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# Secrets on the Muhammadan Way: Transmission of the Esoteric Sciences in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Scholarly Networks

*Zachary Wright*

Northwestern University-Qatar

*z-wright@northwestern.edu*

## Abstract

The eighteenth century witnessed a flurry of Islamic scholarly exchange, connecting North and West Africa to the Middle East and even India. The Islamic sciences transmitted through these networks have had lasting resonance in Africa, particularly in chains transmitting Ḥadīth and Sufi affiliations. Academics have been justly skeptical as to the actual content of these often short meetings between scholars, suggesting such meetings tell us little about shared scholarly understandings. Study of unpublished manuscripts detailing the acquisition of “secrets” (*asrār*), apparently widespread in these eighteenth-century networks, can add new understanding to the affinities between scholarly legacies emerging in the period. This paper considers such questions in relationship to Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1815, Fez), the founder of the Tijāniyya Sufi order prominent in West Africa today.

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In the late eighteenth century, a Mauritanian jurist and ḥadīth scholar named Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ al-‘Alawī (d. 1830) was in Mecca performing Hajj. His most fervent prayer was “to meet a perfected shaykh among the folk of God the Exalted.” As he circumambulated the sacred house, an unknown man approached him and said, “Your shaykh is Aḥmad al-Tijānī.” Surprised, and never having heard this name before, al-Ḥāfiẓ began to inquire of other pilgrim groups about this Shaykh. Finally, he encountered some “riffraff” from Fez (*sūqat ahl al-Fās*), who told him, “as if they wanted to belittle” the Shaykh: “There is a jurist (*faqīh*) with us in Fez (by that name), who is associated with medicine (*ḥikma*) and alchemy (*al-kīmīyā*).” They continued in this manner until one

of them finally admitted they knew little about him, and referred al-Ḥāfiẓ to a group of Moroccan scholars, “for they have more direct knowledge of him than us.” This second group held the Shaykh in great esteem, and informed al-Ḥāfiẓ of al-Tijānī’s deep knowledge and saintliness. Upon accomplishing his pilgrimage, al-Ḥāfiẓ came to Fez and apprenticed himself to the Shaykh he had so ardently sought.<sup>1</sup>

This story tells how an influential Mauritanian scholar became a student of Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1815), in turn serving as perhaps the most important conduit for the spread of the Tijāniyya in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable in this account to find al-Tijānī’s reputation for scholarship and saintliness mixed with various forms of Islamic esotericism. In fact, reference to such esoteric practices is never far from the surface in primary sources relating to Islamic scholarship in the eighteenth century. Integrating analysis of this knowledge field expands our understanding of scholarly exchange in an important period of Islamic intellectual history.

Eighteenth-century Muslim scholarly genealogies have of course fascinated a generation of researchers. No sooner had the picture of widespread scholarly networks spanning Indonesia to West Africa emerged than academics began to wonder about the nature of these interchanges. Some suggested that scholars who met and learned from each other naturally shared certain commonalities that defined an Islamic revivalist impulse in a period of the Muslim world’s political and economic decline. While the term “Neo-Sufism” has since been justifiably discredited,<sup>3</sup> there appears to have been a widespread concept of spiritual renewal articulated through the common invocation of the pre-eminent “Muhammadan Way” (*Tarīqa Muḥammadiyya*).<sup>4</sup> Very broadly, ideas shared within this network included the renewed interest in *ḥadīth* studies, the permissibility of deriving new juristic opinions (*ijtihād*) outside of the established legal schools (*madhāhib*), and the requirement that Sufi practices

1 Aḥmad Sukayrij, *Kashf al-ḥijāb ‘amman talāqā ma’a l-shaykh al-Tijānī min al-aṣḥāb* (Edited Muḥammad al-Rāḍī Kanūn, Rabat: Dār al-Amān, 2012), 540–541.

2 A. Dedoud Ould Abdellah, “Le Passage au Sud: Muhammad al-Hafiz et son Héritage.” Jean-Louis Triaud and David Robinson (eds.), *La Tijaniyya: Une Confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l’Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 2000): 69–100.

3 R.S. O’Fahey and Bernd Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered”, *Der Islam*, 70 (1993), 52–87.

4 Bernd Radtke, “Sufism in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: an attempt at a provisional appraisal,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 36, 3 (1996), 326–364; Mark Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons: the making and remaking of the Rashidi Ahmadi Sufi Order, 1799–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 11–12, 27–49; Zachary Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Tijani and the Tariqa Muḥammadiyya* (Atlanta: African American Islamic Institute, 2005), 9–12.

not contradict the *sharī'a*.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, most scholars shared teacher-student connections with certain key personalities, such as Ibrāhīm Kurānī (d. 1689, Medina) and 'Abd al-Ghānī al-Nabulūsī (d. 1731, Damascus). This story is especially important for Africa: much of the Muslim scholarly activism on the continent in the nineteenth century – from 'Uthman b. Fūdī (d. 1817, Nigeria) to Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (d. 1859, Libya) to 'Umar Tāl (d. 1864, Mali) to Muḥammad 'Abd-Allāh al-Ḥasan (d. 1920, Somalia) – had links to these eighteenth-century scholars advocating the *Tarīqa Muḥammadiyya*.

Others recognized that these ideas predated the eighteenth century, and perceived that they were not applied with any perceivable uniformity across this scholarly network. Ahmad Dallal concluded that “intellectual family-trees” actually tell us little about shared ideas between scholars.<sup>6</sup> For example, among the many students of the Indian Naqshbandī *ḥadīth* scholar Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī (d. 1750) in Medina Arabia was Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) and Muḥammad al-Sammān (d. 1775). One initiated a militant anti-Sufi movement in central Arabia; the other was known as the leading Sufi saint (*qutb*) of his age and apparently left his own Sufi order: the Sammāniyya still popular today in Sudan and Indonesia.

But these meetings between scholars were not altogether meaningless, despite the usually short periods of interchange. Whatever ideological differences, later scholarly traditions that developed from this network continue to mention the teachers of their own shaykh. The voluminous literature on prayers, supplications, and “secrets” produced by most of these traditions offer alternative ways of understanding the imprint of this network on participating scholars. Eighteenth-century scholars sought each other out not only for

5 John Voll, “Muḥammad Ḥayya al-Sindī and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: an analysis of an intellectual group in eighteenth-century Madīna,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38, 1 (1975), 32–39; John Voll, “'Abdallah ibn Salim al-Basri and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Hadith Scholarship,” *Die Welt des Islams* 42, 3 (2002), 356–372; Basheer Nafi, “Taṣawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture: In Search of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī,” in *Die Welt des Islams* 42, 3 (2002): 307–355; Basheer Nafi, “A Teacher of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb: Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī and the Revival of *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*'s Methodology,” in *Islamic Law and Society* 13, 2 (2006): 208–241; John Voll, “Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 42, 2/3 (2008), 314–330.

6 Ahmad Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750–1850,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, 3 (1993): 342. According to Dallal: “The ‘intellectual family-trees’ of students and teachers cannot serve as evidence for common origins; education acquired from the same teacher could be, and indeed was, put to completely different uses by different students, and the commonality of the source does not prove that the outcome is identical or even similar.”

the transmission of *ḥadīth* or to share ideas on Sufi or legal renewal: they collected from each other powerful prayers. These prayers continue to be transmitted by later followers to the present day. I believe a common preoccupation actually did motivate scholarly interchange in the eighteenth century, one that in fact links the study of *ḥadīth*, the emphasis of *ijtihād*, the desire to “meet” the Prophet, and the search for secret prayers through the broad umbrella of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*. For eighteenth-century scholars, the “Muhammadan Way” represented above all a desire to “verify” or “actualize” (*yuḥaqqiq*) the sources of their religion in a time of social and political uncertainty.<sup>7</sup> This last is not an argument I will be able to fully prove here. I am only suggesting that most scholars of the period did not see the acquisition of “secrets” as inconsistent with a broader search for knowledge and spiritual realization.

The Tijāniyya Sufi order is a significant tradition that emerged out of the aforementioned eighteenth-century scholarly networks.<sup>8</sup> Following a waking encounter with the Prophet Muḥammad in the Algerian desert in 1782, Aḥmad al-Tijānī founded his own Sufi order at the Prophet’s command. Like many other Sufis of his age, he described the Sufi revival he perceived himself leading as not really a new Sufi order, but a return to the pure spiritual path of the Prophet: the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*. Al-Tijānī’s encounters with the Prophet continued, and he explained the Sufi practices he transmitted to followers: “I do not make any remembrance (*dhikr*) except that the Prophet arranges it for me.”<sup>9</sup> Often the prayers transmitted within the Tijāniyya are nonetheless sourced to prominent scholars whom al-Tijānī met on his earlier travels, even if the Prophet later appeared to al-Tijānī to specifically confirm these prayers.

7 I am inspired here by the recent work of Khaled El-Rouayheb, who attributes the interest in “verification” (*taḥqīq*) to seventeenth-century scholars such as al-Kūrānī and al-Nabulūsī that figure so prominently in eighteenth century networks. See Khaled El-Rouayheb, “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38, 2 (May, 2006), 263–281.

8 For monographs on the Tijāniyya, see Jamil Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); Zachary Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadiyya* (Atlanta: African American Islamic Institute, 2005); and Jilali El Adnani, *La Tijaniyya: Les origines d'une confrérie religieuse au Maghreb* (Rabat: Marsam, 2007).

