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(Editors)

Global Sufism
Boundaries, Structures, and Politics



HURST & COMPANY, LONDON

First published in the United Kingdom in 2019 by
 C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.,
 41 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3PL
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Distributed in the United States, Canada and Latin America by
 Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016,
 United States of America.

A Cataloguing-in-Publication data record for this book
 is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 9781787381346

This book is printed using paper from registered sustainable
 and managed sources.

www.hurstpublishers.com

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AFROPOLITAN SUFISM

THE CONTEMPORARY TIJANIYYA IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Zachary Wright

The Moroccan government, under the leadership of Islamic Affairs Minister Ahmad Tawfiq, convened in 2007 a conference of leading scholars of the Tijaniyya from all parts of the world. Delegations converged on Fez, the 'zāwiya mère' of the Tijaniyya where Ahmad al-Tijani (1737–1815) is buried, from West and North Africa, South Africa, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Egypt, Palestine, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Europe, and America. Delivering the keynote address, Hasan Cissé (d. 2008, Senegal), concluded:

The historian Amir Shakib Arsalan wrote about the nineteenth century, 'Had the Tijani armies not been defeated by the end of the nineteenth century, the whole of Africa would have become part of a Tijani empire'. But despite this defeat, and despite its rejecters and enemies, the *tariqa* has continued to spread, finding its way to every corner of the world. Indeed, through its Ahmadian, Muhammadan teachings, the *tariqa* has penetrated the hearts of people from all races and nations... today we bear witness that the *tariqa* has indeed reached every corner of the world.¹

While representatives from around the world substantiated the Imam's observation, undoubtedly the most renowned conference participants were the high-ranking West African Islamic scholars (headed by Cissé himself) from Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Mauritania. In this regard, the contemporary Tijaniyya is unique among the world's Sufi orders. Its reach is no less global than older orders like the Qadiriyya, Shadhiliyya, or Naqshbandiyya, but its scholarly leadership is projected around the world from its learning centres in West Africa. Hasan Cissé's successor to the Imamate of the Tijani community of Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975, Senegal), Sheikh Tijani b. 'Ali Cissé, has been ranked the thirteenth most influential Muslim in the world.² He appears to be both the highest-ranking Sufi and most influential black African scholar on the list.

The global resonance of the Tijaniyya under the leadership of black African scholars is a narrative that confounds Orientalist and colonial understandings of inherent racial hierarchies within the Muslim world. It is also a narrative that pushes against the subtle marginalisation of African Muslim identities in Islamic Studies today. As observed in a study of the Tijaniyya in Turkey, 'With hardly any exceptions, the general introductions to the history of Sufism and Sufi orders present the Tijaniyya as a typically "African" tariqa.'³ The characterisation 'typically African' means that the Tijaniyya is thought to be circumscribed within black Africa, and somehow disconnected from global Islamic orthodox scholarship. Despite evidence to the contrary, Trimingham's formative study, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, thus suggests, 'Outside Africa Tijani allegiance was negligible'. And whatever longstanding Tijani emphasis on spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and training (*tarbiya*) evidenced in primary sources, Trimingham believed the order had somehow failed to live up to the ideals of earlier Sufi affiliation: 'anyone prepared to propagate [the Tijaniyya] was made a *muqaddam* [teacher]'.⁴ While more recent overviews of Sufism have avoided such characterisations, the Tijaniyya—certainly one of the most popular Sufi orders in the world today—appears only tangentially in academic discussions on the subject. Nile Green's historical overview of Sufism relegates the influence of the Tijaniyya to West Africa 'where it would form one of the most influential Muslim organizations of the nineteenth century', and suggests—despite a rich African Tijani intellectual tradition in Arabic—that its contemporary appeal relies on 'making strategic alliances with modern political organizations'.⁵ Alexander Knysk recognised the intellectual work of the African Tijani Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse in emphasising 'spiritual training and growth under the tutelage of an accomplished Sufi

master', but he is not prepared to speak to Niasse's influence beyond sub-Saharan Africa.⁶ It would be unfair to blame the otherwise painstaking work of Green and Knysk for overlooking the intellectual vibrancy and global reach of the Tijaniyya. Such observations are symptomatic of the unfortunate disconnect between African and Islamic Studies that render invisible the identities of (black) African Muslims.⁷

The Tijaniyya is not a latent expression of an allegedly heterodox 'Negro-Islam' (*Islam Noir*), nor does its African base marginalise it from worldwide scholarly exchange. In accounting for the spread of the Tijaniyya, this chapter emphasises the order's reception in the Muslim world outside of West Africa, while retaining a visibly black African scholarly presence on the international stage. It is tempting to read the Tijaniyya as a form of Afropolitanism: a demonstration of the vibrancy and resonance of an *Africanité* that simultaneously de-essentialises African-ness and blackness. I hope, then, to accomplish two objectives here. The first is to account for the global presence of the Tijaniyya, effectively arguing against the idea that the Tijaniyya is a 'typically African' *tariqa*. Conversely, I chart how Tijanis around the world frequently articulate a version of Islamic orthodoxy most visible in West Africa today, and often adapt identities in dialogue with a global Afropolitanism, associated mostly with the successors of the twentieth century's most prominent African Tijani scholar, Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse.⁸

An Afropolitan Islam?

