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Irit Back

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## **From West Africa to Mecca and Jerusalem: The *Tijāniyya* on the *Hajj* Routes**

IRIT BACK

*Pilgrimage routes from West Africa provided channels for cultural and spiritual exchange between West African and Middle Eastern Muslims, and facilitated religious exchanges. Some of these exchanges were orthodox in nature; others, such as Sufi beliefs and practices, were more popular in their appeal. This article examines the ways that Tijāniyya tāriqa leaders and disciples spread their beliefs and practices along the hajj routes during the colonial period. Since this period saw the transformation of boundaries and borders, the hajj could be perceived more as a “state affair,” as its routes moved within the boundaries of the new empires or fluctuated between the new colonial empires. The article focuses on the Tijāniyya tāriqa, mainly because this tāriqa was relatively new (established around the beginning of the nineteenth century) and as such serves as a good case study for the spread of tāriqa affiliations through the hajj routes from West Africa during the colonial period. This article also examines the role of the hajj for Tijāni West African Muslims who settled in Jerusalem in the same period.*

**KEYWORDS** *colonialism, hajj, Jerusalem, Sufism, Tijāniyya, West Africa*

### INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage routes from West Africa to Mecca (and also to Jerusalem, as will be elaborated later) provided channels for cultural and spiritual exchange between West African and Middle Eastern Muslims, and facilitated religious

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IRIT BACK is a lecturer in the Department of Middle East and African Studies and head of African Studies at Tel Aviv University. She is also a researcher at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. Her research interests are contemporary Islam in Africa (focusing on the relations between Sufis and Islamists) and conflict resolution in Africa.

exchange in both the sending and the receiving societies. While some of these religious exchanges were orthodox in nature, others were more popular in their orientation and involved a variety of beliefs, practices, and organizations. This article will examine the ways that Sufi *Tijāniyya* leaders and disciples spread their beliefs and practices and established new communities through “*tāriqa* networks” along the *hajj* routes and to destinations from West Africa to the Middle East and back during the colonial period.

The relations between the *hajj* and the Sufi *tāriqa*<sup>1</sup> are complex, as there are inherent contradictions and conflicts between the orthodox concept of *hajj* (to Mecca) and Sufi practices. In many cases, Sufi practices include religious pilgrimage to places other than Mecca, such as the tombs of Sufi saints; such pilgrimages are considered *bid’ a* (unwanted innovation) by orthodox Muslims such as the *Wabbābis*.<sup>2</sup> Many Sufis, on the other hand, were very reserved with regard to the need to perform the *hajj*. Some claimed that “the knowledge of God is more urgent than the visit to His house” or explained the Quranic verses about the pilgrimage as “the pilgrimage of the profession of the essence of the one true God.”<sup>3</sup> Others claimed that “when you seek God, seek him in your Heart—He is not in Jerusalem, nor in Mecca, nor in the Hajj.”<sup>4</sup>

While the *hajj* routes provided conduits for the mobilization of orthodox and even puritan notions of Islam, in practice, nonorthodox notions also spread along these routes. A common Sufi practice, saint visitation (*ziyāra*), was not recognized as a formal path of worship; Islam instructs that all prayers should go to Allah, not to intermediaries such as saints. But saint visitation’s popularity prevailed among the common folk, leading theologians and leaders alike to seek to explain and rationalize the phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup>This article will use the Arabic term *tariqa* (pl. *tūriq*) for the Sufi order or brotherhood.

<sup>2</sup>The *Wabbābiyya* under ‘Abd al-Wāhhāb strongly opposed Sufi practices such as visiting the tombs of saints in order to obtain God’s favor; introducing the name of a prophet, saint, or angel into a prayer; and seeking intercession from any being but God, practices defined as *bid’ a*. Al-Wāhhāb was inspired by Ibn Taymiyya (661–728), who spoke out strongly against beliefs and practices such as *tawassul* (intercession between God and man), saint veneration, and grave cults. The opposition to Sufi ideas and practices became particularly significant following the conquest of the Hijaz by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Saud in 1925. Ibn Saud made the *Wabbābiyyah* the official doctrine of the holy places of Islam. Thus, during the twentieth century, *Wabbābi* influence on attitudes toward many aspects of Sufi practices and thought was enormous. For the conflicts between *Wabbābi* and Sufi attitudes in West Africa, see Irit Back, “From the Colony to the Postcolony: Sufis and Wāhhābists in Senegal and Nigeria,” *Canadian Journal of African History* 42, nos. 2–3 (2009): 423–45.

<sup>3</sup>Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, “Jerusalem and Mecca,” *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* 46, no. 2 (1997): 201.

<sup>4</sup>Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 106.

<sup>5</sup>For example, during the nineteenth century, reform movements such as the *Salafia* introduced less dichotomist attitudes toward Sufism than the *Wabbābiyyah* and presented a more ambivalent attitude toward Sufism’s practical and theological aspects, usually trying to put it on a sounder rational-moral basis. See Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Retinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon, 1999).

on the *hajj*, a pilgrim might seek to visit a saint's tomb along the way and thus reinforce his or her nonorthodox beliefs.