9 Aḥmad al-Tijānī cited in ‘Umar b. Sa’id Tāl, *Rimāḥ ḥizb al-rahīm ‘alā nuḥūr ḥizb al-rajūm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), 445.

Study of the prayers of the Tijāniyya reveal complex genealogies and intense, if short, encounters between scholars in the eighteenth century. Al-Tijānī's contact with the Khalwatī masters Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (d. 1780) in Egypt and Muḥammad al-Sammān in Medina became important sources for many prayers later transmitted in the Tijāniyya. From al-Kurdī, al-Tijānī received the *Musabba'āt al-ʿashr*,<sup>10</sup> which Khidr (the mystical guide of Moses in the Qurʾān thought to be still alive today) first gave to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996, Baghdad).<sup>11</sup> Whoever recites this prayer, his sins will not be recorded for a year, he will be beloved by all who see him, he will be protected from Satan, he will find ease in his affairs, will find provision, goodness and increase.<sup>12</sup> From al-Sammān, al-Tijānī received (among other prayers) Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Dawr al-ʿalā*.<sup>13</sup> According to al-Kurdī's Palestinian student Muḥammad al-Dāmūnī (d. 1785), whoever recites this prayer, "God will rip to utter shreds" his enemies, and he will be safe from oppression, imprisonment, black magic, envy, poverty, and blindness.<sup>14</sup>

The eighteenth century thus witnessed a vibrant circulation of powerful prayers and secrets. Al-Kurdī and al-Sammān shared the same Sufi master of the Khalwatiyya, the Syrian Muṣṭafa al-Bakrī (d. 1748), also the shaykh of Azhar University's leading scholar Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī (d. 1768). Aside from his own Khalwatī masters, al-Bakrī was a student of the Naqshbandiyya scholar ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Nabulusī (d. 1731), whose writing on the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadīyya* probably influenced later expressions of the concept.<sup>15</sup> But other less famous scholars al-Tijānī met, such as the reclusive Aḥmad al-Hindī (d. 1774, Mecca), also played important roles in bequeathing to al-Tijānī their collections of

10 This prayer, "The ten sevens", contains ten different Qurʾan sections and short supplications each recited seven times. See al-Tijānī, *Aḥzab wa awrād*, 112–114.

11 Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 187. The *Jawāhir al-maʿānī* adds a few scholars in between Khidr and Makkī, namely Ibrahim al-Taymi, and adds that Khidr received it from the Prophet Muhammad; but that Khidr then also gave it directly to Kurdī, who gave it to Shaykh al-Tijani.

12 Al-Barāda *Jawāhir al-maʿānī*, I: 84. The more comprehensive discussion of this prayer is found in ʿUmar b. Saʿīd al-Fūtī, *Rimāḥ hizb al-rahīm ʿalā nuḥūr hizb al-rajūm* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001), 451.

13 Al-Barāda *Jawāhir al-maʿānī*, II: 91. Other prayers from al-Sammān included the *Aḥzāb* of Abu Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, the *Wazīfa* of Aḥmad Zarrūq, and the *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* of Muḥammad al-Jazūlī. The text of the *Dawr* is found in al-Tijānī, *Aḥzāb wa awrād*, 80–92.

14 Suha Taji-Farouki, *Ibn ʿArabi: a prayer for spiritual elevation and protection* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2006), 21, 40–41, 70–71.

15 Mark Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 28.

prayers and secrets. While the Tijānī inheritance of these traditions is certainly not a simple replica as that collected by other scholars such as Jibrīl b. ‘Umar (d. 1785, West Africa) or Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1837, Arabia), there is an indication of a shared esoteric tradition that traveling scholars studied (and transmitted) in the eighteenth century. For example, the Indian ḥadīth scholar Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī (d. 1790, Cairo) thus sought authorization in the science of “magic squares” (*‘ilm al-awfāq*) from a student of the West African Egyptian resident, Muḥammad al-Kashnāwī (d. 1741).<sup>16</sup> In the eighteenth century, eminent scholars regularly sought out the “esoteric sciences” as part of their acquisition and transmission of knowledge.

### Sources and Methodology

Academics have paid little attention to the voluminous prayer manuals that various Muslim communities, and Sufis especially, have compiled.<sup>17</sup> Not only can the content of such prayers reveal a good deal about the aspirations and identities of Muslims, they are also key sources of intellectual history. Writers frequently identify the text or scholar from whom a prayer was received, and may include explanation as to the logic or even theological considerations behind the use of a certain prayer. Such manuscripts also contain descriptions of historical encounters, travels, and scholarly exchanges that are not found elsewhere. Previous research on the Tijāniyya, as with other scholarly communities of the eighteenth century, has largely ignored these sources.

One manuscript in particular stands out in relation to the origins of the Tijāniyya, apparently not known to previous researchers on the order. The work in question is a forty-nine-page “travel notebook” (hereafter referred to as *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*) written in al-Tijani’s own handwriting. The work collects various prayers al-Tijānī received from scholars he visited while traveling in North Africa and Arabia. The date of this compilation is unknown, but it appears from most of the scholars mentioned that it was written during his pilgrimage east in the years 1773–1774, or shortly thereafter upon his return to

16 Stefan Reichmuth, “Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī and the Africans: Islamic Discourse and Scholarly Networks in the Late Eighteenth Century,” in Scott Reese (ed.), *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 137–138.

17 Significant exceptions include Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996); Richard McGregor, “A Sufi Legacy in Tunis: Prayer and the Shadhiliyya,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29, 2 (May, 1997), 255–277.

the Maghreb. In any case, it would have been prior to the Shaykh's "grand illumination" (*fath al-akbar*) in the presence of the Prophet in 1782: there is no reference to this event, or to the later tendency of the Prophet to verify for al-Tijānī the efficacy of previous prayers he had received. The fact that some of this *Kunnāsh* contains sometimes lengthy passages of other manuscripts means that the Shaykh likely copied sections of earlier manuscripts loaned from scholars he met while traveling.

The *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* in fact makes liberal reference to two previous collections of esoteric sciences: the *al-Jawāhir al-khams* and the *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, both of which have since been published. While the first has received a good deal of scholarly attention, the second (apparently first published in 2016) seems to have escaped any serious consideration. Al-Tijānī's access to and use of these manuscripts in his own *Kunnāsh* provides insight into his understanding of the esoteric sciences, and to the enduring influence of teachers from whom he received such secrets.

I was granted access to the *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* in the personal "archive" of al-Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé (b. 1955) in Medina-Baye Kaolack, Senegal.<sup>18</sup> Imam al-Tijānī Cissé is arguably the most renowned scholar of the Tijāniyya in the world today.<sup>19</sup> He is also an avid collector of manuscripts and his personal library is likely one of the most voluminous in West Africa. Al-Tijānī Cissé told me that he acquired the *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* from scholars in Fez. Despite being unable to track the transmission of the manuscript back further, the handwriting is identifiably that of Aḥmad al-Tijānī.<sup>20</sup> If there were any doubt, the recognizable handwriting of al-Tijānī's disciple Muḥammad al-Mishrī (d. 1809) appears in the margins to attest to the authenticity of the text.

In some cases, I make reference to other manuscripts to which the Imam provided me access in his collection. Of course, the Imam's archive of

18 Most of my interviews with the Imam on this subject, as well as the viewing of manuscripts in his personal archive, took place in Medina-Baye during successive research trips from 2014–2016.

19 The *Muslim 500* has ranked Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé as high as the thirteenth most-influential Muslim leader in the world, the highest of any Sufi scholar. See Abdallah Schleifer (ed.), *The Muslim 500: The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims, 2014/15* (Amman: Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center, 2014).

20 This based on the observation of Tijānī Cissé, interview, Medina-Baye, Senegal, 29 December 2014. The Moroccan Tijānī scholar Rādī Kanūn claims to be in possession of the same manuscript, which he also describes as "a secret notebook (*kunnāsh*) in the handwriting of our master, the Shaykh (al-Tijānī)." See footnote of Muḥammad al-Rādī Kanūn in Muḥammad b. al-Mishrī, *Rawḍ al-muḥibb al-fānī* (Rabat: Muḥammad Kanūn, 2013), fn 1, 54.

manuscripts is not “open-access” to all researchers, but then all archives control user access to different degrees.<sup>21</sup> In this case, such personal manuscripts often contain significant references to “secrets” (*asrār*) that are not meant to be known except through initiation. A few statements from Tijānī sources neatly summarize prevailing sentiments in this regard: “Revealing secrets to the one in ignorance (of the secrets) is worse than committing a major sin,” for example; or, “The hearts of the liberated ones (*ahrār*) are the graves of secrets”; or, “The best that can happen if you use a prayer without permission is that it will not harm you.”<sup>22</sup> Although I claim no personal mastery in these sciences, I respect the authorizing sentiments of those who hold and transmit such texts. This article therefore takes no interest in the exposition of secrets. Rather I hope to make the case that respect for the authorizing standards of such “esoteric archives” can yield important historical findings.<sup>23</sup>

### Situating the Esoteric Sciences in Islam

The “sciences of secrets” (*‘ulūm al-asrār*) is of course a purposefully ambiguous category. By “secret” (or esoteric), the reference is to invocations that are not (or not meant to be) common knowledge: they are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’ān or collections of the Prophet’s sayings, unless by way of allusion. Designating these practices as “sciences” or objective knowledge (*‘ilm*) is meant to suggest both that they are based in a certain logic, and that they produce replicable results. In fact, Muslim scholars often source these practices to the “rationalists”, namely Greek philosophers. The mainstream Sunni theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111, Persia) thus argued that it was illogical for philosophers to deny Sufism’s reliance on direct spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) when they all attested to the efficacy of a certain “magic square” to ease the pains of childbirth.<sup>24</sup> But whatever their sources, these practices were incorporated

21 For more on the politics of archive production and use, see Ann Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” in *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 87–109. Given the enduring differential access to archives between select academics and the lay public, all archives are controlled by certain credentialing standards.

