

Celebrating Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and the Tijaniyya¹

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May peace and blessing of Allah be upon
our master, Prophet Muhammad.

I give grace to Allah, a grace of absolute happiness.

My intention in this poem is to sing the praises of the Tijani community,
tell the story of its holy men, the *wirds*² of its shaykhs,
and the *dhikr*³ of its great masters. I faithfully accepted the Tijani wurd!

[I celebrate] the Sharif residing in the North and descendant of the privileged from the East,
with the people from the West.⁴ I wear the Tijani turban!

Let us not follow the path of the lost and unaware people from whom light
and conviction have been stripped away, who denigrate the Tijani community.

Alfaa Umar, who made a pilgrimage to Mecca, prayed at the mausoleum of the privileged.
He went to Sham and through him we received the wurd of Shaykh al-Tijani.

What I want is to quickly get out of the authority of kings [of this world],
to be among the shaykhs by swimming in the pond of Tijani spirituality,
for it increases clairvoyance and mystical secrets of the mind.

It removes [mundane] desires from the souls of those who love the Tijani wurd.

[The Tijaniyya] is neither a breach of trust nor a distortion of the Sunnah.⁵

¹ Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (1737/1738-1815), the founder of the Tijaniyya, was born in Aïn Mahdi in Algeria, and died in Fez, Morocco where he is laid to rest.

² *Wirds* refers to invocations specific to the Tijaniyya.

³ *Dhikr* refers to the ritual prayers or litany recited by Sufi Muslims to glorify God and attain spiritual perfection.

⁴ The author talks here about West African Sufi leaders and Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani who is a *Sharif*, *i.e.*, descendant of Prophet Muhammad, who is regarded as the privileged from the East (Mecca).

⁵ *Sunna* refers to the traditions of Prophet Muhammad.

It is unanimous that hope and fear [of God] are the basis of Tijani spirituality.⁶

No one will have the strength nor less the solution on the Day of the Last Judgment. The solution is

to be afraid of the One who has the solution and the strength: the Creator of the Tijaniyya!⁷

I pray to be spared from losing my faith when I am dying,

or to lose my reputation, to be transformed, and to abandon the Tijani wurd.

I pray to keep my faith all my life and to believe in the oneness of God

during the interrogation [in my tomb] and to possess the totality of the Tijani wurd.

What I would do in my lifetime is to respect the obligations and follow the recommendations.⁸

What I hope to have when I am taken into my tomb is the Tijani wurd.

What I advise my Fula parents is not to follow in the footsteps of the deceitful,

for they are traitors who want to reclaim our faith and make us leave the Tijaniyya.

It is Nemrod⁹ who deceived Canaan; it is Haman¹⁰ who deceived Pharaoh; and it is Satan

who deceived Qarun¹¹ into turning away from the Creator of the Tijaniyya!¹²

Be my guarantor, O You who sent the Angel Gabriel and entrusted the rain to the angel Michael,

You who granted custody of the souls to Azrael and Israfil, and who created the Tijaniyya!

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He is named Israfil because of the trumpet he will blow

⁶ The author suggests the *Tijani wurd* is not contrary to the Sunnah and that it is meant to obtain Allah's rewards and to repent one's sins for fear to be punished by God in the hereafter.

⁷ The author is referring to God.

⁸ Allah's obligation and the recommendations of the Prophet Muhammad.

⁹ The exegetes and other scholars in genealogy report that *Nemrod* (or *Nimrod*) was the king of Babylon, brother of *Canaan*, and son of *Cush*, son of *Ham*, son of *Noah*.

¹⁰ *Haman* was the great vizier and high priest of Pharaoh, and his court associate at the time of the Prophet Moses as reported by the Quran.

¹¹ *Qarun* or *Karun* is the same evil character known as *Korah*, *Korach*, *Korak* in the Hebrew Bible. He was a wealthy man and Moses' adversary.

¹² God.

to resuscitate the dead. They will be revived in the religion of the Tijaniyya!¹³

Tamba and its surroundings are already conquered and possessed, so is Kaarta¹⁴ too. The places of

worship of the pagans of Segu¹⁵ have become mosques for the Tijani community!