Following the release of Marvel's *Black Panther* movie, a notable picture from Tijani leaders (*muqaddams*) in Britain circulated on Facebook. About forty mostly Afro-British Tijanis posted a picture of themselves outside the movie theatre dressed in a variety of colourful West African *boubous* like those worn by Tijani scholars in Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria. One description read, 'Yesterday we went to see Black Panther and it was a total shut down, we tolled with over 40 people and represented Black Excellence in true Wakanda style!'⁹ The leading *muqaddams* in the photo had all studied with Sheikh Tijani Cissé or his younger brother Sheikh Mahi Cissé in Senegal, and were mostly Muslim converts from African diaspora communities in London. This was clearly a celebration of an *Africanité*, a way of inhabiting an African identity in a global context, that also reminded the viewer of African Muslims' centrality in the continued articulation of African culture. But not all in the photo were of African descent: British-

Pakistani and British-Arab Tijanis were also visible, many of whom wore clothes of North or West African origin.

This assertion of a cosmopolitan African identity among Tijani disciples, hybrid and mediated as it is, invokes a diasporic Afropolitanism first proposed by Achille Mbembe,¹⁰ here developed by Simon Gikandi:

The idea of Afropolitanism... constitutes a significant attempt to rethink African knowledge outside the trope of crisis. Initially conceived as a neologism to describe the imaginary of a generation of Africans born outside the continent but connected to it through familial and cultural genealogies, the term Afropolitanism can now be read as a description of a new phenomenology of Africanness—a way of being African in the world... To be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions; but it is also to live a life divided across cultures, languages, and states. It is to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity—to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time.¹¹

This 'way of being African in the world' is further facilitated by the movement and reception of people and ideas far beyond the African continent, a process that now includes 'digital mobility' providing for the 'quick circulation of ideas and images'.¹² This notion, then, shares much with *Africanité*, which for Souleymane Bachir Diagne permits of local distinctions (both within Africa and beyond) while retaining a common disposition.¹³ 'African philosophies', Diagne cites Severine Grandvaux to say, 'ceaselessly deterritorialise and reterritorialise philosophies and concepts that are foreign to them, and construct themselves as an encounter'.¹⁴ As the Tijaniyya continues to spread around the world in increasingly mediated and cosmopolitan encounters, the negotiation of a particular *Africanité* appears to be involved in these encounters.

Tijani disciples, African or otherwise, would no doubt resist the territorialisation of their religious identities as 'African', and they would be right to do so. Sufi communities, which engage with non-Muslim populations in varying levels of acceptance, all emphasise a universal human condition their practices are aimed at actualising. Tijani aspirants, like other Sufis, aim to become better humans and servants of God, not more 'African': Tijani identity is not articulated as dependent or subservient to African identity, however defined.

Nonetheless, as the Tijaniyya has spread around the world, *Africanité* has proved a particularly fruitful and inclusive cultural encounter that often marks the reception of the order in new lands. For a devoted pan-Africanist like Sheikh Ibrahim Niassé, the Tijaniyya under his leadership was perhaps the

fulfilment of the unrealised aspirations of African nationalist leaders, but it also transcended political boundaries altogether.

In the mind of the shaykh, his was a Muslim religious community led by non-Arab Africans, even if it eschewed precise formulations of racial solidarity. It solidified lines of religious affiliation, but its boundaries were porous and it proselytized Islam through good-neighborliness. It would uplift and unite Africans, but it would overflow the boundaries of race and the African continent. 'This spiritual flood (*jayda*)', he wrote in the early 1930s when his community was only a handful of Senegalese followers, 'will reach wherever the land reaches'.¹⁵

The 'flood' of the Tijaniyya around the globe, then, is not a solidarity movement calling to 'African-ness'. Rather, the Tijaniyya's *Africanité* is embodied in its unapologetic African leadership supported by a majority African constituency. As they travel the world, leading Tijani scholars wear colourful West African *boubous*; they tend to prefer distinctive West African cuisine, they speak local African languages, they spread West African tonalities in Arabic poetry and even Western Sudanic Arabic calligraphic styles. Tijanis around the world, whatever the extent of their exposure to Africans or African culture, have had to come to terms with the fact a certain *Africanité* marks the public expression of their Sufi path.