22 The first two statements are widely cited in the letters of Ibrāhīm Niasse (compiled in *Jawāhir al-rasā’il*). The last is from an interview with Ḥasan b. ‘Alī Cissé, with author, Medina-Baye, Senegal, July 2006.

23 On this basis, I sought and received permission to publish analysis of these manuscripts from al-Tijānī Cissé upon visiting him in Cairo, October 28, 2016.

24 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali’s Path to Sufism: his Deliverance from Error, al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (translated R.J. McCarthy, Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 2006), 75.

and expanded upon within an Islamic frame of reference. Often, Muslim scholars linked secrets to the various Prophets, obscure *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muḥammad, verses of the Qurʾān, or their own (or other Muslim scholars') meetings with unseen spirits.

The Islamic esoteric sciences mostly include practices to control (*taskhīr*), or to protect (*taḥṣīn*) from, various created beings or their effects: thus angels, spirits (*rūḥāniyāt*), jinn, human beings, sorcery, evil eye, sickness, or poison. The basic logic revolves around “the science of letters” (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*).<sup>25</sup> Each letter of the Arabic alphabet is ascribed a certain numerical “weight” or equivalent, and corresponds to certain divine names, angelic presences, and even phases of the moon. The implication is that, in selecting Arabic as the language of the last revelation, God thus endowed the Arabic letters with a certain intrinsic influence (*taʿthīr*) over creation. The science of letters lends itself to a wide variety of esoteric practices: invocations (*ruqya*, *qasm*, *ʿazīma*), talismans or amulets (*tilsām*, *taʿwīdh*), seeking information from the spirit world (*istishāra*), or even geomancy (*khaṭṭ al-raml*). While many of these practices explicitly reference the Qurʾān or *ḥadīth*, I have argued elsewhere that their initiatory (secret) character distinguishes them from more widespread practices such as supplication (*duʿāʾ*), seeking divine guidance (*istikhāra*), and remembrance of divine names (*dhikr*).<sup>26</sup>

While many Sufis no doubt have been involved in esoteric sciences, many others have not. By all accounts, these practices predate the establishment of Sufi orders in the thirteenth century, and many esoteric practitioners have no formal connection to Sufism. The Egyptian Sufi ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 1565) thus protested against the misuse of these “sciences of the philosophers”, though he did not question their overall efficacy.<sup>27</sup>

The proliferation of the esoteric sciences has not been without controversy. Many orientalist and some Muslim reformists concurred that, whatever

25 Important English references to these sciences were produced in the nineteenth century. See Edward Lane, “Superstitions”, in *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Written in Egypt during the years 1833–1835* (London: Darf Publishers, 1986); Jaʿfar Sharif, *Islam in India or the Qanun-i-Islam* (Translated G. Herklots, London: Oxford University Press, 1921; original translated 1832). For more recent academic work, see David Owusu-Ansah, “Prayer, Amulets, and Healing,” in N. Levtzion and R. Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 477–488.

26 Zachary Wright, *Living Knowledge in West African Islam: The Sufi Community of Ibrāhīm Niassa* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 42–43.

27 Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī* (New Brunswick New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 134–135.

Islamic veneer, these practices constitute “magic” or sorcery (*sihr*). The Sunni Islamic scholarship seems unanimous in its prohibition of sorcery as an act of idolatry, or associating partners with God (*shirk*). Most pre-modern scholars did not, however, consider the esoteric sciences to be sorcery.<sup>28</sup> There were exceptions. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792, Najd) declared that “whoever wears an amulet has committed idolatry (*shirk*)”, even though he admitted some scholars permitted the practice “if the amulet contains verses of the Qur’ān or God’s names or attributes.”<sup>29</sup>

The esoteric sciences did remain somewhat controversial, but they were practiced in all parts of the Muslim world, and there was little if any scholarly consensus prohibiting their use. The dominant opinion was probably best articulated by the seventeenth-century Moroccan scholar Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1691):

We do not heed those who prohibit some of these sciences, for science in itself is food for the mind and the joy of the spirit and the attribute of virtue ... Even magic, which all jurists agree may not be used, if one were to learn it ... just to know it, and be able to distinguish between it and miracles ... studying it would be permissible, or even a duty.<sup>30</sup>

There are of course more elaborate discussions of the legal validity of the esoteric sciences, but Yūsī’s common sense openness no doubt speaks to their widespread reception in the Muslim world. The published collection of Aḥmad al-Tijānī’s prayers, the *Aḥzāb wa awrād*, relates the Prophet’s statement to his companions: “Your [pre-Islamic] invocations (*ruqya*) have been made known to me. There is no harm in what does not contain idolatry (*shirk*).”<sup>31</sup>

28 Muslim scholars in Malaysia thus referred to the Islamic esoteric sciences as *hikmat* from the Arabic *ḥikma* (“wisdom”), differentiating them from magic or sorcery (*sihr*). See Farouk Yahya, *Magic and Divination in Malay Illustrated Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 24. Frustratingly, literature continues to describe these practices as a form of Islamic “magic.” See for example, Michael Knight, *Magic in Islam* (New York: Tarcher Perigee, 2016).

29 Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitab Tawhid: The Book of Monotheism* (Translated Abdul Malik Mujahid, Riyadh: Dar-us-Salam, n.d.), Chapters 7, 8. The hadith upon which he based his first statement, however, was widely considered to refer to non-Islamic talismans used by the Arabs of “pagan ignorance” (*jāhiliyya*).

30 Ḥasan al-Yūsī, *al-Qānū fī aḥkām al-‘ilm*; cited in Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 224–225.

31 Aḥmad al-Tijānī, *Aḥzāb wa awrād* (Cairo: Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Tijānī, 1972), 21. Hadith related in the collections of Muslim and Abū Dāwud, on the authority of ‘Awf b. Mālik,

Given Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s position on the issue and an alleged eighteenth-century emphasis on textualism and renewed scholarly interpretation, it is tempting to suspect a growing distrust with what modernists would later view as medieval superstitions. But there is no such discomfort in the seminal texts that inspired the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* network in the eighteenth century. The influential work of the Ottoman scholar Mehmed Birgivi (or Birkāwī, d. 1573),<sup>32</sup> thought to have inspired the anti-Sufi crusades of the seventeenth-century Kadizadilite movement, in fact includes “charms and spells” under a chapter on medical knowledge:

It is possible that charms and spells are forbidden only to those who think that they are the only means of cure. Those who believe that both sickness and its cure are from God, and that medical intervention is in the hand of God, may also use charms and spells.<sup>33</sup>

Al-Birkawī’s text was popularized in eighteenth-century *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* circles through the commentary of ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Nabulusī (d. 1731): *al-Ḥadīqa al-nadiyya sharḥ al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*. Al-Nabulusī explained al-Birkawī’s words by differentiating between incantations (*ruqya*) performed by Muslims and that performed by non-Muslims: “As for *ruqya* with Qur’ān verses and established utterances, there is no prohibition in this, indeed it is the *sunna* ... All *ruqya* is permitted if it is with the words of God or with his remembrance.”<sup>34</sup> He cites Yaḥya al-Nawawī (d. 1277) in saying that the Angel Gabriel once made *ruqya* for the Prophet when he got sick. Al-Nabulusī then suggests a difference of opinion concerning the incantations of non-Muslims: Imam Shāfi‘ī permitted the *ruqya* of Jews and Christians, while Imam Mālik disliked it. Al-Nabulusī, again citing al-Nawawī, concludes that seeking good health justifies an open mind: “Seeking medicine is loved and it is the path of the Prophet and his companions, and of the righteous forefathers (*salaf*) ... unlike the exaggerators (*ghilāt*) among the Sufis who do nothing claiming everything is fated.”<sup>35</sup> In explaining the permissibility of going to Jewish or Christian healers, al-Nabulusī cites al-Sha‘rānī to say: “Know that the subsidiary

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who begins the narration: “We used to make *ruqya* before converting to Islam (*fi l-jāhiliyya*), so we asked, ‘O God’s Messenger, what is your opinion on that?’”

32 In Arabic: Muḥammad Bīr ‘Alī al-Rūmī al-Birkawī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya wa l-sayra al-Aḥmadiyya*.

33 Imam Birgivi, *The Path of Muhammad, a book on Islamic Morals and Ethics* (Translated Tosun Bayrak, Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 98.

34 ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Nabulusī, *al-Ḥadīqa al-nadiyya sharḥ al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya wa l-sayra al-Aḥmadiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2011), II: 147–149.