[Umar Tall] who destroyed the city of Mamady¹⁶ and the pagans of Macina and Mady¹⁷

built a morgue and implemented the Tijani wird!

He defeated his adversaries without a scratch,

and without the destruction of his homes thanks to the spiritual power of the Tijaniyya!

He began his holy war in Bundu and ended it without his death being celebrated.¹⁸

His scattered companions lived long enough thanks to the wird of Shaykh al-Tijani!

Any will of Allah will necessarily be realized! Every Muslim should have the intention

to perform pilgrimage to Mecca or to pray at the mausoleum of Shaykh al-Tijani!

[Umar Tall] drank from the pond of Jaajalol;¹⁹ he went to drink at the source of Zamzam,²⁰

before coming back to drink in the pond of Sham and implement the Tijani wird!

He is gifted with the secret names by He who has the greatest secret names [God]. He has the

secrets of the purification of the hearts of the believers with the blessing of Shaykh al-Tijani!

The gift of God is not achieved through hard work or spontaneously. It is achieved through

submission and the perpetual quest of knowledge as Shaykh al-Tijani did!

¹³ Islam.

¹⁴ *Kaarta* was a Bambara kingdom located in the western half of present-day Mali. The kingdom was destroyed as an independent power in 1854 by the jihad of *El Hadj Umar Tall* (c. 1797-1864), a leader of the Tijaniyya. Umar Tall captured Niuro and put to death the king of *Kaarta* (*Fama*) *Mamady Kankan* and his entire family.

¹⁵ The Bambara kingdom of Segu stretches large swaths of present-day Mali. It was occupied by *Umar Tall* in 1861.

¹⁶ *Mamady Kandia* was the king of the kingdom of *Kaarta*. In 1854, he was defeated by Umar Tall in Niuro.

¹⁷ Shortcut of *Mamady*.

¹⁸ The author writes that Umar Tall was not killed during his holy war since his remains were not found. It is said that he disappeared mysteriously in the cliffs of Bandiagara in contemporary Mali.

¹⁹ In Fuuta Tooro (north of Senegal).

²⁰ Zamzam is a water spring found in Mecca, in Saudi Arabia.

Before the creation of anything, Allah forecast the privileges to be granted.

He has privileged the Prophet and privileged the Tijani wîrd!

He gave the Prophet the choice to remain in this world or to die,

and the latter chose eternal salvation through death by trusting the Tijani wîrd!

[God] offered him a lake that gives water to the obedient who celebrate Him and his Prophet.

Beautiful young girls will be picked to fetch and give water to the Tijani community!

A group of young men, young women, and a group of masters will meet.

[The beautiful young girls] will greet the bards and those who had practiced the Tijani wîrd!

They will dress in beautiful wrappers and wear perfumed necklaces.

They will wear luminous veils while greeting the Tijani group!

When Ridwan²¹ opens the doors of the houses of [Paradise], he will open the fragrant corridors.

He will show the way to those practicing the wîrds, starting with the Tijani wîrd!

Burak²² will come, with a saddle and pure emerald on its back.

The elected Prophet will ride it, with all Tijani disciples by his side!

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The prophet will gather fine clothes and things, and black coats with embroidery,

and after dressing himself will dress members of the Tijaniyya!

The Angel Gabriel, the beloved who possesses salvation, will jump with joy

like a child playing! He will do it because of Shaykh al-Tijani!

[Shaykh Umar Tall] the generous, the modest one who masters the art of war

and conquered many cities is a champion of the Tijani wîrd.

²¹ *Ridwan* is the name of the guardian angel of paradise.

²² *Burak* or *Al-Buraq* is the name of the winged horse in Islam which transported Prophet Muhammad during his Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. According to some Muslim intellectuals, *Al-Buraq* is the first quadruped God will revive on Judgement Day.

The angels in the heavens, the men and jinn on the earth, and all the waters and living things
are accounted for in the wirds of Shaykh al-Tijani!

Some [Tijani] wirds are done daily, in the morning and the evening.

The wazifa²³ are periodical, as well as the Friday²⁴ traditions of the Tijaniyya.

