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Sufism, Literary Production, and
Printing in the Nineteenth Century

ERGON VERLAG

Sufism, Literary Production, and Printing in the Nineteenth Century

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A New Dawn for Sufism? Spiritual Training in the Mirror of Nineteenth-Century Tijānī Literature

Rüdiger Seesemann

When does the nineteenth century start, when does it end? The response is less obvious than it seems, and with regard to the literary production of Sufis the question is not easy to answer. The closer we get to the turn of the twentieth century, the more does the output of printed materials increase. Do the technological innovations constitute a watershed moment in the history of Sufi literature? To some extent, this is certainly the case. However, viewed from the perspective of the development of Sufi ideas and practices, the chronology looks different. It is obvious that more Sufis wrote, that they wrote more books, and that their literary products became more widely available. Yet, does the change in quantity also entail a new quality? As I will argue in this chapter, understanding the lessons the nineteenth century teaches us about Sufism requires us to widen our historical focus to include at least the four preceding centuries. At the same time, we need to analyse nineteenth-century Sufism against the backdrop of the historical circumstances and technological innovations of the time in order to grasp the specific dynamics of nineteenth-century literary production.

The present study revolves around the Tijāniyya Sufi Order, and more specifically around the concept and practice of *tarbiya*, spiritual training,¹ within this Sufi tradition. The analysis of the literary treatment of *tarbiya* by some of the major Tijānī scholars of the nineteenth century allows us to identify a major shift in the understanding and practice of spiritual training, a shift that coincides with Sufism passing the threshold of modernity.

A discussion of Sufism in the nineteenth century also needs to engage with the notion of Neo-Sufism. From the 1970s onwards noted academic scholars such as Fazlur Rahman (apparently the first to use the term Neo-Sufism²), J. S. Trimingham (who preferred the term “revivalist orders”³), or J. Voll⁴ developed the idea that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centu-

¹ In the context of Sufism, it is inaccurate to render the term as “education”, the meaning of *tarbiya* in the modern Arabic lexicon.

² See F. Rahman, *Islam*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979 (several earlier editions; see in particular pp. 202-207 for his take on Sufism).

³ See the respective chapter in J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971.

⁴ J. O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1982.

ries mark a new era in the history of Sufism, characterised by both doctrinal and organisational changes promoted in newly founded Sufi Orders. In a seminal article published in 1993, R.S. O'Fahey and B. Radtke forcefully debunked the idea of Neo-Sufism, essentially arguing that Sufi doctrine has not substantially changed compared to earlier periods.⁵ Some of the elements identified as new by the advocates of Neo-Sufism were in fact very much present in earlier Sufi thought and practice. The purported new ideas, Radtke claimed, were therefore merely old hats.⁶

However, even if the "old-hat-argument" holds true, we still need to consider the possibility that the same idea (or text) can assume a different meaning or relevance in a different context. For instance, A.S. Karrar, in a study of Sufi Orders in the Sudan, showed that Sufi movements originating in the nineteenth century (and drawing on the ideas of Aḥmad b. Idrīs, d. 1253/1837) display a higher degree of cohesion and centralisation, which enabled them to institutionalise and transmit Sufi teachings in more systematic and efficient ways.⁷ Another element the proponents of Neo-Sufism identified as new is the greater emphasis on the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad, whose dominant role in Neo-Sufism allegedly bordered on eclipsing the earlier Sufi objective of attaining mystical union with God.⁸ The purported new role of the Prophet found its expression in the notion of the Muḥammadan Path (*al-ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*), defined by the nineteenth-century North African Sufi leader Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Sanūsī (d. 1275/1859) as the absorption (*istighrāq*) in the essential being (*dhāt*) of the Prophet. This definition, widely discussed in the academic literature,⁹ certainly captures very well

⁵ R. S. O'Fahey and B. Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", *Der Islam* 70 (1993), pp. 52-87. See also the more recent stance of Voll in this debate: J. O. Voll, "Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again", *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42 (2008), pp. 314-330.

⁶ B. Radtke, "Erleuchtung und Aufklärung: Islamische Mystik und europäischer Rationalismus", *Die Welt des Islams* 34 (1994), pp. 48-66 (see p. 66).

⁷ A. S. Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan*, London, Hurst, 1992. On Ibn Idrīs, see R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint. Ahmad Ibn Idrīs and the Idrīsī Tradition*, London, Hurst, 1990.

⁸ For an illuminating discussion of annihilation (*fanā*) in the Prophet versus annihilation in God, see V. Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31/3 (1999), pp. 351-369.

⁹ R. S. O'Fahey and B. Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", pp. 68-69; B. Radtke, "Ibriziana. Themes and Sources of a Seminal Sufi Work", *Sudanic Africa* 7 (1996), pp. 113-158 (see pp. 125-126; cf. his later amendment in "Between Projection and Suppression. Some Considerations Concerning the Study of Sufism", in F. de Jong (ed.), *Shī'a Islam, Sects and Sufism*, Utrecht, M.Th. Houtsma Stichting, 1992, pp. 70-82; the quote is on p. 74, n. 9); K. S. Vikor, *Sources for Sanusi Studies*. Bergen, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1996, pp. 80-81 (cf. the original Arabic version in *ibid.*, 227); A. Schimmel, *Und Muhammad ist sein Prophet. Die Verehrung des Propheten in der islamischen Frömmigkeit*, Köln, Diederichs, 1981, pp. 203-204; C. E.

what it meant for many Muslims to embark on the Sufi Path in the nineteenth century. However, most likely the quote goes back to a seventeenth-century Sufi figure, Abū l-Baqāʾ Ḥasan al-ʿUjaymī, who died in 1113/1702 in Mecca.¹⁰ Claims made by late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Sufis about daylight encounters with the Prophet Muḥammad, known as *ruʿya fi l-yaqza* (vision in the waking state, as opposed to a dream vision), also point us back to earlier centuries. As F. Meier has shown in his masterful analysis of a “resurrection of Muḥammad” in the work of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), such ideas are anything but a nineteenth-century innovation.¹¹

Yet, even if such mystical ideas and practices have a long genealogy, we should not jump to the conclusion that nothing has substantially changed. It is here that the examination of spiritual training in the context of the Tijāniyya can make an important contribution to our understanding of the nexus of Sufism and literary production in the nineteenth century. As my analysis will demonstrate, the treatment of *tarbiya* in seminal Tijānī texts reveals subtle shifts in emphasis and changes in mystical practice, shifts and changes that signal the transition of Sufism to the modern age.

The Tijāniyya Sufi Order

What is the Tijāniyya?¹² It is the Sufi Path (or Order, Arabic *ṭarīqa*) established by Aḥmad b. Maḥammad [sic] al-Tijānī in the late eighteenth century in ʿAyn Māḍī, a small town located in the Algerian desert. The Tijāniyya is therefore one of the youngest Sufi Orders, founded in a period often identified with the stagnation of Islam, shortly before the encounter with European

Padwick, *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use*, London, SPCK, 1969, pp. 150-151.

¹⁰ R. Peters, “Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Sufi Revival? A Review of the Evidence”, paper presented at *XIIIe Congrès de l’Union Européenne d’Arabistes et Islamisants*, Venice, September 29-October 4, 1986, p. 7. For a useful overview of the historical development of ideas surrounding the Muḥammadan Path, see M. Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons. The Making and Remaking the Rashidi Ahmadi Sufi Order, 1799-2000*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, ch. 1.