35 Al-Nabulusī, *al-Ḥadīqa*, II: 151.

causes (*asbāb*) are all in the hand of God, and He is the healer, none other ... everything other than Him is a but a means (*sabab*).<sup>36</sup>

Aḥmad al-Tijānī, manuscript sources reveal, clearly had a profound knowledge of the esoteric sciences. But his official position on them was more restrained than some of his contemporaries. This sort of nuance may have been a result of the large numbers of followers that began studying with him after his establishment in Fez in 1798. Similarly, ‘Uthmān b. Fūdī of West Africa’s Sokoto Caliphate seems to have been critical of the public misuse of these sciences,<sup>37</sup> while encouraging their use among an initiated elite.<sup>38</sup> I have earlier discussed the Tijāniyya’s ambivalence, and that of Sufism more broadly, to the esoteric sciences: suggesting that Sufi scholars tried to prioritize Qur’ān recitation and God’s remembrance over obscure formulations.<sup>39</sup> Tijānī texts make little or no mention of the more famous collections of esoteric sciences, such as Aḥmad al-Būnī’s *Shams al-ma’ārif al-kubrā*.<sup>40</sup> Ibrāhīm Niasse’s *Kāshif al-ilbās* makes a passing reference to al-Būnī as a master of “formulation” (*shakl*) and letter science, before citing Aḥmad Zarrūq’s explanation of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s censure of such sciences for potentially directing the practitioner away from God and towards the means.<sup>41</sup> The concern expressed seems to invoke the common theological preoccupation with “verification” shared by the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* network. The person whose knowledge of God’s oneness (*tawḥīd*) was not well established could be distracted by secondary causes.

36 Al-Nabulusī, *al-Ḥadīqa*, 11: 144.

37 ‘Uthmān b. Fūdī thus castigated those “who claim that they possess knowledge of the unseen through written magic or by sand-writing, from the positions of the stars ... who practice black magic to separate those who love each other, or husband from wife: all of that is unbelief.” See B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 28.

38 See for example Ibn Fūdī’s treatise on “God’s Greatest Name”, where he endorses the use of a three-by-three “magic square.” See ‘Uthmān b. Fūdī, *The Book of the Great Name of Allah* (Translated Muhammad Shareef, Sennar, Sudan: Sankore Institute of Islamic-African Studies, 2009).

39 Wright, *Living Knowledge*, 231–239.

40 al-Būnī’s text did appear in the study of esoteric sciences elsewhere in the eighteenth century, for example in al-Kashnāwī’s transmission received by al-Zabīdī. See Stefan Reichmuth, “Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (1732–1791) and the Africans: Islamic Discourse and Scholarly Networks in the Late Eighteenth Century,” in Scott Reese (ed.), *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 138.

41 Aḥmad Zarrūq, *Ta’sīs al-qawā’id*; cited in Ibrāhīm Niasse, *The Removal of Confusion Concerning the Saintly Seal Aḥmad al-Tijānī* (Translated Zachary Wright, Muhtar Holland, Abdullahi El-Okene, Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 2010), 30.

In widely circulated letters to disciples, al-Tijānī thus sometimes referred to the esoteric sciences as a “distant mirage” with “little benefit”, or even as “sciences of evil.”<sup>42</sup> Aside from these published letters, there is evidence that al-Tijānī actively discouraged the esoteric sciences among new initiates. Once a very wealthy man, Maḥmūd al-Tunisī, traveled a long distance to visit al-Tijānī in Fez. He asked to be instructed in the arts of *al-kīmīyā*, here probably including letter science besides just alchemy. Al-Tijānī forcefully reproached him: “Get out of this place immediately, do not even spend the night here!” The man went away, purified his intention, and returned to submit himself completely to the Shaykh “like a corpse in the hands of its funeral washer” and was granted divine illumination at al-Tijānī’s hands.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly abrupt was al-Tijānī’s censure of those shaykhs attracting students by the misuse of the esoteric sciences. One of his early disciples, Muḥammad al-‘Arabī al-Damrāwī of Tāza (d. 1798), had earlier been a disciple of ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Azūz (d. 1790, Marrakech), the nephew of Ibn Mubārak al-Lamaṭī the author of *al-Dhahab al-ibrīz* concerning the teachings of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dabbāgh (d. 1719, Fez). Ibn ‘Azūz had apparently gained a reputation for dealings with the jinn and the mastery of esoteric sciences, and perhaps even founded his own sub-branch of the Shādhiliyya. When asked about Ibn ‘Azūz, al-Tijānī waited until he heard from the Prophet Muḥammad: “He is the Satan of this [Muslim] community.”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps because of Ibn ‘Azūz’s training, al-Damrāwī also had a reputation for expertise in this field. “He had complete disposition (*taṣarruf*) with the sciences of boxes (*jadwāl*) and squares (*awfāq*)” such that he could obtain whatever he wanted from people. Upon first receiving al-Damrāwī, al-Tijānī told him unambiguously: “Whoever is associated with these matters, definitely he will not obtain illumination (*fath*).” So al-Damrāwī “left all of this behind him at the command of our master,” relates the Tijānī historian Aḥmad al-Sukayrij (d. 1944, Marrakech), “and he was granted the grand illumination.”<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, al-Tijānī’s reputation as a master of the esoteric sciences seems to have been part of his broader scholarly reputation in Fez.<sup>46</sup> Among the requests of the Tunisian scholar Ibrāhīm al-Riyāhī (d. 1850) upon his initiation into the Tijāniyya in 1802 was “the power of disposition (*taṣarruf*) by

42 Wright, *Living Knowledge*, 234–235.

43 Aḥmad Sukayrij, *Kashf al-ḥijāb ‘amman talāqā ma’a l-shaykh al-Tijānī min al-aṣḥāb* (Edited Muḥammad al-Rāḍī Kanūn, Rabat: Dār al-Amān, 2012), 243.

44 Sukayrij, *Kashf al-ḥijāb*, 195. See the lengthy fn 1, 195, for al-Rāḍī Kanūn’s discussion of Ibn ‘Azūz’s background.

45 Sukayrij, *Kashf al-ḥijāb*, 195–196.

46 Adnani, *La Tijaniyya*, 148–149.

God's greatest name," the knowledge of *al-kīmiyā'*, and the "subjection of spirits (*rūḥāniyya*), men and jinn."<sup>47</sup> Unpublished manuscript sources certainly substantiate a reputation of esoteric mastery. Perhaps the foremost keeper of such manuscripts today, al-Tijānī Cissé, once told an Arab student interested in such sciences: "You will never have to go outside of the Tijāniyya for any secret."<sup>48</sup> In other words, disciples saw al-Tijānī as having collected and verified the fruit of the Islamic esoteric sciences. According to the Shaykh's disciple Ibn Mishrī, "As for the discipline of secrets (*fann arbāb al-nawāmīs*), such as the secret of letters, squares, talismans, and other guarded, comprehensive secrets for the good of this world and the next: God singled him out and he had no equal in his age."<sup>49</sup>

While the use of the esoteric sciences within the Tijāniyya certainly carried a stern warning, elite Tijānīs strategically accessed these practices. However, the ensuing analysis of esoteric manuscripts demonstrates an emphasis on "verification", and a clear predilection for some sources over others. Moreover, the more "exotic" esoteric sciences (such as talismans and the like) unfold within a larger discourse on secret prayers and divine names that renders them mostly peripheral: present but largely secondary.

### A Momentous Encounter in Mecca

After accomplishing the pilgrimage rites in Mecca, al-Tijānī sought out the mysterious Shaykh Aḥmad 'Abd-Allāh al-Hindī (the "Indian"), who died a few days after their encounter in 1774. This meeting, for which the published references are vague, demonstrates the potential depth of connection between eighteenth-century scholars whatever their differences in background or lack of lengthy companionship. Al-Tijānī's more celebrated contacts with Maḥmūd al-Kurdī in Cairo and Muḥammad al-Sammān in Medina were the sources for the Tijāniyya's later incorporation of widely known Sufi prayers, as mentioned above. The lesser-known al-Hindī, the *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* reveals, also had an important imprint on al-Tijānī's arsenal of powerful prayers, but this time with more explicit emphasis on the world of secret divine names.

Tijānī sources, such as *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī*, speak to the intensity of this meeting, but tell us little about Aḥmad al-Hindī himself. According to the

47 Sukayrij, *Kashf al-hijāb*, 212.

48 Author observation, Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé, Cairo, Egypt, February 2011.

49 Muḥammad b. al-Mishrī, *al-Jāmi' li-durar al-'ulūm al-fā'iḍa min biḥār al-quṭb al-maktūm* (Edited Muḥammad al-Rāḍī Kanūn, Rabat: Dār al-Amān, 2012), 50.

contemporary Moroccan Tijānī researcher Rāḍī Kanūn, al-Hindī was one of the great scholars (*a'lām*) of the Naqshbandiyya, whose spiritual arrival (*wuṣūl*) had been at the hands of an unidentified saint from Tanta, Egypt.<sup>50</sup> Tanta was also the origin of the Aḥmad al-Shinnāwī (d. 1619), apparently a transmitter of both the Shaṭṭariyya and Naqshbandiyya Sufi orders. In the *Kunnāsh al-rihla*, Al-Hindī specifically invokes lines of transmission for certain prayers through al-Shinnāwī's teacher, Sabghat-Allāh al-Shaṭṭārī (d. 1606, Bijapur), and al-Shinnāwī's student Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1660, Medina).<sup>51</sup> Sabghat-Allāh al-Shaṭṭārī was a disciple of Wajih al-Din 'Alawī, the inheritor of Muḥammad al-Ghawth (d. 1563, Ahmedabad), the author of *al-Jawāhir al-khams*.<sup>52</sup> Aḥmad al-Qushāshī, originally from Jerusalem, studied with prominent shaykhs of the Shaṭṭariyya and the Naqshbandiyya such as Sabghat-Allāh and Muḥammad al-Shinnāwī, and then taught later scholars such as Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī and 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī. Aḥmad al-Hindī thus appears to have been part of the network traced back to Ibrāhīm Kūrānī in Medina, many of whose members were Indian residents in the Ḥijāz and who alternated Sufi affiliations between the Shaṭṭariyya, the Khalwatiyya, and the Naqshbandiyya.