The pilgrims traveling the *hajj* routes carried within them various cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious influences, and were part of a reshaping and redefining of relations between center and periphery in the Muslim world. In the African context, Susan O'Brien demonstrates these changing relations when examining the relations between the *hajj* and the Hausa Bori spirit adepts:

Their stories belie dominant interpretations of the *hajj* as a globalizing force which serves to unify Islamic beliefs and practice and ensure progressive conformity to a "modern" center by a less developed, and less Islamically orthodox periphery . . . . Indeed, Muslim travel for religious purposes has historically produced ambiguous effects: while it may lead to a heightened identification with an international community of faith, and a reorientation toward a spiritual center abroad, it can as often produce an "ambivalence of identity," in which awareness of difference and identification with locality are reinforced.<sup>6</sup>

Although these contradictions and conflicts existed in the precolonial era, they became particularly relevant during the colonial period. Though the *hajj* pilgrimage was not new in the history of West African Muslims, the colonial era transformed its patterns, scope, and intensity, as well as its impact upon the mobilization of people and ideas. Improvements in infrastructure, the availability of cheap mechanical mass transport, and governmental planning of the *hajj* combined with the fact that in some cases, the pilgrimage was organized by the colonial authorities, who provided new opportunities to expand the pilgrimage beyond the local level. Moreover, as the colonial era transformed boundaries and borders, the *hajj* could be perceived more as a "state affair," as its routes moved within the boundaries of the new empires or fluctuated between empires (such as the British and the French African empires). These changes produced new opportunities for the *tūrūq* to expand beyond the local level and attract new followers.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the Sufi *tūrūq* acted as cross-community networks along the *hajj* routes in the colonial period. Those networks provided the basis for the creation of new communities of West Africans along these routes and the establishment of contacts with other Muslim communities (whether local communities or those of other immigrants), and enabled the spread of their messages farther.

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<sup>6</sup>Susan M. O'Brien, "Pilgrimage, Power, and Identity: The Role of the Hajj in the Lives of Nigerian Hausa Bori Adepts," *Africa Today* 46, nos. 3/4 (1999): 12–13.

<sup>7</sup>For an overview of these changes in the Indian subcontinent, for example, see Arthur F. Buehler, "Currents of Sufism in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Indo-Pakistan: An Overview," *Muslim World* 87, nos. 3–4 (1997): 299–314.

Among the Sufi *tūrūq*, this article will focus on the *Tijāniyya tāriqa*, mainly because this *tāriqa* was relatively new (established around the beginning of the nineteenth century) and as such serves as a good case study for the spread of *tāriqa* affiliations through the *hajj* routes from West Africa to Arabia and back during the colonial period. This article also looks to examine the role of the *hajj* for *Tijāni* West African Muslims who settled in Jerusalem in the same period. Only a few works have focused directly on the history of this West African Jerusalemite community. No study, to the best of my knowledge, has dealt with the role that *Tijāni* networks played in the arrival of West African pilgrims to Jerusalem and the role the *tāriqa* played in establishing their own community there. In order to examine Sufism and the *hajj* in the history of the West African community in Jerusalem in the colonial period, an overview of the history of the *hajj* from West Africa and the spread of the *Tijāniyya tāriqa* through the *hajj* routes up (and into) the colonial period will be provided.

#### SUFI *TŪRŪQ* AND *HAJJ* ROUTES FROM WEST AFRICA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The long-standing pilgrimage highway known as the “Sudan route” ran from the cities of Katsina and Kano in what is now Nigeria through the Maghreb—to Aïr (Agades), the Fezzan, and Aujila—into Egypt or else across the Nile.<sup>8</sup> In the travelers’ literature, Arab and European alike, West African pilgrims who took this route were called *Takurina* (or *Takari*), as mentioned, for example, in Burckhardt’s *Travels in Nubia*, published in 1819:

The greater part of the Takruris who visited Mecca come from the schools of Darfur, the principal of which are the Konjara, in the neighborhood of Kobba. All the black Hajjis from the west of Bagarma, from Burno as far as Timbuctu, either travel with the Fezzan, or great Maghribi pilgrim Caravan, or proceed by sea from the coast of Barbary. The motives for undertaking the journey are partly a sincere desire to fulfil the precepts of their religion, and partly the ambition of enjoying afterwards the credit which the Hajj confers in their own country upon those who have performed it, and which of course is in proportion to the difficulty of the journey.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Umar Al-Naqar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972), 104. For the broader context of the history of the *hajj*, see F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup>John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia* (London: John Murray, 1819), 406–08. As Burckhardt mentions, this term was first used to describe Africans coming from Darfur and Sudan, even though many of them were West African in origin.