The practice of each of the wirds consists of purifications and conditions.

The one giving us the wird must be authorized to give the Tijani wirds!

Those who practiced the wirds will receive a reward of a million

and a thousand blessings. This number is fitting as rewards for the Tijani wirds!

If it is during the time of periodic prayers,²⁵ this number [of blessings] will be increased

to the number of God's creatures! This is also one of the privileges of Shaykh al-Tijani!

The conditions²⁶ are as follows: purity of the body and of the clothes,

to have the intention, have a purified place, accept to rely only on Shaykh al-Tijani,
respect mandatory prayers, face the famous Qibla [the Kaaba in Mecca],

respect people who practice this wird, and to start the Tijani wird.

You should redo it if you have missed it. These are all the obligations.

In what follows, I share with you the good practices of the Tijaniyya tradition.

The fifteen good practices²⁷ are comprised of the Jewel of Perfection,²⁸ the cleanliness

of the water and the seven following conditions of the Tijaniyya to be fulfilled.

²³ They are the dawn and evening prayers. The *wazifa* is one of the most important rituals of the brotherhood founded by Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani. Its practice is mandatory for every member who has received authorization from an attested leader.

²⁴ These prayers are called *Hadrat al-Jum'a*.

²⁵ For the *wazifa* and *Hadrat al-Jum'a* prayers.

²⁶ To practice the *wird* and get these blessings.

²⁷ All fifteen good practices are not mentioned. Only the seven conditions to be met to fulfill them are mentioned.

²⁸ This refers to the *Jawbaratu l-Kamal* (*The Jewel of Perfection*), which is a form of prayer upon the Prophet Muhammad that Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani had received from him in a waking state. According to members of the Tijaniyya, the *Jawbaratu l-Kamal* is evidence of the exceptional spiritual rank of Ahmad al-Tijani which confirms his title of "Seal of the Saints."

One needs a place wide enough to accommodate five people:

the Prophet and four virtuous individuals of the Tijaniyya

who possess privileged spiritual ranks, shining lights,

and protective blessings received thanks to Shaykh al-Tijani.

One must know the meaning²⁹ of the words recited to allow a better understanding.

Understanding the words of prayers corresponds to the intention of Shaykh al-Tijani!

One must recite the formula of preservation against Satan, the Basmalah, and the Fatihah; then recite

the special formula of absolution,³⁰ and prayers upon the prophet and Shaykh al-Tijani!

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It is the end of what should be said about this wird so that [you] understand,

the disciple who wonders how to do the wird of Shaykh al-Tijani.

May Allah grant His mercy to those who practiced the wird of the venerated Shaykh

and to those who praised the people who practiced the wird of Shaykh al-Tijani!

Thanks to the stories of the holy men [of the Tijaniyya], the wirds of its Shaykhs,

and the dhikrs³¹ of its great masters, I faithfully accepted the Tijani wird!

I will be in the group of the Privileged and I will be brought with the community of salvation!

I will be entered into the safe light, and I will see Shaykh al-Tijani!

I will be taken care of, and I will praise the One who forgives believers their sins.

I will follow the path that leads to Muhammad in the company of Shaykh al-Tijani!

The drum of confidence will be beaten to call for the great gathering!

²⁹ Here the author highlights the necessity to translate the prayers from Arabic into Fula/Pular for a better understanding.

³⁰ The formula of preservation against Satan in Arabic is: *a'udhu bi l-Lābi mina l-shayṭāni al-Rajīm* (I seek refuge in Allah against Satan, the accursed). The formula of the *Basmalah* is *Bismi l-Lābi al-Rahmāni al-Rahīmi* (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful). The *Fatihah* is the first chapter of the Quran. The special formula of absolution in Arabic is: *astaghfiru l-Lābi* (I implore Allah's forgiveness).

³¹ The program of meditation to be recited.

The one whom Allah granted submission, will submit to Shaykh al-Tijani!

When David hears the religious chants [of believers], he will also sing with his beautiful voice,

and the other bards will accompany him with the refrain of the Tijani wurd!