The story of al-Tijānī's encounter with al-Hindī, as related in *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī*, is as follows. In Mecca, al-Tijānī "sought out the people of goodness and righteousness, of guidance and felicity, as was his custom." Upon hearing of al-Hindī, al-Tijānī requested an audience with him, but was told that the Indian shaykh had confined himself to pious retreat (*khalwa*) for the rest of his life as a condition of the secret divine names he was using. Al-Hindī thus communicated with al-Tijānī only by letter and through a designated servant-disciple (*khadīm*), saying to him: "You are the inheritor of my knowledge and secrets, my divine gifts and lights." After writing this to al-Tijānī, al-Hindī informed his servant, "This is the one I've been waiting for: he is my inheritor (*wārith*)." The disciple protested, "But I have been serving you for eighteen years, and now a man comes from the far west, and you tell me that he is your inheritor?" al-Hindī said that it was not his choice, but a divine command. Were it up to him, he would have given his secrets to his own son who, after all, had been with him longer than the disciple. Al-Hindī said of al-Tijānī: "I have been hoping for him, and drawing near to him in the unseen (*al-ghayb*) in order give him something. God prohibited (its sharing) until its owner should appear." He then informed al-Tijānī that he would obtain the spiritual station (*maqām*)

50 See footnote Muḥammad al-Rāḍī Kanūn in Ibn al-Mishrī, *Rawḍ al-muḥibb al-fānī*, fn 1, 54.

51 Aḥmad al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-rihla* (M.S., Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé Archive), 30.

52 Richard Eaton, *The Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1978), 112.

of Abū Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. Informing al-Tijānī that he (al-Hindī) would die in twenty days, he implored al-Tijānī to share some of the secrets with his own son. After al-Hindī's death on the exact day predicted, al-Tijānī called upon al-Hindī's son, and gave him the specified secrets.<sup>53</sup>

While the *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī* relates that al-Tijānī received from al-Hindī "sciences, secrets, wisdom, and lights," and elsewhere "a great secret," nowhere is the content of this transmission elaborated in published sources.<sup>54</sup> A few key pages from al-Tijānī's *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* reference the transmission from al-Hindī: "All that is found in these pages, from the reference to the Qur'ān's opening chapter to here, was authorized to us by our shaykh, the righteous guide, our master Aḥmad b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Hindī, just as his shaykhs gave him authorization. And he wrote me an authorization for all of this."<sup>55</sup> The four pages mentioned mostly contain elaboration of the virtues of certain chapters and verses of the Qur'ān. For example, the one who recites together the Qur'ān chapters "Prostration" (*sajda*, chapter thirty-three) and "Sovereignty" (*mulk*, chapter fifty-nine) will have the same reward as one who stood in worship for the "Night of Power" during Ramadan.<sup>56</sup>

Another manuscript of secrets, al-Tijānī's *Kunnāsh al-aṣfar al-maktūm*, further underscores the significance of al-Tijānī's encounter with al-Hindī.<sup>57</sup> This manuscript speaks of God's "greatest name" that was "the name our Shaykh inherited from saintly succor (*ghawth*), the comprehensive unique one (*al-fard al-jāmi'*) when he passed away in Mecca."<sup>58</sup> This is undoubtedly a reference to al-Hindī, who is also described in the *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī* as the "saintly pole" (*quṭb*) of his time.<sup>59</sup> This name is also likely the "great secret"

53 'Alī Harāzīm al-Barāda, *Kitāb jawāhir al-ma'ānī wa bulūgh al-amānī fi fuyūd saydī Abī l-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Tijānī* (Edited Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé, Cairo: al-Sharika al-Dawliyya, 2011), I: 58–59.

54 Al-Barāda, *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī*, I: 58–59. See also, al-Mishrī, *al-Jāmi'*, 66–67.

55 Al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 30.

56 This narration is attributed to Anas, the Prophet's companion. See al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 27.

57 This typed manuscript, many Tijānīs report, is obtainable in Fez, Morocco, from private manuscript sellers. The copy I quote from here is contained in the archive of Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé in Medina-Baye Senegal. This work, in the handwriting of Sayyid 'Alī Cissé, appears to differ from the typed version, in both content and title: *al-Kunnāsh al-maktūm al-makhzūn al-adhī lā yuṭālī'uhu illā man lahu al-idhn* ("The treasured hidden notebook that will not be opened except by one who has permission").

58 Al-Tijānī, *al-Kunnāsh al-maktūm al-makhzūn*, 115.

59 Al-Barāda, *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī*, I: 58–59. This is when al-Hindī instructs al-Tijānī to go to Medina after his own death to "meet the saintly pole after me ... Muhammad al-Sammān."

from al-Hindī alluded to in *Jawāhir al-maʿānī*. Here was al-Tijānī's description of this "greatest name" from al-Hindī:

Whoever desires the greatest sainthood, and arrival to the most exalted of states, let him [say] the greatest name, the letters by which the heavens and the earth were established. It is the guarded, treasured name in truth, which has power over all the other names. Its secret is not obtained except by the permission of one who has permission. For the one who takes it like this, knowing the name, nothing is hidden from him among the affairs of this world or the next. He will become a saint, recipient of spiritual unveilings, provision, success, and God's love.<sup>60</sup>

The text goes on to explain that one recitation of this name is equivalent to all the glorification and praise on the tongues of all created beings, from the beginning of time to the end.<sup>61</sup> Following a lengthy discussion, the text concludes: "And as for the greatest name: it is not written here, but is only (transmitted) from mouth to mouth."<sup>62</sup>

Al-Tijānī's encounter with al-Hindī, despite the slight reference in published sources of the Tijāniyya, thus constituted a momentous transmission of knowledge. Among a wide range of secret prayers, al-Hindī passed to al-Tijānī a certain "greatest name" of God. Perhaps it was this secret that al-Hindī had waited years, hoping for al-Tijānī's arrival to deliver to him. Significantly, this name is not written even in al-Tijānī's own *Kunnāsh*. Secret notebooks, in the end, are still *texts*, and thus cannot take the place of person-to-person knowledge transmission. After bequeathing his entire treasury of secrets to al-Tijānī, al-Hindī then requested the Maghrebi pilgrim to look after the instruction of al-Hindī's own son. Although al-Hindī and al-Tijānī only "met" each other briefly (and then only through an intermediary), al-Hindī's connection to al-Tijānī went beyond the close disciples who had spent years in his company, or even that of al-Hindī's own children.

### The Book of Five Jewels

Interspersed in the discussion of al-Hindī's secrets, al-Tijānī's *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* makes frequent reference to the *Kitāb al-jawāhir al-khams* ("Book of Five

60 Al-Tijānī, *Al-Kunnāsh al-maktūm al-makhzūn*, 115.

61 Ibid., 115–116.

62 Ibid., 118.

Jewels”), one of the Islamic world’s best known collections of esoteric sciences.<sup>63</sup> The Shattariyya Sufi order to which its author Muhammad al-Ghawth and his more famous successor Ibrahim Kurānī belonged has largely disappeared. But as the order’s most famous text, the *Five Jewels* has ensured the Shattariyya’s lasting influence within the Sufi revival of the eighteenth century. The book seems to have circulated throughout the Islamic world, from India to Morocco.<sup>64</sup> Al-Tijānī’s *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* certainly testifies to the importance of this work in eighteenth-century scholarly networks. Today, the work is widely known within Tijānī circles, and the most popular published version of the work in West Africa was prepared under the auspices of the twentieth-century Moroccan Tijānī scholar Idrīs al-‘Irāqī, for many years the head of the central Tijānī *zāwiya* in Fez, Morocco.<sup>65</sup> Tijānī scholars may have been the primary source for the book’s popularity in West Africa. The Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Bello b. ‘Uthmān Fūdī (of the Qādiriyya), apparently requested permission in the book from his friend ‘Umar Tāl,<sup>66</sup> the renowned propagator of the Tijāniyya in nineteenth-century West Africa.