Yet, because conditions were mostly unfavorable, until the end of the eighteenth century, pilgrimages were sporadic affairs, undertaken mainly by the better-off classes. Usually, those who performed the *hajj* were distinguished scholars or political leaders with considerable means to put to the task or very pious young men who were willing to undertake an arduous journey of several years. From the end of the eighteenth century, however, changes occurred in the scope, intensity, and routes of the *hajj* from West Africa. Some of the reasons for those changes were external, derived from events such as the Napoleonic wars, which made the pilgrimage by sea much less safe; the rivalry between Egyptian Khedive Mohammad ‘Ali and the *Wahhabi* Saudis on the Arabian Peninsula, which disrupted the *mahmal* caravans from Egypt; and the early conquests of the French in North Africa. One of the effects of these changes was that the trans-Sahara road slowly gave way to the trans-Sahel road, a change which offered different challenges and opportunities.<sup>10</sup>

Other causes for the changes to the *hajj* route were internal and related mainly to the rise of the jihadi movements in West Africa. Near the end of the eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth century, religious influences began to spread along the *hajj* routes in Arabia/West Africa and inflamed a wave of religious revivalist movements in the region, some of which encouraged Muslims to abide by the obligation of *takfir* (judgment of infidelity); this obligation was translated into a series of wars against the infidels, whether “pagans,” other Muslims, or, later on, Christians.<sup>11</sup> These ideas inspired the jihad movement of the Muslim cleric of Fulani ethnic origin, Uthman dan-Fodio (1804–1807),<sup>12</sup> which was the foundation for the establishment of both the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria and the Umar’ Tal jihad movement in today’s territories of Mali and Senegal, which will be discussed later.<sup>13</sup>

On the threshold of the modern age, other major shifts occurred within the Sufi West African *tūrūq*. Prior to the eighteenth century, the simultaneous affiliation of a Sufi believer, and even a *shaykh*, with several *tūrūq* was not a rare phenomenon. Toward the end of the century, however, the call for a believer to be exclusively affiliated with a single *tāriqa* began to

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<sup>10</sup>Baz Lecocq, “The Hajj from West Africa from a Global Historical Perspective (19th and 20th Centuries),” *African Diaspora* 5 (2012): 187–214.

<sup>11</sup>John Hunwick, “Sub-Saharan Africa and the Wider World of Islam: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives,” in *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters Between Sufis and Islamists*, ed. Eva E. Rosander and David Westerlund (London: Hurst, 1997), 230–31.

<sup>12</sup>Marvyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of Shebu Uthman Dan Fodio* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

<sup>13</sup>David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

spread throughout the Sufi world, and the *tūrūq* became larger, more centralized, and tighter social organizations.<sup>14</sup> Although al-Tijāni, the founder of the *Tijāniyya*, was affiliated earlier in his life with four different Sufi *tūrūq*, including the *Qādiriyya* and the *Khalwatiyya*, he did not hesitate to demand that his followers exclusively belong to the *Tijāniyya*, and even forbade them to visit the tombs of other saints or consult the living ones.<sup>15</sup> The call for exclusiveness was later accompanied by the requirement to visit the site of al-Tijāni's tomb in Fez. For some West African *Tijānis*, the *ziyāra* to al-Tijāni's tomb was part of a broader *hajj*, to be undertaken either on their way to Mecca or back. As such, the combination of the *ziyāra* and the *hajj* consolidated the ties between followers from a distance and helped to spread the message of the *tāriqa* to new audiences, as will be elaborated in the next section.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, both the French and the British were struggling to expand their rule into the African hinterland. Their first encounters with Sufism, in its various interpretations, had important effects on shaping their attitudes toward the Sufi *tūrūq* during the period of establishing their rule. Both the British and the French had some previous knowledge of Sufi *tūrūq*, the former from their occupation of the Indian subcontinent and the latter from their domination of Algeria.<sup>16</sup> Generally, Sufi shaykhs were considered as belonging to the nonradical component of the Muslim community and as such were potential collaborators with colonial authorities. Yet attitudes toward Sufi shaykhs changed along with the changing social and political conditions in their new spheres of influence. Colonial policy toward the Sufi *tūrūq* was revised according to the colonial authorities' relations with other forces within the Islamic communities, as well as each *tāriqa*'s assumed potential for radicalism and for creating unrest in the colony.

In some cases, colonial attitudes toward the Sufi *tūrūq* were interwoven with attitudes toward the *hajj* from West Africa, especially in light of fears that both were spreading anticolonial ideas. This was the case with some of the clerics and Sufi leaders and adherents from West Africa (mostly of Hausa and Fulani ethnic origin) who settled in villages in Darfur<sup>17</sup> and in Sudan during the end of the nineteenth century. Their emigration motives were

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<sup>14</sup>Nehemia Levtzion, "The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, S. N. Eisenstadt, and N. Levtzion (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 109–18.