The Tijaniyya: A Reformist Sufi Order on the Eve of Colonialism

The Tijaniyya was one of several Sufi orders that emerged out of a global Sufi revival in the eighteenth century, centring on the idea of the *Tariqa Muhammadīyya* or 'Muhammadan Way'.¹⁶ The *Tariqa Muhammadīyya* stressed the Sufi's need to follow the path of the Prophet, both externally and internally. It thus emphasised Sufism's essential connection to the shari'a and the orthodox Sunni community, but also practised spiritual absorption (*fanā* or *istiḡbrāq*) in the Prophetic essence through augmented invocations of blessing on the Prophet Muhammad (*salāt 'ala l-nabī*). The former caused *Tariqa Muhammadīyya* trends to distance themselves from antinomian expressions associated with Sufism's more ecstatic (*majdhūbī*) articulation, even if divine knowledge (*ma'rifa*) remained the Muhammadan Sufi's central preoccupation. The latter spiritual exercise of *salāt 'ala l-nabī* often resulted in visionary encounters with the Prophet, through dreams or even in waking states. The Tijaniyya was thus founded by order of the Prophet to Ahmad al-Tijani in Algeria in 1782.¹⁷ After its establishment in Fez in 1798, it became associated

with the Moroccan Sultan Mawlay Sulayman's attempted scholarly reform of popular Islam.

From his new home in Fez, Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani taught a wide range of urban intellectuals, desert travellers, women, businessmen and freed slaves. Disciples collected his teachings during his lifetime, providing the beginnings of a rich Arabic textual tradition to the order.¹⁸ The spread of the Tijaniyya in West Africa corresponded with a nineteenth-century popularisation of Sufi orders in the region more broadly. Sufi affiliation inspired a series of jihads (during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) that responded to the collapse of the *ancien régime* monarchies, which had become associated with selling subjects (many of whom were Muslims) into the trans-Atlantic slave trade.¹⁹ Sufi orders helped transcend ethnic and social rivalries in the constitution of new Muslim communities. As colonial occupation from the mid-nineteenth century gradually defeated the jihads, long-standing black African clerical lineages increasingly invested in these saintly communities and employed new Sufi identities both to reinvigorate existing scholarly expertise and to expand their audiences. By the late nineteenth century, Sufi communities became distinguished for their Islamic learning, and they also attracted floods of freed slaves and formerly casted groups. Their reputation for learning, justice, financial independence (largely through farming), and security made such communities poles of cultural resistance to colonial occupation even if leadership was required to periodically profess its loyalty to the British or French state.²⁰

Sheikh Ibrahim Niassé drew upon this earlier legacy of Islamic learning and clerical independence in constituting his own Tijani community outside of Kaolack, Senegal, in 1930. Niassé's claims to paradigmatic sainthood (*quḥāniyya*) were recognised outside of Senegal by the Idaw 'Alī Islamic scholars of Mauritania, who had first brought the Tijaniyya south of the Sahara. The submission of large numbers of Mauritanian Arab *shurafa'* to a black African scholar was unprecedented.²¹ In the years following World War II, Niassé gained multitudes of followers in Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Sudan: recruiting new Muslims into the Tijaniyya and sometimes effecting mass conversions to Islam. Aside from traditional scholarly credentials, Niassé's appeal was based in an apparent ability to transmit Sufism's most precious science, the experiential knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allāh*) to large numbers of people whatever their previous scholarly training, social standing, age, or gender. 'Nobody comes to me and does not know God', Niassé wrote in verse, 'young or old, since the beloved [Prophet], the sanctuary, has come close: men or women, beggars or sovereigns.'²²

Niassé's activities also attracted attention from prominent anti-colonial leaders, notably Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Guinea's Sekou Touré, and Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, and from the 1950s Niassé toured the African and Islamic world. In the early 1960s, he served as the vice-president of the World Muslim League based in Mecca, and held the same position for the World Muslim Congress based in Pakistan. While remaining rooted in an emphasis on Islamic knowledge transmission, Niassé clearly conscripted modern anti-colonial discourse, and even the tools of modern technology, to assert the centrality of Sufi-Muslim identity under African leadership in the contemporary world. He wrote in 1959: 'Through me the great oppression is being lifted; through my flood the religion has raised its banner.'²³ By his death in 1975, he claimed sixty million followers, with an estimated eighty per cent of all Tijanis today tracing their affiliation in the order through him.²⁴

The Tijaniyya Outside of West Africa

The spread of the Tijaniyya outside of West Africa has largely been associated with Ibrahim Niassé's 'flood' of divine knowledge, but not exclusively. The pre-eminence of black African Tijani leadership on the world stage, largely through the legacy of Sheikh Ibrahim, means that Tijani identity—whether in the Middle East or Southeast Asia—is usually articulated in dialogue with some form of *Africanité*. This section presents a broad overview of the Tijaniyya's contemporary presence in the Muslim world outside of West Africa. This is by no means an exhaustive study, and mostly relies on collecting together the findings of disparate research on the topic, observation of online representations in various languages, and the author's field research in the MENA region. This overview starts, ironically, with Morocco, where the Tijaniyya appears to be returning from its sub-Saharan base. I then consider the Tijaniyya's spread farther east, with special reference to the Middle East.

