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Sufis in a 'Foreign' Zawiya: Moroccan Perceptions of the Tijani Pilgrimage to Fes

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SIT Study Abroad

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Sufis in a 'Foreign'
Zawiya: Moroccan
Perceptions of the Tijani
Pilgrimage to Fes

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Abstract

The purpose of this ISP is to investigate Moroccan perceptions of sub-Saharan members of the Tijaniyya during the completion of their religious pilgrimage to Fes. The relationship between Moroccans and Tijani pilgrims is particularly complex as it occurs at an intersection of various identities, most prominently including race, religion, class and nationality. This project focuses on Moroccans who work in the area surrounding the shrine of Ahmed al-Tijani and either market their business towards Tijani pilgrims or frequently serve Tijani pilgrims as customers. In the course of interviews with five Moroccans, three major themes emerged: 1. Condemnation of Tijani religious practice. 2. Warm economic relationships with the Tijaniyya and 3. Racism towards the Tijani manifested as assumptions about their socio-economic status. This project will also demonstrate the ways in which these themes represent larger discourses within Morocco, especially in regards to race and racism. Finally, this project will offer speculation regarding the reasons why racism does not openly operate in interactions between Moroccans and sub-Saharan Tijanis by offering explanations based on their religious and economic connections.

Keywords: Tijaniyya, Sufism, racism, Fes

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Introduction

The *Tijaniyya* Sufi order has always transcended national borders. Their founder, Ahmed al-Tijani, was born in Algeria but died in Morocco. In Fes, where he spent his final days, his followers ultimately built a *zawiya*, or shrine in his honor. Today, the *Tijaniyya* are the largest religious group in Senegal, and the order has spread throughout the entirety of West Africa and through much of the rest of the world. A common *Tijani* practice is to make pilgrimage to Fes, in order to visit the *zawiya* of Ahmed al-Tijani, a journey that produces myriad cultural collisions throughout its course. Interactions between Moroccans and *Tijani* pilgrims are colored by a confluence of several identities, including nationality, religion and race. In conducting this research project, I sought to determine the ways in which Moroccans perceive and treat *Tijani* pilgrims during their pilgrimage to Fes. Based on the research I conducted before undertaking this project, I anticipated that race would be the primary influence on interactions between Moroccans working near the *Zawiya* and sub-Saharan *Tijani* pilgrims, given that this is historically the most volatile of the identities in question. In reality, I found that Moroccans living near the *zawiya* of Ahmed al-Tijani in Fes have an overwhelmingly positive view of the pilgrims. In conducting interviews with five Moroccans working in businesses located near the *zawiya* or explicitly market towards *Tijani* pilgrims, I found that three major themes emerged: 1. Condemnation of *Tijani* religious practice. 2. Warm economic relationships with the *Tijaniyya* 3. Racism towards the *Tijani* manifested as assumptions about their socio-economic status. In what

follows, I will explore each of these themes based both on existing literature and on the interviews I was able to conduct with Moroccans living in Fes and working near the *zawiya*. After exploring these three themes in the context of the interviews, I will speculate on the reasons why racism plays a smaller role in interactions between Moroccans and pilgrims than I initially expected.

Literature Review

The Tijaniyya and Fes

The Tijaniyya are a Sufi order founded by Ahmed al-Tijani in 1782. Al-Tijani grew interested in Sufism from a young age, joining several orders before eventually establishing his own. In 1789 he moved to Fes, where he would later die and where his followers would establish his *zawiya* in the Medina of the city. After his death, his followers splintered in several factions that spread the influence of the Tijaniyya throughout West Africa, primary in Senegal. Modern Senegalese Tijani stop at the *zawiya* on their way to Mecca, or make a "little pilgrimage" to the site at another time during the year. The Tijaniyya are considered a relatively exclusive Sufi order, as their practice forbids them from interacting with any other Sufi orders in a religious capacity (Hu 2018:9). Most members of the Tijaniyya are middle-upper class, especially in Senegal where the order has immense political and social power (Rddad 2018). In her article titled "Ahmad al-Tijânî and his Neighbors: The Inhabitants of Fez and their Perceptions of the *Zawiya*," Johara Berriane describes the activity surrounding the Tijaniyya *zawiya* in an effort to determine local perspectives on the shrine. Berriane found that most of the locals she talked to considered the shrine a foreign presence in their city, though they were not openly hostile to its existence (Desplat and Schulz 2012:3). Most residents in the area were not aware that Tijani is typically considered Moroccan by his followers, and that despite its use primarily by Senegalese

pilgrims that the shrine in Fes is also used by Moroccans. Berriane also interviewed Moroccan women who prayed in the shrine, though many would not necessarily consider themselves Tijaniyya. In asking about their perceptions of the pilgrims, Berriane found that most Moroccans thought that all Black Tijani were Senegalese, an assumption which displays a certain measure of racism (Desplat and Schulz 2012:10). It is ironic that so many Moroccans consider the shrine a foreign entity, as many of the Tijani pilgrims consider themselves connected to Morocco through their pilgrimage. As Berriane notes in her article "Ahmad al-Tijânî and his Neighbors: The Inhabitants of Fez and their Perceptions of the *Zawiya*," many pilgrims actually don Moroccan clothing before entering the *zawiya* (Berriane 2016:8). Furthermore, Berriane indicates that many Tijanis use their pilgrimage as a bridge to connect more deeply with Moroccan religious life, making trips to the tombs of former Moroccan Kings, as they are also considered Saints descended from Prophet Muhammad (Berriane 2016:7). Berriane does not describe any outright hostility in either of her two articles, but the disconnect between Tijani self-perception and the ways in which Moroccans perceive the pilgrims create a situation ripe for potential conflict.