<sup>15</sup>Jamil Mir' i Abun al-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, reports of the Algerian Bureaux Arabes established in 1844, as analyzed in Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa (1860–1890)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 16, 37. See also Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (West Sussex and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

<sup>17</sup>Darfur was an independent political entity until 1916, when it was annexed by Sudan.

mixed: some resented the British occupation, others were imported there as an agricultural workers, and still others chose to remain there on their route to Mecca. Some of them were spreading Mahdist ideas that prevailed in the Sokoto Caliphate in the Northern Nigerian colony, including the idea that Sudanese shaykh Muhammad Ahmed was the *Mabdi*. This idea, combined with an anticolonial agenda, brought about the *Mahdiyya* movement (1883–1898) in Sudan.<sup>18</sup> Ahmed declared jihad on the colonial authorities and began a rebellion. The British awareness of the *Mahdiyya* as an anti-colonial movement increased after the dramatic death of General Gordon in a battle against the *Mabdi* forces at Khartoum in 1884.

Almost two decades later, in 1921, another *Mahdist* uprising began in Darfur, a western province that five years earlier had been annexed by Sudan.<sup>19</sup> As in the previous *Mahdist* uprising in Sudan, West African Sufi clerics were involved, fighting the British shoulder to shoulder with locals. This uprising aroused British fears of anticolonial plots, and particularly those with a *Mahdist* orientation, spreading along the pilgrimage land routes from West Africa to Sudan, and caused concern about the *hajj*'s radical potential. Thus, colonial authorities tried to curb the flow of pilgrims and enforced rigid rules restricting the number of pilgrims. "Good conduct" was ensured through surveillance by escorts and at strategic posts along the routes.

Like their British colonial counterparts, the French were also eager to ensure that "pacification" would prevail along the *hajj* routes from their West African territories to Mecca. As the traumatic experience of the British in facing the *Mahdiyya* in Sudan had shaped colonial attitudes to *hajj* routes and Sufi *tūrūq* alike, the French attitudes were shaped in light of their military encounters with Umar' Tal's movement. Umar' Tal (c. 1795–1864) was a Fulani Muslim scholar from Futa-Jalon (present-day Senegal). During his pilgrimages to Mecca and his travels in North Africa, he had developed an exclusivist interpretation of affiliation with *tariqa*, deciding that affiliation to the *Tijāniyya* was incompatible with other affiliations, and interpreting his version of Sufism as a commitment to destroy "paganism." At first, that commitment was manifested in his movement's military campaigns against local non-Muslim communities, and later on, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it was directed against the French expansion into the Senegalese hinterland. The last territory in the colony of Senegal to be conquered by

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<sup>18</sup>One of the popular beliefs was that the *Mabdi* would appear in the thirteenth century of *hijra*, a period that roughly coincided with the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. Some of the fiercest adherents to the *Mabdi* notion, particularly Fulani holy men, arrived in Sudan and spread their beliefs there around this time, inciting Ahmed and his followers to establish the *Mahdiyya* movement. The origins of the *Mabdi* perceptions were related in many cases to Sufi perceptions and beliefs. See Gabriel Warburg, *Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan Since the Mahdiyya* (London: Hurst, 2003), 59–62; Bawa C. Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

<sup>19</sup>For details of this uprising see Martin W. Daly, *Darfur's Sorrow: A History of Destruction and Genocide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 120–25.

the French in the early 1890s was the “Tokolor Empire,” which had been established as the result of Umar’ Tal’s movement. Here the French faced the longest and fiercest battle they had yet seen in Senegal, which established Umar’ Tal’s image as the ultimate anticolonial fighter in the eyes of Africans and French alike.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, in spite of the fact that the colonizers had become more suspicious of the radical potential of the *hajj* as anticolonial and nationalist moods spread throughout the colonies, they also recognized that the *hajj* had great propagandistic value, as it represented the empire’s opportunity to introduce itself as a solicitous and accommodating pro-Islamic entity. Thus, both the British and the French decided to “institutionalize” the *hajj* by facilitating better organization and mobility. In some cases, they introduced modern travel requirements such as passports, immigration control, health regulations, and sometimes a payment of deposits for services in the holy land.<sup>21</sup>

These changes, combined with improvements of infrastructure in land, sea, and air contexts, resulted in an increase in the number of pilgrims and improvements in pilgrimage conditions. Buses and lorries were provided for the road journey that passed through Bornu to Chad and into the Sudanese Republic. The pilgrims then crossed the Red Sea to Jeddah by ship from the port of Suakin near Port Sudan.<sup>22</sup> In 1948 the first modern, prominent private pilgrimage agency, the West African Pilgrim Agency (WAPA), was formed to facilitate pilgrimage travel by road and air. Indeed, when air transport became more readily available, the WAPA established a new corporation, Hajj Air Limited, to handle *hajj* travel by air.<sup>23</sup> Undertaking their voyages by steamship, rather than on an old but ever-shifting set of land routes, notable pilgrims from the French colonies often stopped in Marseille and other French ports on either side of the Mediterranean. Administrators of these ports ensured that their guests visited colonial expositions whenever these were under way, and they did their best to use the *hajj* to propagandize and achieve political gains from colonial sponsorship and organization. With these processes of change, new networks were created, distributing religious, cultural, political, and other influences throughout them. This was

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<sup>20</sup>David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>21</sup>Marieme A. Diawara, *Islam and Public Health: French Management of the Hajj from Colonial Senegal and Muslim Responses* (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 2012).