Morocco

Despite Moroccans' apparent contemporary association of the Tijaniyya with black Africa, a 1939 French survey found that the Tijaniyya was the most popular Sufi order in Morocco, with multiple *zāwiyyas* in every major city.²⁵ French colonial policies, together with Moroccan government attempts to control the Sufi orders, encouraged the marginalisation of Moroccan scholarly leaders of the Tijaniyya in favour of al-Tijani's descendants, first brought

by the French from Algeria and subsequently patronised by the independent Moroccan government.²⁶ Following the 2007 Tijani conference in Fez, the Moroccan government exerted further control over the Moroccan Tijaniyya, prohibiting all Tijani conferences or public gatherings unless endorsed by the government-designated leader of the Tijaniyya, Muhammad al-Kabir al-Tijani of Marrakesh.²⁷ This move could have been a government attempt to respond to the demonstrated pre-eminence and charisma of black African Tijani scholars on full display at the conference. The Moroccan monarchy's current articulation of traditional Sunni orthodoxy (in dialogue with which its authority is articulated)—based on 'Maghrebi' Sufi orders, the Maliki legal school, and 'Sharifism'—likely prefers the conscription and delimitation of these transnational trends within domestic confines. But the Moroccan monarchy, possibly to pre-empt Algerian claims to the Tijaniyya,²⁸ has also supported notable Tijani scholars in sub-Saharan Africa, helping to build Qur'an schools and host Tijani conferences in Senegal, for example.²⁹ In any case, al-Tijani's descendants in Morocco exert their own agency in mediating the monarchy's relationship with the global Tijaniyya. Some of them play important roles in promoting unity within the *ṭarīqa*, especially between the followers of Ibrahim Niasse and others, and they often make tours of Tijani communities in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result of their close relationship with black African Tijanis, al-Tijani's descendants can often be seen wearing West African clothes (even in Fez), and some speak passable Wolof or other West African languages.

The public re-emergence of the Tijaniyya in Morocco, perhaps as a result of the 2007 conference, is readily apparent in Fez today. Newly posted signs in the old city indicate the location of the Tijani *zāwiya* along with other cultural landmarks. Tijani-styled rosaries are for sale all over the city. A flood of new literature on the Tijaniyya is on display in the city's bookstores, from the Rabat Tijani scholar Radi Kanun's *al-Nisā' al-Tijāniyyāt*, French translations of *Jawābir al-mā'īnī* and other primary source materials, to former Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fez) Professor Ahmad al-Azmi's three volume history of the order, *al-Ṭarīqa al-Tijāniyya fī l-Maghrib wa l-Sūdān al-gharbi* (2000).³⁰ Restaurants and shops in Fez cater to Tijani visitors from around the world, with names like 'Tijani restaurant' and 'Hotel Timbuktu', the latter having a Moroccan owner who painted pictures of prominent Senegalese Tijani sheikhs on its walls to attract clients. The last ten years, then, seem to have witnessed an increasing public profile for the Tijaniyya in Morocco, one that is somewhat more celebratory than suspicious of the order's popularity in black Africa, and

one in which Moroccan Tijani scholars sometimes emerge independently from the officially designated Sharifian descendants of al-Tijani. Significantly, the Fez *zāwiya*'s Imam is said to have acquired his training (*ṭarbiya*) in *mā'rifa* from a Mauritanian student of Ibrahim Niasse.³¹

The 2007 Tijani conference in Morocco, televised throughout the country, hosted delegations from places that no doubt surprised non-Tijani Moroccans. Sub-Saharan scholars predictably took centre stage, but they used their air time to remind their audiences (in classical Arabic) of the Tijaniyya's orthodox credentials, connections with the Moroccan monarchy, and role in promoting Islamic scholarship throughout Africa and beyond. Aside from African and Middle Eastern communities (and their diasporas), Moroccans learned of Tijani communities in the Americas, Ethiopia, South Africa, Europe, Russia, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Brief discussion of the Tijaniyya in a few of these places (here Ethiopia, South Africa, and Asia) is thus warranted before turning to a closer analysis of the order in the Middle East.