Sufism, Religious Regulation and the Moroccan Government

Although Morocco's religious identity has always been associated with Sufism, after the 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca, the Moroccan government reinscribed and reemphasized Sufi influence on Moroccan religion. Historically, Moroccan religious identity has been characterized by four major characteristics: Sunnism, Malikism, Ash'arism and Sufism (Wainscott 2018:8).¹ Sufism, the most important aspect of Moroccan religious identity for this project, refers generally to Islamic Mysticism and other practices associated with physical

¹Sunnism refers to the dominant sect of Islam, used by Morocco specifically to contrast themselves from Shi'a Iran. Malikism and Ash'arism refer respectively to schools of Islamic law and reasoning.

experience of religion.² Though these four elements had always played a significant role in Moroccan religious identity, after the 2003 bombing they became firmly enshrined in Morocco's official religious identity as promoted by the government (Wainscott 2018:8). The 2003 Casablanca bombing, which killed 33 people and targeted several Jewish sites in Casablanca, was Morocco's first experience with a major terrorist attack motivated by Islamic extremism (Kalpakian 2005:114), and the attack forced the Moroccan government to address Islamic extremism, an issue that they had largely ignored before this event. In the aftermath, the Moroccan government decided to use Sufism as a tool to dissuade future extremists, casting Sufism as a loving and welcoming alternative to the hatred and strict interpretation of Islamic extremism (Bekkaoui and Larémont 2011:39). In his article "Strengths and Limits of Religious Reform in Morocco," Driss Maghraoui outlines the Moroccan government's recent religious reforms, indicating that they are explicitly part of the government's response to the 2003 Casablanca bombing. Maghraoui claims that the Moroccan government used Sufism both as an appeal to Morocco's existing religious history and as an attempt to appeal to the West with a "tolerant and flexible" version of Islam (Maghraoui 2009:206). Although the Moroccan government always had control over official religious doctrine, given the King's title of Commander of the Faithful, their control increased after 2003 with the inception of state-regulated Iman training (Wainscott 2018:7). This training caught the eye of other African countries, and by 2013, Morocco's neighbors began to request that Morocco train their own religious leaders. This phenomenon was unprecedented in this region, as no West African country had ever outsourced the training of its own religious leaders before. This practice firmly imposed Morocco's official religious doctrine, with Sufism at its core, upon the entirety of West Africa.

²Although this definition seriously oversimplifies the breadth and depth of Sufi practice, for the purposes of this project it will suffice.

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Though this phenomenon is relatively recent, Morocco's spiritual connections to West Africa have existed since the country's independence, in particular with Senegal. In 1960, Morocco funded the building of the Great Mosque of Dahkar in Senegal, and the governments of both countries continue to recognize this gesture as evidence of their ongoing spiritual and diplomatic connections. This strong political relationship ties into the pilgrimage of Senegalese Tijanis, as most of the country belongs to the Tijani order. In recent years, Algeria has been trying to compete with Morocco to market Ain Madhi, Ahmed al-Tijani's birthplace, as an alternative destination to Fes for Tijani pilgrimage (Rddad 2018). Regardless of the fact that Tijanis are too connected to Fes to ever fully abandon pilgrimage to the city, Wainscott speculates that Senegal's strong relationship with Morocco and poor relationship with Algeria is one of the reasons that Ain Madhi has not emerged as an additional pilgrimage site (Wainscott 2018:13). The current King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, seems especially intent on preserving his relationship with Senegal as he has personally visited the country as Commander of the Faithful nine times since his ascension to the throne in 1999. Though the Tijaniyya are not Morocco's largest Sufi order, Morocco inherently has enormous influence over the Tijaniyya. Given Morocco's status as the most important destination for Tijani pilgrims, and its close diplomatic and religious relationship with Senegal, (the largest source of Tijani pilgrims), it is clear that the Moroccan government has a stake in promoting and maintaining its relationship with the both Senegal and with the Tijani pilgrims themselves.