¹¹ F. Meier, “A Resurrection of Muḥammad in Suyūṭī”, in id., *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, Leiden, Brill, 1999, pp. 505-547 (first published as “Eine Auferstehung Mohammeds bei Suyūṭī”, *Der Islam*, 62 (1985), pp. 20-58).

¹² The classical study, though now out of date, is J. M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijāniyya. A Sufi Order in the Modern World*. London, Oxford University Press, 1965. For a critical analysis of the doctrines and history of the Tijāniyya, see J. El Adnani, *La Tijāniyya, 1781-1881. Les origines d’une confrérie religieuse au Maghreb*, Rabat, Editions Marsam, 2007; a more sympathetic approach based on a thorough analysis of primary sources is taken by Z. V. Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet: Ahmad al-Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadīyya*, Atlanta, African American Islamic Institute, 2005. See also the collective volume edited by J.-L. Triaud and D. Robinson, *La Tijāniyya. Une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l’Afrique*, Paris, Karthala, 2000.

colonialism. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Tijāniyya was not only well established in its Algerian homeland, in the neighbouring Maghreb (present-day Morocco, where the founder died in 1230/1815), and Tunisia, but had spread to various regions south of the Sahara, most notably the *bilād Shinqīṭ* (present-day Mauritania), the Western Sudan (present-day Mali and Senegal), and the Nilotic Sudan (present-day Republic of Sudan). Over the course of the twentieth century, the Tijāniyya emerged as the dominant Sufi Order in many parts of West Africa, most notably in Nigeria, where the Order occasionally competed with the Qādiriyya. Other areas with significant Tijāni activities include Egypt and Indonesia, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this Sufi Order can be found on all five continents, although its numerical strength is greatest in West Africa.

In works written by scholars of the Tijāniyya, the standard definition of the Tijāni Path refers to its recitation formulas: The Path consists of *al-istighfār* (i.e., asking God for forgiveness), the *haylala* (i.e., the formula “there is no deity but God”), and the *ṣalāt ‘alā l-nabiyy* (i.e., saying blessings on the Prophet Muḥammad).¹³ The collection of these formulas is referred to as the *wird*, to be recited individually in the morning and the evening. In addition, members of the Tijāniyya are supposed to perform the so-called *wazīfa* once a day, another set of recitation formulas based on the same three elements *istighfār*, *haylala*, and blessings on the Prophet. The *wazīfa* should be recited in a group, and the same applies to the so-called *dhikr al-jum‘a*, a collective recitation of the *haylala* to be performed every Friday before sunset.

The fact that the Tijāniyya has its peculiar recitation formulas does not set it apart from other Sufi Orders, which all have their specific sets of litanies. However, there are other elements in Aḥmad al-Tijāni’s teachings that make the Tijāniyya distinctive, such as his claim that he received his *ṭarīqa* directly from the Prophet Muḥammad in a daylight encounter, thus creating a shortcut to the long *salāsīl* (chains of transmission, sing. *silsila*) typical for most other Orders. The major primary source on al-Tijāni’s life and teachings, *Jawābir al-ma‘āni* by ‘Ali Ḥarāzīm, a disciple of the Order’s founder, contains several descriptions of meetings between al-Tijāni and the Prophet.¹⁴ All ma-

¹³ Such definitions abound in the literature. A very concise summary of the basics of the Tijāniyya is offered in Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abdallāh Niase, *Majmū‘ Riḥlāt al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm*, ed. Muḥammad al-Amin b. Ibrāhīm Niase, Kaolack, no publ., n.d. [ca. 1993], pp. 63-74.

¹⁴ ‘Ali Ḥarāzīm b. Barāda, *Jawābir al-ma‘āni wa-bulūgh al-amāni fī fayḍ Sayyidi Abi l-‘Abbās al-Tijāni*, 2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1383/1963-1964. The book was completed in 1800, during the founder’s lifetime. The first print edition appeared in 1893 in Cairo (see below); the first translation is Ravane Mbaye’s *Perles des sens et réalisation de vœux dans le flux d’Abū-l-‘Abbās at-Tijāni*, Beirut, Dar Albouraq, 2011. The work still remains understudied in the academic literature. Among the most elaborate treatments are (in addition to El Adnani, *La Tijāniyya*) Wright, *On the Path of the*

for pillars of Tijānī doctrine, such as the prohibition to visit saints (*awliyāʾ*) who have not taken the Tijānī *wird*, or the rule that those who take the Tijānī *wird* are not allowed to abandon it until death, purportedly all go back to instructions al-Tijānī received during his daylight encounters with the Prophet Muḥammad that started in the 1780s. The latter also confirmed that al-Tijānī was indeed of *sharīfian* descent and informed him of his ascension to the position of the “Seal of the Saints” (*kbatm al-awliyāʾ*), implying that he was the highest-ranking saint of all times.

The actual inception of the Tijāniyya as a Sufi Path can be identified with yet another message the Prophet conveyed on the completion of Aḥmad al-Tijānī’s spiritual training (*tarbiya*) at his own hands: the Prophet told al-Tijānī that he should now begin imparting spiritual training to the creation (*al-kbalq*).¹⁵

Spiritual training in the Sufi tradition

What is *tarbiya*? In our context the term refers to spiritual training, dispensed by a qualified shaykh or master, based on a set of rules, meant to guide the aspirant (*murīd*) during the journey (*sulūk*, “wayfaring”) on the Sufi Path, with the aim of purifying one’s self and achieving mystical union with and experiential knowledge of God (*maʿrifā*). Understood in this sense, there are very few references to *tarbiya* in the seminal Sufi works of the classical period, roughly equivalent to the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. For F. Meier, one of the foremost authorities in the academic study of Sufism, the end of classical Sufism coincided with a shift from *taʿlim*, instruction, to *tarbiya*, training, which he regards as complete by the year 1100 CE.¹⁶ Meier’s attempt to establish a chronology of various stages in the development of Sufism did not remain unchallenged.¹⁷ However, even if the precise chronology remains in the dark, his model remains useful, provided we understand the stages as ideal types rather than as actual historical periods.

Among the post-classical authors quoted by Meier is the Andalusian Shādhilī Sufi Ibn ʿAbbād of Ronda (d. 792/1390), one of the first to break the entire mystical endeavour down into three stages called *taʿlim*, *tarbiya*, and

Prophet, and J. Berque, *L'intérieur du Maghreb, XV^e-XIX^e siècle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, pp. 240-282.

¹⁵ ʿAli Ḥarāzīm, *Jawābir al-maʿānī*, vol. 1, p. 51 (discussed in F. Meier, *Bemerkungen zur Mohammedverehrung*, Teil I: Die Segensprechung über Mohammed; Teil II: Die *taṣliya* in sufischen Zusammenhängen, Leiden, Brill, 2005, vol. 2, p. 353).

¹⁶ F. Meier, “Khurāsān and the End of Classical Sufism”, in id., *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*. Leiden, Brill, 1999, pp. 189-219.