East Africa

The Tijaniyya appears to be surprisingly absent from East Africa south of Sudan, although further research might uncover evidence to the contrary. Ibrahim Niasse had close relations with the Comorian-Ba-'Alawi scholar 'Umar 'Abdallah b. Abu Bakr (d. 1988), himself a student of the Zanzibari scholar 'Umar Sumayt.³² Hasan Cissé visited Tanzania in 2006 as the initiator of the Network of African Islamic Faith-based Organizations, which held a conference in Zanzibar on 'combating HIV/AIDS and gender violence through Islamic teachings'.³³ Such relationships may suggest the Tijaniyya is not altogether unknown in Tanzania or Kenya, but there is little evidence of the Tijaniyya's spread in the region.

The only East African country with a sizeable Tijani population seems to be Ethiopia. The Tijani Sheikh Ahmad b. 'Umar (d. 1953) arrived in Ethiopia from Bornu, Nigeria, in 1910.³⁴ He is alleged to have converted thousands to Islam and to have initiated many into the Tijaniyya, mostly among the majority Oromo ethnic group. Internal estimates put the Ethiopian Tijani population at close to eight million. Some of the Ethiopian Tijani scholars seem prone to spiritual retreat (*khaliwa*). An African-American Tijani, who had married among the Ethiopian Tijani community, related a story he heard from a scholar when visiting the country:

I saw the Prophet, God's peace and blessing upon him, and I asked, 'O Messenger of God, tell me something you have never told anyone else.' He said, 'When coffee is roasted, angels enter the room and pray God for forgiveness for everyone in the room.'

I listened to this story in the house of an African-American Tijani residing in Medina, Saudi Arabia, while drinking freshly roasted coffee his Ethiopian wife had prepared.³⁵ Here the Prophet appears to sanction an ancient Ethiopian coffee ritual, re-enacted in a global African diaspora connected through the Tijaniyya Sufi order. *Africanité* is not constitutive of Tijani identity, but it never seems far away from many Tijanis' contemporary experience.

South Africa

South Africa has also quickly produced (since 1995) indigenous scholars and representatives of the Tijaniyya, but who maintain much closer links with their West African initiators.³⁶ Following a tour in 2003, Hasan Cissé appointed a Mauritanian-Senegalese scholar named Baye Hayba to spend a number of months in the country on an annual basis, and subsequently designated as Imam Fakruddin Owaisi of Cape Town, himself of Indian descent. Owaisi, whose formative education was in Saudi Arabia, often delivers the Friday sermon at various mosques in the city, and also lectures at Cape Town's traditionalist Madina Institute.³⁷ A number of South African students now study in Medina-Baye, Senegal, as well as in Baye Hayba's *madrasa* in Nouakchott, Mauritania. Two South African Tijanis of mixed Indian, European, and Malay descent also married daughters of Sheikh Hasan Cissé, who have in turn supported Qur'an education programmes in the country in the West African model.³⁸ Together, public South African Tijani scholars appear as belonging to mixed ethnic backgrounds, promoting Qur'an learning, speaking classical Arabic, and affiliated with a West African spiritual leadership.

Asia

In Asia, prominent Tijani populations, mostly associated with Sheikh Ibrahim Niassé, have become visible in Kerala, India,³⁹ in Karachi, Pakistan,⁴⁰ as well as Southeast Asia. Indonesia has long had a well-established Tijani community numbering several hundred thousand, and has recently attracted increased attention with the former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's

alleged initiation into the order.⁴¹ A group of mostly Malay Muslims in Singapore have more recently joined the Tijaniyya, and on several occasions invited the Senegalese scholar Sheikh Mahi Cissé to publicly lecture in the country. They have also published two books of Sheikh Tijani Cissé's translated speeches.⁴² Sometimes Asian Tijanis appear less celebratory of their order's West African leadership. In one Facebook post, a British-Indian former Tijani claimed to have seen Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani in a vision, telling him to follow the ways of the Indonesian and Malaysian Tijani scholars, 'not the African ones'.⁴³ Other posts in proximity reveal the consternation surrounding the public use of talismanic sciences, certainly not synonymous with (or exclusive to) the African Tijaniyya even if that was the individual's particular experience.⁴⁴ Predictably, other Tijanis on Facebook excoriated the post for its cliché stereotype of African Islam and reasserted the predominance of contemporary West African Tijani scholars. The spread of the Tijaniyya in Asia, even when its largely autonomous leaders (in the case of Indonesia) are seen as exemplary, is thus often read in dialogue with an accepted African centre.

