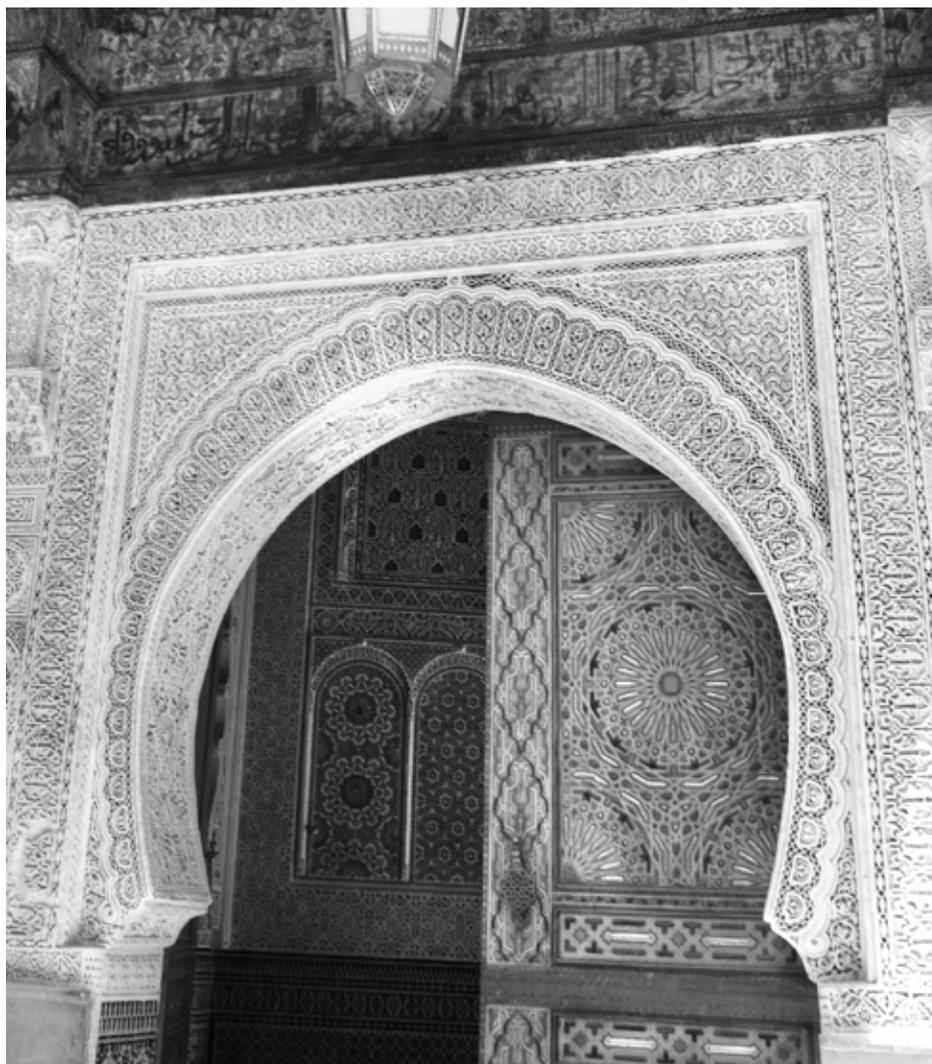

The Centrality of Fez in the Articulation of Translocal and Transnational Tijani Religious Circuits: the Case of the Baro Family in Mbour, Senegal

ABDOULAYE KANE

Every year thousands of West African Muslims belonging to the Tijani Sufi Order travel to Fez to pay a visit (*ziarra*) to the founder of the Tariqa buried inside the Tijani Zawiya situated in the old Medina of the city. The Baro family in Mbour, known for belonging to the Medina Gounass branch of Tijaniyya in Senegal, has over the past two decades led collective visits to the Zawiya Tijani of Fez. The annual *ziarra* of Fez has become one of the most important moments for the Baro brothers to reenact their religious authority over their expanding translocal and transnational networks of followers.

Mansour Baro initiated in the 1980s translocal circuits of travel that take him from Mbour to the villages of the Senegal River Valley (along the border between Senegal, Mauritania, and Mali) and among popular neighborhoods of Dakar where he exhorts Muslims to return to the practice of “true Sufi Islam” by following the recommendations of the Prophet and Sidi Ahmed Tijani. Over the years, he established a vast network of villages who are affiliated to him and to the Medina Gounass Branch of Tijaniyya. Some of the leaders of this translocal community of followers were invited to join Tierno Mansour on his annual *ziarra* in Fez where they are met by their followers from Morocco and Europe. After his death in 2007, Tierno Mansour was replaced by his brother who continues to entertain both his expanding translocal and transnational networks, with a special attention to Fez and their connections with the Tijani Family in Morocco.

This research examines how the Baro brothers use the *ziarra* of Fez to consolidate their religious authority and to prove their special rank in the Tijaniyya brotherhood. It analyzes the ritual performances and the sermons delivered by the Baro brothers inside the Zawiya



during annual *ziarras*. The appearance of Sheikh Tijani to Sheikh Baro as well as the claims of embodiment of Sheikh Tijani by followers, and the assurances of prayers answered are all part of the confirming elements of the high ranking of Sheikh Baro. The research analyzes the relations that pilgrims in the Zawiya Tijani of Fez entertain with the sacred and how they attempt to materialize *baraka* through the combination of the water of Zawiya’s well, the tomb of the founder of Tijaniyya, and his

descendants. The research addresses lastly a touristic dimension of the pilgrimage by looking at various activities that pilgrims engage in which make them comparable to secular tourists. The research examines lodging arrangements for pilgrims outside hotels as well as the shopping and sight-seeing of symbolic places in and around the city of Fez.

Abdoulaye Kane is associate professor of anthropology & African studies.