¹⁷ L. Silvers-Alario, “The Teaching Relationship in Early Sufism: A Reassessment of Fritz Meier’s Definition of the *shaykh al-tarbiya* and the *shaykh al-taʿlim*”, *The Muslim World* 93 (2003), pp. 69-97.

tarqiya (elevation).¹⁸ With the emergence of the Sufi Orders from the late twelfth century CE onwards, Sufi masters began to employ a variety of methods to train their disciples. Quite a few of them revolved around physical exercises. In addition to the usual recitations and the widespread (though not universal) practice of *samāʿ* (listening to music) and *raqs* (dance), the most common exercises were extended individual prayer sessions, fasting over prolonged periods of time, and abstention from sleep, often in seclusion (*khalwa*). Some Orders also used more colourful methods, such as walking on charcoal, the piercing of limbs with needles or lances, or other exercises that put the human body to extreme physical tests.¹⁹ Regardless of the method, the objective was always *tazkiyat al-nafs*, the purification of the lower self, as the extinction of the ego was seen as a precondition for mystical union with God.

By the fifteenth century CE, certain Sufi training practices became the subject of heated controversies among Sufis themselves. In North Africa, the Shādhili scholar and prolific author Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) emerged as an outspoken critic of *tarbiya*. Citing his master al-Ḥaḍrami (d. 895/1490), an illustrious Sufi figure in Yemen and late Mamluk Egypt, Zarrūq insisted in his writings that “conventional spiritual training has come to an end (*inqaṭaʿat al-tarbiya bi-l-iṣṭilāḥ*).”²⁰ This statement had reverberations well into the twentieth century CE, with Sufi authorities in North Africa and beyond arguing whether Zarrūq and his master had meant to proclaim the general end of *tarbiya*, or whether they only intended to stamp out the controversial training methods based on physical exercises.²¹

¹⁸ Meier, “Khurāsān” and Silvers-Alario, “Teaching Relationship” both discuss Ibn ʿAbbād’s contribution at some length.

¹⁹ A vivid description of some of these practices in Egypt of the 1820s can be found in E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London, John Murray, 1860.

²⁰ Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Zarrūq, *Qarwāʿid al-taṣawwuf*, Beirut, Dār al-Jil, 1412/1991-1992, p. 165. The quote continues, “what remains is only to turn towards spiritual energy (*himma*) and the mystical state (*ḥāl*). So follow the book [i.e., the Quran] and the Sunna without adding or omitting anything.” Cf. the translations by S. Kugle (*Rebel Between Spirit and Law. Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 124) and J. O’Kane and B. Radtke (*Pure Gold from the Words of Sayyidi ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Dabbāgh (al-Dhabab al-ibriz min kalām Sayyidi ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Dabbāgh)*, by Aḥmad b. al-Mubārak al-Lamaṭi: *A Translation with Notes and an Outline*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. 614). I offer a detailed discussion in R. Seesemann, *The Divine Flood: Ibrāhīm Niāsse (1900-1975) and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 74-79.

²¹ Whereas the author of the *Ibriz* (see n. 30 below) shows a certain degree of restraint in the criticism of Zarrūq, Ibn ʿAjība (d. 1224/1809), a well-known Moroccan Sufi author and contemporary of Aḥmad al-Tijāni, is quite frank in his disapproval of Zarrūq’s verdict about *tarbiya*. See Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAjība al-Ḥasanī, *Īqāz al-himam fi sharḥ al-Hikam li-Ibn ʿAtāʾ Allāb al-Sakandari* [sic], Beirut, Dār al-Fikr,

Zarrūq's announcement of the end of spiritual training roughly coincided with the reinvention of another old Sufi exercise: saying blessings on the Prophet Muḥammad, a practice encouraged and extolled in the Quran and the hadith. The practice is based on variations of the formula "May God bless him and grant him peace," referred to as *taṣliya* and *ṣalāt ʿalā l-nabiyy* in the sources. The fifteenth century CE saw an unprecedented proliferation of such formulas, the most famous being the collection *Dalāʾil al-kbayrāt* by the Moroccan Sufi master Muḥammad al-Jazūli (d. 869/1465). As F. Meier demonstrates in an extremely rich study published posthumously by his former students B. Radtke and G. Schubert, the ascendancy of the *taṣliya* from the fifteenth century CE onwards at times even tended to eclipse the *dhikr*, or remembrance of God, as the most frequent recitation practice of the Sufis.²² Elsewhere, Meier spoke of *Mohammadmystik*, mysticism centred on the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad, to characterise this tendency within Sufism, which gradually took centre stage in the practice of many Sufi Orders from the fifteenth century onwards.²³ To avoid any misunderstanding, this is not to say that previous Sufi practice did not include *taṣliya* recitations. Rather, what Meier observes—partly drawing on Tijānī material—is an ever-growing emphasis on the *taṣliya* at the expense of other recitations and religious practices. The following cursory analysis of nineteenth-century Tijānī literature will serve to explore the implications of this shift for the practice of spiritual training.

Spiritual training in Tijānī literature

The authoritative source for the life and teachings of Aḥmad al-Tijānī is *Jawābir al-maʿānī*, written during the founder's lifetime by his student ʿAlī Ḥarāzīm b. Barāda (d. 1217/1802-1803).²⁴ The book was long considered a secret compilation of Sufi teachings, as evidenced by the alternative title *al-Kunnāsh al-maktūm* ("The Hidden Compendium"), and therefore only cir-

n.d., p. 346. In *al-Futūḥāt al-ilābiyya fī sharḥ al-Mabāḥith al-aṣliyya li-Ibn al-Bannā al-Saraqustī* (published in the margin of *Īqāz al-himam*, see for instance pp. 126-127), Ibn ʿAjība takes an even stronger position against Zarrūq. See Kugle, *Rebel*, 200-202 for more on Ibn ʿAjība's scathing critique. – The twentieth-century debates about Zarrūq's statement in Senegal and Morocco are analysed in Seesemann, *Divine Flood*, pp. 82-87.

²² Meier, *Bemerkungen zur Mohammedverehrung*, vol. 2, p. 316-317 (full bibliographical details in n. 15).

²³ See F. Meier, "The Mystic Path", in Bernard Lewis et al. (eds.), *The World of Islam. Faith, People, Culture*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 1976, p. 117-140.

²⁴ On ʿAlī Ḥarāzīm, see Abun-Nasr, *Tijāniyya*, 24-25 and the most important collection of early Tijānī biographies, Aḥmad b. al-ʿAyyāshī Skiraj, *Kashf al-hijāb ʿammaṅ talāqā maʿa l-Shaykh al-Tijānī min al-aṣḥāb*, Beirut, al-Maktaba al-Shaʿbiyya, 1408/1987-1988, pp. 68-97.

culated in the form of manuscripts for almost a century. However, under unknown circumstances the book was printed in the Cairo-based press of Muḥammad Efendi Muṣṭafā in 1310/1893.²⁵ In both the manuscripts and the published version, the book comes in two parts. The first part begins with an introductory section, known as *khubṭat al-kitāb* (parts of which appear to be plagiarised from an earlier work²⁶), followed by an exposition of Aḥmad al-Tijānī's family background, education, and itinerary as a Sufi. His first daylight encounter with the Prophet Muḥammad marked the beginning of a master-disciple relationship between the two: al-Tijānī received his spiritual training directly from the Prophet. Subsequent sections of the first part of *Jawābir al-maʿānī* deal with al-Tijānī's Sufi teachings, whereas the second part contains speeches, fatwas, and narrations of al-Tijānī not primarily concerned with Sufism.