Race in Morocco

Though research on race specifically in regards to the Tijaniyya in Fes is scant, research on race in Morocco in general is extensive. The primary source on this topic is Chouki El-'s book, entitled *Black Morocco*. In *Black Morocco*, Hamel argues that the formation of Moulay

Ismail's black army was the foundational moment for contemporary Moroccan racism (Hamel 2013:160). Before the formation of the black army, slavery in Morocco was not explicitly racialized. Although Black Africans were often enslaved, this had more to do with their economic or immigrant status than prejudice against darker skin – although this prejudice existed. Even though racism was common throughout the Arab world, the primary indicator used for enslavement was status as a non-Muslim (Hamel 2013:78). Given the inherently foreign status of Black Africans in Morocco as both heathens and immigrants, they were the primary group pressed into Moroccan slavery. In 1698, Moulay Ismail decided that he needed to form an army in order to consolidate his power, and opted to use slaves and fugitives as his candidates as he believed that he could force them to offer intense loyalty (Hamel 2013:161). In forming the black army, Moulay Ismail initially sought only current slaves, but eventually opted to forcibly enlist all Black Moroccans into his army regardless as to their freedom. Black Moroccans often lived on the margins of society due to their low socioeconomic status, but their forced recruitment into the black army institutionalized their status as separate from the rest of Moroccan society. Once Morocco disbanded the army in the 1800s, Black Moroccans who had already enjoyed freedom in Morocco were forced to once again reintegrate into society, which had by then adopted a deep association between Blackness and slavery. Hamel notes that that Ismail explicitly used the Blackness of his army to justify its enslavement when some legal scholars protested the enslavement of Black Muslims (Hamel 2013:172). Ismail used their Blackness as an othering tool, separating these individuals from their “Muslimness” by emphasizing the “foreignness” of their skin color. This process was able to occur despite the fact that Black Moroccans had already integrated into society, and this conflation between Blackness

and Otherness left a significant mark on the Black Moroccan community once they were free from the bondage of the black army.

Assumptions and Methodology

The most significant assumption I made before starting this project was that I would find examples of racism towards pilgrims from Moroccans, given Morocco's racial history. I wrote my interview guide with the intention of drawing out racism as much as possible, without using leading or otherwise biased questions³. This assumption did not affect the way in which I interacted with my interview subjects, nor did it affect the ways in which I interpreted their responses. I also assumed that all of my interviewees would come from hotels and/or restaurants market directly towards Tijani pilgrims, but there were fewer of these locations than I had anticipated. One of the restaurants had closed, and I found that waiters in the hotel were generally more unwilling to talk to me than I expected.

My methodology consisted of both literary research and semi-structured interviews. I conducted five interviews with Moroccans working near the *zawiya* and one interview with an expert on Sufism in Morocco, Professor Sadik Rddad. I found my first two interviewees through frequenting a hotel/restaurant explicitly marketed towards Tijani pilgrims. I intended to conduct all of my interviews in a neutral location, such as a nearby café, but this was only possible for the first interview with waiter Z. I conducted my interview with waiter Y in the hotel, but at a relatively isolated table. He was generally disinterested in answering questions, and he ultimately cut the interview short to run an errand without any further explanation. My final three interviewees were all shopkeepers or employees in shops on the same street as the *zawiya*. I selected two of these shopkeepers arbitrarily, and waiter Z introduced me to the third.

³ See Appendix 1

Unfortunately, I had to conduct each of these interviews in the street or in the storefront, but fortunately, no customers arrived to disturb the interview. Shopkeeper A sells a variety of Moroccan goods directly across from the *Zawiya*, shopkeeper B owns a fabric store across from the former location of a Tijani restaurant, and shopkeeper C works in a blanket/carpet store further down the street. I had a translator assist me with conducting all five interviews primarily in *Darija*, though waiter Z and shopkeeper C spoke a limited amount of English. I obtained oral consent from each interviewee, and recorded each conversation in addition to taking shorthand notes. I originally targeted my interview guide specifically towards waiters in the hotel/restaurant, so I had to make made minor alterations to my lines of questioning as necessary when I interviewed the shopkeepers. The location of each interview was a significant drawback to my methodology, as I was largely unable to conduct interviews in a neutral site. This may have affected participant responses, given that Tijani pilgrims were walking down the street in significant numbers as I conducted each of these interviews. With the exception of waiter Z, each of these interviews were also set-up and conducted at the same time. I suspect that participant's answers may have been more developed if they had been given more time to prepare their responses, or seen some of my questions in advance. Each of the interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, with the exception of waiter Z's, which lasted over 90 minutes.