As mentioned above, there has been a good deal of speculation as to the significance of eighteenth-century scholarly interchanges, most of which seem to have been loosely connected to the intellectual legacy of Ibrahim Kūrānī and his students. It seems evident that, along with *ḥadīth* sciences and the study of Ibn al-‘Arabī, scholars linked to Ibrahim Kūrānī transmitted various esoteric sciences, sourced primarily from the *Five Jewels*. Kūrānī himself studied the book with his teacher Ahmad Qushāshī (d. 1661), who had received it from Ahmad al-Shinnāwī (d. 1619), and he from Sibghat-Allah al-Barwajī (d. 1606),

63 For more on the work’s contents and resonance, see Carl Ernst, “Jawāher-e Kamsa,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 14, 6 (2008), 608–609; Khaled Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 249–251. For more on the life of the book’s author, see Carl Ernst, “Persecution and Circumspection in Shattari Sufism,” in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: thirteen centuries of controversies and polemics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 416–435; Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 103–104.

64 Ernst, “Jawāher-e Kamsa,” 608–609.

65 The actual editing was done by ‘Abd Allāh al-Yisār al-Tijānī. For more information on previous printings on the book by Tijanis and spread around the Islamic world, see Ernst, “Jawāher-e Kamsa,” 608–609.

66 A. Dedoud Ould Abdellah, “Le Passage au Sud: Muhammad al-Hafiz et son Héritage.” Jean-Louis Triaud and David Robinson (eds.), *La Tijaniyya: Une Confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l’Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), 93.

the successor of the book's author Muhammad al-Ghawth (d. 1562, India).<sup>67</sup> Sibghat-Allah brought the book with him from India to Arabia, where he first translated the book from its original Persian to Arabic, although al-Ghawth himself may have written a first draft of the text in Arabic.<sup>68</sup>

The Egyptian al-Shinnāwī's commentary on the *Jawāhir*, sometimes referenced as *Tahliyat al-baṣā'ir bi-tamshiya 'alā l-jawāhir*,<sup>69</sup> often appears in Tijāni accounts as the means of the *Jawāhir*'s transmission.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless al-Shinnāwī's unpublished commentary is now almost impossible to locate, except for a barely legible copy in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Maghrebi handwriting.<sup>71</sup> The commentary appears to add substantial information to the currently published version of the *Jawāhir*, and a report circulates within the Tijāniyya that al-Shinnāwī had once declared no one would find his commentary except that God had given him permission to use the prayers contained.<sup>72</sup>

It is not clear from whom al-Tijānī received the *Five Jewels*, but there are two likely sources. The first is from al-Hindī himself, who by virtue of his Indian origins and placement in Mecca would have undoubtedly been familiar with the book. As mentioned above, al-Hindī elsewhere references chains of transmission passing through Shaṭṭarī propagators of the *Five Jewels*, such as Sabghat-Allāh and al-Qushāshī. Al-Tijānī's *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* suggests such a possibility since discussion of the book is bracketed by other prayers in which al-Hindī authorized him. However, al-Tijānī states that his source is the Yemeni scholar Sālim b. Shaykhān (d. 1636) of the Bā-'Alawiyya Sufi order:

The direct source (*min aṣlihi mubāshira*) for this book has been the beloved brother (*shaqq al-ḥabīb*) in knowledge of the people of spiritual

67 For the line of transmission from al-Gawth to Kūrānī, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification: the forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century," in *IJMES*, 38, 2 (2006), 271.

68 Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), EN 26, 276.

69 Al-Tijānī, *Kunnash al-riḥla*, 38.

70 This was the case for 'Umar Tāl, *Rimāḥ ḥizb al-rahīm 'alā nuḥūr ḥizb al-rajīm* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001), 446.

71 Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Microfilm 647, MS 14.

72 Tijānī b. 'Alī Cissé, interview with author, Medina-Baye, Senegal, July, 2016.

witnessing of the unseen, the gnostic (*al-‘arīf bi-Llāh*) al-Sayyid (Aḥmad) Sālim b. Aḥmad Shaykhān Bā-‘Alawī.<sup>73</sup>

The reference to Sālim as the “direct source” likely refers to al-Tijānī’s access to Sālim’s hand-written transcription of the *Five Jewels* along with Shinnāwī’s commentary.<sup>74</sup>

Aside from demonstrating al-Tijānī’s connection to yet another prominent Sufi lineage (the Yemeni Bā ‘Alawiyya), the attribution to Sālim b. Shaykhān is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that the network linked to Qushāshī and Kurānī was not the only source of transmission for the *Five Jewels*. Sālim’s primary teacher, besides the Moroccan ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Idrīsī al-Maknāsī (buried in the Meccan zāwiya over which Sālim presided), was none other than al-Shinnāwī himself. Secondly, direct attribution to Sālim could serve as a claim to superior understanding of the book’s contents. According to some accounts, Sālim read the entire book with Shinnāwī seven times, and himself wrote the commentary (under his teacher’s name) on fourth and fifth of the “Five Jewels” as Shinnāwī had only been able to write commentary on the first three.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, al-Tijānī’s notebook contains a lengthy letter from Sālim explaining the intricacies of the saintly hierarchy and reconciling the understanding of Muhammad al-Ghawth with that of Ibn al-‘Arabī.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the nature of al-Tijānī’s instruction in the *Five Jewels*, the sense from his notebook is that he was a prodigious student quickly processing information from authoritative sources.

Given the importance of the *Five Jewels*, some brief analysis of the text is warranted. Previous discussion of the *Five Jewels* has sometimes been obstructed by the tendency to exoticize the genre of Islamic esoteric sciences. A nineteenth-century orientalist thus believed the work “is largely made up of Hindu customs which, in India, have become part of Muhammadanism”<sup>77</sup> The general contents of the book, most scholars now recognize, unfold within the universe of Islamic references and the Arabic language. Ernst points out that

73 Al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 34. The first name “Aḥmad” before Sālim appears in the text, but it seems to have been crossed out. Later al-Tijānī reproduces a letter by the same scholar who refers to himself as “*al-faqīr* (the humble Sufi) Sālim”.

74 Munīr b. Sālim Bāzhīr, *al-Jawāhir al-ḥissān min tarājīm al-sāda Āl Shaykhān* (unpublished document prepared for author, July, 2016), 2. I thank former Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies graduate student Ayaz Asadov for prevailing on the scholars of Hadramawt, Yemen, to produce this document for me.

75 Bāzhīr, *al-Jawāhir al-ḥissān*, 2. Bāzhīr here quotes from Muḥammad al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-athar fī a’yān al-qarn al-ḥādī ‘ashr*.

76 Al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 34–36.

77 T.P. Hughes, as cited by Ernst, “Jawāher-e Kamsa,” 608–609.

the beginning sections of the book are “clearly aimed at the ordinary [Muslim] believer,” while “succeeding parts increasingly aim at more elite audiences.”<sup>78</sup> Of the “Five Jewels” or chapters of the book, the first two deal primarily with prayers or supplications to be performed at specific times or for certain needs. For example, there are prayers for forgiveness (*ṣalāt al-tasbīh*), for guidance (*ṣalāt al-istikhāra*), for making up missed prayers (*ṣalāt kafārat al-ṣalāt*), for “illuminating the heart” (*ṣalāt tanwīr al-qalb*), for “encountering the Prophetic presence” (*malāqāt al-ḥaḍra al-nabawīyya*). There are also different prayers for the beginning of each lunar month, and for other special days of the year, such as the nights of Ramaḍān, the fifteenth of Sha‘bān, or the tenth of Muḥarram.

The book’s more “esoteric” accent develops in last three chapters. The third “Jewel” introduces the reader to the system of numerological equivalences to the Arabic letters (*ḥisāb abjada*) that comes to characterize the rest of the book. Muḥammad al-Ghawth suggests that the divine response (*ijāba*) to the worshipper’s supplication is connected to the spiritual “weight” of letters and words, which connect the divine kingdom (*malakūt*) to the seen world (*mulk*). Each letter is in fact linked to a divine name, an angelic presence, and – by way of indicating influence over the worldly kingdom – to a phase of the moon:

The twenty-eight letters (of the Arabic alphabet) are, at their source, twenty-eight comprehensive divine names. Every letter has a spiritual presence (*rūḥānī*) entrusted with that letter and occupied with the remembrance of the (respective) divine name ... so when they (saints) became engrossed with invoking the names, they found the trustees and spiritual presences of these names by way of unveiling and ocular witnessing. They found twenty-eight divine names, from which manifested the twenty-eight phases of the moon (*manāzil al-qamar*). Just as there are twenty-eight letters, there are (a like number of) determinative, comprehensive names (*asmā’ kawniyya kulliyya*), and so there are twenty-eight lunar abodes. What is found among the influences in the world: they are due to the determinative names, for what is seen is the (worldly) kingdom (*mulk*), and what is unseen is the spiritual kingdom (*malakūt*).<sup>79</sup>

Al-Tijani considered this discussion significant enough to copy portions of it, along with the elucidation of al-Shinnāwī: “The excellence of every supplica-

78 Ernst, “Jawāher-e Kamsa,” 608–609. See Ernst’s article for a more detailed list of chapter headings.

79 Muḥammad al-Ghawth, *Kitāb al-jawāhir al-khams*, (‘Abd-Allāh al-Yasār al-Tijānī, unknown publication details, transcription date 1318/1900), 128–129.

tion is in its letters and words ... and the efficacy (*ḥukm*) of the letters is by the efficacy of the angelic names (*al-asmā' al-jabarūtiyya*) attached to them." Al-Tijānī would later explain in a letter to disciples:

There are elevated spirits, pure and immaculate, who are in charge of producing results for these secrets, continually occupied with rendering them effective. These spiritual beings have specific procedures, and these procedures are what permit prayers to be answered more quickly than the blink of an eye.<sup>80</sup>

The logic behind the “science of letters” emerges then from a deep reflection on the relationship between the letters comprising the revealed text and the angelic world.

