts of Faṭḥ Allāh al-Qayrawānī.²⁰ In the presence of such a difference of opinion, it is difficult to determine the exact date when the Qādiriyyah order entered Nigeria. Notwithstanding this, the Qādiriyyah Sufism existed in the Sokoto region well before Usman dan Fodio came to power.²¹

Usman dan Fodio was born in 1754 in a family famous for its scholarship and piety. He was a descendant of Mūsā Jukūlū, who migrated from Futa Toro and settled in Hausaland.²² Usman dan Fodio studied under many venerable scholars of his time such as ‘Uthmān Bindūr al-Kabawī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥamdā, Muḥammad b. Rājī, Jibrīl b. ‘Umar, etc.²³ The influence of Jibrīl b. ‘Umar on Usman dan Fodio cannot be overemphasized. Jibrīl b. ‘Umar was the first person who pledged allegiance to Usman dan Fodio.²⁴ Jibrīl b. ‘Umar had previously been preaching reform to Muslims in Hausaland, an action that infuriated Sultan Bawa of Gobir, who expelled him from his region.²⁵ Thus, one can safely assume that Usman dan Fodio’s *jihād* movement was influenced by the efforts of his teacher Jibrīl b. ‘Umar. Usman dan Fodio was also influenced by another teacher and eminent scholar Muḥammad b. Rājī

¹⁷ A. F. Ahmed, “The Spread of Qadiriyyah in Bornu and Hausaland before the Fulani Jihad,” *Journal of the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 13, nos. 1-4 (1983-87): 7.

¹⁸ Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, 218.

¹⁹ Al-Ilūrī, *al-Islām fī Nayjīriyā*, 43

²⁰ Ahmad Sharif al-Haddad Bakin Ruwa, “al-Ṭarīqah al-Qādiriyyah wa Iqāmat Mawkibihā fī Kānū” (B.A. long essay, Department of Islamic Studies, Bayero University Kano, 1982), 25.

²¹ Ibid. Also see M. A. Al-Hajj, “The Meaning of the Sokoto Jihad,” in *Studies in the History of the Sokoto Caliphate: The Sokoto Seminar Papers*, ed. Yusufu Bala Usman (Zaria: Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University for the Sokoto State History Bureau, 1979), 8.

²² Ahmad Muhammad Kani, *The Intellectual Origin of Sokoto Jihad* (Ibadan: IMAN publications, 1985), 29.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Balogun, *‘Uthman Dan Fodio*, 29.

²⁵ Ibid., 30.

under whom he studied the science of *hadīth*,²⁶ which was reflected in his life and his most celebrated work²⁷ *Ihyā' al-Sunnah*.²⁸

Before the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate, the masses were exploited by the regional rulers with the support of many 'ulamā' (scholars). When the rulers imposed un-Islamic taxes such as cattle tax on the masses, the scholars justified these actions.²⁹ Usman dan Fodio led a revolution, which eventually resulted in the establishment of a community of Muslims known as the Sokoto caliphate. He succeeded in establishing the caliphate thanks to the support he received from his lieutenants like his brother Abdullah dan Fodio (d. 1828) and his son Muhammad Bello (d. 1837) among many others. Each of his lieutenants made individual efforts to establish and sustain the caliphate.³⁰ While preaching in different towns and cities of the Sokoto territory, Usman dan Fodio moulded and shaped the lives of his disciples by giving them spiritual training in Sufism,³¹ especially the Qādiriyyah Sufi order. Notable among his trainees were his brother Abdullah dan Fodio, his sons Muhammad Bello, Muhammad Sambo, and other members of his family i.e., wives and daughters.³² He died in 1817. Due to his efforts, the Qādiriyyah Sufi order gained prominence among his followers. In sum, he trained all members of his family in Sufism.³³ One of such family members was Nana Asma'u.

Nana Asma'u: A Biographical Sketch

Nana Asma'u was born in Degel in 1793 and was one of the thirty-six children of Usman dan Fodio.³⁴ She was the twin sister of her brother

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ 'Uthman dan Fodio, *Handbook on Islam*, trans. Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley (London: Diwan Press, 1980), 2.

²⁸ 'Uthmān b. Fūdī, *Ihyā' al-Sunnah wa Ikḥmād al-Bid'ah*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Al-Ḥājj 'Abd Allāh al-Yassār, n.d.).