<sup>22</sup>These examples are taken from *Kano State Jiya Da Yau A.D. 999, 1864-1968*, quoted in: *The Hajj Exercise In Nigeria: Challenges, Constrains and Draubacks* in [https://www.academia.edu/1060403/THE\\_HAJJ\\_EXERCISE\\_IN\\_NIGERIA\\_CHALLENGES\\_CONSTRAINTS\\_AND\\_DRAWBACKS](https://www.academia.edu/1060403/THE_HAJJ_EXERCISE_IN_NIGERIA_CHALLENGES_CONSTRAINTS_AND_DRAWBACKS) (accessed 25 February 2015).

<sup>23</sup>It is not certain which of two pilgrimage travel agencies—the Pilgrims Aid Society (PAS) of Kano or the WAPA/Hajj Air Limited—pioneered mass transportation by air from Kano, but it is certain that the PAS obtained the approval of the colonial Resident in Kano to airlift pilgrims from Kano in a West African Airways Corporation (WAAC) aircraft. See Tom Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 78–79.

the case also with the spread of *Tijāniyya* affiliations along the *hajj* routes during that period.

### THE *TIJĀNIYYA* ON THE HAJJ ROUTES DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

In the nineteenth century, the mystic call of the Algerian-born Sufi thinker Ahmad al-Tijāni (1735–1815) spread throughout West Africa. Inspired by the ideology and spirituality of the great medieval Sufi thinker Ibn-‘Arabi and claiming to be *qutb al-aqtāb* (the supreme pole of sainthood) and *kbatm al-awliyā’* (the seal of the saints), he claimed to have received his visions directly from Muhammad and God and thus to have no need to refer to the chains of transmission (*isnad*) to determine the validity of Islamic concepts traced to Muhammad. Al-Tijāni also believed in the role of the *muqaddam* (mystical propagandist), “who channels the spiritual benefits to be derived from Ahmed al-Tijāni, the Prophet Muhammad and God to the individual member.”<sup>24</sup> His claim led to heated debates throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between *Tijāniyya* proponents and those who defended other ways or opposed Sufism altogether.<sup>25</sup> Yet, at the same time, the *muqaddamun* proved to be powerful instruments, as they helped to establish networks of missionaries, spreading the *Tijāniyya* call to new audiences.

Some of these networks were established via the *hajj* routes, as occurred during Umar’ Tal’s pilgrimage in the first half of the nineteenth century, briefly mentioned earlier. Tal left his homeland of Futa-Toro in 1826, arriving in Mecca in 1828 and staying there for several years; he then traveled back via Jerusalem and Cairo, and finally arrived at Sokoto, where he spent five years.<sup>26</sup> During his pilgrimage to Mecca and his travels in North and West Africa, he developed an exclusivist interpretation of affiliation with *tariqa Tijāniyya* as incompatible with other affiliations, as well as an interpretation of Sufism as a commitment to destroy “paganism.” During his stay in Sokoto, he was able to recruit many followers to the *Tijāniyya*, including probably Mohammad Bello, the emir of Sokoto and dan-Fodio’s son.<sup>27</sup>

This case can serve as a good example for the claim that even prior to European expansion in Africa, cross-community networks that were based on Sufi affiliation were spreading through the *hajj* routes from West Africa

<sup>24</sup>Patrick J. Ryan, “The Mystical Theology of Tijani Sufism and Its Social Significance in West Africa,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. 2 (2000): 209.

<sup>25</sup>David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54.

<sup>26</sup>For a full description of his *hajj* journey, see Jamil Mir’i Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 106–10.

<sup>27</sup>According to some claims, he had convinced the emir to change his Sufi affiliation from the *Qādiriyya* to the *Tijāniyya*. See *ibid.*, 108.

to Arabia and back. However, these networks expanded much more rapidly and intensively during the colonial period, as is exemplified by the *hajj* pilgrimages of the *Tijāni* father and son Shaykh Abdullahi Niasse and Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse.

Shaykh Abdullahi Niasse (1840–1922) was born in Senegal and became a *Tijāniyya* member in 1875. In 1890 Abdullahi performed the *hajj* and visited Fez on his way. As such, his *hajj* journey granted Shaykh Abdullahi double prestige among the *Tijāni*: not only had he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, but he had also visited the tomb site of the founder of the *Tijāniyya*. Indeed, upon his return to Senegal, his following continued to grow. The popularity and prestige that he gained from this pilgrimage reminded the French authorities of his predecessor, Shaykh Umar' Tal, who had made the pilgrimage before beginning his jihad movement. Abdullahi Niasse's growing power and spiritual authority provoked the French colonial administration to exile him from Senegal to Gambia. This case strengthens David Robinson's claim that French officials saw the *Tijāniyya* as fanatics who were hostile to French colonial rule and eager to wage jihad. In some cases, French authorities detained and deported *Tijāni* "fanatics" whom they thought might oppose French rule.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, as their policy regarding Africa involved the creation of large-scale federations, they did not support the idea of a separate management of every colony, and even encouraged some cooperation between their colonial subjects from different colonies (as long as they did not perceive the subjects' activities as radical and anticolonial).<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, even during his period of exile, Abdullahi Niasse cultivated ties with West African, North African, and Middle Eastern *Tijāniyya* communities through correspondence and visits.<sup>30</sup> Many of his aspirations to spread the *Tijāniyya* message to new audiences were materialized by his son, the *Tijāni* shaykh Ibrāhīma Niasse, who was born in Senegal in 1902 and became one of the *tāriqa muqaddam*. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Niasse helped spread the message of the *Tijāniyya* throughout West Africa. As had happened with his father, Ibrāhīma Niasse's *hajj* pilgrimage served as a powerful engine to shape his Sufi affiliation and spread it to new audiences. On his way back from Mecca to West Africa in 1937, Niasse visited Morocco, where he met with various leaders of the *Tijāniyya*. He met with Abdullahi Bayero, the emir of Kano (Northern Nigeria), who was also on his way back from the *hajj*, and the two discussed ways to promote the *tāriqa* in Northern Nigeria.