As mentioned earlier, Aḥmad al-Tijānī's mission as the founder of a distinct Sufi Path began when the Prophet ordered him to impart spiritual training to the creation, a term that includes both men and *jinn*. The model for this type of *tarbiya* was none other than the training al-Tijānī had received from the Prophet. The author of the *Jawābir* does not provide details about al-Tijānī's training, but another major Tijānī work of the nineteenth century, *Bughyat al-mustafid* by Muḥammad al-ʿArabī b. al-Sāʿih (d. 1309/1892 in Rabat), gives some more information. As Muḥammad al-ʿArabī explains, the Prophet established Aḥmad al-Tijānī as the sole intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) between the believers and God. There were no spiritual masters besides him, and God had granted him a preferred status by enabling him to reach the spiritual station (*maqām*) appropriate to him without recourse to seclusion, isolation, or strenuous exercises. According to Muḥammad al-ʿArabī, the guarantee to achieve the appropriate spiritual position extended to al-Tijānī's disciples, who could likewise attain mystical realisation without undergoing seclusion

²⁵ This first edition already had the *Rimāh hizb al-Rahīm ʿalā nuḥūr hizb al-rajīm*, another major Tijānī reference work by ʿUmar b. Saʿīd al-Fūti (d. 1280/1864), in the margin (on this work and the author see, among other studies, S. Bousbina, *Un siècle de savoir islamique en Afrique de l'Ouest (1820-1920). Analyse et commentaire de la littérature de la Tijāniyya à travers les œuvres d'al-Hājj ʿUmar, ʿUbaida ben Anbūja, Yirkoy Talfi et al-Hājj Malick Sy*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris I, 1996, pp. 122-143; B. Radtke, "Studies on the Sources of the *Kitāb Rimāh hizb ar-rahīm* of al-Hājj ʿUmar", *Sudanica Africa* 6 (1995), pp. 73-114; D. Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985). Almost all subsequent editions of the *Jawābir* also featured the *Rimāh* in the margin. The earliest prints all appeared in Cairo: Mṭ al-Taḳaddum, 1326/1908; Mṭ al-Saʿāda, 1329/1911; Mṭ al-Azhariyya, 1927. Later editions abound, with diverse places of publication (see *GAL* S II, p. 876, and S III, p. 875). In her contribution to the present volume, A.-L. Dupont refers to a *Jawābir* edition printed in Tunis in 1878.

²⁶ See El Adnani, *La Tijāniyya*, pp. 169-209, for a detailed discussion of this matter.

or other hardships.²⁷ In other words, the training al-Tijānī first received from the Prophet and later dispensed to his disciples did not include physical elements of the type Zarrūq and others were trying to eliminate four centuries earlier.

Tijānī authors took the absence of seclusion in the practices of their Sufi Path as a sign of superiority over other Orders. ‘Ubayda b. Anbūja, a nineteenth-century Mauritanian Tijānī shaykh and author of a rare *tarbiya* manual that will be discussed below, expressed this supposed advantage in a famous verse that contrasts al-Tijānī’s method of spiritual training with the approach taken by others:

Without seclusion he gave spiritual training, while the others trained by seclusion:
how different are the sources from which the two Yazids drink!²⁸

The second hemistich is meant to emphasise the fundamental difference between the two methods by using an allusion to the Umayyad caliph Yazīd, held in contempt for the slaughter of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, the Prophet’s grandson, at Kerbela, and the early Persian mystic Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/874), a model of piety and mystical knowledge. The author employs this metaphor to underscore the contrast between the two approaches to spiritual training, one relying on *khalwa* and strenuous exercises, and the other, Tijānī method dispensing with seclusion.²⁹ Everybody who takes and recites the Tijānī *wird*

²⁷ Muḥammad al-‘Arabi b. al-Sā’ih, *Bughyat al-mustafid li-sharh Munyat al-murid*, Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1379/1959–1960, p. 26. This book—a commentary on *Munyat al-murid*, an earlier work in verse by Aḥmad al-Tijānī b. Bāba (d. ca. 1270/1854) from the western Sahara—was first published in 1304/1887 (according to C. Mayeur-Jaouen; see her contribution to the present volume) and again 1326/1909 by Mṭ al-Taḡaddum al-‘Ilmiyya in Cairo. The next edition (Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1937) appeared with *al-Jaysh al-kafil bi-akhdh al-tha’r mimman salla ‘alā l-Shaykh al-Tijānī sayf al-inkār* in the margin, another nineteenth-century Tijānī work by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr b. Anbūja al-Tishīti (d. 1275/1858–1859). For a discussion of the *Jaysh*, see A. W. Ould Cheikh, “Les perles et le soufre. Une polémique mauritanienne autour de la Tijāniyya (1830–1935)”, in Triaud and Robinson, *La Tijāniyya*, pp. 125–163; the work is extensively quoted in Meier, *Bemerkungen zur Mohammedverehrung*, vol. 2. There were at least a dozen later editions of *Bughyat al-mustafid*, and the work became the most widely read manual of Tijānī doctrine and remains so today.

²⁸ ‘Ubayda b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr b. Anbūja, *Mizāb al-rahma al-rabbāniyya fi iḥbāt al-tarbiya fi l-ṭariqa al-Tijāniyya*, Cairo, Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1371/1951–1952, p. 29. There is at least one earlier edition (Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1348/1929), and the copy in the university library in Leiden might have been printed in the early 1900s, although it does not feature bibliographical details.

²⁹ However, this does not mean that *khalwa* had no place at all in the Tijāniyya. In the upper floor of the Dār al-Mirāya, the house where Aḥmad al-Tijānī lived for many years in Fez, there is a small windowless room where the Order’s founder used to go into seclusion. The point is that neither al-Tijānī nor his disciples depend on seclusion in order to reach the loftiest spiritual stations. See also Seesemann, *Divine Flood*, pp. 300–301 n. 37.

has the guarantee, pronounced by no less than the Prophet himself, that he or she will experience *fath* or illumination without ever entering into *khalwa*.

Once more, the most elaborate treatment of the appropriate training methods is found in Muḥammad al-ʿArabī's *Bughyat al-mustafid*. Interestingly, in the respective passages the author draws substantially on an earlier non-Tijāni work, the *Kitāb al-Dhabab al-ibriz min kalām Sayyidi ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Dabbāgh*.³⁰ This work, a hagiography and posthumous compilation of the teachings of ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Dabbāgh (d. 1131/1719) by his disciple Aḥmad b. al-Mubārak al-Lamaṭī (d. 1156/1743), has been one of the most influential texts in the later Sufi tradition of the Maghreb and beyond; apparently it already existed in print by the time Muḥammad al-ʿArabī wrote *Bughyat al-mustafid*. The prominence of quotations from the *Ibriz* in Muḥammad al-ʿArabī's work not only underscores my earlier observation about the difficulty to draw clear line between nineteenth-century Sufism and earlier Sufi currents. It also shows that Tijāni authorities endorsed al-Lamaṭī's (and, by extension, al-Dabbāgh's) portrayal of the history of *tarbiya*, which is worth to be presented in some detail.

According to the *Ibriz*, the goal of *tarbiya* is the purification of the self (*dhāt*).³¹ This purification continues as long as it takes the self to get ready to bear the secret. To achieve this, the self has to be kept away from all falsehood and harmful influences. All its negative traits need to be eliminated. Initially God Himself used to effect this purification without intermediary. This had been the case in the first three centuries (after the *hijra*)—the best ones ever. As the believers of the early generations had been eager to please God on their own accord, *tarbiya* was not required. The master could lead the disciples to illumination (*fath*) by merely whispering into their ear, because at that time the believers were still following the right guidance.