The Middle East

Within the Middle East the Tijaniyya has a significant presence in Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Turkey, and Arabia. Alfa Hāshim (d. 1931, Medina Arabia), the nephew of the celebrated nineteenth-century West African scholar 'Umar Tāl (d. 1864), figures prominently in the chains of many early twentieth-century Tijani initiations in the region. Alfa Hāshim, who had fled French and British colonialism in West Africa, came to reside in Medina, teaching at the College of Sharī'a Sciences and in the Prophet's mosque. He was later appointed to 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Sa'ūd's "High Council of Scholars of Medina," and cooperated superficially with the nascent Saudi regime, most notably in his critique of the legacy of the "Sudanese Mahdi", Muḥammad Ahmad (d. 1885).⁴⁵

While Alfa Hāshim's scholarly reputation provided a foundation for the Tijaniyya in the region, most Tijani adherents in Egypt and the Sudan are today attached to one of two genealogies: that passing through the famous hadith scholar Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misrī (d. 1979, Cairo) and that through the Nigerian Mufti Sharif Ibrahim Salih, who maintains a house in Cairo. The *zāwiya* of al-Hafiz in Old Cairo remains frequented by Tijanis from all over the world, as well as by a native Egyptian constituency. A group of Tijanis from the main Hafiz *zāwiya* used to make the Tijani Friday congreg-

gational remembrance in the central Husayn mosque every week.⁴⁶ Predictably, a good number of visitors to the Hafiz *zāwiya* hail from West Africa. Al-Hafiz himself remained on good terms with Niasse, hosting him in Cairo in 1961, and exchanging *ijāza* knowledge authorisations with him in a variety of Islamic sciences. But otherwise there is no evidence Hafiz Tijaniyya recognised Niasse's claims to paradigmatic sainthood (*qūṭbāniyya*), even though it respected the unprecedented popularity of the Tijaniyya under Niasse's instruction.⁴⁷ Sharif Salih's affiliation to the Tijaniyya is through Niasse, and for his followers he no doubt embodies Niasse's ability to participate in (and lead) global exchanges of Islamic learning as an accomplished black African Arabic speaker. Western Sudan (Darfur) retains an independent trajectory, probably drawing on the Tijani leader 'Ali Dinnar's claim to a separate Darfur Sultanate, whose reign came to an end in 1916 when he backed the Ottoman empire against the British protectorate of the Egyptian Sudan.⁴⁸ Such independence was asserted by Darfur's Ibrahim Sidi (d. 1999), whose affiliation to the Tijaniyya through Ibrahim Niasse led him to criticise Salih's perceived attempt to downplay the Tijaniyya's doctrinal particularities (the immense reward for the prayer *ṣalāt al-fātib*) for a wider audience.⁴⁹ Today, Sudanese Tijanis from all three lineages (Hafiz, Salih, Sidi) are some of the most visible diasporic Tijani communities in a number of places: various American cities such as Chicago and Denver; or Gulf cities such as Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Medina in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁰

The Tijaniyya has been known in Turkey since the late Ottoman empire. Two notable Tijani sheikhs, the Mauritanian Wad al-'Aliyya and the Malian Muhammad b. Fadigh (d. 1919), were personally welcomed by Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II. The Algerian Tijani Muhammad al-'Ubayd may have established a Tijani *zāwiya* in Istanbul (1897) before Atatürk banned all Sufi orders in 1925.⁵¹ The Turkish Tijaniyya re-emerged in the mid-twentieth century, partly under the leadership of Kemal Pilavoglu whose followers recited the Arabic call to prayer in the Grand Assembly and broke statues of Atatürk in protest against the exclusion of Islam from the public sphere. Pilavoglu was imprisoned under a new law (1952) criminalising the public disrespect of Atatürk's legacy, but his reputation for saintliness—partially established through claiming that al-Tijani had appeared to him in support of his activities—followed him in prison.⁵² According to Cathlene Dollar's research, the Tijaniyya is thus distinguished from other orders, which are possessed of a 'nostalgic, neo-Ottoman vision of Turkish history', by its association with a 'more genuinely global, anti-nationalist vision of Islamic identity'.⁵³ Such senti-

ments are difficult to substantiate, however. A contemporary Tijani centre active in Bursa, Turkey ('Arifane İlim Derneği'), appears to avoid international connections altogether. Its Facebook page is entirely in Turkish, and it appears to avoid any political messaging, instead focusing on the teaching of primary sources related to the Tijaniyya and the Sufi tradition more broadly, especially the works of Ibn al-'Arabi.⁵⁴ The leader of this community was initiated in Medina while on pilgrimage by a fellow Turkish Tijani, after experiencing a vision of the Prophet Muhammad apparently urging him to do so.⁵⁵ The Bursa Tijani group insists it has no links to either to earlier Turkish Tijanis or Tijani networks outside of Turkey. But photos posted on Facebook from inside the Bursa *zāwiya* suggest that up to half of the Tijanis present there are from West Africa.⁵⁶ Afropolitanism, then, appears to have been present both at the origins of the Tijaniyya in Turkey, and in contemporary contexts, even when Tijanis insist otherwise.