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<sup>28</sup>David Robinson, "French 'Islamic' Policy and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Senegal," *Journal of African History* 29, no. 3 (1988): 415–16.

<sup>29</sup>One example is the Association of Young Muslims (*Subbanu al-Muslimin*), which was established in Bamako, French Sudan, and later turned into an interterritorial Islamic movement known as the Union Culturelle Musulmane (UCM), created in December 1957 in Dakar. See Lansine Kaba, *The Wabbabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>30</sup>Alaine S. Huston, *We Are Many: Women Sufis and Islamic Scholars in Twentieth Century Kano, Nigeria* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1997), 106–07.

In the context of the colonial period, the *Tijāniyya tāriqa* was able by means of the *hajj* routes to spread its messages not just beyond the individual colony, but even beyond the boundaries of the colonial empire. Indeed, on his way to Mecca, Niasse spread *Tijāniyya* messages both within the borders of the l'Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF), in places like Zinder, Niger, and Futa Jalon, Guinea, and beyond, to the British territories of Northern Nigeria, the Gambia, and the Gold Coast.<sup>31</sup>

Another story that sheds light on the relationship between West African Muslims, the *hajj*, and the *Tijāniyya* during the colonial period and is also directly connected to Ibrāhīma Niasse's influence in Northern Nigeria is that of *Hajiya* Maymunatu Iya (1894–1986), a female *Tijāni* from Northern Nigeria. Born to an important *Tijāni* family in Kano, Maymunatu Iya was a *Tijāni muqaddama*, a famous teacher who was able to read Arabic. Because of her qualifications, she was chosen to facilitate the visits of Arab and other non-Hausa-speaking female dignitaries in Kano. She hosted two Arab women from Mecca who later on persuaded her brother to allow her to perform the *hajj*. On *Hajiya* Iya's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1937, Alaine Huston writes:

she came in contact with a community of West Africans who had fled the British invasion of the Sokoto Caliphate and migrated to Medina around the turn of the century. This community was originally under the leadership of Alfa Hashim (1866–1932), who was a nephew of Al-Hajj Umar Tal of Futa Toro. This community and its leaders served as a link between West African Tijanis and those from other countries while on *hajj*. During *Hajiya* Iya's pilgrimage in 1937, Shaykh Ahmad b. Abd al-Rahman b. Ibrahim Zaki was leader of the community and gave her *taqdim*. In so acting, Shaykh Ahmad was following the tradition of his community. His predecessor, Alfa Hashim, had made a woman, nicknamed Allahu Hayyun, a *muqaddama*. Upon her death another woman, Sakinat, became *muqaddama* for the women's community. Eventually, Shaykh Ahmad and *Hajiya* Iya accepted Shaykh Niasse's leadership.<sup>32</sup>

As *Hajiya* Iya's case demonstrates, West African Muslim women also participated in the *hajj* and influenced the spread of the *Tijāniyya* along its routes. It also supports the notion that during the late 1930s, *tāriqa* networks were well established along the *hajj* routes at points of departure and arrival alike. These networks were well organized and were able to support the pilgrims both during their journey and upon their arrival to their destination. Moreover, the performance of the *hajj* awarded some of these pilgrims a

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<sup>31</sup>Rüdige Seesemann and Benjamin F. Soares, "Being as Good Muslims as Frenchmen": On Islam and Colonial Modernity in West Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 1 (2009): 91–120.

<sup>32</sup>Alaine S. Huston, "The Development of Women's Authority in the Kano Tijaniyya, 1894–1963," *Africa Today*, 46, nos. 3–4 (1999): 50.

prestigious status that enabled them to become efficient agents of the *tariqa* upon their return.