Interviews and Analysis

Condemnation of Tijani Practices

The first major theme of this project is Moroccan rejection of Tijani practice. Although this concept emerged in only my first interview, my interviewee's commitment to his anti-Sufi convictions and its deviation from expected Moroccan norms were so significant and unexpected that they clearly stood out. Leading up to my interview with waiter Z, I spent several

days eating overpriced *Harira*⁴ in a hotel marketed towards the Tijani, in order to gain recognition from the staff. Waiter Z talked to me each time I went to the hotel in order to practice his English. He actually offered to talk to me about the history of Fes, and I used this invitation as an opportunity to set up an interview with him. Although Z did not express any openly racist views regarding the Tijaniyya, he did not hesitate to express his displeasure towards their religious identity. Given Morocco's history of supporting Sufism and the government's explicit promotion of Sufism and of the Tijani pilgrimage (Muedini 2012:203), I did not expect the opinions of Moroccans to vary from this apparent norm. Z completely subverted this expectation, as he openly and vehemently criticized Sufi practice, focusing specifically on the Tijani. His primary concern with Tijani practice was their inappropriate use, in his view, of an intermediary between the individual and God. He frequently stopped his diatribe in order to repeat that he had no problem with Tijani individuals, but he did not spare Tijani practices. As the interview continued, he became more openly critical not only of Tijani practice, but also of the Moroccan government for supporting their practice. Z explicitly said that Moroccan government would have an issue with his views on the pilgrims, but this did not stop him from expressing his condemnation of their support for Sufism in a public café.

Z's views came as a surprise both because Morocco has historically embraced Sufi practices, and Muhammad VI's religious reforms are generally well received (Bekkaoui, Larémont, and Rddad 2011). Additionally, Z's opinions about Sufism are particularly surprising in context as he depends on Tijani pilgrims in order to make a living. Despite the fact that Z's views about Sufism create a conflict of interest with the hotel, he indicated that he likes the establishment itself. He said that he worked at several high-class hotels for a while, but he was

⁴ An excellent Moroccan soup

uncomfortable with serving alcohol to guests and sought a more conservative work environment. Despite his disagreement with Tijani practice, he enjoys working at the hotel because he views it as a conservative space, in accordance with his understanding of Islam, despite the views of its primary tenants. Z did note that he respected the conservative demeanor of the pilgrims, as this aspect of their practice adheres to his vision of Islam. Though the hotel is openly marketed towards pilgrims, Z indicated this strategy is only used because of the existing presence of pilgrims in the nearby area. Given that in his view the hotel's marketing strategy is based on convenience and accessibility, Z does not feel that the Tijani identity is central to the hotel itself. For him, the Tijani are simply customers with whom he has intense theological disagreement. Z's relationship with the pilgrims was unique among my interview subjects, as he was the only individual who had an openly negative view of the pilgrims, despite his dependence upon their patronage for his livelihood.

When I asked Z if he was willing to put me in touch with one of his co-workers, he made two contradictory statements in response. First, he said that he did not want to because they would give me different answers than his own. Once I explained that this was the point of interviewing multiple individuals, he changed his story and said that they all shared his views about Tijani practices. His quick self-contradiction illuminates the fact that his negative view of the pilgrim's theological stance may not be as universal as he claimed, and it alludes to the fact that his views make him an outlier in this part of Fes. Despite the fact that Z was my only interviewee who condemned the pilgrims' practice, he represents a major theme in this project both because of the strength of his conviction, and because of its direct opposition to dominant social and official government rhetoric. Though Z claimed that his co-workers shared his unexpected views, his hesitance to introduce me to any of them may indicate that he is less

secure in his deviation from the norm than he indicated during the interview. Z was however willing to introduce me to a shopkeeper whose storefront is adjacent to the *zawiya* itself, and I was able to conduct a short interview with shopkeeper A, which I will discuss in the next section.

Warm Economic Relationships with the Tijaniyya

The second theme that emerged across several of my interviews was an overwhelmingly positive view of the pilgrims, based on their constant presence in and economic contribution to the area surrounding the *zawiya*. This perspective, developed in an area of Fes that both depends on and caters to the presence the pilgrims for its economic status, was a common thread throughout all of my interviews, as four of the Moroccans I interviewed conflated their economic relationship with their personal feelings towards the pilgrims. Another common thread through each of the interviews described in this section is general confusion about my interest in the pilgrims in the first place. My interviewees generally considered the pilgrims a mundane aspect of their daily lives, as they are nearly always present in Fes in some numbers. Shopkeeper B specifically said that he does not bother thinking about the pilgrims very much because they are just a normal part of life in this neighborhood of Fes. The pilgrims' constant presence is one of the reasons why their economic contributions to this area are so important, and the lack of attention the locals pay them speaks to the extent to which they have immersed themselves in this part of Morocco. This sentiment directly contradicts to conclusions Berriane draws in her article "Ahmad al-Tijânî and his Neighbors: The Inhabitants of Fez and their Perceptions of the Zâwiya", as she found that despite the pilgrims' connection to Morocco, many Moroccans considered them foreigners (Berriane 2012:10). I asked questioned about the foreignness of the pilgrims in each of my interviews, and though my interviewees never said the pilgrims were

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Moroccan, they each represented the presence of the pilgrims in Fes as something normal and welcome rather than foreign.