Present-day Tijani communities in Palestine appear more connected with West Africa than their Turkish counterparts, although the order's history in the country is no less rich. Tijanis there claim that the anti-Zionist Muslim scholar, 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, whose killing in 1935 inspired the 'Great Revolt' against Zionist settlers and the British mandate, was a member of the Tijaniyya.⁵⁷ I visited the house of a Palestinian Tijani *muqaddam* of Senegal's Sheikh Tijani Cissé in Jerusalem in 2017, who visited Senegal several times with his wife. The house is immediately outside the Aqsa mosque grounds (or 'temple mount') to the north, and serves as a gathering place for local Tijanis and those making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁵⁸ Another active Palestinian *muqaddam* from Haifa, whose initiation comes from a Moroccan emigrant to Palestine, Abu l-Hasan al-Maghribi (d. 2002), reports the presence of Tijanis in Jericho and several other cities aside from Haifa and Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Unlike the Jerusalem *muqaddam*, the Haifa *muqaddam* does not have close relations with West African Tijani leaders, but some of his students later studied in Medina-Baye Kaolack (Senegal), and he maintains close relations with his colleague in Jerusalem.

The Tijaniyya is present in Arabia, but because of lingering Wahhabi hostility to Sufism, is more difficult to locate in public settings (such as the internet). The *ṭarīqa* became widely known in Medina, Arabia, following the establishment there of Alfa Hashim (d. 1931), a nephew of the West African Tijani propagator 'Umar Tal. Hashim cooperated with the Algerian Tijani *muqaddam* Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-'Alami (d. 1934) to build a Tijani *zāwiya* in the city.⁶⁰ While the gradual 'Wahhabisation' of the Hijaz no doubt

obscured the public presence of the Tijaniyya, as other orders, in subsequent generations, there is still an active Tijani presence in Medina. On separate trips in 2016 and 2017, I visited several Tijani gatherings while in the Prophet's city. At a Friday *dhikr* meeting in a private home, with mostly Sudanese Tijanis, I was informed that there have been a few Tijani *zāwiyyas* in the city since the time of Alfa Hashim, which are periodically shut down by Saudi authorities. Medinan Tijanis now meet for *dhikr* in their own houses.

But in 2017, I witnessed an extraordinary sight: inside the Prophet's mosque, on the north side of his tomb, I happened upon a group of Tijanis reciting their Friday congregational *dhikr* out loud in a circle (a practice forbidden by Saudi authorities). The *muqaddam* was a Saudi citizen, surrounded by Tijanis from Indonesia, Oman, Pakistan, and Africa. The *muqaddam* had become connected to the West African Tijaniyya through the time he often spent in London, and I recognised him for our mutual attendance at a *maulid* celebration in Senegal a few months earlier. After the *dhikr*, he gave a lengthy talk about love for the Prophet and the Sufi path. That was followed by a number of Omanis who requested initiation in the Tijaniyya from him. Eventually, the Saudi police appeared to break up the gathering, but they otherwise treated the *muqaddam* respectfully, simply reminding him that they monitored the mosque on video camera and that unapproved circular gatherings (*halqa*s) in the mosque were forbidden.⁶¹ The alternating disbanding and persistent re-emergence of the Tijaniyya in Medina is evidence of the order's enduring presence in Arabia, apparently capable of rapid expansion given the opportunity.

Tijanis in the Emirates and Qatar, like Saudi Arabia, mostly meet in private homes. Nonetheless, the *tariqa* appears to have expanded recently in urban areas. This is partly the result of increasing expat populations, in which Western (Sufi) Muslims figure prominently. But it is also because of small numbers of committed Emirati and Qatari citizens, most of whom have their affiliation through West Africa. In the Emirates, Tijani gatherings are held in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In Qatar, there are three separate Tijani *dhikr* gatherings every Friday: one of only Qataris; one of mixed Qataris, West Africans, Indians, and Western expats; and one of Sudanese. The most prominent Qatari *muqaddam* (who hosts the mixed gathering) has visited Medina-Baye, Senegal, and was granted *ijāza* by Sheikh Hasan Cissé (who also visited Qatar in 1995) as well as by the Mauritanian Sheikh Muhammad al-Yadali.⁶² The latter, whose father was a close student of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse, had previously resided in Qatar but is now a Mufti in Abu Dhabi. The Sudanese Tijanis

in Qatar are mostly followers of the Darfurian Sheikh Musa 'Abdallah al-Husayn, himself a disciple of Ibrahim Salih, who visits Qatar on a semi-annual basis and has publicly represented the Tijaniyya as an orthodox Islamic voice for peace in Africa.⁶³ In both the Sudanese and mixed Qatari and Indian expat Tijani gatherings in Doha, frequent reference is made to Medina-Baye, Senegal, where the teachings of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse are continuously related and stories are told of personal visits to Senegal.