This notion provides a broader understanding of the role of the Sufi *tūrūq* during the colonial period, when processes such as large-scale urbanization and changing economic patterns were accompanied by feelings of alienation and confusion among large segments of the population. The Sufi *tūrūq* were able to respond to these changes both spiritually and practically. Joining the *tariqa* provided a follower with a feeling of belonging and a sense of coping with the new and dramatic challenges of the colonial period. The creation of intercommunity networks also strengthened feelings of belonging for individuals and communities alike. This was the case with the West African pilgrims who settled along the *hajj* routes, either on their way to Arabia or on their way back, creating their own communities and villages. While most of these new communities were established along the *hajj* routes within Africa,<sup>33</sup> others were established at the pilgrimage destinations themselves: in Mecca, Medina, or Jerusalem. In some cases, belonging to a Sufi *tāriqa* played a key role in individuals establishing these communities, strengthening their ties with followers from other places and with local Muslims, and further spreading the call of the *tāriqa* into new communities. This was the case with the settlement of West Africans in Jerusalem.

### THE *HAJJ*, THE *TIJĀNIYYA*, AND JERUSALEM

It was during the Umayyad period that the pilgrimage to Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad, was formalized and set to occur in the twelfth month of the lunar calendar. This pilgrimage was often accompanied by a journey to Medina, where Muhammad first established his rule. The Umayyad also established a third holy city of Islam, Jerusalem, by building the Dome of the Rock on the remains of the Jewish Temple. By this time the tradition that Muhammad had ascended to heaven from the Dome on the wings of Jibril (Gabriel) had developed. Since that time Jerusalem has been an important shrine and center of pilgrimage for all three religious communities attached to the Abrahamic heritage.<sup>34</sup>

It is unclear when West African Muslims first arrived in Jerusalem in significant numbers. There is evidence, however, that two wards (called *ribat*, a Sufi lodge) within Jerusalem were given to West Africans, probably during the Mamluk period (around the thirteenth century). During this period, the

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<sup>33</sup>See, for example, John A. Works, *Pilgrims in a Strange Land: Hausa Communities in Chad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Bawa C. Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

<sup>34</sup>David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9. For a detailed discussion of the role of Jerusalem in the Islamic pilgrimage and its comparison to Mecca and Medina, see Lazarus-Yafeh, "Jerusalem and Mecca," 197–205.

Jerusalem *waqf* (an inalienable religious endowment) was also bestowed upon the West Africans settled in Jerusalem, granting them a historic role as guardians of the mosque.<sup>35</sup> During the latter part of Ottoman period, the *habs al ribat*, buildings on ‘Ala al-din Street that were originally built in the thirteenth century as hostels for pilgrims and later were transformed into a local jail, were given by the Islamic *waqf* authorities to African families to serve as their residences (alongside the less serious offenders). It was during World War I that several hundred Africans arrived in Jerusalem, primarily to serve as laborers laying down railways and water pipes needed by General Edmund Allenby’s forces. At the start of the British Mandate period (1918) in Palestine, authorities decided to move the jail to another location and leave the buildings as residences for members of the African community.<sup>36</sup>

During the British Mandate period, particularly in the 1930s, groups of Chadians, Senegalese, Sudanese, and Nigerians made their way to Jerusalem as part of an extended pilgrimage to Islam’s holy sites that included Mecca and Medina as part of the *hajj* circuit.<sup>37</sup> Many of them married local Palestinians. This was the case with El-Haj Jadeh, a community *mukhtar*. He was born in N’djamena (modern-day Chad) and wandered throughout his childhood to different locations in West Africa, where he acquired both Islamic education and knowledge of English and French. His *hajj* route crossed through Sudan, Ethiopia, and Yemen, as he explained in an interview:

Then from Yemen we walked to Mecca. We arrived at Mecca. After performing the hajj we went to Medina. After that, we set off for Jerusalem. We spent two days travelling on water before setting off again on foot. First we walked to Jordan and afterwards we arrived here, in Palestine. We settled here in Jerusalem. There were already people here from Sudan and from Nigeria and this is with whom we stayed, in this very ward. There were lots of Hausa, too, who came here as a kind of pilgrimage. Our ‘brothers’ here gave us a place to live.<sup>38</sup>

Jerusalem was part of the route of West African *Tijāni* pilgrims even before the colonial era. One of the earliest examples was al-Hajj Umar’ Tal’s visit to Jerusalem, where his reputation for piety and learning were recognized. It is said he led the prayer in the Dome of the Rock, cured the son of

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<sup>35</sup>William F. S. Miles, “Black African Muslim in the Jewish State: Lessons of Colonial Nigeria to Contemporary Jerusalem,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinions* 2, no. 1 (1997): 39–42.

<sup>36</sup>Michael Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study* (Jerusalem: British School of Archeology, 1987), 119–21.