My interview with shopkeeper A immediately followed my interview with waiter Z, and was conducted in the street at his storefront. Though this was not an ideal situation for an interview, especially as Z continued to listen in on our conversation, his interview still proved useful. Unlike Z, A indicated that in his view differences between pilgrims and Moroccans are actually a good thing because they allow Moroccans and pilgrims to learn from each other. When asked about government support for the pilgrims, he said that it is “obvious” that the government should support the pilgrims coming to Fes. He also said that the main target of his business is the pilgrims, because they buy the most Moroccan goods. He said that he rarely sells goods to Moroccans. Given his proximity to the *zawiya* pilgrims constantly surround his store, and this reality sheds further light on his support for government involvement in the pilgrimage. The more pilgrims are able to come to Morocco, the more goods he is able to sell. A said that he set up his store in this location specifically to make a living selling to pilgrims. Though his store does not have any visible marketing or signage that targets pilgrims, the fact that he sells Moroccan goods near the *zawiya* is enough to for him to determine his clientele. Even if his target clientele was not evident through his location, A’s choice to target pilgrims is illustrated through his merchandise. Even though A and other merchants near the *zawiya* sell things that are stereotypically Moroccan, such as *djelabas*⁵ and *babouches*⁶, they are made with fabrics and colors considered unusual in Morocco, but more familiar to sub-Saharan Africans (Rddad 2018). A indicated that it was a pleasure for him to sell goods to pilgrims, and he and everyone else in Fes has great respect for the pilgrims while they are in the city on pilgrimage.

⁵Traditional Moroccan hooded robes, associated with piety

⁶ Traditional Moroccan slippers

Following my interview with shopkeeper A, I returned to the hotel to attempt and talk with another waiter. Unfortunately, I was forced to conduct the interview in the hotel as waiter Y was technically working, but he clearly had time to spare in the middle of the afternoon. Despite his apparent lack of responsibilities, I was only able a partial interview with Y as he was extremely disinterested in my questions. It became abundantly clear that Y does not share the same passion about the Tijaniyya that Z did, as he demonstrated that he spares them little thought. Though Y did admit that he had some theological differences with the pilgrims, his primary concern with them related to his employment. He made it clear that his decision to work at this hotel was completely arbitrary and that his relationship with the pilgrims was based solely upon contact in the course of doing his job. He primarily characterized his relationship with the Tijani through the normalcy of their presence. Y claimed he did not know anything about the hotel's marketing towards the pilgrims and that his decision to work there had nothing to do with the clientele; to him, the Tijani are simply his indirect source of income. I interpret Y's apathy towards answering questions about the pilgrims as a manifestation of their normalcy, conflated with the fact that they primarily represent a source of income and employment for him rather than a personal interest. Despite his lack of personal connection, Y made it clear that the pilgrims were "more welcome in Morocco than Moroccans." This statement reflects the larger situation illustrated through my other interviews, as although Y does not personally participate in the welcoming of the pilgrims he is aware that others in the area near his hotel feel much more strongly towards the pilgrims. The fact that Y feels the welcome extended to the pilgrims in spite of his personal apathy towards them speaks to the strength of this sentiment in the space around the *zawiya*.

Although I had planned to focus my interviews on the employees of the hotel in order to control for as many variables as possible, I was eventually forced to abandon this location after the manager refused to participate in an interview, despite agreeing to do so in advance and the other waiters followed suit in his dismissal. I decided to turn to other shopkeepers on the same street as the *zawiya*, as they were the other group most likely to have contact with the pilgrims on a regular basis. I was quickly able to locate a fabric store near the *zawiya*, and across the street from the former location of a Tijani restaurant. For shopkeeper B the pilgrims primarily represent an aspect of everyday life that is not worth questioning. After clarifying his misconception that I was personally curious about conversion into the Tijaniyya, he went on to say that he takes government support for the Tijani for granted, specifically given the historical prominence of Sufism in Morocco. Despite his proximity to the *zawiya*, B indicated that he does not specifically target Tijanis, although they do make up a noticeable portion of his customer base. Despite his support for their presence in Fes and his claims that they are extremely welcome and well loved, he does not share the personal debt to them that both Y and A have. B admitted that most people in the area love them because of the business that they bring, but also emphasized the fact that their practices do not separate them from Moroccan Muslims, which further increases their positive reception in Fes. B's views are particularly interesting because, unlike Y and A, he does not depend upon the Tijani for his income. B indicated that the primary reason he does not target the pilgrims is that they do not have the "right taste" to shop in his store. When I asked him to elaborate, he indicated that he believed most of the pilgrims to be rural and uneducated, and thus unable to appreciate his quality fabrics. Given the general demographic status of the Tijani, this view came as a surprise to me, as it does not adhere to demographic reality and appears to illuminate racist preconceptions. I will elaborate upon B's

potentially racist views in the next section, after outlining similar statements from my interview with shopkeeper C.