However, the *Ibriz* continues, this changed in subsequent centuries. The people started to develop ignoble intentions; they became obsessed with worldly concerns and followed their passions. Their minds were occupied with futile and wicked pursuits. When people in such a condition came to a shaykh, he subjected them to the training by using formulas of remembrance (*adbkār*, sing. *dbkr*; i.e., the recitation of Divine Names), or by sending them into seclusion (*khalwa*), or by ordering them to reduce their food intake. In seclusion they were far removed from bad company, when they

³⁰ Aḥmad b. al-Mubārak al-Lamaṭī, *al-Dhabab al-ibriz min kalām Sayyidi ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Dabbāgh*, Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Tawfiqiyya, n.d. (in the following quoted as al-Lamaṭī, *Ibriz*). The authoritative English translation is O'Kane and Radtke, *Pure Gold* (bibliographical details given in n. 20 above). See J. Dreher's contribution to the present volume for a more detailed discussion of this work and its impact.

³¹ The following is a summary of al-Lamaṭī, *Ibriz*, pp. 356-357; cf. O'Kane and Radtke, *Pure Gold*, pp. 614-616, where *dhāt* is translated as "body".

recited litanies they were prevented from loose and superfluous talk, when they ate little, their passions were subdued, until their concentration was focused again on God and the Prophet, and they finally became ready to bear the secret. This was the intention of the masters when they sent their disciples into seclusion and imparted spiritual training to them.

But this situation did also not prevail. According to the *Ibriz*, falsehood soon mixed up with truth, darkness mingled with light. The “people of falsehood” started to send others into seclusion with ulterior motives. They gave them Divine Names to recite, not for the sake of the truth, but to seek personal profit. At the time of Zarrūq and others the malpractice had reached such proportions that the true masters discouraged people to engage in *tarbiya*. They should stay on the safe side and adhere exclusively to the Quran and the Sunna. This was meant as a counsel in order to avert harm from the believers. It could by no means have been their intention to abolish true *tarbiya*; the light of the Prophet was to subsist until the Last Day.

While the *Ibriz* can hardly be read as a factual account of the history of *tarbiya*, it gives us valuable insights into how leading Sufis saw the development of spiritual training. One of the most remarkable statements is that *tarbiya* was not necessary during the first few centuries of Islam. This is precisely the point of departure for Muḥammad al-ʿArabī’s discussion of the topic in *Bughyat al-mustafid*, where the *Ibriz* is quoted extensively.³² For him the Tijānī Path represents nothing other than the return to the “original method” of the *salaf*, or pious forebears, marked by the training of the heart (*al-riyāda al-qalbiyya*). Everything introduced after the first three centuries, i.e. exertion, toil, and corporal exercises (*al-riyāda al-badaniyya*), was not part of this method, but was imposed by the conditions of the times. The former system amounted to a journey of the hearts, and the latter to a journey of the bodies. In order to reach the goal of *tarbiya* and attain *maʿrifa*, mystical knowledge of God, it was more important to turn attention to the heart than to the body. Muḥammad al-ʿArabī b. al-Sāʿih thus presents the Tijānī method of spiritual training as the journey of the hearts as opposed to the journey of the bodies. In other words, just as Aḥmad al-Tijānī skips over the long *silsila* of masters and establishes a direct connection with the Prophet Muḥammad, his *tarbiya* method discards the historical baggage of physical exercises and returns to the journey of the hearts, which—according to the Tijānī view—conforms to the original practice of the first generations of Muslims.

³² The following is based on Muḥammad al-ʿArabī b. al-Sāʿih, *Bughyat al-mustafid*, p. 27.

A nineteenth-century tarbiya manual

How exactly does this type of *tarbiya* work? Whoever seeks a clear and comprehensive answer to this question will soon realise that it is hard to find. Teachings pertaining to Sufi secrets—of which the mystical experience forms an important part—are not meant to be disclosed to outsiders and therefore do not feature among the subjects treated in books. Mystical knowledge cannot be put in words and cannot be conveyed in writing. Accordingly, the analysis of Sufi literature only offers limited insights into the practice of spiritual training. If such secret knowledge circulates in writing at all, it usually takes the form of poetry with its rich metaphors and symbolism, or the form of personal notes collected in compendiums, referred to as *kanānīsh* (pl. of *kunnāsh*) in Tijānī circles.³³ In any case, the literary products of Sufis do generally not contain details or practical instructions pertaining to spiritual training, and Tijānī writings are no exception. Mystical knowledge is transmitted “from breast to breast”, not from books to readers.

However, we do learn a few more things about *tarbiya* from the major expositions of Tijānī doctrine. The sources, beginning with *Jawābir al-ma‘ānī*, are unambiguous that the key to successful spiritual training, epitomised by the experience of illumination (*fath*) and the attainment of mystical knowledge (*ma‘rifā*), lies in the litanies (*awrād*) Aḥmad al-Tijānī received directly from the Prophet Muḥammad. Whoever recites the obligatory litany (*al-wird al-lāzim*) according to the rules (*shurūṭ*) under the guidance of a qualified shaykh and on a regular basis will sooner or later experience illumination.³⁴

Among the vast corpus of Tijānī literature there is one work that is entirely devoted to the theme of spiritual training: *Mizāb al-raḥma al-rabbāniyya fī iḥbāt al-tarbiya fī l-ṭarīqa al-Tijāniyya*, written by ‘Ubayda b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr b. Anbūja (d. 1284/1867) from Tichit in present-day Mauritania.³⁵ This is the work that comes closest to what we can call a *tarbiya* manual, even though the author fails to give practical directions as to how the training is to be conducted. Such instructions still remain the preserve of oral transmission and embodied knowledge practices, which defer articulation in written form.

Mizāb al-raḥma is of particular interest for two reasons. Firstly, Ibn Anbūja presents a model detailing the stations (*maqāmāt*) and stages (*manāzil*) of the mystical Path the disciple is supposed to follow during the training,

³³ As mentioned above, *Jawābir al-ma‘ānī* was itself originally considered a secret book, hence its alternative appellation *al-Kunnāsh al-maktūm*.

³⁴ See Muḥammad al-‘Arabi b. al-Sā‘ih, *Bughyat al-mustafīd*, pp. 26-27.