In the context of eighteenth-century scholarship’s search for “realization” (*taḥqīq*), the *Five Jewels* provides significant evidence to the way in which *ḥadīth* study and the search for divine grace (*faḍl*) combined in knowledge acquisition. Al-Tijānī’s first reference to the *Five Jewels* in his *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* is to the aforementioned *ṣalāt al-kafāra*, a prayer that could make up for any ritual prayers missed in a Muslim’s lifetime. The following citation is taken from al-Tijānī’s *Kunnāsh* based on Shinnawi’s commentary, with divergences from the published *Five Jewels* based on Shinnāwī’s commentary rendered in italics:

Whoever has missed a ritual prayer and does not know<sup>81</sup> how many, let him pray on Friday four extra prayer cycles (*raka'āt*) [...] The prince of the faithful, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may God ennoble his countenance, said: “I heard God’s messenger, peace and blessing upon him, say: ‘Even if a person has missed seventy years of prayer, this will cover him.’ They said, ‘O messenger of God, mankind’s lifespan does not exceed seventy or eighty years, so what is the meaning of this description?’<sup>82</sup> [He replied] “Then it covers his prayer and the prayer of his parents and children, and the prayers of all are accepted.” [...]

*In another narration: “Whoever prays on Friday before the afternoon prayer four cycles [...].” ‘Uthmān, may God be pleased with him, said: “I heard the*

80 Al-Barāda, *Jawāhir al-ma‘ānī*, 197; previously cited in Wright, *Living Knowledge*, 234.

81 In the manuscript: *lam ya‘lam* (does not know); in the published version, *lam yadrī* (is not aware).

82 The point being that seventy years of prayer more than covers an individual, since a person is only responsible for prayer from age ten.

*Prophet, peace and blessing upon him, say, "This prayer covers the missed prayers, even those for one hundred years." And 'Alī, may God be pleased with him, said: "I heard the Prophet, God's blessing and peace upon him, say: "This prayer covers the missed prayers of five hundred years." And 'Ā'isha said, "I heard the Prophet, peace and blessing upon him, say: "This prayer covers the missed prayers of one thousand years. Who makes this prayer without further need of compensation, it covers the missed prayers of his father and mother."*<sup>83</sup>

Noteworthy here is that a book of "esoteric sciences" elaborates on different narrations from the Prophet concerning a prayer to fulfill a basic obligation of Islamic law. An obvious question would be why such a prayer would be transmitted through such manuscripts (and thus by initiation) rather than through more public *ḥadīth* transmission. The likely answer is that scholars could thereby ensure a lay audience did not misinterpret this special prayer to avoid praying the five daily prayers altogether. The passage also demonstrates the role of al-Shinnāwī, referred to in al-Tijānī's text as "the eye of (Muḥammad) al-Ghawth's spiritual presence," in heightening the later scholarly reception of the *Five Jewels* by providing a variety of mutually supportive narrations.

As a comprehensive collection of powerful prayers, where the author and later commentators painstakingly explain the sources and logic for such prayers, the *Five Jewels* clearly played a significant role in eighteenth-century scholarly exchanges. Classic elements of the Islamic esoteric sciences are obviously present in this book: letter sciences, and the secret names of angels and jinn for example. But the work systematically integrates such references into a holistic understanding of an individual's relationship with the unseen world. And most importantly perhaps, the book prioritized the believer's relationship to God over subsidiary spirits under his command. It is noteworthy, in other words, that eighteenth-century scholars demonstrated clear preference for works like the *Five Jewels* over other sources for the esoteric sciences, such as Aḥmad al-Būnī's *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*.<sup>84</sup> In comparison to other works of the genre, the *Five Jewels* may have been read by eighteenth-century scholars as somewhat distinctive in its ability to rationalize the esoteric sciences as unfolding within the logic of the Qur'ān's revelation.

83 Al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 31.

84 For an analysis of this work, see Edgar Francis, "Islamic Symbols and Sufi Rituals for Protection and Healing: Religion and Magic in the Writings of Ahmad ibn Ali al-Buni (d. 622/1225)" (Ph.D. Dissertation Islamic Studies, University of California Los Angeles, 2005).

The *Five Jewels* was thus a significant source of inspiration for eighteenth-century scholarly networks. The claim is not that such scholars used the book in the same way as did Muḥammad al-Ghawth and his early disciples of the Shaṭṭariyya. Indeed, later scholars reading the book had their own *Ṭariqa* affiliations that obviously emphasized other forms of worship or litanies over those described in the text. But the *Five Jewels* contained elements that clearly resonated with eighteenth-century preoccupations. Firstly, it provided a coherent means to “verifying” the unseen world, thus corresponding to a much larger desire for religious verification (*taḥqīq*) expressed in *ḥadīth* study, theology, and Sufism. Secondly, the book amassed a number of short prayers (such as *ṣalāt al-kafāra*) that offered access to divine grace (*faḍl*), erasing past mistakes and sins that many believed to weigh heavily on the Muslim world in a perceived age of corruption.<sup>85</sup>

This emphasis on grace may partially explain the popularity of al-Shinnāwī’s commentary on the *Five Jewels*. There are places where al-Shinnāwī departs entirely from the original text, for example, in discussing the invocation of blessing on the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣalāt ‘alā l-nabī*). By all accounts, this practice became an integral component of the *Ṭariqa Muḥammadiyya* in the eighteenth century. Here is an example of al-Shinnāwī’s writing on the topic as it appears in al-Tijānī’s handwritten transcription:

Whoever desires to have the light of (Muḥammad) Muṣṭafa’s beauty, peace and blessing upon him, illuminate him like the rising sun, let him bath every night from Friday to Friday, wear clean clothes and perfume himself. And every night (for a week), let him read the following prayer one thousand times: “O God, send blessings and peace upon the body (*jasad*) of Muḥammad among all bodies, and upon the tomb of our master Muḥammad among all tombs, and on upon the earth (around the grave) of our master Muḥammad among all earth ...” He who embarks on the preceding will become acquainted with (regularly) meeting him (the Prophet), God’s blessing and peace upon him, and he will obtain from him what he desires, finding true honor and elevation from him directly.<sup>86</sup>

This “commentary”, appearing at the end of second chapter of the *Five Jewels*, bears no real connection to Ghawth’s previous discussion on prayers to avoid

85 Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet*, 155–158.

86 Al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 31. This prayer is similar (but not identical) to the opening of the third (Wednesday) section of Muḥammad al-Jazūlī’s (d. 1465) *Dalā’il khayrāt*.

unfortunate astrological alignments (*daf' nuḥusat al-kawākib*). Al-Shinnāwī's inclusion offers a deeper opportunity for religious "verification" (*taḥqīq*) that eighteenth-century scholars ardently desired. He provides a practical method for encountering the enduring presence of the Prophet Muḥammad so important for the Tijāniyya and many contemporary Sufi communities. The transmission of the *Five Jewels*, especially through the commentary of al-Shinnāwī, must thus be considered an important reference and inspiration for the eighteenth-century *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* phenomenon.

### The Fulfillment of Desires in Summoning Angels and Jinn

Al-Tijānī's travel notebook also references a more obscure work on esoteric sciences, the *Ighāthat al-Lahfān fī taskhīr al-amlāk wa l-jān* ("The Fulfillment of Desires in the summoning of Angels and Jinn").<sup>87</sup> Al-Tijānī does not mention the work's author, 'Umar b. Mas'ūd al-Mundhirī Sulayfī (d. 1747, Oman), by name. But he was clearly appreciative of the book's contents, reproducing nineteenth pages of the text in his own handwriting. These pages thus make up nearly forty percent of al-Tijānī's *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, and in fact precede discussion of al-Hindī and the *Five Jewels* detailed above. There is no reference to how al-Tijānī found the book. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that scholars in Mecca and Medina transmitted al-Mundhirī's works to students interested in the esoteric sciences. The fact that al-Tijānī spent time copying long sections of the book indicates that it had not yet appeared in the Maghreb. Moreover, he likely did not obtain a copy of the book himself, as he probably did in the case of the *Five Jewels*, but viewed the book among the personal manuscript collection of a scholarly acquaintance.

'Umar al-Mundhirī hailed from the town of Sulayf, in the 'Ibrī district of Oman near the country's modern border with the Emirates. Little is known about him, except that he was the student of the renowned Omani scholar, Sālim b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Bū Sū'aydī. Aside from his writing on the esoteric sciences, al-Mundhirī also wrote epistles on the subjects of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), ethics (*adab*), and medicine (*ṭibb*). According to one description: "In his time, many people from all places sought him out. Some of them asked for legal

87 'Umar al-Mundhirī Sulayfī, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān fī taskhīr al-amlāk wa l-jān* (Beirut: Dār al-Mizān, 2016). This work is of course not to be confused with the more famous book by a similar title: *Ighāthat al-lahfān min maṣā'id al-shayṭān* of Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya.

rulings, some sought healing, and others guidance.”<sup>88</sup> Al-Mundhirī’s more famous work was the exhaustive contribution on medicine and the esoteric sciences, published in three volumes, *Kashf al-asrār al-makhfiya fī ‘ilm al-ajrām al-samāwiya wa l-ruqūm al-ḥarfiya*.<sup>89</sup> The *Fulfillment of Desires* sometimes has been printed at the end of the last volume of this larger work,<sup>90</sup> but it was more recently published in Beirut as a separate book.