Following my interview with shopkeeper B, I moved to a blanket store down the street and interviewed shopkeeper C. He offered me the most enthusiastic interview on the subject, and he was my interviewee who was most fond of the Tijani. He repeated similar ideas to shopkeeper B about Tijani practices, but revealed that he had a personal connection to the *zawiya*. He said that as a child he loved playing near the *zawiya*, because the pilgrims would give candy to Moroccan children. He specifically said that he associates the *zawiya* with his childhood, and memories of a “beautiful happy life” built around the shrine’s “Senegalese charm.” He talked at length about the warmth of the pilgrims and about how much he enjoyed talking with them both as a child and now as an adult. C went so far as to say the pilgrims are often even friendlier than his Moroccan customers are. He described the shopping habits of the pilgrims at length, indicating that they are his favorite type of customers to have in his store because they have a strong affinity for quality Moroccan goods; however, in discussing this topic he revealed a contradictory belief. C indicated that pilgrims buy huge amounts of Moroccan goods while in Fes, both out of love for Morocco and out of appreciation for Moroccan artisanship. Nevertheless, in the same breath he indicated that most of the pilgrims were poor, and primarily lived in rural areas. While these seemingly incongruous ideas are potentially reconcilable, given similar comments made by both Z and B in their respective interviews I posit that these comments represent a manifestation of Moroccan racism towards sub-Saharan Africans.

Racism Towards the Tijani

As I discussed previously, the Tijanire generally known as a middle to upper class Sufi order. Their class status is one of the reasons that so many Tijanis are able to make the pilgrimage to

Fes in the first place, and this status is one of the reasons that the local economy is able to depend upon their presence. Locals welcome pilgrims because they buy many Moroccan goods, a practice entirely enabled by their relative wealth. Although this does not mean poor Tijanis do not exist, as they certainly do, it does mean that most pilgrims in Fes are comfortable financially, especially if they are buying Moroccan goods in large quantities. Shopkeeper B's lack of marketing towards pilgrims becomes more peculiar given these details, especially when considering his proximity to the *zawiya*. Despite the fact that B insisted, in direct opposition to Z, that there are no differences between Moroccans and pilgrims in regards to their religious practice, B did describe differences between these groups as clients. B claimed that relatively few pilgrims shopped in his store because they were mostly too poor to afford his prices, and that they did not have the "proper taste" to appreciate his products. He claimed that "eighty percent" of pilgrims are too poor to afford his goods, as he believes they come from rural areas, and are thus both too poor and too uneducated to patronize his store. Based on my interview with Professor Rddad, this shopkeeper's view does not reflect the demographic reality of the pilgrims. Beyond the fact that pilgrimage is generally a costly endeavor, Rddad confirmed that the *Tijani* are generally considered a middle to upper-class Sufi order, associated with wealth and power in Senegal. While this does not mean that there are no examples of poor Tijanis, it does call into question B's opinion that the overwhelming majority of pilgrims are poor and from rural areas.

In my first interview, Z expressed similar sentiments about the class status of the pilgrims. Though he did not offer a percentage, Z indicated that most of the pilgrims he received at the hotel come from rural areas, which makes them uncomfortable in nice places, such as the hotel. Z's comments imply that lack of education and "proper culture" leads to strange behaviors from pilgrims in the hotel, rather than this behavior simply coming from their presence in a new and

unfamiliar country. Though Z was willing to condemn the practice of Tijani from around the world, he specifically indicated that sub-Saharan pilgrims experienced this cultural discomfort, and he attributed it to their lower-class status in their home country. Again, while this may be the case for individual pilgrims, Z's assumptions do not reflect the demographic reality of the *Tijani* as a whole. Both Z and B's comments about the rural and uncultured nature of the pilgrims represent a common trope of racism in Morocco, as Black Africans are often associated with lower classes, and thus excluded from "sophisticated" culture (Hamel 2013:161). Though neither of these individuals blamed the pilgrims for their perceived cultural shortcomings, the fact that they made these assumptions at all speaks to one manifestation of racism against the pilgrims during their time in Fes.

Shopkeeper C made a similar comment about the rural status of the pilgrims, but unlike Z and B he did not assign any meaning to this distinction. Although he participated in the racial stereotyping of sub-Saharan pilgrims along the same factors as the others I interviewed, he did not use this stereotype to criticize them. This is particularly interesting, as he addressed their lower-class status after describing at length the amount of Moroccan goods that the pilgrims buy. C claimed that the pilgrims bring many Moroccan goods back to their "villages" to share with others, but he evidently did not see the contradiction in someone from a "village" having the means to make pilgrimage and buy Moroccan goods in bulk. This disconnect between the perceptions of the Moroccans I interviewed and the reality of the pilgrims is the most explicit representation of racism I encountered in my interviews. Though each subject emphasized how welcome the pilgrims were in Fes, and how much both the locals and the Moroccan government love them, three of my five interviewees held the same racist assumption about the class status of the pilgrims. It is possible that these perceptions could be based on reality if they had all truly

encountered only poor pilgrims, but given the demographics of the Tijani as a whole, this seems extremely unlikely. Especially in the case of shopkeeper C, as he specifically referenced poor Senegalese pilgrims, and Senegal is the country in which the *Tijani* have the most status and influence (Rddad 2018). Although it is possible that this assumption is based on nationality, none of these three interviewees made any distinctions based on nationality when labeling pilgrims as rural. Given that race is the common denominator I suspect that it is also the primary generator of their assumption, especially since this stereotype fits in with historical Moroccan discourses about racism. Furthermore, C described racist behavior towards the pilgrims that he observes on a regular basis. He claims that Moroccan children often chase the pilgrims and call them racial slurs, as a sort of game. C was careful to emphasize that he has only ever heard children do this, and that he is sure they do not mean what they say. While this may be true, this disturbing game may illustrate the larger racial issues hiding underneath the friendly reception that the pilgrims receive in Fes.