³⁵ See the bibliographical details in n. 28. The work is summarised and analysed in Bousbina, “Un siècle de savoir islamique”, pp. 212-273. ‘Ubayda b. Anbūja is the brother of the author of the *Jaysh* (see n. 27).

and secondly, he specifies three methods used to traverse the stations and stages. Translated into a table, the model looks as follows:

The Three Stations of Religion (maqāmāt al-dīn al-thalāth)

three <i>maqāmāt</i> / stations		
<i>islām</i> / submission	<i>īmān</i> / faith	<i>iḥsān</i> / perfection
nine <i>munāzil</i> / stages		
1. <i>taḥbā</i> / repentance	4. <i>ikhlāṣ</i> / sincerity	7. <i>murāqaba</i> / contemplation
2. <i>istiḳāma</i> / righteousness	5. <i>ṣidq</i> / truthfulness	8. <i>mushābada</i> / witnessing
3. <i>taḥqūqā</i> / awareness of God	6. <i>ṭuma'nīna</i> / serenity	9. <i>ma'rifa</i> / cognizance

Of course, such models are familiar to those who specialise in Sufi studies, and they are certainly not a nineteenth-century innovation.³⁶ The names of the three *maqāmāt* are derived from the famous “Hadith of Gabriel”³⁷, where a stranger approaches the Prophet while he is surrounded by some of his Companions. To the latter’s great surprise, the stranger then puts the Prophet to a test as if he were addressing a student, asking him three consecutive questions: What is *islām* (submission), what is *īmān* (faith), and what is *iḥsān* (perfection; lit., “doing the beautiful”)? In response to the first question, the Prophet enumerates the five Pillars of Islam, and the answer to the second question consists of the fundamental articles of faith (‘*aqā'id*; belief in God, his angels, his messengers, all heavenly books, and the divine decree and predestination). In response to the last question, the Prophet gives a definition of *iḥsān* that the Sufis have come to interpret as a direct reference to their practices: “*Iḥsān* means that you worship God as if you see Him. Even if you have not seen Him, He sees you.” After the stranger has left, the Prophet—who had recognised that he was no other than the angel Gabriel, the transmitter of the Quranic revelations—discloses the latter’s identity to his Companions.

In 1930, the Senegalese Shaykh Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abdallāh Niassé (d. 1395/1975), one of the most influential Tijānī leaders in the twentieth-century,

³⁶ For an overview of such models, see, for instance, Trimmingham *Sufi Orders*, pp. 152–157 (though his remarks about ethical versus mystical Sufism should be taken with a grain of salt).

³⁷ See A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 8 vols., Leiden, Brill, 1936–1988, vol. 1, p. 467.

wrote a concise summary of the model presented in *Mizāb al-rahma*,³⁸ where the stations are defined as follows: Submission, the first station, means to pronounce the first part of the *shabāda*, the declaration of God's oneness: The traveller on the Path *says*, *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, "there is no deity but God." Arriving at the station of faith, the traveller reaches certainty beyond any doubt: He or she *knows* that there is no deity other than God. Those who attain the station of perfection are constantly engaged in putting God's Oneness into practice: They *realise* the maxim "there is no deity but God," to the extent that it permeates their entire existence.³⁹

In Ibn Anbūja's model, each station is divided into three *manāzil*, adding up to a total of nine stages. Drawing on the more elaborate definitions in *Mizāb al-rahma*, Ibrāhīm Niasse then tackles the three stages of the first station: *tawba* (repentance) is defined as "leaving the state of being ungrateful for God's favour".⁴⁰ It also implies to fulfil the legal obligations of a Muslim and to shun all actions and objects that are unlawful. The second stage, *istiqāma* or righteousness, means to follow the straight (or righteous) path (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqim*) referred to in the Quran (Sura 1:6; 6:39 and 126, and others), and to abstain from associating anything with God. The third stage, *taqwā* or awareness of God, takes the first stage further and entails full compliance with the divine commandments and total avoidance of everything that is forbidden.

Then follows the transition to the station of *imān* or faith. The fourth stage, *ikhlāṣ* or sincerity,⁴¹ introduces a new quality to the compliance with the divine commandments and prohibitions, which already was the focus of the stage of awareness of God. The sincere aspirant complies with these rules purely for the sake of God (*li-wajh Allāh*), and not for profane or selfish motives, like the fear of divine punishment or the longing for paradise. During the subsequent stage of *ṣidq* (truthfulness) the traveller on the Path performs only virtuous deeds (*ʿamal al-birr*). The single criterion that guides the possessor of truthfulness (*ṣādiq*) in all his undertakings is the belief in God and the Last Day. With *ṭuma'nīna* (serenity), stage number six, the

³⁸ The relevant section can be found in Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-rahma*, pp. 59-121. The title of Niasse's work is *Maqāmāt al-dīn al-ṭhalāth*. There are numerous editions of this short booklet; the one I used only shows the year of publication (1410/1989-1990) and was probably printed in Kano. Niasse's adaptation of Ibn Anbūja's model formed the basis of his Sufi movement within the Tijāniyya, which is the subject of Seesemann, *Divine Flood*.

³⁹ Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdallāh Niasse, *Maqāmāt al-dīn al-ṭhalāth*, n.p. (Kano), no publ., 1410/1989-1990, p. 2. The following summary of the stages is based on the same source.

⁴⁰ Ibrāhīm Niasse, *Maqāmāt*, p. 2; cf. Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-rahma*, pp. 60-61.

⁴¹ It should be noted that stages four and five are reversed in Niasse's presentation, i.e., *ikhlāṣ* is stage number five and *ṣidq* stage number four. See Ibrāhīm Niasse, *Maqāmāt*, pp. 4-5; cf. Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-rahma*, pp. 84 and 91.

heart of the seeker dwells in God and reaches a state where it is content with God. The heart no longer cares about what may cause benefit or harm, but commits itself totally into the hands of God.

The next level, *iḥṣān* or perfection, begins with the stage of *murāqaba* (contemplation). Here, the traveller on the Path can permanently sense the Divine Presence. However, a thin veil still obscures God from full perception; the aspirant only perceives Him through tasting (*dhawq*). In the subsequent stage of *mushābada* (witnessing), this veil is removed and gives way for “vision of the Real (*al-Haqq*) by the Real.”⁴² When this vision occurs, it cannot be imagination; it is beyond the possibility of doubt. The seeker loses sensation of anything but the Real by the Real through the Real; not even a hair is left from his or her existence. This is a state where nothing remains as a separate object, neither remembrance (*dhikr*) nor the one who remembers (*dhākir*; i.e., the aspirant) nor the object of remembrance (*madbhūr*; i.e., God). Witnessing is the stage nearest to *fath*, illumination: the traveller has now reached the door of *maʿrifā*, cognizance or mystical knowledge of God. Once on this level, the spirit (*rūḥ*) stands firmly established in the presence of witnessing. Such an attainment, however, cannot come through one’s own faculty or effort. It rather resembles the experience of being suddenly overwhelmed by God, resulting in complete annihilation of one’s own identity (*fanāʾ*), which is finally, after returning to self-awareness, followed by permanent sustenance in God (*baqāʾ*).⁴³

As indicated above, none of the stations, stages, and technical terms can be considered as novelties introduced in nineteenth-century Sufism. They represent the elements that constitute the journey on the mystical Path (*sulūk*) and can be found in virtually all Sufi traditions, even if each Sufi Order stands for a peculiar combination of these elements. However, what is striking is the fact that Ibn Anbūja’s model is adopted from a fourteenth-century author from Andalusia, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī al-Sāḥilī (d. 754/1353). In fact, the stations and stages expounded by Ibn Anbūja are an exact reproduction of the model developed by al-Sāḥilī in a work under the title *Bughyat al-sālik fi ashraf al-masālik*.⁴⁴ Ibn Anbūja even acknowledges al-Sāḥilī as his source of inspiration⁴⁵, and it is perhaps more than a coincidence that the latter is almost a contemporary of the above-mentioned Ibn ‘Abbād

⁴² Ibrāhīm Niasse, *Maqāmāt*, p. 7.

⁴³ Ibn Anbūja also speaks of *fanāʾ al-fanāʾ*, the “annihilation of annihilation” (Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-raḥma*, pp. 113 and 155-156); cf. Ibn ‘Ajība, *Īqāz al-himam*, 52.