Conclusion

The Tijaniyya's spread throughout the Muslim world has been in dialogue with an *Africanité*, mostly associated with the community Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse based in Senegal. This is not so much the story of an ethnically African diaspora associated with the Tijaniyya,⁶⁴ it is more often the case of new initiates from all backgrounds negotiating their religious identities in dialogue with a West African spiritual leadership. True to the idea of Afropolitanism, the meaning of this identity is hybrid, locally negotiated, and thinks beyond the essentialisation of blackness or Africa. Whatever the myriad negotiations of African-ness Tijanis mediate around the world, their shared reference is the fact the Tijaniyya is the only contemporary global Muslim network with an unapologetic black African leadership.

This chapter has largely avoided the presence of the Tijaniyya in the West. This is mostly due to space limitations, but also because Sufism in the West tends to receive outsized attention in academic studies. Nonetheless, the Tijaniyya has spread among African diaspora communities, both immigrants and Muslim converts, in several American cities, in Canada, in the Caribbean, in France, and in Britain. It has also spread among Westerners of Arab, Pakistani, and European descent, most of whom were exposed to the Tijaniyya through their contact with African diasporic communities. Much of this has been the fruition of the efforts of Sheikh Hasan Cissé (d. 2008; Senegal), who from the late 1970s established Tijani communities among African-American populations in Chicago, New York, Detroit, Atlanta, and Washington D.C.⁶⁵ More recently, African diasporic spoken word artists and musicians give the Tijaniyya new audiences. 'Tijani Concious' is a Jamaican musician, connected to Tijani communities in Atlanta, referred to on Jamaican television as the 'first Muslim reggae artist'.⁶⁶ Amir Sulaiman, a disciple of Sheikh Mahi Cissé based in California, is perhaps America's most famous contemporary Muslim poet, appearing on Russell Simmon's Def Poetry Jam and at numerous

Western Islamic conferences with Tijani prayer beads wrapped around his wrist.⁶⁷ In Britain, the female 'hip hop hijabi' Sukina Douglas mixes politically conscious lyrics with references to spiritual training in divine gnosis, based on her studies in Medina-Baye, Senegal.⁶⁸

The Tijaniyya in the West, as with its spread elsewhere in the world, combines local cultural articulations, often expressing an *Africanité*, usually (in the case of the majority of Tijanis affiliated to the order through Ibrahim Niassé) with recognition of a West African spiritual centre. Afropolitanism has thus provided a degree of internal coherency to the world diffusion of the order, where new initiates often enter into a productive dialogue with certain markers of West African Muslim identity. There is no doubt the association with black Africa has not always facilitated the Tijaniyya's reception in communities where Arab or other ethnicities are privileged. But neither has the order's association with *Africanité* circumscribed its influence: the Tijaniyya has undoubtedly become one of the world's most popular Sufi orders, not only in West Africa. In so doing, the Tijaniyya has expanded the meaning of African identity in global contexts and destabilised the pejorative marginalisation of African Islam.

For the followers of Ibrahim Niassé, *Africanité* does not necessarily 'colour' the experiential knowledge (*ma'rifa*) at the core of their Tijani affiliation. After all, the knowledge of God remained an experience of annihilation (*fana'*) beyond specification. According to Niassé:

In this [rapture], the servant is not aware of himself, or anything else; neither what came before nor what will come after, neither of any part of himself, nor the whole of himself ... The lover becomes extinct in his Beloved. And he becomes extinct to his own extinction. Nothing remains except the divine selfhood.⁶⁹

But the annihilated servant could also become the locus of divine manifestation:

The Most High has taken possession of the heart, so He controls its. He has taken possession of the limbs of the body, so He uses them for what is pleasing to Him. He has taken possession of the servant's character traits, so He operates them however He wills for the sake of His pleasure.⁷⁰

The veneration of Africa among Tijanis can be explained, in the end, by the perceived emergence of God's beloved saints among black Africans. After all, Muslims justified love for the Arabs because of the Prophet Muhammad: 'Who has loved the Arabs loves them because he has loved me,' said the Prophet.⁷¹ The inscription of *Africanité* in the global Tijaniyya results from the

perception of divine favour bestowed on black African Muslim saints like Ibrahim Niassé.

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