Speculation on Reduction in Racism

Given Morocco's history with anti-Black racism, I anticipated encountering more examples of both open and subtle racism against the sub-Saharan pilgrims in Fes. In my conversation with Professor Rddad, he made sure to emphasize that Morocco in general, and Fes in particular, have serious problems with anti-Black racism. Since the responses of my interviewees did not represent the extent of racism that I expected, I will offer two potential explanations for their reduction in openly racist views. Whether or not any of my interviewees were actually racist is largely irrelevant, as these explanations address the larger question of why Fes in general is not as openly racist towards sub-Saharan pilgrims as one would expect. Given the history of racism's forms in Morocco, I suspect that the economic relationship and generally

accepted Muslim status of the pilgrims are two main factors in the elimination of explicit racism in the completion of the Tijani pilgrimage.

Historically, Black Africans in Morocco were targeted for enslavement primarily based on their non-Muslim status (Hamel 2013:172). Though conversion was not always enough to save Black Africans from enslavement, specifically during the formation of the black army, Muslims are technically forbidden from enslaving fellow Muslims. In contemporary Morocco, Black Muslims are generally treated better than Black non-Muslims purely because of their religious status. For example, Professor Rddad noted that many sub-Saharan Africans working in the Moroccan informal economy successfully dress and present themselves as Muslims in order to avoid harassment, regardless of their true religious commitment (Rddad 2018). Since Morocco's official religious doctrine validates Sufism as a legitimate interpretation of Islam, the *Tijani* are in part able to circumvent open racism through their religious status. Each of my interviewees, including Z, spoke at length about the respectability and kindness of the pilgrims. These overwhelmingly positive comments surprised me, in the context of his repeated condemnation of their practice. When I asked Z about the apparent contradiction in his statements, he indicated that the *Tijani* are still Muslims, even if their practice is incorrect, and thus worthy of his respect. Interestingly, when I asked each of my interviewees how they visually identify the pilgrims, none of them mentioned race. Z said their prayer beads, called *tasbih*, were the best way to identify them. Shopkeeper B said there is no way to identify a *Tijani* without talking to him, and the rest all referenced their clothing. The respect paid to the *Tijani* and the reluctance to openly identify them through race may speak to the respect accorded to them on behalf of their status as Muslim, especially in the context of racism writ large in Fes.

In addition to religious connection, financial relationships are another factor that historically reduces open racism out of pure economic interest.

The fact that sub-Saharan Tijani pilgrims strongly influence the economy near the *zawiya* also positively effects their reception. Most of my interviewees openly expressed love for the pilgrims, and they all considered them eminently welcome in Fes. This welcoming sentiment even holds true for Z, as despite his theological objection to the pilgrims he acknowledges that they are an important part of Fes both culturally and economically. This blanket acceptance likely speaks to Morocco's broader diplomatic relationship with Senegal. Despite Morocco specifically emphasizing its religious connection to Senegal, Wainscott notes that Morocco's close ties to the country have a significant economic impact as well (Wainscott 2018:17). This does not mean that Morocco's emphasis on its spiritual relationship with Senegal is a charade, but the economics underneath their religious ties certainly affect the reality on the ground in Fes. Johara Berriane describes the extent of economic activity surrounding the *zawiya* in her article "Ahmad al-Tijânî and his Neighbors: The Inhabitants of Fez and their Perceptions of the *Zawiya*", wherein she cites both NGOs and government agencies specifically promoting the *zawiya* as a spiritual tourist destination after seeing its impact on the local economy (Berriane 2012:11). My interviews strongly represented this practice, as four of my five interviewees depend on the pilgrims in order to make a living. Even though Z condemns government support for the Tijani pilgrimage, he acknowledges the role that they play in the local economy and he still believes that they are universally welcome in Fes.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this project, it became abundantly clear that most Moroccans greet sub-Saharan Tijani pilgrims with open arms, regardless as to the context of racism that their relationship operates within. Whether their relationship is based on mutual respect as Muslims or out of economic necessity, it is indisputable that the Tijani are welcome in Fes. Part of this welcome has to do with the normalcy of the pilgrims' presences in the region of Fes surrounding the *zawiya*, but it also exists in the context of Morocco's larger relationship with West Africa, and with Senegal in particular. In their long history of pilgrimage to the *zawiya*, the Tijani have integrated themselves into daily life in Fes to such an extent that asking questions about them seemed silly to several of my interviewees. This normalcy helps create the strong economic ties between the pilgrims and local Moroccans, and their economic relationship influences the personal feelings that Moroccans have towards the pilgrims. Although I found an isolated example of anti-Tijani religious sentiment, most of the Moroccans I talked to fell in line with their government's warm embrace of Tijani pilgrims and Sufi practice in general. Many Moroccans living near the *zawiya* depend on the pilgrims in order to make a living, and market their business primarily towards the Tijani in order to do so. This positive relationship with the pilgrims exists in the context of the Moroccan government's larger efforts both to reform the country's religious identity to serve as a religious leader for West Africa as a whole. Morocco focuses particularly on its relationship with Senegal, the country that sends the most Tijani pilgrims to Morocco. Although the Tijani are certainly not the only or even the primary reason for Morocco's relationship with Senegal, it is clear that their diplomatic ties play a role in the realities of the Tijani pilgrimage to Fes. The strength of the economic relationship between the pilgrims and local Moroccans is strong enough for it to cover any traces of racism towards sub-Saharan Africans that may exist. Though I did not discover any examples of open discrimination