⁴⁴ See *GAL S I*, p. 809 and *S II*, p. 378. The book has recently become available in a careful edition in two volumes with introductory chapters about the work and the author: Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Sāḥilī al-Māliqī [sic] al-Andalusī, *Bughyat al-sālik fi ashraf al-masālik*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-‘Alami, Rabat, Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1424/2003.

⁴⁵ See Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-raḥma*, pp. 59 and 120.

of Ronda who was among the first to elaborate on the distinction between instruction (*taʿlīm*), spiritual training (*tarbiya*), and elevation (*tarqīya*).

Yet—and this brings us back to the history of *tarbiya* as a Sufi practice—there is a notable difference between the methods Ibn Anbūja and al-Sāhili propose for the aspirants' journey through the stations and stages. In his model of *sulūk*, al-Sāhili relies heavily on seclusion (*khatwa*). Writing five hundred years after al-Sāhili, Ibn Anbūja presents three methods in his *Mizāb al-raḥma*, each forming the subject of a separate chapter. The first method is spiritual training by means of formulas of remembrance (*adhbkār*).⁴⁶ In this case the *adhbkār* are equivalent to the Tijānī *wird*: Ibn Anbūja breaks them down into formulas asking God for forgiveness (*istiḡfār*), the formula “there is no deity but God” (*ḥaylala*), and formulas invoking blessings on the Prophet (*ṣalāt ʿalā l-nabiyy*).⁴⁷ He thus describes nothing other than *tarbiya* by means of the obligatory Tijānī litanies, the standard method referred to in *Jawābir al-maʿānī* and Muḥammad al-ʿArabi b. al-Sāʿih's *Bughyat al-mustafid*, and it is in this chapter of *Mizāb al-raḥma* that Ibn Anbūja reproduces al-Sāhili's model.

The following chapter addresses the second method, *tarbiya* by means of the five daily ritual prayers (*al-ṣalawāt al-khams*).⁴⁸ Here Ibn Anbūja offers a detailed exposition of the merits and spiritual value of ritual prayer, without clearly indicating how it does actually effectuate progress on the mystical journey. The chapter on the third method is actually the shortest, comprising only six pages⁴⁹ that deal with *tarbiya* by means of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*, a formula of saying blessings on the Prophet Muḥammad. Before I move to the discussion of this formula, let me highlight once more the significance of the lesson we can learn from the comparison between al-Sāhili and Ibn Anbūja, neatly summarised in the latter's verse quoted above (“Without seclusion he gave spiritual training, while the others trained by seclusion”). The case of al-Sāhili and Ibn Anbūja illustrates the gradual transition from seclusion to the *ṣalāt ʿalā l-nabiyy* as the principal training method and thus corroborates Meier's hypothesis about the shift of Sufi practices from what he calls the *vita purgativa* (i.e., seclusion, physical exercises) to the recitation of litanies invoking blessings on the Prophet—a practice he identifies with the *ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya*.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 59-121; cf. the summary and discussion in Bousbina, “Un siècle de savoir islamique”, pp. 233-266.

⁴⁷ Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-raḥma*, p. 61.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 121-142; cf. Bousbina, “Un siècle de savoir islamique”, pp. 266-270.

⁴⁹ Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-raḥma*, pp. 143-148; cf. Bousbina, “Un siècle de savoir islamique”, pp. 271-272.

⁵⁰ See Meier, *Bemerkungen zur Mohammedverehrung*, vol. 2, pp. 313-317 and p. 337.

While Tijānī sources unanimously emphasise the importance of the *ṣalāt ʿalā l-nabiyy* in general, it is one particular formula, the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*, that takes centre stage in Tijānī beliefs and practices. The latter's merits are extolled in Tijānī writings, beginning with ʿAlī Ḥarāzīm's *Jawābir al-maʿānī* and up to the latest literary products of this Sufi Order. It can roughly be translated as follows:

Oh God, bless our Master Muḥammad, the opener of what has been closed, the seal of what has gone before, he who makes the Truth victorious by the Truth, the guide to thy straight path, and bless his household as is due to him on account of his immense position and grandeur.

Although the Tijānī sources also acknowledge that the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* was first used by the Egyptian Sufi Muḥammad al-Bakrī (d. 994/1586),⁵¹ who originally received it written “on a sheet of light” (*ʿalā ṣaḥīfa min al-nūr*), they stress that the Prophet explicitly instructed Aḥmad al-Tijānī in one of their daylight encounters to adopt the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*. Moreover, the Prophet informed al-Tijānī about the excellence of this particular formula as well as countless benefits reserved for those who recite it with a proper permission (*idbm*).⁵² Tijānī authors also refer to it as *al-yaqūta al-farida*, “the matchless sapphire”, and some have even treated its meanings and benefits—divided into the categories *zābir* (manifest), *bāṭin* (hidden) and *bāṭin al-bāṭin* (the hidden within the hidden)—at the length of entire books.⁵³

As mentioned above, Ibn Anbūja devotes a separate, if short chapter of *Mizāb al-raḥma* to the training by means of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*. Even though he does not give detailed instructions as to how this training is conducted, he insists that the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* alone is sufficient to traverse the various stations and stages of the mystical journey, because the Prophet had given the

⁵¹ On him A. Sabra, “Household Sufism in Sixteenth-Century Egypt: The Rise of al-Sāda al-Bakriyya”, in R. Chih and C. Mayeur-Jaouen (eds.), *Le soufisme à l'époque ottomane*, Cairo, IFAO, 2010, p. 111-115; see also D. Gril's contribution to the present volume. Abun-Nasr (*Tijāniyya*, 51) confuses Muḥammad al-Bakrī with another member of the Bakrī family, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Bakrī (d. 952/1545; on him Sabra, “Household Sufism”, p. 103).

⁵² See the summary of the history and the benefits of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* in Abun-Nasr, *Tijāniyya*, pp. 51-52; see also Meier, *Bemerkungen zur Mohammedverehrung*, vol. 2, pp. 323-325.

⁵³ A comprehensive treatment of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* in four parts, distributed over two large volumes, is Maḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Nazīfī, *al-Durra al-kharida fi sharḥ al-Yaqūta al-farida*, Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1372/1952-1953. – To mention only the most famous of its benefits: According to ʿAlī Ḥarāzīm (*Jawābir al-maʿānī*, vol. 1, p. 136), the Prophet told Aḥmad al-Tijānī that whoever recites the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* once receives a reward equivalent to 6,000 recitations of the entire Quran. Not surprisingly, this statement gave rise to multiple waves of criticism, as documented in Abun-Nasr, *Tijāniyya*, pp. 173-181, and analysed in R. Seesemann, “The *takfir* Debate: Sources for the Study of a Contemporary Dispute among African Sufis. Part I: The Nigerian Arena”, *Sudanic Africa* 9 (1998), pp. 39-70.

guarantee that everybody who recited the formula according to the conditions (*shurūt*) would eventually attain illumination and experience rapture (*jadhb*).⁵⁴

Writing a few decades after Ibn Anbūja, another celebrated Tijāni author of the nineteenth century, the Moroccan Muḥammad al-Kansūsī (d. 1293/1877), likewise pointed to the function of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* as the best means of spiritual training. Interestingly, in this context he also refers to Zarrūq as an authority, quoting him with the statement, “I saw the doors to God as they were about to close, and the only ones that remained open were those of saying blessings on the Prophet Muḥammad”.⁵⁵