The young and the adults who followed the obligations and shunned the prohibitions, those

who praised the Privileged, and those who undertook the wurd of Shaykh al-Tijani,

will all be at the great gathering of the Privileged. They will comfortably be seated,

in the sitting rooms that Allah, the Almighty, reserved for Shaykh al-Tijani!

They will enter the splendor Allah reserved to His Prophet.

These are the blessings of Allah, blessings that He granted to Shaykh al-Tijani!

A great Shaykh for the [Muslim] faith, a holy man close to Allah!

He is preserved from any satanic act. It is He who is named Shaykh al-Tijani!

A Sharif, a great amongst the perfect beings who comes from the privileged

lineages and communities! He is a guide to the masters Allah named al-Tijani!

He kept people away from associationism³² with the words of Allah's oneness. His wurd serves

as refuge in Allah against Satan, the accursed. Here are the prayers of the Tijani wurd:

During the wazifa, he commands to recite the formula of preservation against Satan, the Basmalah,

the special formula of absolution, the Salat al-Fatiha of the Tijaniyya,³³

the words of sacralization,³⁴ and the Jewel of Perfection [Jawartul Kamal].

To finish the wazifa, one must pray upon Allah, the Prophet, and upon Shaykh al-Tijani!

Friday prayers are supererogatory. They consist of reciting certain names of Allah.

³² The belief in a divinity other than Allah (*shirk* in Arabic), which is one of the greatest sins for Muslims.

³³ *Salat al-Fatiha* is a regular prayer upon the Prophet Muhammad, practiced individually or in congregation by followers of the Tijaniyya.

³⁴ It is the phrase of the oneness of God in Arabic: *Lā ilāha illa l-Lah* (There is no God but Allah).

If they are not done on time, you are not obliged to redo them according to the Shaykh!³⁵

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I was assisted [with this poem] by two shaykhs who are the sons of two muezzins,

two true believers who relentlessly implore Allah's forgiveness with the Tijani wird!

Muhammadu is from the Girlaajo lineage, and Abdul comes from the Surgayanke lineage.³⁶

They were pleased to have contributed to these praises of the Tijani wird!

May salvation, blessing, love, and perfection

be upon the sincere Prophet. It is he who had started the Tijani wird!

May Allah be satisfied with this wird and the disciples who practice it,

such as Shaykhul Fahimu Usmaan, a master of the Tijani wird,

a great holy man gifted with knowledge and exceptional manners. One has the impression

that he is a companion of the Prophet! What a worthy successor to Shaykh al-Tijani!

May Allah grant salvation to all believers, the dead as well as the living.

May the blessings of Shaykh Usmaan, the blessings of the Tijani wird,

as well as the blessings of the privileged Prophet, of all his companions,

and of all our spiritual masters and Shaykhs be upon Shaykh al-Tijani!

In the name of Allah, the Eternal, who grants salvation and blessing, may salvation and

blessing be upon the trustworthy Prophet and upon Shaykh al-Tijani!

May Allah bless our master, Muhammad, his family,

and his companions, and may eternal peace be upon them.

³⁵ It means that when a person misses the *hadra* (Friday prayer), s/he will not make it up later (as if it was a mandatory prayer), for Shaykh al-Tijani did not do it in his lifetime.

³⁶ The *Yirlaabe* (singular *Girlaajo*) are a sub-group of the *Jalluɓe* Fula of Fouta Djallon. They are found in the areas of Labe, Tongue, and Mali in Guinea (Conakry). The *Surgayanke* are a Fula family that belongs to the *Uururɓe* group of Fuuta Jalon. The famous Cerno Maawiyatu Maasi (born c. 1832 in Maasi), son of Karamoko Muhammadu Saalihi, a great master of the Tijaniyya in Fuuta Jalon, belongs to this lineage.

Citation: Fallou Ngom (PI), Mouhamadou L. Diallo, Ehadji Djibril Diagne, Boubacar Biro Diallo, David Glovsky, Ndieme Sow, Daivi Rodima-Taylor, and other contributors. 2022. "Celebrating Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and the Tijaniyya." <http://sites.bu.edu/nehajami/the-four-languages/fula/fula-manuscripts/waccugol-shaykhu-tijaani-e-tijaaniyya/>.

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