²⁹ Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 98-99.

³⁰ Kani, *Intellectual Origin of Sokoto Jihad*, 32.

³¹ Bello Omar, "Muhammad Bello's Ideal of Criminal and Political Justice," in *Islamic Law in Nigeria: Application and Teaching*, ed. Syed Khalid Rashid (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1986), 31.

³² Yasir Anjola Quadri, "The Trend of Sufism among Sokoto Jihad Leaders," *al-Fikr* 1, no. 1 (1980): 57.

³³ Usman Aliyu Shagari and Jean Boyd, *Uthman Dan Fodio: The Theory and Practice of His Leadership* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1978), 17-18.

³⁴ Muhammad Dangana "The Intellectual Contribution of Nana Asma'u to Women Education," in *Proceedings of the Conference on the "Impact of the Ulama in the Central Al-Sudan"*, ed. Abubakar Mustapha and Abubakar Garba (Maiduguri: Center for Trans-Sahara Studies, University of Maiduguri, 1981), 208.

Ḥasan. Her father decided to name her Asma'u, a departure from the common tradition among the people of his community in naming twin children Ḥasan and Ḥusayn or Ḥasanah and Ḥusaynah and so on. He might have foreseen the role she would play in her future life. Therefore, he was determined to name her after Asmā' (d. 692 CE), the daughter of the first caliph Abū Bakr (r. 632–634 CE), hoping that she would greatly serve Islam like the first Asmā'.³⁵

Nana Asma'u lost her mother Maymūnah (d. 1795) two years after her birth. She was brought up by her step-mothers 'Ā'ishah commonly known as Gaddo and Ḥawwā' bint Ādam known as Inna Garka, the mother of Muhammad Bello.³⁶ Like other Muslim children, Nana Asma'u commenced her education with the study of the Qur'ān, which she memorized at an early age under the supervision of her father. Belonging to a religious family which attached great importance to the acquisition of knowledge and learning motivated her to seek further knowledge of Islamic law, Arabic grammar, literature, and logic.³⁷ In addition to her father, she studied under her elder brother Muhammad Bello and her sister Khadījah. She was also taught by her step-mothers such as 'Ā'ishah and Ḥawwā' before she was married to Usman Gidado dan Laima (d. 1848) from whom she also acquired knowledge. Nana Asma'u's enthusiasm for learning made her be in the constant company of her father and attend almost all classes taken by him.³⁸

In 1807, Nana Asma'u was married to Usman Gidado dan Laima at the age of fourteen. Usman Gidado dan Laima was a bosom friend to her elder brother Muhammad Bello. It was in the same year that she started her teaching career. She started teaching the women and children of her household and locality.³⁹ Later the number of her students constantly increased as women from the surrounding villages like Wamako, Wurno, Hama'ali, Gwadabawa joined her study circle.⁴⁰

Nana Asma'u gave birth to her first child 'Abd al-Qādir in 1810. Her other four sons Aḥmad, 'Uthmān, Abdullahi Bayero, and Muhammad Laima were born in 1820, 1829, 1832, and 1834 respectively.⁴¹ In April 1817, her father Usman dan Fodio and her twin brother Ḥasan died. Nana Asma'u and her husband Usman Gidado dan Laima compiled various

³⁵ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11; Omar, "Women and Scholarship," 248.

³⁷ Dangana, "Intellectual Contribution of Nana Asma'u," 208.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 11.

⁴¹ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 11.

works of Usman dan Fodio. She also translated some of her father's works from Fula into Hausa.⁴² Her husband died in 1848 while she died in 1864.

Selected Works of Nana Asma'u

Nana Asma'u was a prolific writer. A total sum of sixty-six works is credited to her. She wrote on different aspects of Arabic and Islamic studies. She wrote mainly in Arabic, Fula, and Hausa. Some of her works include the following:

1. *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*: This work is considered her maiden work, which she wrote in Arabic in her twenties. It is on the moral ethics of Islam focusing on Sufism.
2. *Sunnore Abdullahi*: She wrote this eulogy to express her grief and sadness over the death of her uncle Abdullah dan Fodio. It is in the Fula language.
3. *Tabbat Hakika*: This was originally written by Usman dan Fodio in Fula in 1812. The objective of the work was to educate the public about their duties and responsibilities. Later, Nana Asma'u translated it into Hausa in 1832.
4. *Tabshīr al-Ikhwān bi 'l-Tawassul bi Suwar al-Qur'ān*: It is on Prophetic medicine.
5. *Marthiyat 'Ā'ishah bint 'Umar*: It is an elegy that she wrote on the death of 'Ā'ishah bint 'Umar.
6. *Rasā'il*: This is a compilation of epistles written on different aspects of Islam.
7. *Qaṣīdah min Asmā' ilā Mu'allim Aḥmad al-Mūrītānī*: It is an ode, which she composed to welcome the Mauritanian scholar Mu'allim Aḥmad to Hausaland.
8. *Gawakuke Farnzaida*: It was written on the victory of Gawakuke in the Fula language.
9. *Godaben Gaskiya*: It is a piece of work written in the Hausa language about the search for truth.
10. *Alhinin Mutuwa Madibo Dan Ali*: It is an elegy, written by Nana Asma'u on the death of Madibo dan Ali in the Hausa language.
11. *Tawaslili ga mata Masu Albarka/Tindinore labne*: (Sufi women) written in the Hausa and Fulfa languages respectively to intercede with certain women whom she described as women of divine grace.

Most of the works credited to Nana Asma'u have been compiled by Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack in a book titled *The Collected Works of Nana Asma'u, Daughter of Usman dan Fodiyo 1793-1864*.

⁴² Ibid., 316-17.

Nana Asma'u as a Sufi Master

Nana Asma'u like many other writers has been categorized variously based on her writings. For instance, she was perceived by some scholars as a Sufi woman scholar.⁴³ Some others viewed her as a political thinker.⁴⁴ These categorizations were based on the individual assessments of her works. Her Sufi background is reflected in her works. Apart from the fact that she belonged to the family of Usman dan Fodio, she was a great Sufi master in her own right as is evident in her works. She authored a book *Tindinore* in the Fula language, in which she discussed the lives and works of those women whom she described as pious ladies. In another Sufi work titled *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*, she briefly discussed the guiding rules for Muslims generally and Sufis particularly.⁴⁵

Through her works and teachings, Nana Asma'u exhibited her inclination towards Sufism, especially towards the Qādiriyyah order. An example of this is her work titled *Sonnore Mo'Inna*, which is an elegy written by Nana Asma'u for her sister Fāṭimah. In this elegy, she likened Usman dan Fodio to 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (d. 1166 CE), the founder of the Qādiriyyah Sufi order⁴⁶ whom she portrayed as a saint who would intercede with God for Muslims on the Day of Judgement. She also drew a parallel between the life, character, and career of Usman dan Fodio and those of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him).⁴⁷ Thus, one may argue that Nana Asma'u is recognized as a Sufi woman scholar. Yet her inclination towards Sufism did not make her ignore Islamic law.⁴⁸ Hence, she can be described as a Sufi-cum-scholar.⁴⁹

The Role of Nana Asma'u in Society

Nana Asma'u realized that she had been given a role to play in improving and advancing her society. She, therefore, adopted multifarious methods in fulfilling her responsibilities.

The first method she adopted for the betterment of society was to establish education centres, where she started teaching. The teaching was not limited to the dissemination of Sufi doctrines; rather, it also

⁴³ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁴ Ahmed, "Dominance of Qadiriyyah," 7.

⁴⁵ Quadri "Trend of Sufism," 57.

⁴⁶ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 316-17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 254.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 3.

included the debates of Islamic law.⁵⁰ Her students became trained teachers, who took the responsibility of widening the sphere of education. She trained innumerable students. Some sources mentioned the prominent of them.⁵¹

The teaching circle of Nana Asma'u was female-oriented. Usually, only women attended the classes. She organized them to take lessons in groups from different territorial areas. The common name given to this educational circle was the *Yan Taru*,⁵² which is described as a method of education, which Nana Asma'u adopted to disseminate women's education following her father.⁵³ She initiated the plan in 1840 with students coming from villages and towns in the Sokoto area.⁵⁴ The *Yan Taru* had a structure. Nana Asma'u was its overall head and called *Uwar Gari* (mother of all).⁵⁵ The group leaders were known as *jaji* and were chosen based on maturity, learning, intelligence, and reliable character.⁵⁶ Each group from a village had its own *jaji*. Every *jaji* was given a hat (*melfa*) as a symbol of authority. This educational system was sustained by the gifts and contributions made by the members of the *Yan Taru*.⁵⁷