in my interviewees, I did uncover racism that manifests itself as an association between the pilgrims and a lower class status that is not based on demographic reality. While this prejudice did not appear to affect the economic relationship between these Moroccans and their sub-Saharan Tijani customers, its existence speaks to the larger history of anti-Black racism in Morocco. Ultimately, it seems that the deep economic and religious connections between Moroccans and Tijani pilgrims define the core of their relationships. Condemnation or suspicion of Tijani practices are the exception rather than the rule in this space, and for some of my interviewees their religious differences with the pilgrims are actually a positive aspect of their relationship. As surprising as this close relationship between Moroccan and sub-Saharan Tijani pilgrims may be in the context of Moroccan racism, it is important to note that racism still manifests itself in the background in the form of class-based prejudice, even if this racism does not appear to affect their larger relationship as a whole.

Limitations and Further Research

The most prohibitive limitations on this project were time and my language barrier with my subjects. Having to coordinate my availability with my translator and my interviewees was an early obstacle, but fortunately, I was mostly able to overcome this. Another major limitation related to time was the number and variety of interviews that I was able to conduct. The time restraint forced me to find my interviewees in similar areas and business, which decreased the overall diversity of perspective that I was able to find. Choosing merchants and waiters as my subjects also affected the quality of my interviews, as they were largely conducted on the street in front of their stores, as pilgrims walked by in great numbers. Had I been able to give my subjects more time to prepare their answers or to interview them in a quiet neutral location I

suspect that their responses would have changed. It would also have been extremely useful to obtain the perspectives of Moroccans who interact with the *Tijani* on a regular basis in a non-economic capacity, as this would help clarify the economic dimension of the Moroccan-pilgrim relationship, but this was also essentially impossible due to time restraints. I also initially planned to conduct half of my interviews with Tijani pilgrims themselves, but this was also impossible due to time and language barrier restraints in addition to the staff at the hotel blocking me from talking to their customers in the hotel itself. Talking to the pilgrims directly about racism would be the most effective way to uncover the depth to which it does or does not affect their pilgrimage, and without their perspective, I was forced to broaden my research question to focus on Moroccan perspectives in general, rather than only regarding racism. A future project could further explore this dimension of the Moroccan-pilgrim relationship by focusing on the perspectives of the pilgrims, as this research would provide a new perspective on their connections. I had originally intended to focus on this dimension of the Moroccan-pilgrims relationship, but due to time constraints and issues with access to the pilgrims, I opted to focus only on Moroccan perspectives.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Questions for Moroccans:

1. Did you know about the *Tijani* before working here?
 - a. If so, how did you understand the *Tijani* before working here?
 - b. Has your understanding of them changed?
2. What is your understanding of the *zawiya*?
 - a. Do you ever interact with the *zawiya*?
 - b. Why or why not?
3. Do you feel that the pilgrims are welcome in Fes?
 - a. Why or why not?
4. What do you think about the *Tijani* pilgrims themselves?
5. Why do you work at this (hotel/restaurant)?
6. Why is this (restaurant/hotel) marketed towards the *Tijani*?
7. What does your ideal customer look and behave like?
8. Can you tell that a customer is a *Tijanipilgrim*?
 - a. How?
 - b. Describe a typical pilgrim (appearance, behavior, dress, etc.)
9. Do you look forward to having *Tijani* customers?
10. Are you curious about the countries that the pilgrims come from?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. What assumptions do you have about their home countries?
11. Do you have conversations with your *Tijani* customers?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. About what?
 - c. Are there any memorable examples of conversations you have had?
12. How do *Tijani* customers behave in this (restaurant/hotel)?
 - a. Does their behavior differ from Moroccan customers?
13. What are your expectations when *Tijani* pilgrims enter your (restaurant/hotel)?
 - a. Do you expect to be tipped?
14. Have you ever heard a co-worker or friend make a negative comment about the pilgrims?
 - a. Did you say anything in return? Why or why not?
15. Do you know any Moroccan *Tijanis*?
 - a. Do they differ from *Tijani* pilgrims from other countries? If so, how?

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