<sup>37</sup>Miles, “Black African Muslim,” 39–42. It is important to note, however, that only a minority of these pilgrims stayed in Jerusalem, while most of the West Africans chose to reside in Gaza, the West Bank, or Jordan.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

an Ottoman sultan from madness in Syria, and astonished scholars in Cairo by his vast erudition.<sup>39</sup>

The stories of Mohammad Qous and Mohammad al-Qadi, as told to me by their son and nephew Yasser Qous, provide good examples of the relationship between the *hajj*, the *Tijāniyya*, and the establishment of the Muslim African community in Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup> Both men were born in Chad. Mohammad Qous performed his first *hajj* at the age of sixteen or seventeen, and arrived in Jerusalem after visits to Mecca and Medina during the 1940s. After he settled in Jerusalem, he performed the *hajj* six more times.<sup>41</sup>

The story of Yasser's uncle, Mohammad al-Qadi, is even more revealing in the context of the *Tijāniyya*, as he considered becoming a *Tijāni* shaykh. Like his brother, he came to Jerusalem as part of his *hajj* (although he was a bit older, in his twenties), became one of the central religious figures in the community, and was responsible, for example, for teaching the seven proper ways to learn the Quran to the youth of the community. Moreover, through his Sufi affiliation, he extended the ties of the West African community to other Muslim communities in Jerusalem, such as those from the Maghreb and Afghanistan. Most interestingly, he was awarded with his own *badra*<sup>42</sup> at the *zawiyya Afghania* in Jerusalem. As this *zawiyya* is amongst the oldest Sufi establishments in Jerusalem<sup>43</sup> and is also considered a lively place of gathering and spiritual practice, an invitation to perform one of its main rituals is quite an honor. That an African *Tijāni* shaykh was invited to fill this role provides an example of how Sufi affiliation played an important role in establishing the West African community in Jerusalem and extending its social and religious connections with other Muslim communities there.

## CONCLUSION

In 1898 the German emperor Wilhelm II and his wife Empress Auguste Victoria visited Jerusalem and arranged for an impressive church-hospital complex to be built on the southern side of Mount Scopus beside the Mount

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<sup>39</sup>Madina Ly-Tall, *Un Islam Militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe Siècle: La Tijaniyya de Saïku Umar Futiyyu contre les Pouvoirs traditionnels et la Puissance coloniale* [Militant Islam in West Africa in the 19th Century: The Tijaniyya of Saïku Umar Futiyyu against Traditional Powers and the Colonial Powers] (Paris: ACCT, 1991).

<sup>40</sup>Personal interview with Yasser Qous, Jerusalem, March 10, 2014. Qous is executive manager at the African Community Society in Jerusalem.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>The *badra* is the Friday Sufi communal gathering for *dbikr* (prayer of remembrance) and its associated liturgical rituals, prayers, and song recitals, whether private or public. In earlier orders, the "presence" referred to was that of God, but since the eighteenth century it has been considered the spiritual presence of Muhammad.

<sup>43</sup>It was established in 1603 C.E. as a gift from the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem to the *Qadiri tāriqa* of spiri tuality. It remained as such for about 300 years and then passed onto the *Shadhili tāriqa*, under whose auspices it remains today.

of Olives. The motives for this visit are beyond the interests of this article, yet one aspect is relevant here. According to Yasser Qous, all the West Africans who were serving as guardians of the Dome of the Rock were imprisoned during that visit, as there was a reasonable suspicion that they would try to attack the visitors or prevent their entrance into the mosque. Qous claimed that suspicion about the potential unrest was related to West Africans of *Tijāni* affiliation, as many of them were employed as guardians of the mosque, and, according to *Tijāni* belief, the presence of a non-Muslim could contaminate the sacred place.<sup>44</sup>

This story illuminates an interesting point regarding the interrelations between the *hajj*, Sufi affiliation, and colonialism. Many Muslims feel that some aspects of colonial rule polluted Islamic lands, such as the importation of *haram* items such as pork and alcohol. For Sufis, the site of al-Tijāni's tomb is related to his *baraka* (blessing, sacred power) and *karamat* (miracles performed by the saint), which can purify the impure. In this sense, visitation at the saint's site during the *hajj* is perceived as purifying the *hajj* routes.<sup>45</sup> Hence, it could be claimed that in some respects the *hajj* to Mecca and the *ziyāra* to the saint's tomb were not contradictory, but complementary, practices during the colonial period.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, *hajj* routes facilitated the mobilization of religious movements, serving as powerful vehicles in the spread of Islamic ideas and practices, whether their content was orthodox, popular, or a combination of both. Through these routes, the *tāriqa* played a key role in strengthening ties with followers from other places, establishing new communities, and further spreading the call of the *tāriqa* into other communities. Moreover, the call of the *tāriqa* could be considered in some cases "radical," with content that could be classified as pan-African, pan-Islamic, or anticolonial (and often a combination of the three), and thus could refute the classification of Sufism as a local and antireformist branch of Islam.

My initial conclusions regarding the community of West African *Tijānis* in Jerusalem support this assumption. Most of them arrived there as a result of new travel opportunities in the colonial era combined with their religious aspirations. Their Sufi affiliation served as an important vehicle both in facilitating the pilgrimage itself and in establishing their community networks in Jerusalem. Further research will hopefully give us a deeper understanding of the role the *Tijāni tāriqa* played in establishing the Jerusalemite community and shaping its history during the colonial period and beyond.

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<sup>44</sup>Personal interview with Yasser Qous.

<sup>45</sup>See, for example, "The Story About the Saint Who Made a Pilgrimage to His Own Shrine," in Ameen Rihani, ed., *Around the Coast of Arabia* (London: Constable, 1930), 327–33.