The course contents of the *Yan Taru* included teachings of Islamic rituals and the knowledge of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* (permissible and prohibited) acts. As a result of its impact on society, non-Islamic traditions such as *bori* (pre-Islamic traditional spirit possession cult in Hausaland) and heretical dancing were discontinued in the houses of Nana Asma'u's students. Rather, they influenced others and eventually became agents of Islamic reform.⁵⁸ The *Yan Taru* resolved to teach fellow women who could not attend the classes. Consequently, the influence of Nana Asma'u spread to many places in Hausaland.

Another method adopted by Nana Asma'u to expand her influence in society was through her writings. A total number of sixty-six works of multiple themes are credited to her, which were written in three languages. Another method adopted by Nana Asma'u for the betterment of society was her political desire to involve in social activities

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4, 7.

⁵¹ Dangana, "Intellectual Contribution of Nana Asma'u," 209.

⁵² Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 223-24.

⁵³ Dangana, "Intellectual Contribution of Nana Asma'u," 210.

⁵⁴ Omar, "Women and Scholarship," 249.

⁵⁵ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 9.

⁵⁶ Dangana, "Intellectual Contribution of Nana Asma'u," 210.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Boyd, "Role of Women Scholars in the Sokoto Caliphate," 3.

practically such as her ability to mediate disagreements of the people.⁵⁹ she also served her community by working for its interests through various means such as engaging herself in the distribution of food and clothes among the needy, helping the widows and orphans, organizing food supplies for the army, educating women, and improving on their status.⁶⁰ Thus, one can safely hold that Nana Asma'u was a woman of substance from whom the later generations of Muslim women, in general, and Sufi women, in particular, learnt much and took her as a model.

Nana Asma'u and the Contemporary Sufi Women

In present-day Nigeria, many Sufi women scholars are committed to spiritual activities. One can hardly see them missing their spiritual rituals like recitation of the litanies. Due to their commitment to spiritual activities, they may be perceived to have restricted Sufism to the recitation of litanies alone, whereas the scope of Sufism is much wider. Nana Asma'u played many roles, a teacher of women, a Sufi master, a daughter of Usman dan Fodio, a sister of the caliph, a wife of the vizier, yet she combined religiosity with a commitment to the social welfare of her community. She was an effective teacher and a leader of women educators. This eventually made her have great authority and respect in society.⁶¹ Given this, an Islamic scholar Shehu Umar Abdullahi summarized the life activities of Nana Asma'u as follows:

Nana Asma'u embarked upon what may today be termed as political philanthropic activities which had tremendously mobilized women in the North. She planned out the distribution of clothes and foodstuffs to the destitute and needy. She also conducted a mass literacy campaign as well as helped the orphans and widows.⁶²

Boyd and Mack observe that Nana Asma'u understood her role to be that of a teacher of the *sunnah* and that she was not hesitant to promote the well-being of her community.⁶³

Therefore, contemporary Nigerian Muslim women and Sufi women scholars should not limit themselves to the rituals of their Sufi orders. Rather, they should also consider working for the social welfare of their

⁵⁹ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 9.

⁶⁰ Boyd, "Role of Women Scholars in the Sokoto Caliphate," 2.

⁶¹ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 6.

⁶² Shehu Umar Abdullahi, *On the Search for Viable Political Culture: Reflections on the Political Thought of Shaikh 'Abdullāhi Dan-Fodio* (Kaduna: New Nigerian Newspaper, 1984), 9.

⁶³ Boyd and Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u*, 8.

community, which is another form of seeking the favour of God and a means of securing His grace and blessing.

Conclusion

The article studied the two major Sufi orders in Nigeria (i.e., Qādiriyyah and Tījāniyyah) and the role that women scholars of these Sufi orders played in society. It also discussed the life and works of Nana Asma'u and her contribution to the well-being of her community through teaching, writing, and establishing the *Yan Taru*, an educational organization through which she disseminated knowledge in her community. The contemporary Sufi women scholars should study the life and works of Nana Asma'u to learn from her and emulate her good character. It is hoped that this will lead to the construction of a peaceful society. The academia should also study the lives and activities of other past women scholars to discover their political, social, educational, and religious achievements and highlight their impact on their societies.

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