The shift from seclusion to the recitation of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* reaches its apogee in the *tarbiya* practices adopted by the twentieth-century Senegalese Tijāni leader Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abdallāh Niasse, introduced above in connection with Ibn Anbūja’s model of the mystical Path. The year 1348/1929 marks the beginning of his movement, known as the “Community of the Divine Flood” (*jamā‘at al-fayḍa*), which later became the dominant branch of the Tijāniyya in West Africa and beyond, not least because of the efficiency of Niasse’s *tarbiya* method.⁵⁶

The implications of the emphasis on the practice of saying blessings on the Prophet are not limited to the mystical journey, but also pertain to the specific notion of the *ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya* endorsed by Tijāni authors of the nineteenth century. Let me mention only two important aspects here.⁵⁷ The Muḥammadan nature of the Tijāni Path stems, first of all, from the fact that the founder received his *ṭarīqa* directly from the Prophet, thus eliminating the long chains of transmission (*salāsīl*) characteristic of other Orders. The Tijāniyya is the Prophet’s *ṭarīqa*. Moreover, in his presentation of the last three stages of the *tarbiya* model, Ibn Anbūja declares that the objective (*maqṣad*) of his method consists of “attaining experiential knowledge of the secrets of the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-‘utbūr ‘alā ma‘rifat ba‘ḍ asrār al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*)”.⁵⁸ Muḥammad al-‘Arabī b. al-Sā’ih takes this even further: According to *Bughyat al-mustafid*, the continuous invocation

⁵⁴ Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-raḥma*, pp. 146-147.

⁵⁵ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Akansūs [al-Kansūsī], *al-Jawāb al-muskit fi l-radd ‘alā man ta-kallama fi ṭarīq al-Imām al-Tijāni bi-lā tathabbut*, Algiers, Mṭ al-Tha‘ālibiyya, 1913, pp. 47-48. Apparently the book was first printed in Tunis (Mṭ al-Rasmiyya al-Tūnisiyya, 1307/1889-1890). – Cf. Kugle, *Rebel*, 149 on Zarrūq’s use of the *taṣliya*. In his *Ṭabaqāt*, al-Sha‘rāni (d. 973/1565) attributes a similar statement to ‘Alī al-Khawwāṣ (d. 939/1533), who emphasised that the seekers should now proceed through the gate of the Prophet, as the gates of the friends of God were closed (Meier, *Bemerkungen zur Mohammedverehrung*, vol. 2, p. 338).

⁵⁶ For details see Seesemann, *Divine Flood*.

⁵⁷ Cf. the discussion of the topic in O’Fahey and Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered”, pp. 68-70.

⁵⁸ Ibn Anbūja, *Mizāb al-raḥma*, 155; see also *ibid.*, 111.

of blessings on the Prophet brings the seeker closer to Muḥammad until he eventually sees him in a daylight encounter (*ru'ya fi l-yaqza*), just as Aḥmad al-Tijānī did at the time of the inception of his Path.⁵⁹ Accordingly, as I was told multiple times during my encounters with Tijānīs in various countries, many later Tijānī shaykhs recited the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* thousands of times every day, until the Prophet appeared to them in a waking state.

Conclusion

What does the preceding analysis teach us about Sufi literature and printing in the nineteenth century? First of all, the Tijānī writings presented here allow us to trace the rise of the *ṣalāt 'alā l-nabiyy* as a method of spiritual training. The purpose of invoking blessings on the Prophet transcends mere devotion or expression of love (*maḥabba*), which seems to be the principal motive of, for instance, Yūsuf al-Nabhānī's use of such formulas.⁶⁰ The *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* was particularly efficient, even enabling its reciter to experience daylight encounters with the Prophet Muḥammad.

The emphasis on the *ṣalāt 'alā l-nabiyy* goes hand in hand with a further systematisation of the Sufi Path and a move away from seclusion, as expounded in Ibn Anbūja's *tarbiya* manual. The *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* takes the transition from the journey of the body to the journey of the heart to a new level. It is significant, however, that the nineteenth-century Tijānī writings discussed here all draw on earlier sources, ranging from al-Sāḥili's *Bughyat al-sālik* (fourteenth century) and Zarrūq's *Qarwā'id* (fifteenth century) to al-Lamaṭī's *Ibriz* (eighteenth century). Tijānī authors rely on previous Sufi authorities, but they subtly shift the emphasis, thus developing and justifying the *tarbiya* method outlined above.

The history and contents of the writings considered here suggest that the impact of the introduction of print technology was rather limited in the nineteenth century. I do not know of any work printed before the late 1880s. In other words, Tijānī literature only circulated as manuscripts when the major texts were written. However, we can assume that the manuscripts circulated in relatively large numbers, at least among the leading figures of the Tijāniyya. Some of them might have had access to the earliest printed editions of Sufi works published in Cairo, which included al-Lamaṭī's

⁵⁹ See Muḥammad al-ʿArabi b. al-Sāʿih, *Bughyat al-mustafid*, pp. 79-83; this section contains the most elaborate statement on the *tariqa muḥammadiyya* in the Tijānī tradition.

⁶⁰ See J. Dreher's contribution to the present volume. Similar to Nabḥānī's understanding, other famous collections of *taṣliya* formulas, such as *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, also seem to be serving primarily devotional purposes.

Ibriz.⁶¹ In any case, it is only in the first decades of the twentieth century that printing gives rise to the proliferation of books in Tijānī circles of North and West Africa in particular, and most Tijānī works were only printed after the turn of the century.

Be this as it may, the mere fact that leading Tijānī shaykhs put their ideas about *tarbiya* into writing and distributed their texts widely in the form of manuscripts is already significant, as it heralds the popularisation of a new, systematic approach to the mystical Path, a Path focused on the Prophet Muḥammad. As already emphasised, devotion to the Prophet as expressed in the form of the *ṣalāt ‘alā l-nabiyy* is anything but a nineteenth-century innovation, and F. Meier has documented numerous precedents for the use of the *taṣliya* for mystical purposes, including the encounter with the Prophet. For this and other reasons, nineteenth-century Sufism is not Neo-Sufism. However, the nineteenth-century Tijāniyya gradually recasts earlier Sufi teachings and practices against the backdrop of changing circumstances and contexts, triggered by the impending transition to modernity. The Tijānī approach to *tarbiya* is a case in point: Even if the authoritative writings habitually present this approach as a return to the method of the *salaf*, it reveals new features. The systematisation of the Sufi Path as displayed in Ibn Anbūja’s *Mizāb al-rahma*, combined with the use of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* as training method, creates a novel form of Sufism that turns out to be very successful, as epitomised in Niasse’s “Community of the Divine Flood”.

Judging from this survey of Tijānī literature, the nineteenth century does not have a clear-cut beginning, nor does it have a definite end. Rather, it marks the transition to a practice of Sufism compatible with the exigencies of modern life. The characteristic feature of this practice is the use of the *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* as the perfect means to attaining mystical knowledge of God and possibly even being blessed with an encounter with the Prophet Muḥammad. Indeed, the treatment of *tarbiya* in the major Tijānī writings serves as a reminder that mystical knowledge is transmitted through lived practice rather than in books.

⁶¹ For details on these early editions see the contribution by C. Mayeur-Jaouen to the present volume.