Despite its provocative title, the *Fulfillment of Desires* mostly contains reflections on the relationship between God, the words used in a person’s supplication, and the angelic beings that answer prayers by God’s direction. There is a clear accent on differentiating between legitimate esoteric inquiries, and those that are beyond the pale of Islamic scholarly activity. The author begins his work with the advice: “First of all, I advise God’s servants to avoid associating partners with God (*shirk*) and to be content with His decree.”<sup>91</sup> In other words, a person’s relationship with unseen spirits and powers should not undermine the basic foundation of his monotheism (*tawḥīd*). The reader is thus reminded that all agency belongs to God, and that the struggle to better worldly conditions unfolds within divine decree, not from discontent with God’s will. Al-Mundhirī declares in his introduction that he composed the work “when I saw the ignorance and corruption claimed to be knowledge in this science ... and not one of the scholars (*‘ulamā’*) would speak up.”<sup>92</sup> He claims his book is meant to clarify “the science at the source of spiritualism (*‘ilm uṣūl al-rūḥāniyya*)” and the “authentic entry points (*abwāb*)” of this knowledge: those “derived from trustworthy books and from gnostic shaykhs, endowed with disposition (*al-mashāyakh al-‘arīfīn al-mutaṣarrifīn*) in creation by the permission of God.”<sup>93</sup> He specifically castigates unreliable and misleading texts, such as *al-Nafaḥat al-rabbāniyya fī ‘ilm al-rūḥāniyya*, relating how one respected scholar threw it into the ocean since “everything in it is mistaken, without any foundation.”<sup>94</sup> Al-Mundhirī marshals a host of scholarly authorities to explain the believer’s acceptable relationship with the unseen world of spirits. The text thus cites famous Muslim scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Ibn

88 See introduction of al-Mundhirī, *Kashf al-asrār al-makhfiya fī ‘ilm al-ajrām al-samāwiya wa l-ruqūm al-ḥarfiya* (Beirut: Mawata al-‘Ilmi, 2003). The biography of the author is scanned and available online, <http://imgur.com/w9QEr05>. Accessed November 1, 2016.

89 This work was first published by the Ministry of Culture, Sultanate of Oman, 1986.

90 See, for example, an online description of the 1986 publication, <http://www.ddsunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=165334>. Accessed November 1, 2016.

91 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 7; cited in al-Tijani, *al-Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 1.

92 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 7.

93 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 7.

94 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 15. I have been unable to identify the text criticized here.

Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1499), and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) in support of the ensuing spiritual reflections.

The *Fulfillment of Desires*' primary purpose, and certainly that which is emphasized in the pages copied by al-Tijānī, is to arm the individual with protection in dealing with the realm of spirits and Jinn. Al-Mundhirī first starts with particular verses of the Qurʾān, relating for example al-Suyūṭī's opinion that the "Throne Verse" (*ayat al-kursī*) was sufficient protection from the Jinn.<sup>95</sup> But the author goes on to introduce a number of supplications to protect a person involved in the "science of spiritualism" (*ʿilm al-rūḥāniyya*). Here is a typical introduction to one such supplication.

Know, O seeker of the sciences of spiritualism, may God bring you all security, that you have met with a great peril and weighty adventure. So prepare yourself with the weapons to protect you from the evil of this adventure, and secure yourself from this danger. May God grant you victory over your enemies: those who are watching you, though you see them not.<sup>96</sup>

The prayer that follows this description is alleged the power to place the reciter in the hand of God: protected from people, Jinn, and all created beings. Here is an excerpt from the supplication, which al-Mundhirī attributes to the Prophet Muḥammad:

With the name of God, I have been shrouded. In the strength of God, I have sought refuge. To the power of God, I have seized hold ... I have entered into the enveloping ocean waves of the secrets of the veils of light ... I have been grasped in the unlimited hand of God that shields me from the harm of all created beings in the heavens and the two earths.<sup>97</sup>

This was clearly the sort of powerful prayer that interested al-Tijānī, and the particular supplication mentioned here continues to be transmitted within the Tijāniyya.<sup>98</sup> While the prayers mentioned from the *Ighātha* were later transmitted through specific Sufi orders (such as the Tijāniyya), it is noteworthy that they were originally considered part of an elite scholarly inheritance to be transmitted irrespective of specific Sufi affiliation.

95 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 18. The Qurʾān verse here is 2:255.

96 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 27.

97 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 27–28; cited in al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 2.

98 Tijānī b. ʿAlī Cissé, interview with author, Medina-Baye, Senegal, July 2015.

Al-Tijānī's consideration for the *Fulfillment of Desires* is of course not simply explained by the text's emphasis on protection from malevolent forces. He also copied prayers from al-Mundhirī's text that endowed reciters with extraordinary spiritual benefits, along with protection from evil. Here is an excerpt from a prayer attributed to 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Mawākīsī:

O my Lord, I ask You by that which the prophets and messengers have used to call upon You, and by that which they have used to glorify You, and by that which the bearers of Your Throne, and those brought near to You among the Angels, have used to glorify and magnify You. [I ask] that You protect me from every enemy among the Jinn and men, among all of the worlds, those I know and those I do not know ... [I ask] that You give me a life in obedience to You, that you give me understanding of Your divine knowledge, that you grant me the companionship of Your righteous servants, the special saints (*abdāl*), the truthful ones. And [I ask] that you make me among them, ... and that You allow me to drink from the cup of Your love.<sup>99</sup>

According to al-Mundhirī's citation of the unidentified al-Mawākīsī, the benefit for the one who reads this prayer "cannot be explained in (many) pages," but it includes the following:

His spirit (*rūḥ*) will ascend in the highest heavenly kingdoms, greeting the Angels, and that he will be granted full power of disposition (*taṣrīf*) ... and he will become familiar with spiritual encounters coming through the door of the greatest effusion (*al-fayḍ al-a'ẓam*) ... For the reciter of this prayer, even if he were to call to a bird up in the air, it would come down to him.<sup>100</sup>

Such descriptions clearly demonstrate the interest of eighteenth-century scholars in the obtaining powerful prayers. They also provide some insight into the religious aspirations of these scholars and their followers. Powerful prayers were tools to actualize the potentialities of the human condition.

Besides such supplications, other references in the text to summoning particular Angels place the *Fulfillment of Desires* well within the genre of "esoteric sciences." This book, along with the *Five Jewels*, nonetheless emphasized the theological logic of such sciences, and situated their practice firmly within

99 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 62–63; cited in al-Tijānī, *Kunnāsh al-riḥla*, 10–11. I have been unable to identify al-Mawākīsī.

100 Al-Mundhirī, *Ighāthat al-lahfān*, 63.

a broader context of an individual's worship of God and relationship to the unseen world. These texts thus represent the manner in which eighteenth-century scholarship was largely reconciled to such practices.

### Conclusion

Analysis of the *Kunnāsh al-riḥla* of Aḥmad al-Tijānī points to the widespread transmission of “secrets” or esoteric sciences within the eighteenth-century *Tariqa Muhammadiyah* networks. Scholars from distant lands met together in places like Cairo and Medina, not only to exchange *ḥadīth*, ideas on *ijtihād*, or Sufi allegiances; but also to share powerful prayers and secret names of God. It is true that many of these meetings were not long and that networks of exchange can tell us very little about the similarity of ideas among various scholars. But the transmission of secret prayers, most of which were happily received by later Tijānī disciples with their non-Tijani origins intact, meant that such relationships with *Tariqa Muhammadiyah* networks were deeper than formerly observed. Meetings between scholars in the eighteenth century were important not only for discussions of *ijtihād and ḥadīth*, they could be moments of powerful spiritual transfer.

Al-Tijānī's use of the Islamic esoteric tradition was marked by certain ambivalence. On one hand, he warned the lay Muslim (and Sufi) community against this “science of secrets” as a distraction to the individual's reliance on God. On the other, his disciples no doubt saw al-Tijānī's mastery of this discipline as unrivaled among his contemporaries. Al-Tijānī's own travel notebook demonstrates his interest in this field. But this interest developed within a larger theological preoccupation with God's oneness (*tawḥīd*), and the relationship between divine oneness and secondary causes (*asbāb*). The textual referents upon which al-Tijānī drew, namely the *Five Jewels* and the *Fulfillment of Desires*, were marked by a larger fascination with powerful prayers and a clear reflection on the “science of letters” from within the context of orthodox theology. Significant for eighteenth-century scholars was the fact that both texts were written by fellow members of the Muslim scholarly class (*‘ulamā’*).

Al-Tijānī's interest in the esoteric sciences may have been part of a larger process of “taking stock” of the inherited Islamic tradition in the eighteenth century. Scholars sought out the most reliable sources for all disciplines of knowledge specialization: Prophetic narrations, jurisprudence, Sufism, theology, and esoteric sciences. Al-Tijānī's collection of powerful prayers evidenced in his *Kunnāsh* was thus part of a lifelong process that would culminate in his later claim: “I do not make any prayer except that the Prophet arranges it for me.”

